



UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD

DAHRENDORF
PROGRAMME
at the
EUROPEAN
STUDIES CENTRE

Europe and Freedom

Edited by Timothy Garton Ash and Josef Lolacher



This publication results from the Europe in a Changing World research project of the Dahrendorf Programme at the European Studies Centre St Antony's College University of Oxford, OX2 6JF
Tel: 01865 274474
<https://europeanmoments.com/>

Typeset and printed by the Medical Informatics Unit, NDCLS, University of Oxford

The essay by Timothy Garton Ash, 'Europe and Freedom' is © Timothy Garton Ash
All other content is © Dahrendorf Programme

ISBN 978-1-3999-8006-7

This report is also available as a pdf at <https://europeanmoments.com/>

The front cover is adapted from a photograph taken by Timothy Garton Ash in front of St. Michael's Monastery in Kyiv in February 2023

The back cover shows part of the audience at the 2023 Dahrendorf Colloquium

Europe and Freedom

Edited by
Timothy Garton Ash
and Josef Lolacher

DAHRENDORF PROGRAMME
at the
EUROPEAN STUDIES CENTRE
ST ANTHONY'S COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Contents

Preface	7
<i>Timothy Garton Ash</i>	

Essays on Europe and Freedom

Europe Whole and Free	11
<i>Timothy Garton Ash</i>	
The Contested Concept of Political Freedom	21
<i>Olivier Yasar de France</i>	
Can We Measure Freedom?	33
<i>Josef Lolacher</i>	

The 2023 Dahrendorf Colloquium

Europe and Freedom: The View from Outside	41
<i>Anne-Marie Slaughter, Lu Xiaoyu, Faisal Devji, Timothy Garton Ash</i>	
<i>Rapporteur: Talia Kollek</i>	

Freedom in Europe: The Last Fifty Years	45
<i>Timothy Snyder, Andreas Wirsching, Glenda Sluga, Paul Betts</i>	
<i>Rapporteur: Jan Farfal</i>	

The State of Freedom in ...

Britain	49
<i>Helen Mountfield, Fraser Nelson, Will Hutton, Anne Deighton</i>	
<i>Rapporteur: Olivier Yasar de France</i>	

Germany	53
<i>Karl-Heinz Paqué, Gesine Schwan, Jan-Werner Müller, Patricia Clavin</i>	
<i>Rapporteur: Julia Carver</i>	

East Central Europe	57
<i>Karolina Wigura, Michal Šimečka, Jacques Rupnik, Lenka Bustiková</i>	
<i>Rapporteur: Reja Wyss</i>	
Southern Europe	61
<i>Lucia Annunziata, Charles Powell, João Carlos Espada, Tim Vlandas</i>	
<i>Rapporteur: Talia Kollek</i>	
South-Eastern Europe	65
<i>Ivan Vejvoda, Kerem Öktem, Jessie Barton-Hronešová, Othon Anastasakis</i>	
<i>Rapporteur: Kristijan Fidanovski</i>	
Ukraine	69
<i>Yaroslav Hrytsak, Nataliya Gumenyuk, Marnie Howlett, Paul Chaisty</i>	
<i>Rapporteur: Sofii Horbachova</i>	
The European Union	73
<i>Nathalie Tocci, Charles Grant, Mark Leonard, Hartmut Mayer</i>	
<i>Rapporteur: Jan Farfal</i>	
European Media	77
<i>Sylvie Kauffmann, Katrin Bennhold, Alan Rusbridger, Rasmus Nielsen</i>	
<i>Rapporteur: Alexandra Solovyev</i>	
European Universities	81
<i>Michael Ignatieff, Shalini Randeria, Christoph Markschiess, Roger Goodman</i>	
<i>Rapporteur: Josef Lolacher</i>	
Freedom in Europe: Dimensions, Dilemmas and Prospects	87
<i>Ivan Krastev, Anne Applebaum, Lea Ypi, Kalypso Nicolaidis</i>	
<i>Rapporteur: Lucas Tse</i>	
The Future of Freedom	91
<i>Francis Fukuyama, former and current Dahrendorf Scholars, and members of the Dahrendorf Network</i>	
<i>Rapporteur: Ruihan Zhu</i>	
Participants in the 2023 Dahrendorf Colloquium	96

The Dahrendorf Programme

The First Fifteen Years	101
<i>Timothy Garton Ash</i>	
Dahrendorf Lectures 2010–2023	105
Dahrendorf Scholars and Essays 2010–2023	107
Publications and Websites	111

Preface

This publication marks fifteen years of the Dahrendorf Programme. It is devoted to Europe and freedom, two leitmotifs of Ralf Dahrendorf's work and my own. It examines the often complex relationships between Europe and freedom in many areas, both geographical and thematic.

The essays in the first section were prepared specifically for the 2023 Dahrendorf Colloquium, with my own being a revised and extended version of my Dahrendorf Lecture. In the second section, students working with our research project on 'Europe in a Changing World' give their accounts of the discussions during the Colloquium sessions. A short final section documents the work of the Programme over the last fifteen years.

That work continues.

Timothy Garton Ash
Oxford, February 2024

Essays on Europe and Freedom

Europe Whole and Free

Timothy Garton Ash

Oddly enough, the most visionary formulation of what we Europeans have tried to achieve on our own continent comes from a US president who deplored the ‘vision thing’. ‘Let Europe be whole and free,’ declared George H.W. Bush in the German city of Mainz in May 1989. He described ‘growing political freedom in the east, a Berlin without barriers, a cleaner environment, [and] a less militarised Europe’ as ‘the foundation of our larger vision: a Europe that is free and at peace with itself’.

So the goal is threefold: whole, free, and at peace. How has Europe done against those benchmarks in the more than thirty years since 1989? Is the vision coming closer or receding? What would it take for Europe to advance further toward it?

Europe’s Post-Wall Era

Europe’s post-Wall era is a tale of two halves. Painting with a broad brush, we can characterise the period from 1989 to 2007 as one of extraordinary progress. Political freedom spread across Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. Germany was united. Soviet troops withdrew. New democracies joined the European Union and NATO. In 1989, what was then still called the European Community had just twelve members and NATO had sixteen. By 2007, the EU (into which the European Community was transformed by the 1992 Maastricht Treaty) had twenty-seven members and NATO twenty-six. There had never been a time when so many European countries were sovereign, democratic, legally equal members of the same security, political and economic communities. As a European citizen, you could fly from one end of the continent almost to the other – from Lisbon to Tallinn, from Helsinki to Athens – without needing to show a passport. Many of the countries along the way shared a single currency, the euro. Here was an unprecedentedly large, single European space enjoying an unprecedented level of peace and freedom.

To be sure, this was also a period that saw five wars in the former Yugoslavia, including the most brutal, genocidal one in Bosnia. But the last of these wars, in Macedonia, was over by the end of 2001. These two decades also saw the 11 September attacks on the United States. Yet with hindsight 11 September 2001, which was a major turning point in Middle Eastern and US history, does not appear to have been one in European

history. The consequences of the US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq contributed to the radicalisation of some of the Islamist terrorists who subsequently attacked European capitals such as London, Madrid, Paris and Berlin, but the process of radicalisation had deep roots in Europe itself, especially among second-generation European Muslims.

The crucial European turning point came in 2008. Two separate but almost simultaneous developments – Vladimir Putin’s military occupation of two large areas of Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia in August, and the eruption of the global financial crisis with the collapse of Lehman Brothers in September – began a downward turn that continued throughout the second half of the post-Wall period. The financial crisis segued into a ‘Great Recession’ in many European countries. It also provoked the Eurozone crisis that started in 2010, hitting Southern European countries such as Greece especially hard. Also in 2010 Viktor Orbán started demolishing democracy in Hungary. In 2014 Putin followed his Georgian aggression with the annexation of Crimea and the beginning, in eastern Ukraine, of the Russo-Ukrainian War.

The refugee crisis that began in 2015 prompted a sharp rise in support for hard-right nationalist-populist parties such as the Alternative für Deutschland in Germany and Marine Le Pen’s Front National in France. In Poland, the Law and Justice party, having won both the country’s presidency and an absolute majority in parliament, set about following Orbán’s example to erode Poland’s fragile democracy. In 2016 came the Brexit referendum, which resulted in Britain leaving the EU, and then the election of Donald Trump as US president, which was also a significant moment in European history. The Covid pandemic struck in 2020, with economic, social and psychological consequences that are still becoming apparent. This cascade of crises reached its lowest point (so far) with Putin’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

It would require another essay to analyse all the many varieties of hubris that contributed to this downward turn after 2008, but it’s worth highlighting one fundamental mistake in the way many Europeans (and Americans) came to view our recent history. Put most simply, this was the fallacy of extrapolation. We saw the way things had gone for nearly two decades after 1989 and somehow assumed they would continue in that direction, albeit with setbacks along the way. We contemplated one of the most nonlinear events in modern history – the fall of the Wall and the peaceful end of the Soviet empire – and made a linear projection forward from it. We took history with a small h, history as it really happens – always a product of the interaction between deep structures and processes on the one hand, and contingency, conjuncture, collective will and individual leadership on the other – and misconstrued it as History with a capital H, a Hegelian process of inevitable progress toward freedom. But freedom is not a process. It’s a constant struggle. The point is perfectly captured in the Ukrainian word *volia*, which means freedom and also the will to fight for it.

As the first half of the post-Wall period had not all been peace and progress, so the second half was not all conflict and regress. The European Union did not merely

survive what one of its leaders dubbed its ‘polycrisis’, despite losing one member state (Britain) and another (Hungary) ceasing to be a democracy; in some respects it emerged stronger. Responding to the economic impact of the pandemic, the EU did what it should have done in response to the Eurozone crisis and launched a €750 billion financial support programme called NextGenerationEU, which finally broke with two taboos that had been stubbornly upheld by Northern European creditor states such as Germany. It effectively mutualised some European debt, since the European Commission was authorised to borrow money on behalf of the entire EU, and it dispersed more than half that money as grants, not merely loans. The EU has also proved remarkably united and decisive in the face of the full-scale war in Ukraine.

Although it’s too soon to judge this last event in proper historical perspective, it seems plausible to suggest that 24 February 2022 marks the end of the post-Wall period that began on 9 November 1989. The scale and global implications of the war in Ukraine, and the way it compels Europeans to revise some of their most treasured post-1989 assumptions, mean that we have entered a new era, whose character and name no one yet knows. So where does Europe stand today? At peace? Free? Whole?

At Peace?

Europe is not at peace. In Ukraine we have the largest war in Europe since 1945. ‘Never again!’ Europeans cried in 1945, after the horrors of the Second World War and the Holocaust. That was post-war Europe’s first commandment. Yet Southern Europe laboured under fascist dictatorships until the 1970s, while the eastern half of the continent continued to experience invasions and violent repression until 1989. After the end of the Cold War, Europe settled down to be a continent of Kantian perpetual peace. Almost immediately, war erupted in the former Yugoslavia. Following the massacre in the Bosnian town of Srebrenica in 1995, Europeans again said, ‘Never again!’ Now it has happened yet again. This is the ‘never’ that seemingly never comes.

When I started writing my book *Homelands: A Personal History of Europe* five years ago, I thought that in order to bring home to young Europeans the horrors against which post-war Europe has defined itself, I must hurry to track down some of the last surviving elderly Europeans with personal memories of the hell that was Europe during the Second World War. So I did, in Germany, France and Poland. But today all you need do to experience such horrors firsthand is take a train into Ukraine from the South-Eastern Polish town of Przemyśl. Departure time 2023, arrival 1943.

In Bucha, the commuter town northwest of Kyiv whose name has become synonymous with Russian atrocities in Ukraine, I met an elderly woman whose nephew had been murdered by the occupying Russian forces simply because he had some photos of destroyed Russian tanks on his phone. In Borodyanka I contemplated a statue of Ukraine’s great nineteenth-century poet Taras Shevchenko, shot several times through his metal head by Russian soldiers. The intention of the Russian occupation is genocidal. Thousands of Ukrainian children have been separated from their parents and forcibly deported to Russia, where they are to be raised as Russians.

In March 2023 the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin, holding him directly responsible for this war crime.

I will never forget an evening conversation in Lviv with Yevhen Hulevych, a tall, lean, handsome cultural critic who had volunteered to serve in the Ukrainian army after the full-scale invasion. He had twice been wounded, the second time in the gruelling infantry campaign to liberate Kherson, but when we met he was preparing to return to the front yet again. Inexperienced recruits would have need of him, he explained; his combat experience could save lives. A few weeks later he lost his own life to a Russian sniper's bullet in the blood-soaked mud around Bakhmut, Ukraine's Passchendaele. I think often of Yevhen.

Casualty figures in this war are difficult to establish, but in August 2023 US officials estimated that the total number killed and wounded was nearing 500,000: some 120,000 dead and 170,000–180,000 wounded on the Russian side; perhaps 70,000 dead and 100,000–120,000 wounded on the Ukrainian side. The number of war dead of this country of no more than 40 million people in just one and a half years thus already exceeds the US fatalities of 58,000 in nearly two decades of war in Vietnam. In a recent opinion poll, four out of every five Ukrainians said that someone among their close family or friends had been killed or injured. And there is no end in sight.

Is Europe itself at war? Many people in Eastern Europe would say yes; most in Western Europe would say no. Europe is not at war in the way it was in 1943, when most European countries were direct parties to the conflict; but neither is Europe at peace in the way it was in 2003. Many European countries are supporting Ukraine's war effort with weapons, ammunition, training and money. And, as in 1943, the only way forward to a lasting peace is through victory in war.

A ceasefire or peace agreement now, effectively compelling Ukraine to sacrifice territory the size of a small European country, would be a recipe for future conflict, not just in Europe but also in Asia, since President Xi Jinping of China might reasonably conclude that armed aggression pays. Yesterday Crimea, tomorrow Taiwan. A nuclear-armed Russia cannot be reduced to 'unconditional surrender', like Germany in 1945. But an outcome in which Russia is forced to give up the Ukrainian territory it has secured by armed aggression is still attainable and would be the only sure foundation for a durable peace.

To achieve this, two things are necessary, one tangible and one intangible. European countries need to abandon the post-Wall illusion that peace can be secured entirely by non-military means, tangibly increase their defence expenditures, make credible forward deployments on NATO's eastern frontier, gear up their defence industries to supply Ukraine's almost Second World War-level need for weapons and ammunition, and be prepared militarily and economically for the long haul. Barring miracles, on 6 June 2024, the eightieth anniversary of the D-Day landings, the Russo-Ukrainian War will still be grinding on.

The intangible essential is the will to fight for freedom. Ukrainians pose the question of courage in ways that can make Western Europeans quite uncomfortable. In a meeting with one of President Volodymyr Zelensky's closest aides in the heavily sandbagged presidential palace in Kyiv in July 2023, a French member of our fact-finding mission started a question with the words, 'Aren't you afraid that ...?' 'Well, first of all,' Zelensky's aide shot back, 'we're not afraid of anything.' The Ukrainian writer Volodymyr Yermolenko talks of a 'warrior spirit' that he finds present in Ukraine and absent in the West. The spirit of Achilles. In a word: *volia*.

Free?

What would it mean for Europe to be free? Perhaps most obviously, that it would be a continent of free countries. Two distinct although related things are implied by the term 'free country': a country that is independent from foreign domination and one whose citizens enjoy individual liberty at home.

At first glance, Europe does well on this count, compared both with its own past and with other continents today. According to Freedom House, Europe has two fifths of the world's free countries: thirty-four out of eighty-four in 2023. Many of these European states are small, so they are home to only 7 per cent of the world's population, but many are also rich, so they comprise 17 per cent of global GDP.

Some Eurosceptic populists maintain that their homelands are not free because membership of the EU deprives them of true independence. They point to the fact that European law takes precedence over national law. In post-Communist countries like Poland, they say: 'Yesterday Moscow, today Brussels!' Thanks to an initiative of its own Eurosceptics, Britain has just conclusively disproved this narrative of vassalage by freely leaving the EU following a democratic national vote.

Such a broadly positive picture of European freedom must, however, be qualified in several ways. Among the twenty-seven member states of the EU, there is one – Hungary – that Freedom House classifies as only 'partly free'. As early as 2013, observing Orbán's dismantling of its fragile new democracy, the Princeton political scientist Jan-Werner Müller asked: 'Can a dictatorship be a member of the EU?' Hungary is not yet a full-blown dictatorship in the sense that Putin's Russia is, but it's certainly no longer a liberal democracy. Political scientists characterise its political system as competitive or electoral authoritarianism. Although EU membership has in some respects constrained Orbán's neo-authoritarian regime, it has also greatly facilitated its consolidation – for example, through the billions of euros in EU funds that he has used to strengthen his power base.

Even inside the twenty-six EU member states that Freedom House still comfortably classes as free, that 'free' is an aggregate of relatively narrow criteria of 'negative liberty', defined by a checklist of political rights and civil liberties. But are all citizens of these countries really free?

A more ambitious definition of individual liberty argues, against the minimalist version of negative liberty associated with thinkers such as Isaiah Berlin, that certain minimum enabling conditions have to be fulfilled for someone meaningfully to be described as free. Malnourished, homeless, illiterate children are not free, even if they live in what Freedom House characterises as a free country. This account of liberty is present already among Franklin D. Roosevelt's four freedoms: 'freedom from want'. It is powerfully articulated in the 'capabilities approach' of Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen. It speaks through the work of Ronald Dworkin, who insisted that the heart of liberalism must be 'equal respect and concern' for every member of a given political community. It appears, in yet another variant, in the work of Ralf Dahrendorf, who argued that liberalism, properly understood, requires a 'common floor'. There must, he explained, be a 'common starting point' of housing, healthcare, education and the availability of meaningful work.

These more egalitarian versions of liberalism were neglected in much of Europe during the post-Wall era, as liberalism was reduced almost to the single dimension of economic liberalism. As a result, even in those countries that fulfil the most demanding criteria of political liberty, millions of individual Europeans are significantly less free than others in those same societies. A man of sixty-five living in Richmond upon Thames, a leafy corner of southwest London, can on average expect to enjoy another 13.7 years of healthy life, which is more than twice the 6.4 years that his counterpart can expect in the poor eastern borough of Newham, which has a high proportion of people with a migration background. You can't be free if you are dead. Nearly one in every four children in the EU is classified as being at risk of poverty. Minorities – ethnic, cultural, religious and of sexual orientation – are generally overrepresented among the less free. By contrast, at the most privileged end of European societies we have something close to a plutocracy, or what has been called, with nice irony, 'hereditary meritocracy'. A fundamental reform of Europe's liberal democratic capitalist societies is therefore required before we can say that even this most fortunate part of Europe is truly free.

Meanwhile, in South-Eastern Europe outside the EU there are several more countries, including Bosnia, Montenegro and Serbia, that Freedom House categorises as only 'partly free'. Beyond that, there are European countries such as Belarus that are neither externally nor internally free. A wider penumbra includes countries that have geographical, historical and cultural claims to be at least partly European but are domestically unfree (e.g. Russia) or only partly free (e.g. Turkey). This takes us to the most elusive concept in our European trinity: 'whole'.

Whole?

What does 'whole' mean when applied to Europe? Back in 1989, that was clear. It meant overcoming the Cold War division of Europe represented by the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain. 'To heal Europe's tragic division', Bush explained in Mainz, was 'to help Europe become whole and free'. What followed over the next eighteen years, until 2007, was an extraordinary leap forward in European unification and in the

enlargement of the geopolitical West. But after 2008 that process stalled. Croatia slipped into the EU and NATO; Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia into NATO; but that was it. Turkey was accepted as a candidate for EU membership as long ago as 1999, North Macedonia in 2005; they're both still waiting.

In 2005, inspired by the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, I pressed the president of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, to state publicly that the European Union wanted Ukraine to become a member one day. 'If I did that,' he replied, 'I would immediately be slapped down by two major member states.' He meant France and Germany. Asked about a possible Ukrainian candidacy, a commission spokesperson observed: 'There will first have to be a discussion of whether a country is European.' Intra-European orientalism – that age-old tendency for Western Europeans to consider Eastern Europeans either less European or not European at all – could not have been more clearly expressed. (To add insult to injury, the spokesperson was British.)

What a difference a war makes. Today the European Union has accepted Ukraine and Moldova as candidates for membership, is making positive signals toward Georgia, and has injected new energy into relations with countries in the western Balkans that member states such as Germany and Austria insist must not be left behind. Negotiations with Ukraine commence in 2024. Charles Michel, president of the European Council, has said the EU should aim to take in new members by 2030. This renewed seriousness about enlargement is exemplified by a debate about reforming the EU's institutions and decision-making practices, so that a union of thirty-six members could continue to function effectively. As with all earlier attempts at creating a larger European political community, the key will be to find the right balance between unity and diversity.

With EU members Finland and Sweden having decided to join NATO in response to the full-scale war in Ukraine, the EU and NATO are now more closely aligned than ever. For Ukraine, security is a precondition for the reconstruction and reforms without which it will not be ready for EU membership. The politics of a US presidential election year may unfortunately hinder Ukraine being invited to join NATO at the alliance's seventy-fifth anniversary summit in Washington in July 2024, but only NATO membership will ultimately provide that security. Given that Ukraine is one of the largest and poorest countries in Europe, and that the smaller countries in prospect, from ethnically divided Bosnia to partly Russian-occupied Georgia, have intricate and intractable problems of their own, this is work for at least a decade.

Yet even if these extraordinary ambitions are realised, bringing more European countries than ever before into one and the same political and security communities, Europe will still not be 'whole'. For Europe doesn't end at any clear line – except possibly the North Pole, where it ends at a point. In all other directions, Europe merely fades away: across the vast expanse of Russia, somewhere between St Petersburg and Vladivostok; across Turkey, somewhere between Istanbul and the Iranian frontier; across the Mediterranean, that *Mare Nostrum* ('our sea') which, with its entire

coastline, was for the ancient Greeks and Romans a single civilisational space; and across the Atlantic. ‘Since Europe is an idea as much as a place,’ said President Bill Clinton on accepting the Charlemagne Prize in 2000, ‘America also is a part of Europe.’ For many years, the *New York Review of Books* could reasonably claim to be the leading pan-European intellectual review. And Canada would be an ideal member of the EU.

Yet if Europe is everywhere, it’s nowhere. To be an effective protector of the interests and values of Europeans, a European political or security community must be bounded. Its boundary will not be a line between unambiguously Europe and unambiguously not-Europe, because there is no such line. The question therefore becomes not whether there is a border but what is the character of that border.

The answer being given by today’s Europe is truly shocking when measured against the hopes of 1989. That year was all about bringing down walls, lifting barriers, cutting barbed wire, opening frontiers. One of the greatest achievements of the first half of the post-Wall era was freedom of movement. Inside the EU, European citizens could now choose to work, study and live in any other member state. Across the larger Schengen area, a wider group of Europeans could travel freely, without frontier controls. Yet in recent years, especially since the refugee crisis of 2015, Europe has been building new walls, erecting new fences, and closing external frontiers even as – and partly because – it has opened internal ones.

In 1989 we took down an Iron Curtain through the centre of Europe. In 2023 we are erecting a new Iron Curtain around the periphery of an arbitrarily defined European space. On land, it consists of actual fences, such as the one Hungary has erected on its frontier with Serbia, and accompanying fortifications. At sea, it consists of naval patrols, some of which have pushed back migrant boats into non-European territorial waters, in contravention of international humanitarian law. It also involves paying neighbouring authoritarian governments, whether in Turkey, Libya or Morocco, to keep back millions of migrants who wish to come to Europe from Africa and the wider Middle East. Pope Francis has accurately described the Libyan detention camps to which some of these would-be migrants have been returned as ‘places of torture and ignoble slavery’.

This may not appear to be an ethical dilemma for a nativist, particularist version of European values, such as that championed by Orbán or Italian prime minister Giorgia Meloni, but it certainly is for anyone who embraces the liberal, universalist version of European values enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty of the European Union. It also highlights a problem with theories of modern liberalism that, even in the versions proposed by egalitarian liberals such as Dworkin and Dahrendorf, incline to operate in the framework of an idealised nation state. Within the boundaries of that hypothetical state, ‘each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all,’ to quote John Rawls. To achieve that, says Dahrendorf, there should be ‘economic growth and citizenship rights for all’. But what about the person just across the frontier, in Serbia, or Turkey, or Morocco, or Libya? When I visited the Spanish North African enclave of Ceuta, a Spanish woman of Moroccan origin who grew up in a

neighbourhood very close to the formidable EU-funded fence separating Ceuta from Morocco told me: 'If I'd been born just a few metres away, I would have a completely different life.'

One possible answer is suggested by Dahrendorf: economic growth. Development should reduce the economic gulf between the African and European sides of this new Iron Curtain, offering more life chances at home to the now 830 million Africans under the age of twenty-five. (For comparison, the total population of the EU is 450 million.) There is, however, scant evidence of European leaders trying to persuade their electorates of the wisdom of redoubling Europe's efforts to support development to the continent's south as well as in its east. The history of foreign aid suggests that it is difficult to help states that are not themselves effectively fostering development. And in the short to medium term growing prosperity may increase rather than decrease migration.

Even if all these obstacles were to be overcome, development on that scale, however ecologically 'sustainable' its theoretical design, would put a further burden on a tortured planet – another important dimension of 'whole'. It would probably drive up global average temperatures that in July 2023, for the first recorded month ever, exceeded the UN-endorsed climate change ceiling of 1.5 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels. Young Europeans are passionate about addressing the climate emergency, and the EU is committed to a target of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by 55 per cent by 2030. Yet there is no sign that the majority of European voters are prepared to make the sacrifices in their own living standards that might permit the lives of others to be uplifted in a sustainable way.

Here we come to a final contrast with 1989. Back then, external circumstances were extremely favourable to a Europe setting out to be 'whole and free'. Now they are unfavourable. Russia is waging a full-scale war to prevent the achievement of precisely this goal. China is a Leninist capitalist superpower, a formidable competitor to both Europe and the United States. Its leader, Xi Jinping, is hungrily eyeing Taiwan, as Putin once eyed Crimea. And China is just one in a wide array of great and middle powers, including India, Turkey, Brazil and South Africa, that are quite happy to do business with Putin's Russia, even as it wages a brutal war of recolonisation in Ukraine. The US does not have the pre-eminent hard power, let alone the abundant soft power, it projected thirty years ago. Few if any Europeans now look to the United States as a model of politics or society. All tremble at the prospect of a second Trump presidency. Artificial intelligence will exacerbate the widespread misinformation already facilitated by the internet. Over everything hangs the existential risk of planetary overheating. In the long run, these external challenges may constitute a greater threat to the pursuit of a Europe whole and free than any of the continent's internal ones.

All hill-walkers know the experience of slogging up a long, steep hillside towards what looks like a clear horizon, only to face a dip and then an even higher ascent beyond. This is where Europeans stand today. We have made extraordinary progress, especially

in the first half of the post-Wall period. If you doubt this, just visit Estonia, a country that did not even exist on the political map of Europe in 1989, although it always continued to exist in the hearts and minds of its people. Today Estonia is a confident, prosperous democracy, secure in the EU and NATO, despite its proximity to a revanchist Russia, and third in the world on the Human Freedom Index. But now we have an even larger mountain to climb before we can seriously talk of a Europe whole, free and at peace.

The challenge is daunting, but we can take counsel and courage from Václav Havel, one of the greatest Europeans of this period, who in dark times wrote: 'Hope is not prognostication. It is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart.' Hope is:

an ability to work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed ... It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.

Defending, improving and extending a free Europe, including a free Ukraine, makes sense. It's a cause worthy of hope.

This essay is a revised and extended version of the 2023 Dahrendorf Lecture. It was first published in the New York Review of Books, 2 November 2023.

The Contested Concept of Political Freedom

by Olivier Yasar de France

Does human history work towards a progressive emancipation of individuals? If it does not, should it? Definitions of freedom have been contested across all traditions of intellectual history, both in and outside the ‘West’. They will all tend to vary, however, according to the answers they provide to these two central questions – one analytic, the other normative.

Definitions of freedom are also dependent on the elementary assumptions they harbour about the individual itself. If the rational, utility-maximizing individual is the basic unit of collective political existence,¹ then individual flourishing will constitute an end in itself. If the unit of analysis changes, then the definition of freedom is likely to change with it. Alternatives to a broadly defined ‘liberal’ concept of freedom may simply not subscribe to the idea that the individual is the philosophical beginning and end of all things. They may view social relations from the ‘outside-in’ more decidedly than from the ‘inside-out’² – or focus on the underlying relation between individuals and the group, state, species or ecosystem they belong to.³ The answer to the two liminary questions will adjust in kind.

¹ ‘Mainstream scholarship in the West largely sees the world as composed of discrete and independent entities acting and interacting, very much with the push of outside forces. An application of this logic to the social world leads naturally to a belief that individual actors are entities independent of one another and each endowed with *a priori* properties and attributes. Rationality is [...] a great discovery, for it defines clearly and succinctly the characteristic attributes of human beings: they are egoistic individuals, always ready to maximise their self-interest at the lowest cost. Starting from rationality so many influential social theories have been developed, from economics through sociology to political science.’ Yaqing Qin, *A Relational Theory of World Politics*. (Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. xi.

² Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, ‘G comme Gauche’, *L’Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze* (1988).

³ ‘The majority of IR theories are substantialist – they presume entities precede interaction, or that entities are already entities before they enter into social relations with other entities. The most common of these presupposed entities is “the state”, but it is not the only substantial list starting point. Other scholars begin with “the individual” or “the ethnic group”, but the basic ontological move is exactly the same – units come first, then, like billiard balls on a table, they are put into motion and their interactions are the patterns we observe in political life. This

Many such ancient abstractions, however, have now broken to new mutiny: any and all theoretical brands of freedom must account today for the blunt material reality of ecological and technological change. Its very scale has rewritten some of the discussion's key assumptions: none more so perhaps than the long-standing compact struck by European modernity between freedom, growth and abundance – which has simply come up against the limits of the planet itself.

Facing The Sartrean Test

The metaphysical terms of freedom's old quandary have lingered on throughout the ages with stubborn familiarity. Jean-Paul Sartre's claustrophobic play *No Exit*, which he wrote surrounded by the desolation caused by the Second World War,⁴ is often cited as one of its most edifying renditions. It features an individual named Joseph Garcin who attempts to escape the hotel room to which he is confined with two complete strangers. He is forced, however, to arrive at the gradual realisation that there is no escape – and that his sole remaining choice is to find a *modus vivendi* which will allow for collective cohabitation. As all three of the play's characters will come to acknowledge, having 'a say in their own hell' is the most they can hope for, and indeed the best they should strive for.⁵

Theories of human freedom can no more escape this foundational dilemma than Garcin can leave his hotel room. *No Exit's* philosophical conundrum arises so long as a multiplicity of human beings inhabit a bounded space from which there is no effective exit. In such a context, political theorists will typically contend that an individual is bound to ensure and protect their survival, livelihood, interests or values, which will ultimately threaten or appear to threaten the survival, livelihood, interests or values of another.⁶ Hence the philosophical conundrum yields a specifically political dilemma. International political theorists will argue along similar lines that 'the self's identity can only be formed with a negative and hostile other, an outsider who poses existential danger and threat'⁷ in the relation between nation states.⁸ Within an anarchic system of states, the philosophical conundrum generates in this case an incipient security dilemma.⁹

analytical or ontological commitment to substances cuts across conventional divisions in the field, including theories in all of the major "paradigms" of IR.' Jackson, Patrick Thaddeus, and Nexon, Daniel H., "Relations Before States: Substance, Process and the Study of World Politics," *European Journal of International Relations*, 5(3), (September 1999), p. 293.

⁴ Jean-Paul, Sartre, *No Exit: A Play in One Act*, Acting edn in French (New York, 1958), p. 43. Author's translation.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁶ Thomas Hobbes, 'If any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their end (which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes their delectation only) endeavour to destroy or subdue one another.' *Leviathan*, chapter XIII.

⁷ See Qin, *A Relational Theory of World Politics*, p. 134.

⁸ Reality tends to assent: as Oleksandra Matviichuk stated in her Nobel Peace Prize lecture, 'In this war, we are fighting for freedom in every meaning of the word.' Oleksandra Matviichuk, 'Time to take responsibility', Nobel Peace Prize lecture on behalf of the Center for Civil Liberties, 10 December 2022, Oslo City Hall, Norway.

In response, poets and politicians have been known to conjure up the bracing *utopia* and *uchronia* of an antediluvian Golden Age. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, for example, opens with the depiction of a sweeping, honeyed and somewhat hackneyed scene in which there are 'no steep ditches surrounding towns, no straight war-trumpets, no coiled horns, no swords and helmets. Without the use of armies, people passed their lives in gentle peace and security.'¹⁰ In the real world, however, effective freedom cannot escape the presence of the outside world, under the guise of other human beings or of their natural habitat – which European modernity has meticulously contributed to separate out from the human one.¹¹ The surrounding worlds, both human and natural, force a constraint upon individual liberty which is interpreted as liberatingly fertile, insufferably limiting or potentially hostile, according to one's underlying philosophical assumptions. Outside human *utopia* and *uchronia*, real-world theories of freedom are condemned therefore to set out how individuals, communities and nation states may have 'a say in their own hell'.

Concepts of freedom will differ according to how they rise to the challenge of coexisting without the possibility of coexisting – as per Jean-Paul Sartre's account in *No Exit*. Following on (with some caveats) from Isaiah Berlin's distinction between 'freedom from' and 'freedom to', the liberal tradition will tend to pit 'negative' freedom against 'positive' freedom. The former, of which there are elements in the work of Francis Fukuyama, can be likened to an absence of constraints. The latter, which is more common in the work of Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum, Jan-Werner Müller and contemporary social democratic thinking, allows for the possibility of freely assigned constraints, with a view to enabling individuals to pursue desired opportunities.

Gerald MacCallum and Charles Taylor qualify the binary nature of the distinction between negative and positive freedom, and argue that both types include elements of freedom 'from' and freedom 'to'. It may be argued however that all conceptions of freedom – not merely negative conceptions – relate to constraints. 'Dialectical' freedom could be defined differently: it understands both as part of a broader process which leads to a richer form of negative and positive freedom. Many aspects of Lea Ypi's work are consonant with dialectical freedom, which follows on from neo-Kantian and neo-Hegelian scholarship. Republican freedom and its variants, interpreted and reframed as below, might be described as neither positive, negative, nor dialectical.

Yet there also exists a range of more fundamental critiques of liberal conceptions of freedom. Uncovering them requires reaching further afield outside 'the West', or further back to periods of history which held different assumptions about freedom and sovereignty. Many such alternatives are wary of the idea that the individual is the philosophical beginning and end of all things – and distrust the view that human

⁹ John H. Herz, 'Idealist internationalism and the security dilemma', *World Politics*, 2(2) (1950), pp. 157–80.

¹⁰ 'Sine militis usu mollia securae peragebant otia gentes.' Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, Book I, 99–100 (author's translation).

¹¹ Philippe Descola. *Par-delà Nature et Culture*, Gallimard, 2005.

history works towards a progressive emancipation of individuals in, of and for themselves. Benedict Spinoza, for example, offers up a definition of freedom which is rich but neither teleological, anthropomorphic, normative nor indeed liberal in the contemporary senses of the word.

Fashioned from his radical critique of individual agency, Spinoza's philosophy allows us to understand how any genuine increase in individual power can be channelled only through the expansion of collective freedom. In an early modern period devoid by definition of the monopoly exerted by states on political power, its political ramifications brook neither the modern dichotomy between the state of nature and the social contract, nor the numbing contemporary opposition between methodological individualism and methodological nationalism. They contribute to laying out an iconoclastic set of ideas for rethinking (geo)political coexistence outside the liberal conceptions of freedom, the social contract, and the individual whose diktat may have been cemented too wide and too deep by political modernity. In this, Spinoza's philosophy can help contemporary political enquiry find new pockets of collective agency in an age of tectonic ecological and technological change.

Negative and Positive Freedom

In *The End of History and the Last Man*, Francis Fukuyama argues that human societies have progressed from primitive tribal societies to feudalism and liberal democracy, which represents the final stage of human political evolution.¹² With some caveats, his understanding of freedom is grounded in the belief that human history ultimately charts – and indeed should chart – a course towards greater freedom of the individual. The best chance of achieving it is by fashioning liberal democracies. Liberal democracy for Fukuyama is characterised by a set of institutions and values that promote individual freedom. Such institutions include free and fair elections, the rule of law, protection of individual rights, and an independent judiciary: they allow individuals to pursue their own interests and express their own opinions without fear of persecution or oppression. A strong civil society ensures individual rights are protected and is ultimately the best bulwark against state centralisation and authoritarianism.

This meaning of freedom is anchored partly in the tradition of 'negative' freedom, which insists upon the importance of limiting external constraints on, coercion or oppression of individuals. If freedom is the absence of coercion or interference, then it is key to the protection of individual rights and liberties. Robert Nozick's work, for example, is an emblematic contemporary example of libertarianism insofar as it advocates a strict and minimalist notion of negative freedom. It argues for a minimal state to protect individuals from external interference in their life, liberty and property. In general, the liberal view of freedom emphasizes the importance of individual autonomy and self-determination, and it asserts that individuals should be free to pursue their own interests and goals as long as they do not harm others.

¹² Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (Free Press 1992).

Since the late nineteenth century, many major liberal theorists have also attempted to combine individual and social perspectives. One of the most important was L.T. Hobhouse in his seminal book *Liberalism*, where he writes:

Mutual aid is not less important than mutual forbearance, the theory of collective action no less fundamental than the theory of personal freedom [...] the life of the individual [...] would be something utterly different if he could be separated from society. A great deal of him would not exist at all.¹³

Hence it is worth noting that describing the ‘liberal conception of freedom’ is necessarily reducing a complexity to a singularity, which is typical of many critics who seek to generalise liberalism to discredit the whole. It is typically accepted however that the liberal tradition refers back to the work of John Rawls, Raymond Aron or Karl Popper, and the roots of the liberal worldview reach back to the thinkers of the Enlightenment, classical liberalism and thinkers such as John Locke, Benjamin Constant, Montesquieu and John Stuart Mill. Isaiah Berlin argues that they reach back to Hobbes’ theory of liberty.

‘Positive’ interpretations of freedom look to address the gaps in the liberal classical definition of ‘negative’ freedom. Although it is prone to a certain rhetorical plasticity across time, it is more common today in social democratic thinking such as that of Amartya Sen or Martha Nussbaum. It allows for the possibility of assigning constraints freely, with a view to enabling individuals to pursue desired opportunities:¹⁴ it sets out the role of the state in ensuring that individuals have the necessary resources and opportunities to pursue their goals. Such positive definitions of freedom thus recognize the importance of the social and economic conditions which are necessary to enable individuals to be authentically and effectively free. They are anchored in a political theory that views freedom not only as the absence of external constraints but also as the ability to accomplish one’s desires and interests. Martha Nussbaum’s concept of capabilities¹⁵ builds upon Sen’s work to build a comprehensive political theory underpinned by a positive conception of freedom.

As a result, positive freedom is sometimes called effective freedom. Under negative freedom, for example, any individual is formally free to go to university, insofar as there are no tangible external obstacles that prevent him from doing so. However, he may not be effectively free to do so because he might lack funding. Positive freedom tends to argue that negative freedom is merely about formal freedom, not actual

¹³ Leonard Hobhouse, ‘The Heart of Liberalism’, in *Liberalism* (1911), chapter VI.

¹⁴ See Isaiah Berlin’s initial distinction in his Inaugural Lecture as Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory at the University of Oxford in 1958: ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’, in Henry Hardy (ed.) *Liberty: Incorporating Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 166–217. For an in-depth analysis, see Hubert Czystewski, ‘Isaiah Berlin as a historian’, *History and Theory* 61, (3) (2022), pp. 450–468.

¹⁵ See Martha Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (Harvard University Press, 2011), chapter 1.

freedom. Negative freedom, also known in some contexts as liberty, indeed implies that individuals are free to act as long as they do not harm others or violate the law. It may be at the detriment of the understanding of collective action and institutions, and fail to provide sufficient guidance on how to deal with social and economic inequalities that limit people's freedom. If an individual lacks access to education or healthcare, they will not have the same opportunities as others to exercise their freedom. In return, critics will argue that positive freedom can lead to an excessive concentration of power in the hands of the state, and that it contributes to limiting individual autonomy.

Gerald MacCallum argues more broadly that any conception of freedom ultimately follows a similar underlying formula.¹⁶ All definitions of freedom include an *x*, a *y* and a *z* (for *x* to be free means to be free from *y* in order to *z*), but differ in what they hold these elements to refer to (for negative freedom, *x* is free when he is free from external obstacles to live the life as *x* wishes; for dialectical freedom: *x* is free when he is free from internal obstacles to live the life *x* truly wants, etc.). Here thereby qualifies the distinction, and argues that negative and positive freedom both include elements of freedom 'from' and freedom 'to'. Two fundamental ideas are contained in MacCallum's now classic analysis of the shared cluster 'x is free from *y* to do or become *z*'. First, the '*y*' may be a presence or an absence. Second, the '*z*' may be a static or a temporally dynamic process. That results in multiple variations. Liberals generally wish individuals to pursue their desired opportunities, but not opportunities that they do not desire and that are imposed externally.

Another key contribution to this debate may be found in the work of Jan-Werner Müller, who challenges the narrowly liberal individualistic conception of freedom. His theory of freedom is based on the two key concepts of social power and discursive control. Social power refers to the ability of individuals or groups to shape the social, economic, and political environment in which they live. This includes the ability to influence public policy, shape public opinion, and control the means of production. Discursive control refers to the ability of individuals or groups to shape the terms of political debate and to define what is and is not considered legitimate political discourse.

Hence Müller argues that genuine freedom requires the ability of individuals and groups to shape the social, economic, and political environment in which they live. Individuals must have access to the means of production and must be able to participate in the political process in order to shape public policy. It also means that individuals must have the ability to define the terms of political discourse and to challenge dominant discourses that limit the freedom of individuals and groups. Müller proceeds to argue that liberal conceptions of freedom which rest upon individual autonomy and non-interference are insufficient for promoting genuine freedom. Liberal freedom, he contends, fails to account for the ways in which social power and discursive control can limit the freedom of individuals and groups. In return, Müller lays out a theory of freedom that emphasizes the importance of collective action and social power in promoting freedom.

¹⁶ See Josef Lolacher, 'Can we measure freedom?' (pp. 33 below) for a more detailed account.

Dialectical and Republican Freedom

There are many meanings of freedom which exist outside the dichotomy between negative and positive freedom. They include dialectical freedom, republican freedom and their variants. Lea Ypi's theory of freedom is one such example. Grounded in her broader work on the nature of power, authority, and legitimacy in contemporary society, Ypi's definition of freedom is centred in a specific way around the concept of individual autonomy. She argues that individuals must be able to understand and articulate their own desires and preferences in order to exercise meaningful autonomy. One of the key challenges to achieving such freedom in contemporary society is the rise of neoliberalism.

The emphasis on free markets and limited government intervention in the economy has eroded the conditions necessary for individuals to exercise their autonomy, by promoting a narrow vision of individualism that prioritises economic success over other values. Ypi argues that neoliberalism has created a system of economic and political inequality that undermines the legitimacy of political institutions. In return, she highlights the role of political institutions in promoting freedom and in helping human beings live in a reasonable manner, conscious of the inherent limits of their rationality in a Kantian sense. In a democracy, they allow citizens to be the 'subjects' of their own freedom, insofar as their will is 'channelled' and represented by institutions. Democracies are able to say to their citizens: 'You are free to the extent that you are the author of the laws that you are required to obey.'¹⁷ Political institutions thus have a crucial role to play in creating the conditions necessary for individuals to exercise substantive freedom and autonomy, as opposed to an ideal or formal version of it. As Ypi describes:

In the world in which we live in, not everyone has the same power and the same capacity to make these laws. The institutions and the rules that we abide with track people's wills in very different ways. If you are an immigrant and you don't have the capacity to participate in these forms of decision-making, then you are officially or formally in a democracy—but substantively you are not the author of the laws that you are required to obey. So this idea already in that category clearly shows itself to be more of an ideal than the institutional reality that we live under¹⁸.

Institutions should thus be designed to promote the interests of all members of society, rather than serving the interests of a privileged few, and be responsive to the changing needs and preferences of individuals, in order to maintain their legitimacy and effectiveness. Hegel also described the crucial role played by the state in achieving freedom. In Hegelian scholarship, the state is an expression of the collective will of the people and that it has the power to overcome the contradictions and conflicts that arise in society. It is necessary to provide the framework for individual freedom, as it ensures that individuals are not subject to arbitrary power or external constraints.

¹⁷ See Deep Thought – In conversation with Lea Ypi, Arte TV, February 2023, minutes 17–20: <https://www.arte.tv/fr/videos/110190-002-A/deep-thought-au-fond-de-sa-pensee-lea-ypi/>

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, mins. 22-23.

Like Hegel, Ypi contends that individual autonomy is not merely the absence of external constraints, but rather the result of a process of self-realisation. For Hegel, individuals are free only when they become fully conscious of their own nature and are able to realize their own potential. This process of self-realization involves a dialectical progression in which individuals confront and overcome contradictions and conflicts within themselves and in the world around them. Hegel this argues that individuals can become alienated from themselves and from society when they are unable to realize their own potential or when they are subject to external constraints. This alienation can lead to feelings of powerlessness and despair, which prevent individuals from achieving true freedom.

In the light of neo-Kantian and neo-Hegelian scholarship, Ypi advocates an in-depth rethink of the meaning we ascribe to freedom and autonomy. Creating the conditions necessary for individuals to exercise their autonomy requires a more democratic and participatory political system that promotes the interests of all members of society. It also relies on the capacity of liberal democracies to fashion more actual and less formal social and economic equality. Herbert Marcuse has similarly argued that capitalism and its emphasis on materialism and consumerism create one dimensional thinking, which makes it impossible for individuals to think and live in radically different ways.¹⁹ This worldview relies on a discrepancy between a lower self or lower will and a higher self or higher will (the authentic self that acts as it truly wants). Marcuse argues that capitalism creates a false consciousness with false wants and needs within the lower self that strives for materialism – thereby blocking our access to our higher true selves with our true wants and needs.

For example, the addict who longs for a drug acts in accordance with their lower self that wants harmful things. They are thus not free. To make them free, society should help them get rid of their addiction. Under a conception of freedom which relies on the assumption of a divided 'soul', the government is justified in enacting policies to discourage or ban drugs to 'force people to be free', as per Jean-Jacques Rousseau's formula. It is an argument that is often invoked in public discourse by a more dialectical conception of freedom in order to justify more government intervention. The negative conception of freedom will oppose such intervention on the grounds of precedent: the government should not force behaviour on individuals by stating that freedom is what individuals would or should want as their higher selves. Isaiah Berlin similarly voices concern about the tendency towards authoritarian behaviour.

Crucially, Berlin further collapsed positive liberty into its 'hard' version, superimposing a higher will on a gentler positive liberty. Gentler positive liberty is focused on enabling individuals to make good choices for themselves by creating conditions that remove those elements of MacCallum's 'y' that block the exercise of their own potential capacity (rather than 'forcing them to be truly free') and it is a central plank of the welfare state (historically a liberal idea). The emphasis is on self-

¹⁹ Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Beacon, 1964), chapter 1.

development rather than self-realisation – which is not a liberal term. Also, any disagreements over what is common, scope for diversity and proper pluralism are essential to a liberal viewpoint.

Marxist theories of freedom would more generally argue that the dialectical method is too abstract to provide a path to achieving freedom in practice in conditions of economic and social inequality. Freedom here is not merely the absence of external constraints or interference, but also the ability to exercise control over one's own life and destiny. Economic inequality and class domination are a form of oppression that undermines individual freedom. Genuine freedom can thus only come by striving to eliminate economic and social inequalities. Feminist theories of freedom will emphasize the role of gender inequality and patriarchal oppression in propping up social and economic inequality. As such, freedom cannot be realised unless women and minorities are given equal opportunities and equal access to power and resources.

Republican meanings of freedom strike out from the liberal dichotomy between negative and positive meanings of freedom, and are neither dialectical, teleological nor normative. Traditional republican understandings of freedom dwell on civic participation, active citizenship, engagement with the common good and self-government, because individuals are free only if they are able to participate in the political process and exercise control over the laws that govern them.

In Anglo-American scholarship, republican freedom is based on the two key principles of non-domination and civic participation. Non-domination refers to the absence of arbitrary power, which means that individuals are free from the arbitrary exercise of power by others – both private individuals and the state. Republican freedom emphasises the importance of limiting the power of the state to prevent the arbitrary exercise of power and protect the rights of individuals. Civic participation refers to the active engagement of citizens in the political process. This includes not only voting but also participating in public debate, serving on juries, and engaging in other forms of civic engagement. Civic participation is thereby essential to the maintenance of republican freedom because it helps to ensure that power is distributed and that citizens have a say in the decisions that affect their lives.

Like proponents of negative freedom, republicans emphasise the importance of the individual being able to map out their own life plans and execute them without interference. But republicans stress that this requires conditions of predictability and stability, i.e. the absence of arbitrary interference that creates constant uncertainty, anxiety and stress, making it impossible to live one's life as one wishes. Classic examples of the specificities of the Republican meaning of freedom are the slave and his benevolent master, or the 'gentle giant'. Suppose there is a slave who is treated well by their master: the master never beats the slave up and allows them to come and go as they wish. In a sense the slave is like their master, except for the fact that they are the property of their master. In a purely negative conception of freedom, the slave is free because there is no external interference. But republican meanings of freedom would

object that the slave is not entirely free, because the slave's 'freedom' is entirely contingent upon the arbitrary will of the master, however benevolent the master. The latter may wake up the next day and decide to beat up their slave.²⁰

The roots of republican freedom run back to ancient Greece and Rome. In such societies freedom was not simply the absence of coercion or interference from others, but was tied to the notion of citizenship and participation in the political process. Civic virtue was central to this conception of freedom, and citizens were expected to play an active role in the affairs of the city-state. The idea was revived during the Renaissance, particularly in the work of Machiavelli and his emphasis on the importance of civic engagement and participation. The theory of civic virtue was further developed during the seventeenth century by English republicans such as James Harrington and John Milton, who highlighted the importance of a balanced constitution, civic engagement, and the common good. Jean-Jacques Rousseau also argued that freedom was tied to the notion of self-government and active participation in the political process, not merely the absence of coercion. He thought that individuals could only be free insofar as they were part of a community that shared a common purpose. Republican understandings of freedom also resonate in the more recent works of Arendt and Pettit.²¹

The Contested Future of Liberal Freedom

Republican freedom has important implications for contemporary political theory. Firstly, it challenges the individualistic conception of freedom that is central to what might be broadly but debatably defined as 'liberal' political theory. Republican freedom suggests that individuals are not simply free to pursue their own interests, but are also responsible for contributing to the common good. The republican understanding of freedom is more restrictive than negative freedom in some respects (the slave with the benevolent master is not free for republicans but free for negative freedom), but looser in others (it pushes back against arbitrary external interference, where classic negative freedom shuns any external interference).

Republican freedom does not tend to take issue if a government interferes in the lives of individuals through laws which are publicly known to everyone, apply to everyone equally, and that are the result of a decision-making process in which all have been able to participate. Hence it is more concerned with the arbitrary nature of state power than with the importance of limiting it wholesale. Deliberation and public reason are both conceived of as means of resolving political conflicts and promoting the common good – which can be more difficult to achieve in large, diverse societies, and may

²⁰ The 'gentle giant' example supposes a benevolent giant living next to a village. The giant does not harm the people of village, but has the ability to do so whenever he wishes. In the republican meaning of freedom, the village is not truly free because it lives at the mercy of the giant.

²¹ Pettit, Philip, 'Republican freedom: three axioms, four theorems' in C. Laborde and J. Maynor (eds.), *Republicanism and Political Theory* (Blackwell 2008).

exclude marginalised groups who lack access to political power. Indeed one might argue that the republican notion of freedom is too narrow to encompass arbitrary oppression which does not emanate from the state, but also from groups and individuals.

There also exists a range of more fundamental critiques of liberal conceptions of freedom. Uncovering them requires reaching further afield outside 'the West', or further back to periods of history which held significantly different assumptions about freedom and sovereignty. In political and international political theory, Hobbes's ontology, concept of the state of nature and theory of the contract have formed an altogether solid basis. They are still widely applied to ideas of political community, state sovereignty and interstate relations. A radical, early modern variant can be found in Benedict Spinoza's iconoclastic critique of individual agency, autonomy and free will. His philosophy charts an overall path from individual natures to political communities which is irreducible to Hobbesian paradigms, as well as to much European modern thinking.

The normative emphasis placed by Hobbes and Spinoza on different political forms (roughly speaking – monarchy for the former, democracy for latter) is testimony to how they conceive of the institutionalisation of political power. Hobbesian theory seeks a universal mechanism that keeps motion automatic, with a view to avoiding change in a way that is inconsistent with his own assumption that everything is but matter in motion. Hobbes's 'monarchy' embodies the universal solution to the political problem of order: it represents the best political 'form'. Conversely, Spinoza's philosophy alights upon a mechanism of motion that amplifies change, in accordance with his metaphysics of substance as becoming. It follows that Spinoza's democracy can be conceived as a political 'form' or 'institution' only insofar as it is an open process of institutionalisation. It expresses in effect the refusal of any universal and definitive solution to the problem of political order.

In short, Spinoza only defines individual autonomy through an open process of fashioning collective freedom. He argues that freedom is not the absence of external constraints, but the ability to understand and acknowledge individual and collective determinisms. By using reason to understand their own nature and the nature of the world around them, human individuals are liable to overcome passive, irrational fears and desires that prevent them from acting in accordance with their own individual and collective nature. In a universe where everything is caused by prior events, including human actions, living beings are determined by a combination of their physical and rational dispositions, which constitute their individual and collective nature – or *ingenium*. Freedom is the ability to act in accordance with one's own individual and collective *ingenia*, insofar as human beings understand it. It is not the absence of external constraints, quite the contrary: it arises with what Spinoza terms the union of the intellect with God, which allows individuals and communities to produce effects which are related to their own nature.

Hence Spinoza's political philosophy largely sidesteps the distinction between the state of nature and the social contract, but also between individual and collective freedoms. In doing so, it provides a radically immanent genealogy of political institutionalisation which exists outside liberal conceptions of freedom and the modern diktat of the individual. Drawing upon it *contra* Hobbes in the study of freedom would yield a different type of political materialism which rejects individualism in favour of collective empowerment. It is liable to open up pockets of collective agency within the very ecological and technological forces disrupting human societies.

Discussing – and contesting – ‘liberal’ meanings of freedom cannot indeed be limited to abstract academic disputations. It also contributes to challenging the assumptions that modern ideas of freedom are built upon in both the public and private realms. It helps understand, for example, the power that large corporations and technology giants have developed over civil societies, and their ability to interfere arbitrarily in people's lives. Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos or Mark Zuckerberg make decisions for Twitter (aka X), Amazon and Facebook wholly at their own behest. They have an impact on the social fabric itself and can contribute to making it less free.

Political ecological thinking and post-human politics have also reframed the issue of freedom, growth and abundance from the bottom up. Decoupling freedom from abundance, in the face of virtually all European political and industrial modernity, has wide-ranging consequences for every aspect of human life.²² In an era that is only slowly acknowledging the inevitability of sobriety, the limits of the Earth system have de facto redrawn the boundaries of the idea of freedom itself, to an extent which human societies have not yet fully fathomed. ‘Liberal’ theories of freedom are grappling with these shifts in modern consciousness. Yet many alternatives to the broadly defined liberal concept of freedom, both within and outside ‘the West’, simply do not subscribe to the idea that the individual is the philosophical beginning and end of all things. They are liable to contest the very notion that human history works towards a progressive emancipation of individuals in, of and for themselves – or indeed that it should do so.

Olivier Yasar de France is a Dahrendorf Scholar at St Antony's College, University of Oxford. An earlier version of this essay was prepared for the 2023 Dahrendorf Colloquium. The author should much like to thank Michael Freeden (Oxford) and Tijmen Severens (Oxford) for their comments.

²² See Pierre Charbonnier, *Affluence and Freedom: An Environmental History of Political Ideas* (Polity, 2022).

Can We Measure Freedom?

Josef Lolacher

Regardless of which concept of freedom is used as a basis, most people are likely to agree that it is not enough to simply determine *whether* a person is free or not. Instead, we want to know *to what degree* a person is free, how free they are *in comparison with others*, and *what* they are free to do. In other words, we want to distinguish not only between the presence or absence of the quality of freedom, but also between the various degrees and forms to which it is present. This applies not only to individual persons, but also to entire societies and countries.

As Thomas Hobbes famously stated in his *Leviathan*: 'liberty is in some places more, and in some less; and in some times more, in other times less, according as they that have the sovereignty shall think most convenient.'²³ Ian Carter takes up this thought and asks: 'But where and when *has* liberty been "more", and where and when has it been "less"?'²⁴ Political thinkers have grappled with this question for decades, if not centuries, putting forward competing and not seldom opposing views. While Roger Scruton, for example, believed that it is in Britain that we find 'more freedom ... of every kind than in most other countries of the world',²⁵ his compatriot Bryan Magee pointed to the United States, claiming that 'there is more freedom for the individual there than here'.²⁶ The state of California, in particular, appeared to be the epitome of freedom for him: 'There can be few more attractive places to live in, and few where the individual is freer to do his own thing.'²⁷ Yet, all over America, he explained, people are 'extraordinarily free'. This is in stark contrast to Christopher Caudwell who, as a Marxist, strongly believed 'as Russia shows, even in the dictatorship of the proletariat, man is already freer'.²⁸ According to John Somerville, we should at least note that 'in the communist world, there is more freedom from the power of private money, from

²³ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Penguin, 1985 [1651]), p. 271.

²⁴ Ian Carter, *A Measure of Freedom* (Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 1.

²⁵ Roger Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism* (Penguin, 1980), p. 19.

²⁶ Bryan Magee, 'New World Symphony', *Guardian*, 22 September 1990, cited in Carter, *A Measure of Freedom*, p. 1.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Christopher Caudwell, *The Concept of Freedom* (Lawrence & Wishart, 1965), p. 74.

the influence of religious institutions, and from periodic unemployment.²⁹ Although it may be the case that capitalism makes some people poorer, this is not enough to convince Friedrich von Hayek that it makes them less free. He argued that even ‘the poor in a competitive society’ are ‘much more free than a person commanding much greater material comfort in a different type of society.’³⁰

Despite these pronounced differences, virtually all these views share an implicit or explicit understanding of freedom as a quantitative attribute that allows us to make meaningful statements about how free a person or society is relative to others. Freedom is thus understood as an attribute that is not merely possessed or lacked but possessed or lacked *to a certain degree*.³¹ This implies that freedom should, at least in principle, be quantifiable and measurable.

Our understanding of freedom as a measurable quality is primarily based on Gerald MacCallum’s conception of freedom as the absence of preventing conditions on agents’ possible actions. According to MacCallum’s triadic formula, an agent, *x*, is free from ‘preventing conditions’, *y*, to do something (or to become something), *z*.³² Following this definition of freedom, a ‘direct measurement’ of freedom would require ‘the enumeration of individual agents’ (more or less probably) available sets of compossible actions.³³ Theoretically, this would make it possible to calculate the proportion of all possible actions that one cannot perform due to preventing conditions such as ‘constraints’, ‘limitations’ or ‘barriers’ – a requirement that is hardly fulfilled in reality and for which some proxies are consequently needed.

Unfortunately, there is a dearth of scientific literature on measuring freedom. While numerous studies have addressed theoretical, conceptual, and methodological aspects of measuring democracy, comparatively little attention has been paid to the measurement of freedom. Systematic efforts to measure freedom

²⁹ John Sommerville, ‘Toward a consistent definition of freedom and its relation to value’, in C.J. Friedrich (ed.), *Liberty* (Atherton Press, 1962), p. 300.

³⁰ Friedrich von Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1944), p. 76.

³¹ Carter, *A Measure of Freedom*, p. 3.

³² For MacCallum’s definition see Gerald MacCallum, ‘Negative and Positive Freedom’, *The Philosophical Review*, 76(3) (1967), p. 314. According to MacCallum, it is these three key variables of the triadic relationship – actors, preventing conditions and action – over which the various definitions of freedom differ and how the definitional disagreements between can be restructured (see Carter, *A Measure of Freedom*, p. 15-6; and Olivier de France, ‘*The contested concept of Political freedom*’ above, pp. 21). Evidently, these varying views also have different implications for the empirical measurement of freedom. For example, what counts as a preventing condition? Does an obstacle have to make an action physically impossible to be considered a preventing condition and thus a case of limited freedom or do threats count too? Can a person be unfree because they suffer from ‘internal’ constraints? And do constraints on freedom have to be obstacles imposed by humans, or do natural obstacles also count? (Carter, *A Measure of Freedom*, p. 16) This shows that questions of the concept of freedom and the measurement of freedom are closely interwoven.

³³ Carter, *A Measure of Freedom*, p. 270.

only emerged in the 1970s, most notably with Freedom House publishing its first report in 1973. Many of these efforts at measuring freedom have been seriously flawed, ‘blurring various definitions of freedom ... confusing “other good things” with freedom, using subjective rather than objective measures, and either failing to account for economic freedom or focusing exclusively on it.’³⁴ While political theorists and philosophers engaged in epistemic debates about the (theoretical) measurability of freedom, they offered little guidance on how this might be done in practice. However, those who attempted to measure freedom empirically often paid little attention to theoretical and conceptual issues, making it somewhat questionable what these ‘freedom’ indices actually measured.

From a theoretical point of view, political theorists have mainly focused on so-called specific freedoms (a person is free to do a specific thing) rather than overall freedom (freedom *tout court*). While it is widely accepted that it is possible to measure specific freedoms (such as freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, media freedom, etc.), there is no consensus on the question of whether such a thing as overall freedom exists, and whether it can be measured. Influential proponents of the specific freedom thesis, such as Felix Oppenheim, Will Kymlicka and Ronald Dworkin, have claimed that all talk of ‘increasing’, ‘expanding’ or ‘maximising’ freedom is not fruitful – because liberty *tout court* does not exist (ontological version of the specific freedom thesis), cannot be ‘even roughly measurable’ (Dworkin’s epistemic version of the thesis), or is of no great importance (normative version). Benn and Peters, for example, argue that ‘liberty is not a commodity to be weighed and measured. I am free to do x, y and z, but not p, q and r – but there is no substance called “freedom” of which I can therefore possess more or less.’³⁵ Kymlicka similarly claims: ‘The idea of freedom as such, and lesser or greater amounts of it, does no work in political argument.’³⁶ In his seminal monograph *A Measure of Freedom*, Ian Carter refutes this view, arguing that we should think of freedom both in a specific sense (the freedom to do a certain set of things) *and* in a nonspecific sense (freedom as a quantitative attribute in a more general sense). Building on MacCallum’s notion of freedom as the absence of preventing conditions on agents’ possible actions, Carter argues that an empirical analysis of the state of overall freedom is doable and provides added value to political discourse as well as academic debates. While he considers measuring freedom to be theoretically possible, he acknowledges that practical problems may arise in collecting the necessary data and aggregating it into a freedom score.

Regardless of which philosophical viewpoint one takes, there is evidently a gap between the extensive theoretical discussion on the possibility of measuring freedom and the sparse empirical work on actually measuring freedom. While ‘scholars tackling the issue of freedom are mostly interested in theoretical approaches [they]

³⁴ Fred McMahon (ed.), *Towards a Worldwide Index of Human Freedom* (Fraser Institute, 2012), p. v.

³⁵ Stanley I. Benn and Richard S. Peters, *Social Principles and the Democratic State* (Allen & Unwin, 1959), p. 214.

³⁶ W. Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 145–51.

do not construct their theories or ideas with regard to empirical conditions.³⁷ It seems, almost paradoxically, that the more political theorists have sought to define and conceptualise freedom, the more positivist political scientists have shied away from operationalising and measuring it. Nevertheless, various efforts have been made, with *Freedom in the World* (Freedom House), the *Legatum Prosperity Index* (Legatum Institute) *V-Dem* (V-Dem Institute) and the *Human Freedom Index* (Cato Institute and Fraser Institute) being probably the most well-known.

Freedom House's *Freedom in the World* index is probably the most widely read and cited report of its kind, tracking global trends since 1973. It is a composite measure consisting of two sub-components: political rights and civil liberties. While political rights cover issues related to electoral processes, political participation and pluralism, as well as the functioning of government, civil liberties pertain to freedom of expression and belief, rights of association and organisation, personal autonomy and the rule of law. Although Freedom House's freedom index had long been the benchmark for cross-country freedom/democracy comparisons, it has faced several criticisms. For example, critics pointed to the limited scope of the index, which neglects, for example, economic freedom,³⁸ questioned the objectivity and validity of the measurement, and argued that the index had an inherent Western bias with criteria and standards being strongly influenced by Western views on democracy and freedom.³⁹ Yet others raised concerns about the simplified categorisation of countries into 'free', 'partly free' or 'not free', which may not fully capture the complexities related to the evolving nature of freedom and democracy.

However, what appears to be even more problematic than this simplification, by labelling countries as 'free' or 'not free', the *Freedom in the World* index conceals its most serious deficiency, namely that it is much more a *democracy* rather than a *freedom* index. As McMahon argues: 'Freedom House simply seems to assume the identity between freedom and democracy.'⁴⁰ Landman and Hausermann go even further in their critique, pointing out that 'the index by Freedom House has been used as a tool for measuring democracy, good governance and human rights, thus producing a conceptual stretching which is a major cause of "losses in connotative precision": in short, an instrument used to measure everything, in the end, is not able to discriminate against anything.'⁴¹ An example will illustrate this problem. If democratic structures (free and fair elections, peaceful change of government after

³⁷ Peter Graeff, 'Measuring individual freedom. Actions and rights as indicators of individual liberty', in McMahon (ed.), *Towards a Worldwide Index of Human Freedom*, p. 113.

³⁸ As Eugen Richter, a leading liberal in the early twentieth century, argued: 'Economic freedom is not safe without political freedom and political freedom finds its safety only in economic freedom.' Eugen Richter, *Im alten Reichstag. Erinnerungen*, vol. II (Fortschritt. Aktiengesellschaft, 1896), p. 114.

³⁹ It is worth noting that some of these points of criticism (concerns of political and Western bias, methodological validity, data availability, etc.) also apply to comparable indices.

⁴⁰ Fred McMahon, 'Human freedom from Pericles to measurement', in McMahon (ed.), *Towards a Worldwide Index of Human Freedom*, p. 41.

⁴¹ Cited in Diego Giannone, 'Political and ideological aspects in the measurement of democracy: the Freedom House case', *Democratization*, 17(1) (2010), p. 69.

elections, etc.) are adopted as measures of political freedom, it is no longer possible to distinguish between the effects of democracy and freedom, as one is by definition an inherent part of the other.⁴² Despite these criticisms, the *Freedom in the World* index is still a valuable resource because of its long-standing history and global coverage, which allows for comparisons over time and across countries or regions.⁴³

One index that at least partially remedies some of these problems is the *Human Freedom Index* (HFI), co-published by the libertarian Cato Institute and Fraser Institute. Covering 98 per cent of the world's population and including both economic freedoms and civil liberties, the HFI claims to be the most comprehensive freedom index. Based on a negative definition of freedom, the index includes 82 different indicators (40 variables on personal freedom and 42 variables on economic freedom) and a 'gender legal rights adjustment' to capture the extent to which women have the same level of economic freedom as men. As one of the few attempts to integrate both economic and personal freedoms, it offers intriguing insights. For example, while Sweden and Norway ranked first and fifth in personal freedom in 2019, they tied for 37th place in economic freedom in 2019. In contrast, Singapore (which came second in economic freedom) scored poorly in personal freedom, ranking only 88th. Certainly, there are various difficulties here too, especially when it comes to weighing up the different components of freedom. How important are specific personal freedoms compared with indicators of economic freedom? Is person A, who is in a position to trade relatively freely, has good purchasing power and is comparatively well off economically, freer than person B, who lives in a poorer country where hardly any trade is possible, but who, in contrast to A, can express their opinions freely? Can one objectively outweigh the other, or is this not an inherently subjective assessment that varies from person to person and from context to context? It is beyond the scope of this essay to address these normative issues. However, they highlight some key problems with current freedom indices, which often make many implicit assumptions – for example, that different indicators have a similar weight on an individual's overall freedom.

This short essay is by no means intended to suggest that measuring freedom would be easy; quite the contrary. Still, I believe that paying more attention to the empirical measurement of freedom would be of great academic and political added value. For too long, political theorists and positivist social scientists have

⁴² For this point, see Graeff, *Measuring Individual Freedom*, p. 115.

⁴³ While the V-Dem democracy indices provide extremely useful quantitative data on the quality of democracy in regimes around the world, there are similar limitations when it comes to measuring freedom "tout court". The V-Dem dataset contains a number of essential indicators for measuring political and private liberties that can be grouped into an "index of civil liberties", but even here economic freedoms are only partially included with the indicators "property rights for men and women" and "freedom from forced labour". The V-Dem data can therefore be used to compare the state of some specific freedoms in the world (e.g., the state of academic freedom, freedom from forced labour, freedom of discussion and freedom of expression), but unfortunately they also do not provide us with an overall index of "freedom tout court".

sought to approach the issue of freedom independently from each other and have adopted the stance that others' subject areas are none of their business. Theorists have referred to the theoretical nature of their work, thus absolving themselves from formulating a realistic theory that would present specific indicators and, even more crucially, their interaction and aggregation to make freedom *tout court* measurable. Meanwhile, empiricists have – in the face of theorists' definitional disagreement about freedom – begun to conflate several 'good things' (democracy, good governance, well-being) with freedom. Ultimately, there is a need for productive collaboration between these two disciplines to construct objective, reliable and valid measurements of overall freedom. Only then can we really say when and why freedom is 'in some places more' and 'in some places less'.

Josef Lolacher is Research Coordinator of the Dahrendorf Programme and a DPhil student in Political Science at Lincoln College, University of Oxford. An earlier version of this essay was prepared for the 2023 Dahrendorf Colloquium.

**The 2023
Dahrendorf Colloquium**

Europe and Freedom: The View from Outside

Panel: *Anne-Marie Slaughter (Princeton), Lu Xiaoyu (PKU), Faisal Devji (Oxford)*

Chair: *Timothy Garton Ash (Oxford)*

The opening session of the colloquium reflected the aims of the current project of the Dahrendorf Programme, reversing the gaze in order to look at 'Europe from the outside'. The session included three speakers sharing perspectives from the United States, China and India, and asking what European freedom means in these contexts.

'What does freedom look like from the outside?' asked Anne-Marie Slaughter in her opening remarks. Understanding freedom as a set of balances, she addressed the theme of the colloquium on an individual, national and global level.

On an individual level, Slaughter believes that Europe has managed to strike a balance between individual freedom and collective abundance. With 'just enough restraint', Slaughter sees Europe as having 'harvested the fruit of both peace and prosperity to nurture two dimensions of human thriving – the freedom to be who you aspire to be and the strength and security of being connected to others'. However, what does that balance look like from the outside? Slaughter gave the example of a young Kenyan woman she spoke to after the death of Queen Elizabeth II. As a Kenyan, the young woman couldn't imagine why anyone would grieve the death of the Queen – she had a very different view of Europe to the view that Europeans have of themselves. Yet this young woman was pursuing a degree in Oxford. Slaughter described how 'the perception of Europe as dominion [is] tempered by the possibility of inclusion ... the balancing act that Europe needs to carry out is one between inclusion and exclusion ... and importantly, between [the] solidarity of homogeneity and pluralism.'

At a national level, Slaughter argued that Europe's and the United States' conceptions of the 'free world' have been challenged by the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Initially, President Joe Biden described the conflict as Vladimir Putin versus the free world, claiming that the free world would hold Putin to account; but many non-European-but-free countries have declined to be included in Biden's coalition. 'It wasn't the free world versus the unfree world,' Slaughter claimed. 'The world has not responded to Biden's call ... The war in Ukraine will transform a world order that is deeply Western in which Europe's problems are the world's problems, but the world's problems are not Europe's problems.'

Europe must reckon with its own priorities on a global level, Slaughter said. 'Europe presents itself as the champion of the rules-based order, most committed to multilateralism,' especially on global challenges such as climate change and the regulation of new technology. Slaughter described Europe's self-conception as 'a power that seeks a world of liberty under law'. Yet, Slaughter claimed, if this were true, Europe would 'be spending much more time on conflicts around the world in addition to Ukraine ... Most immediately, if Europe was really serious about being that power, about global freedom, it would take a far more forward-leaning stance on the reform of global institutions, because we are completely paralysed.' Global institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank 'are stuck in 1945'. The EU should take the lead on reforming them, because 'the rest of the world won't wait'.

In his remarks, Lu Xiaoyu shared two of his observations on freedom. First, that freedom is not an old-fashioned or outdated concept, but a resilient one which has found renewed footing in unexpected places. Lu gave the examples of the recent protests in Iran following the death of Mahsa Amini, and the protests in China against the government's zero-Covid policy. In Iran and China, calls for freedom have provided new alternatives to the identity politics which previously compartmentalised people, providing surprising examples of social unity.

Lu's second observation was that we cannot expect conceptions of freedom in these contexts to align with those with which we are familiar. 'Cherishing the very idea of freedom does not mean I think China or other places will be in a very close alignment or consensus with Europe – or the United States for that matter – on what we mean by the concept of freedom ... the very idea of freedom has been detached from [an] association with a particular country or regional organisation, or even particular political institutions or designs.' In responding to the conflict in Ukraine, but not those in Yemen or Palestine, the West is seen as hypocritical, Lu said. This hypocrisy has 'exposed the weakness of Europe as a normative power'. On global leadership, Lu added: 'I don't think there will be a so-called beacon for freedom anymore. No country, institution or regional organisation will be convincing enough for the rest of the world to be the leader of so-called freedom.'

Faisal Devji outlined India's historical dealings with the European revolutionary tradition – particularly the French Revolution. Devji described how the Sultan of Mysore had an embassy in Paris at the time of the revolution; when the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen was issued, the embassy immediately translated and distributed the document. 'India and Indian thinkers have had contemporaneous simultaneous engagement with the European revolutionary tradition, in fact long before other European countries.' Yet, Devji pointed out, India has never had a revolution of its own. Instead, Indian political thought has continued engagement with the great slogan of the French Revolution: liberty, equality and fraternity.

So how does the current Indian government view the EU? 'In a way [the EU] might remind them of their past, which they thought they had somehow surpassed ... They

might prefer a Europe that's not part of a bloc. They'd rather have national sovereignty. This is what they decide for themselves, after all ... I think they realised in a way that what they had understood to be a relic of history – Enlightenment-style political ideas – are not, in fact, a relic of history. Enlightenment ideas have come back in a big way not to rule victorious over the international order, but certainly in the form of the EU, despite its many problems.'

The common theme among the three speakers was that, despite difficulty, the concept of freedom endures. It may not, however, always manifest itself as Europe has envisioned. The challenge they put forward was to revise our assumptions about the forms and functions that freedom may take, and how European freedom might be perceived by the rest of the world.

Talia Kollek

Freedom in Europe: The Last Fifty Years

Panel: *Timothy Snyder (Yale), Andreas Wirsching (LMU Munich), Glenda Sluga (EUI)*
Chair: *Paul Betts (Oxford)*

The history of freedom in Europe is often framed as a steady progress of liberalisation, starting with the death of Franco and the Helsinki Accords in 1975 and followed by democratisation in Southern Europe – Greece, Portugal and Spain – which eventually moved to another wave of democratisation in Eastern Europe. However, we should not fall under the impression of a neat teleological liberal order marching on over the course of a few decades. The history of freedom is not linear. What is more, the triumphant march of liberalism was often a resurrection of a nationalism that assumed the caveat of liberalisation and democratisation – with Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union being the most obvious examples.

We often discuss the shortcomings of neoliberalism as a perversion of the liberal and progressive agenda, but we hardly know what liberal democracy actually means. The lack of a clear understanding of what liberalism stands for also affects our conception of freedom.

Throughout this session, an uneasy feeling about what we mean by freedom resurfaced. Two main frameworks emerged: freedom perceived as a value in a dichotomy with security, and the challenges to freedom posed by economic principles. Both frameworks are reflected in the complicated legacies of notions of universalism, inherent in our understanding of freedom. Behind those two categories, various interpretations followed, ranging from commerce and technology to gender and societal norms. That diversity of perspectives reflects our need to reconsider our understanding of the most important concepts in this discussion.

This is particularly important in the aftermath of the deconstruction that has occurred over the last three decades, when we have renounced universalist notions of freedom alongside our proclivity to disregard universal explanations. Andreas Wirsching argued that the Charter of Paris is a sort of European universalism – the idea that a new age has begun, with universal values and a universal programme coming from Europe, which is meant to bridge the gaps that history has put on the continent and that this is a paradigm for the whole world. This proposition evokes the notion of ‘the

last utopia' by Samuel Moyn, tracing the rise of human rights to primacy only after the remaining universalist ideas subsided: socialism, anti-colonialism and liberal democracy.

This happened as a result of the introduction of racial, national and civilisational sensitivity into the discussion. This came as a prerequisite because, without it, there would be hardly any reconfiguration and healing of the horrors Europe inflicted upon the rest of the world. However, this avenue has been fully exploited and the challenge now is to preserve that type of sensitivity towards the progressive agenda in the light of mounting challenges coming from an emerging multipolar world order.

One attempt to redefine our conception of freedom came from Timothy Snyder, who advocated that the twenty-first century should resolve the issue in which 'freedom for us' would mean 'unfreedom for others', saying that we should come up with a conception of freedom that is non-exploitative. Snyder's proposition prompted a heated debate on the 'problem of formal freedom', meaning the question of how to extend freedom without reducing it. The genealogy of this debate has been profoundly engraved in European thought; many participants evoked Rousseau, Kant, Hegel and Marx to counter Snyder's claim.

Snyder argued that the foundation of non-exploitative freedom would have to take unpredictability into account, claiming that 'the key concept for freedom is actually human unpredictability versus human predictability. And that the way that unfreedom has been perpetrated in human history is that I preserve unpredictability for myself at the cost of predictability for you.' He added: 'The whole point of freedom is that it transcends space and transcends time. If it's about human unpredictability, it can never be confined in any precise coordinates in space and time. By its nature, freedom will always rebel against any attempt to define it precisely in space and time, or else it would not be freedom.'

Essentially, Snyder challenged one of the fundamental premises of Western thought about security coming at the expense of freedom: that one has to trade some freedoms for security in order to enjoy one's remaining freedoms. Snyder claimed that this is a misunderstanding. 'I think that freedom is about trying to find the combinations where you can get the most of all good things. I think it is a mistake that we have to immediately trade it for something else; I think it is a big problem in our discussions of freedom. My view would be [that] the idea would be to set up for as many people as possible as many possibilities for unpredictability as possible. We shouldn't immediately go to "you've got to trade freedom for something else". Freedom is about trying to get as many of the good things together as possible.'

However, many participants doubted the feasibility of Snyder's claim about getting as much as possible through unpredictability, arguing that predictability is crucial for material and economic security. Snyder continued: 'Society doesn't mean conformism, but society means finding the unpredictable places where your authentic interests intersect with my authentic interests.' But do systems want unpredictability? If you

are a lower-middle-class parent of two, do you need unpredictability to explore authentic creation? Or do you need your material conditions of life settled so that your children can go to school for free? Snyder's proposition seemed difficult to imagine in practice.

This sentiment between civil freedom and material security was taken up by other speakers. Wirsching related the issue to neoliberalism. 'For most people, the growth of freedom, the multiplication of options, was accompanied by a neoliberal mantra of self-improvement. The 1990s were the time when, for example, Manuel Castells' information society or Peter Drucker's idea of a knowledge worker, which dates back to the 1950s, became the standard language of consultant agencies and stakeholders in politics and in economy. And for decades individuals in Europe have been told by political and economic authorities and stakeholders to discard outmoded certainties to make themselves fit for the market, especially the labour market, to embrace lifelong learning to change jobs several times in a working lifetime. So this is a sort of mantra, which was continuously addressed to the larger public during the last thirty or forty years.'

The economic dimension was brought up by other panellists. Glenda Sluga argued: 'We linked our dream of spreading individual liberty much too closely to one particular model of capitalism, a global financialised [one]. Capitalism did bring major gains, but also levels of inequality not seen in the West for a hundred years.' Indeed, many speakers evoked the sentiment that freedom would need certain correcting mechanisms against the shortcomings of the neoliberal model.

Snyder also addressed the long historical discussion about how economic arrangements serve freedom. 'There's been a conflation in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first, where it's not how they serve freedom – it's that they are defined as freedom. We're not supposed to think about whether free trade or free markets serve freedom – they are now the thing itself. And we're supposed to not think about the people.'

Countering the claims related to economic determinism, he also made a sharp distinction between unpredictability and uncertainty. 'We all want to have some form of predictability around us, where Keynesianism is ultimately about politics. Keynesianism says that capitalism will have crises; therefore, we have toolbox A, B and C, because maybe capitalism is self-correcting. But in the long run, we're all dead. Therefore, in the short and medium term, we want to have good lives. And so the case for unpredictability at the individual level is that you're using economic tools, not directly to create freedom, because that's impossible, but using economic tools to create conditions in which people can be unpredictable. Because if there's too much unpredictability around us, then it's as if there are no nursery schools, no pension plan, and so on.'

The debate also addressed social and cultural influences, with Wirsching arguing that most of the conventions around social and cultural certainties have simply disappeared, while the pressure on people to adapt to these changes has become massive.

Wirsching stated: ‘When we talk about the change during the last fifty years, technology plays a major role. And technology is always ambivalent – we know this also from history. It’s not a normative thing, but it’s ambivalent in its consequences. And, of course, technology was a driver of freedom, a driver of globalisation. It was a driver for financial freedom all over the world, in the 1990s and 2000s. And at the same time, we have indeed observed that in social media and the internet, and so on, the utopian ideas that Manuel Castells, for example, predicted in the 1990s, haven’t come about. So we must live in the present with this ambivalence. And in my opinion, it’s very important – and the European Union is doing that – to try to regulate this whole sphere of communication, this whole sphere of political and social struggle, and to put regulations into it. But it’s very difficult because you also see a collective force, claiming that an unregulated internet, for example, is a means of freedom. So there is a dilemma within this new technology, which will accompany us for some years.’

Among that broad array of different conceptions of freedom ranging from universalism to social norms there was one aspect that seemed to overshadow and challenge the entire debate: the war in Ukraine. The struggle for Ukraine’s independence brought back an absolute claim, which haunted the debate, that freedom means freedom. And whereas participants disagreed and clashed about their views on gender norms and gay rights in Ukraine and what the effect the war is having on those, one thing emerged: that we struggle to provide a universal definition of freedom that would reconcile a progressive agenda in the face of aggression.

Jan Farfal

The State of Freedom in...

...Britain

Panel: *Helen Mountfield (Oxford), Fraser Nelson (Spectator), Will Hutton (Oxford)*
Chair: *Anne Deighton (Oxford)*

An enduring theme emerged over the course of this spirited discussion: it appears that in the recent history of Britain, the abstract idea of freedom is always entangled in practice with other concepts. Its role in the country and its discourse is, therefore, fluctuating and hard to define.

Helen Mountfield began the session from a legal perspective. For her, the abstraction of freedom is entangled with the practical idea of equality. She noted that the law can further both freedom and equality. It is not the application of brute force. It articulates the norms we have in common based on shared understandings (e.g. the Human Rights Act). It is in lockstep with what people think. It can help hold power to account by enforcing those norms. She accordingly emphasised that the law can be a mechanism for shifting values, 'ensuring what Amartya Sen defines as equality of capacity - the capacity of living a life you value, which can lead to different outputs?

However, Mountfield suggested that, over the past three decades, much of the capacity of law to further freedom-as-equality has been undermined. 'Equality before the law has been destroyed. The law is not accessible anymore. There has been a regression since roughly 1990.'

Will Hutton, in contrast, focused on the intertwining of economic freedom and political freedom. He stated: 'If you take the long view, capitalism will always throw up immense amounts of wealth. This will always also come with an immense amount of social unrest. These two aspects are absolutely interdependent.' He further noted that, under the umbrella of libertarian anarcho-capitalism, political freedom is seen as getting in the way of economic freedom; using as an example Liz Truss' attempts to implement freeports, investment zones which are jurisdictions within jurisdictions and in which one forgoes one's democratic rights.

For Hutton, ‘this is consonant with ideologies which are promulgated by Elon Musk or Peter Thiel. This type of Toryism needs to be constrained and rooted in institutions.’

He then moved on to discuss the idea that modern Toryism is a mixture of three strands: anarcho-capitalism as per Liz Truss; small state capitalism as per Rishi Sunak; and one-nation conservatism, as per Theresa May. ‘The state of Britain today is more broadly characterised by the “three Ps”: polarisation, post-truth politics and populism. Post-truth politics can be defined as politics in which the only criterion is what plays with public opinion. It is about not caring; it could also be called post-honesty politics – when truth is a game and people see that. Populism can be defined as pushing politics you know will not work, but which are popular. The moment when the big shift came was 2016.’

In mentioning 2016, Hutton was referring to a topic that dominated the panel’s conversation and the session’s concluding discussion: Brexit. Mountfield linked Brexit to her argument about freedom and its relationship to equality before the law. ‘People did not feel that the system was working for them or that they were listened to by the judges, the civil service, the broadcasters, the mainstream media or the universities. They therefore voted to “take back control”. Boris Johnson was quoted as saying: “With iron determination we saw off Brenda Hale and we got Brexit done.”’

Fraser Nelson concurred with this, stating – provocatively, it was felt by many of the audience – that Brexit ‘is a force for good because the EU was making its constituent members less free, becoming a source of instability and a driver of populism. Freedom of movement and the ever-closer union of European governments diminishes the ability of voters to change the rules of their countries. When there is nothing you can do to change things in your own elections, you feel overlooked and undervalued. The definition of Brexit is the freedom to decide our own laws. Brexit voters were happy to take an economic hit. The chaos resulted from parties who opposed Brexit being ordered to accept and enact it. Freedom can be messy that way.’

Nelson also cautioned against categorising Brexit and freedom as dichotomous, pointing out that the vote was a demonstration of voters’ wishes being used to enact bottom-up change, rather than top-down change being imposed upon them by their government. ‘The Conservative and Labour parties have been corrected by Brexit, as indicated by the share of the popular vote held by the main two parties. Brexit was not their idea; it was a popular idea. Brexit has been a success as a result because it provided the democratic realignment by the main parties and voters, spelt the defeat of populism. The UK is the only country in Europe that does not have populist parties in parliament or with any significant showing in opinion polls. Populism is, always and everywhere, a result of the failure of established parties to understand and respond to new popular concerns.’

There was some debate over this between Nelson and Olivier de France on the saliency of the European issue before the Brexit referendum was announced, during which

they agreed that outside the Conservative Party, Britain as a whole was at the time more indifferent than Eurosceptic or Europhobic.

However, Mountfield challenged this, as did Ellen Dahrendorf in the post-panel discussion, stating that EU institutions may have seemed more remote, and British ones (with elections every five years) more obviously accountable to voters, but that the real outcome of Brexit has been an executive power grab; with Parliament and other British institutions of accountability being attacked, as European institutions were before, by the same (executive) constitutional actors. Nelson noted in response that Brexit's changes both to the UK-EU relationship and to UK institutions themselves could easily be described as positive within a liberal worldview. In particular, he noted: 'Brexit means globalisation continues, but with less resentment. Legal migration levels are far higher than before but polls show it doesn't trouble people as much as before. The UK is now a mass-immigration country, 20 per cent of all workers are immigrants, higher than the United States. But immigration is no longer in the top three public concerns. The single takeaway from this is that Brexit voters were mainly worried not about the numbers but about control and the cohesion of the nation state. I believe most European countries will end up having the same approach as the UK.'

In particular, Nelson emphasised that the legislative freedom Brexit has offered the UK to make its own immigration policy has itself been one of the drivers of wider public acceptance of migration and globalisation. He emphasised the EU's unpreparedness for recent demographic change. 'The EU's free movement rules were designed in an era before the post-2000 wave of mass migration. 2016 was the worst year for the dislocation of asylum claims and boat crossings. This change is driven by a decrease in global poverty whereby people have the means to pay large sums to people traffickers, making a new industry possible. Battling this evil industry means understanding its economics. A UK deportation deal with Tirana showed how the realistic prospect of deportation destroys the economic rationale, with small boat arrivals from Albania collapsing.'

Finally, Nelson noted that any discussion about the state of freedom in Britain ought to reference Covid and, in particular, what the response to the pandemic on both an institutional and social level revealed about the centrality to notions of freedom-as-liberty within British public life. 'Sweden protected freedoms while we extinguished ours. And we suspended them just like that, with minimal fightback. Freedom was not as ingrained as we thought in the great British tradition.'

Olivier Yasar de France

...Germany

Panel: *Karl-Heinz Paqué (Friedrich Naumann Foundation), Gesine Schwan (Berlin), Jan-Werner Müller (Princeton)*

Chair: *Patricia Clavin (Oxford)*

Several significant themes emerged over the course of this lively discussion. First, panellists considered whether there is a specifically ‘German’ notion of freedom. Jan-Werner Müller referred to Ralf Dahrendorf’s work, above all his argument that free societies produce conflict, and said that Germans are far too obsessed with unity and consensus, and don’t have enough tolerance for conflict. He noted a contemporary move towards the term *Zusammenhalt* (‘holding together’), which ‘can seem a form of communitarian kitsch, which distracts from social disagreements, but conflict is itself not polarisation, and can minimise open and contentious debates.’

As an example, Müller offered recent responses in Germany to climate activism. ‘In Germany, we can see echoes of the debate in the United States around “civility”. To take the issue of climate activism, there is an increasing trend for climate activism to involve forms of law breaking. Putting aside the debate on whether this is justified, the severity of the state’s crackdown on this in Germany has been surprising. Going back to the 1980s, many Germans understood that civil disobedience is a legitimate form of politics. Just because you’re sitting on the road or violating minor laws should not result in someone saying: “This is an incredible violation of *Zusammenhalt*.” That seems to be changing, and reinforcing boundaries and unity doesn’t leave enough room for legitimate forms of dissent.’

Schwan’s analysis of this was more positive. She noted that there is a growing pro-science and pro-academic agenda in Germany and that protest movements such as Fridays for Future have been generally well received in the country and its media. Nonetheless, she expressed her concern with Germany’s democratic institutions and their failure to encourage the largely young supporters of these climate movements into existing democratic processes.

She provided an example of how this concern is manifesting. ‘Survey data on the question of freedom in Germany is complex. Germans trust the concept of democracy, but when presented with choice – direct democracy, technocracy, representative democracy or autocracy – only autocracy ranked lower than representative democracy. There is an emotional distance to representative democracy, and many

Germans don't understand the implications of their preferences. Technocracy was the highest ranked, and is more or less the position of Germany's mainstream conservatives.'

Karl-Heinz Paqué considered this survey data to indicate a looming crisis. 'There are dangers on the horizon for liberal democracy in Germany. The problem is fundamental splits in society which have deepened in recent years. A clear example is the coronavirus pandemic: freedom is constitutionally protected in Germany, but in circumstances of disease, there can be restrictions. Crucially, these are supposed to be justified with reference to proportionality, but in 2020-21 the government did not really make these justifications in a clear or decisive way, which gave the impression of a lack of due respect for the proportionality principle. This led to a protest movement, mostly nurtured by the populist right, whose claims were never addressed. Now it is clear that mistakes were made, but the reaction of those responsible has been flippant and does not seem to show a genuine respect for the concerns of the people, with the result that the populist right has been strengthened.'

Müller took a more neutral view. 'During the pandemic, a certain section of the population became libertarian-authoritarians: "I get whatever I want, and plus I'm going to impose my vision on society." But you can also reframe freedom as something that says "it's okay to criticise the government" without falling into authoritarian rhetoric. Concerns around anti-lockdown protest voting or massive turnouts for the far right were less significant than feared, partially because of this reframing.'

Paqué noted, however, that this should not be taken to suggest that the populist right is not a major force in Germany, particularly in how the geographical tensions it reveals within the country have wider implications for voters' response to and satisfaction with German and EU foreign policy – above all, in the face of the war in Ukraine. He emphasised that the populist right is considerably stronger in eastern Germany than in western Germany, and pointed out that geographically rooted debates about centre-and-periphery and belonging-versus-left-behind – which are understood in the Anglophone world largely through the lens of the United States – need to be taken into account if the state and meaning of freedom in Germany is to be dissected properly. For example, he argued that 'there is a long-standing issue of West German intellectuals referring to "democratic deficits" in the East, which is – of course – perceived in the East as an insult and patronising: "You lack the maturity to make reasonable democratic choices." This drives a wedge between East and West, as well as between urban and rural populations.'

This point dominated much of the post-panel discussion, with audience members focusing on how social media has made ideological rifts deeper, especially in terms of 'cultural losers' – people who do not feel included by what they see on TV. Paqué noted on this point that Olaf Scholz has moved too slowly on the modernisation of the country, and that the lifestyle attainable in many West German cities is not replicated everywhere – although he also made clear that Germans have a relatively high quality of life even when compared with other EU nations.

Paqué, however, raised the idea that collective identity *is* important to the discussion. He noted that support for the populist right does not seem to be economic. ‘The AfD vote is concentrated in Saxony, the most economically advanced region in the East, and its vote share is lower in poorer areas. Instead, it is a form of identity politics relating to a connection to the political centre, but the issue is much too easily subsumed under economic matters in Germany.’

Specifically, he said, East Germans identify with Russia. ‘People say – with a bit of irony – that the aggression in Ukraine can’t be justified, but Russia was, over the years, not treated nicely by the United States. In fact, Russia was treated as nicely as you [West Germans] treated us.’ He then argued, counter to Schwan, that there is a deeply rooted emotional anti-Americanism in Germany.

Schwan agreed with the necessity of confronting the ‘problem of the West’ and its ‘failure to live up to ideals, hypocrisy. Further, it’s important to interrogate the belief found in much post-colonial thought that the West is necessarily in contradiction between what it says.’ She went on to examine how the conflict in Ukraine challenges this critique. ‘The idea that freedom has a geographical concentration is said to be obsolete in the twenty-first century, but the war in Ukraine has revitalised what the West means and stands for. Freedom is still understood to have individual, private, social and political dimensions, but it is increasingly tied to psychological and material security.’

Müller noted that the idea of security – which is often criticised as requiring the curtailing of individual liberties – is complex within Germany. ‘Germans still have a strong sense of the importance of privacy – the freedom not to be known, the freedom to reinvent oneself – which is a leeway of self-determination. This is an important tradition, coming from informational self-determination in the 1980s due to distrust of the state. This is in profound contrast with, for example, the United States, where policy decisions like the “right to be forgotten” have been dismissed by many jurists.’ He did acknowledge, however, that data protections have made Germany a hub of organised crime.

The speakers also interrogated the idea of Germany as a neoliberal state, another topic which occupied much of the discussion. Schwan argued that, if we organise the whole of a society around the principle of competition, ‘you miss out on the very ligaments which are key for competition itself’. She also noted that after 1989, solidarity with the East was damaged by the idea of competition and the idea that the East ‘lost’. Paqué was unconvinced by this, countering that the distribution of inequality in Germany before 2008 has been overestimated. ‘Traditionally Germans have a tendency of dreaming of a nirvana (what was called *Volksgemeinschaft* in different times) and a tendency to discuss matters not pragmatically, but in ideological terms.’ He stated: ‘Whenever I try to make an argument, as a centrist liberal, and the argument is against something the left pursues, I get punished in a way that would be a problem for a lot of people who don’t want to have this kind of uncivilised discourse.’

The discussion concluded with a consideration of what the future holds for freedom in Germany. Schwan re-emphasised her concern with the growing distrust in representative democracy among young Germans, stating: 'If we don't succeed in training more people with practical experience in political decision-making, we won't keep our political freedom.'

Paqué's suggestions focused on the relationship between values, quality of life and state control. 'What can we do as liberals? We don't need to find a compromise. We have to stand up for our values. The way you organise government activity has to account for these rifts, and it hasn't done so sufficiently. Liberals have had a moderate success in changing message and content, now saying that we're guilty of having had a libertarian streak ten to fifteen years ago. This has gone; we don't want to minimise the state anymore. We want an enabling state, an efficient state that works, that is present all over the country. We have to insist that digital infrastructure not only works in Berlin, but that we need digitalisation all over the place to open up the door for later development. It's about walking together; we care for you, we walk together.'

Müller offered a wider-ranging view, noting that pessimism about demographic elements is consistent across democracies. 'Regardless of where you are, you are convinced your children will be worse off.' In doing so, he returned the discussion to its initial question: is there something unique about freedom in Germany?

Julia Carver

...East Central Europe

Panel: Karolina Wigura (*Kultura Liberalna*), Michal Šimečka (*European Parliament*), Jacques Rupnik (*Sciences Po*)
Chair: Lenka Bustíková (*Oxford*)

The session on the state of freedom in East Central Europe began with Karolina Wigura's physical absence due to a change in post-Brexit border control regulations, giving the participants a timely reminder of the not necessarily linear nature of European integration, as well as the role of freedom of movement for freedom in Europe.

In this discussion, the participants reflected on the state of freedom in East Central Europe through three lenses. First, the role of emotions was discussed, especially in relation to cultural backlashes and economic freedom. Second, the use of East Central Europe as an umbrella term for a diverse – both contemporaneously and historically – set of countries was questioned: what makes Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Czechia 'East Central European'; and what does the state of freedom in these countries have in common? Finally, the discussion concluded with a look into the future. How has the Russo-Ukrainian War shaped the region? Is East Central Europe truly more 'central' to Europe now than it used to be; and how will democratic resilience shape the future trajectory of freedom in the region?

Wigura based her remarks on the three 'fears' shaping Poland and its relationship with East Central Europe. She emphasised that thinking about the state of freedom in the region means thinking about emotions, as emotions precede freedom and emotions can define epochs, following Montesquieu in his argument that emotions precede politics and political systems. One such emotion is fear. First, she noted, there was the *fear of the past*. It was that fear which in 1989 led people in East Central Europe to seek democratic freedom. However, this move towards freedom was always a conditional one, and that condition was for the changes to lead to success, especially economic success. Once the generation of the 'fear of the past' had passed, and once the promise of a better future became more widespread, the emphasis shifted towards a *fear of the future*. This emotion was 'best understood and played on by illiberal politicians. In fact, they were the only political force capable of embracing it.' In Poland, populists created an image of a country in ruins, simultaneously creating an imaginary past similar to the Trumpian 'Make America Great Again'. Finally, a new epoch started in February 2022,

when the Russian war against Ukraine began – the epoch of the *fear of a future which will repeat the past*. Whereas this fear is widespread in East Central Europe, Wigura observed, the reactions to it have been diverse. The main point to remember, however, is that there is reason for hope. ‘Although fear is not a good companion of freedom, it can produce determination and hope to promote a better together in Europe.’

The argument that fear will strengthen freedom in Europe is particularly present in the European Parliament, added Michal Šimečka, who is a member of the Parliament’s Renew Group. He also noted that the conflict in Ukraine has been taken by many living in East Central Europe as a demonstration that their attitudes have been right all along. ‘History has vindicated CEE members in their suspicions of Russian motives.’ He raised the question, then, of whether the centre of gravity in Europe would shift further east.

Šimečka nonetheless doubted that the current war in Ukraine would fundamentally change the debate on the meaning of freedom in East Central Europe. ‘The war has paradoxically strengthened the narrative of those who are pro-Putin.’ He then referred to developments specifically in Slovakia. ‘The narrative is that the war is caused by the United States to weaken Slovakia, just like the EU sanctions. [It is said that] the “decadent West is forcing its LGBTQ rights and support for Ukraine on Slovakia”. This is part of one big story, which is not about nationalism in the classic sense, it is rather the “fear” that Karolina Wigura was referring to.’

But can we really talk about one homogenous region in this debate? This was the follow-up question Šimečka raised. ‘Is Slovakia really comparable with Czechia or is Czechia perhaps closer to Germany instead, as Slovakian standards of living are among the lowest in Europe (together with Bulgaria)? And since this has led to growing numbers [of people] saying that the situation today warrants a tough authoritarian ruler, then how can the case for freedom be strengthened?’

Šimečka’s question was familiar to many of the audience, many of whom had backgrounds in Area Studies and International Relations. What is a region? On what grounds are countries grouped into a region and what does this mean for the analysis of global developments? In connection with this, Jacques Rupnik highlighted how Viktor Orbán sees his form of governance in Hungary as part of a bigger picture, part of a global end of liberal non-democracies, evidenced by events such as Brexit or the election of Donald Trump. Rupnik also made clear that Hungary is not alone in East Central Europe in aligning with this ideology, noting, for example, that in 2015 PiS (Poland’s Law and Justice party) ran with the slogan ‘We’re going to build Budapest in Warsaw.’ ‘And so they did,’ Rupnik concluded, pointing to the work of Wojciech Sadurski.

He then asked how we got to this point. He referred to how, in 1990, Bronisław Geremek identified populism (and within it a promise of equality similar to the second fear mentioned by Wigura), authoritarianism and nationalism as the three main factors that could threaten Poland’s transition to a liberal democracy. Rupnik noted that, although he himself had rejected this idea just a few years ago, the situation has

since changed. He posited that, perhaps, political liberalism has indeed been the victim of economic liberalism; that perhaps it is as István Bibó predicted and liberal democracy has come into conflict with the cause of the nation.

The panel then moved to a discussion of the future of freedom in East Central Europe.

Rupnik noted that, two weeks before the conference, the Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki took a trip to Washington as an opportunity to indirectly respond to statements made by French President Emmanuel Macron, in which he distanced himself from the United States. Poland's view, Morawiecki made clear, is an entirely different one. 'There are no nations that love freedom as much as Poles and Americans, and this unites us ... Old Europe believed in an agreement with Russia and Old Europe failed. But there is a New Europe, a Europe that remembers what Russian Communism was and Poland is the leader of this New Europe. Poland wants to become a bedrock of European security and we are on the right track.'

In these words, it is clear that the war in Ukraine has had an undeniable influence on the understanding of freedom in East Central Europe. The increased geopolitical importance of the region, particularly Poland, is an opportunity to develop a new political attitude, as Wigura suggested, emphasising the need for this to be a political attitude aimed at European freedom, rather than the feeling of humiliation, which national populist politicians have so expertly been manipulating and capitalising on in recent years. Similarly, Rupnik pointed to Czechia where the Babiš government distanced itself from the war against Ukraine; it was subsequently not re-elected and was replaced with a pro-liberal democracy government. However, Šimečka underlined that the war has strengthened pro-Putin sentiments in Slovakia, and all panellists noted that countries like Hungary continue to distance themselves from the conflict.

Finally, as the panel broadly agreed that freedom in East Central Europe primarily means self-determination, Wigura added a caveat: East Central European countries can defend Ukraine's sovereignty without defending liberal democracy. As Rupnik put it: 'There is no Central European Visegrád paradigm.'

Whether the region will now become the 'New Europe' can also be questioned, he stated. 'Let's imagine the war in Ukraine ends. Huge reconstructions will be on the agenda. Who will carry out the reconstruction, with what means? Is it Bulgaria, Poland, Estonia?'

Indeed, the role of the economy, of economic freedom, is central to the question of freedom in East Central Europe. It was woven through the discussion like a thread visible only at times, but always present. The panel not only considered who will pay for the reconstruction of Ukraine, but also how far behind this region is in terms of quality of life and economic performance compared with countries like Germany or France. Can a country like Slovakia really still be grouped with Czechia, Hungary or Poland, when its economic performance is more similar to Bulgaria. Will climate change turn into a divisive issue and, if yes, will that be because of the cost of the Green transition or because it will be associated with the 'culture wars'?

Freedom, the panel agreed, is also economic freedom, especially in a region which has transitioned from a communist economy to a capitalist market economy. However, East Central Europe should not be reduced to its common communist past. The region is diverse, whether that is in terms of GDP, the countries' relations with Russia, the success rate of populist politicians, each country's relationship with the EU and its conditions, or in terms of how far institutions have been dismantled. Additionally, the promise of freedom, as Lea Ypi reminded us in her timely intervention in the fourth session of the conference, has not been (and perhaps cannot be) fulfilled under a capitalist structure. And money, Šimečka added, is not the issue holding back the Green transition in Slovakia.

So, what is it really, as Martin Wolf asked, that differentiates the developments in East Central Europe from the international struggle against illiberalism, or from the international cultural backlash? What do these countries have in common that sets them apart from the rest of the world? Perhaps it is, after all, some common historical experience, not just the region's communist past but also the region's long-term experience with Russian domination. Wigura responded that we must remember that there are also other – non-communist – traumas to keep in mind, such as Hungary's experience with Trianon. Rupnik further noted that while both Jarosław Kaczyński and Orbán are former communist dissidents who turned into 'illiberal critics of Western, European-style democracy', both pro-democratic and anti-democratic candidates in the most recent Czech elections were former members of the Communist Party, suggesting that 'that kind of past is no longer a sufficient divide'. Instead, the panel considered that perhaps it is a history of and a potential for democratic resilience which unites East Central Europe. Or that it is perhaps the fact that ever since 1989 women's mobility in the region has increased drastically, leaving the rural areas behind and therefore leaving them male-dominated. Or that it is perhaps the region's clear dependence on an EU originally created without East Central Europe in mind, and not just a difference in living standards.

The panel concluded that there is no one thing that differentiates the state of freedom in East Central Europe from the state of freedom and illiberalism in the world, but an amalgam of factors coming together to shape a region often seen as the cradle of illiberalism in recent European and Western history. This is despite the fact that its being part of the West, and its centrality to Europe, is always disputed – where illiberalism is established and widespread, where institutions have been dismantled but democracy is still present and held up mainly by civic resilience. As Rupnik said: 'The conclusion for us is that the illiberal trends we have discussed do exist, they are strong, they are disturbing for many Europeans who watch from the outside – but they can be defeated.'

Reja Wyss

...Southern Europe

Panel: *Lucia Annunziata (Rai), Charles Powell (Real Instituto Elcano), João Carlos Espada (UCP)*

Chair: *Tim Vlandas (Oxford)*

Is freedom in Southern Europe under threat? This was the question addressed by the panel, with reference to Italy, Spain and Portugal. The overarching theme that emerged from the discussion was that freedom in Southern Europe cannot be taken for granted.

In her remarks, Lucia Annunziata challenged the idea that the far right in Italy has only now emerged with the election of Giorgia Meloni. Annunziata, the former chair of the Italian public television network Rai, brought her extensive journalistic experience to the session, outlining the simmering far-right movement in Italy in recent history and the rise of Italian populism since Berlusconi. She described the turbulence in Italian politics in the past decade; over the course of ten years, Italy has seen seven governments and six premiers. Annunziata described the resulting distrust in Italy towards political institutions. The sense of abandonment by voters has resulted in the popular rise of Meloni, which has ‘provoked a big shift [in] consensus between political parties, all of them.’ Annunziata singled out the left-wing Democratic Party as particularly negatively impacted by this shift. ‘We see with Meloni a sort of protest vote, the result of disillusionment of the voters [towards] an institution that in ten years was not capable of being trusted by anybody. “There is no point in voting,” people say, “if at the end [politicians] will do whatever they want.”’

Annunziata was very forthright in describing Meloni’s party, Fratelli d’Italia. ‘[They] are of an extreme-right fascistic background. When I say fascistic, I think it is a proper definition because this is a right-wing group that belongs to the 1970s type of fascist organisation that was not ... a part of the constitutional process. Fundamentally that means that this new party [Fratelli d’Italia] has never clearly moved from the fascist side.’

The history of fascism in Southern Europe was also present in Charles Powell’s remarks. He began with the reminder that both Spain and Portugal were dictatorships only fifty years ago. ‘We are still enjoying this relatively new, young democratic environment. This raises an interesting question: did the fact that Spain and Portugal experienced long-lasting right-wing dictatorships inoculate these two countries? Or

vaccinate them permanently from possible far-right resurgence? Until recently ... we [believed] that we would never have far-right populist movements ... but lo and behold, now we have our own brand.'

While Powell assessed that the overall state of freedom and democracy in Spain is quite strong, his remarks outlined potential areas of concern where Spain's democratic institutions may show vulnerabilities. Against the backdrop of the 2008 financial crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic, Powell stated that the lack of independence of Spain's judiciary is the country's largest challenge to freedom. He described it as 'the politicisation of the judiciary and the judicialisation of politics ... a very dangerous issue'. Other challenges included the issue of minority rights in Spain (although, notably, Powell stated that the issue of migration is not politically salient), the poor quality of public media, unemployment, inequality and the weakness of civil society.

With increasingly pressing socioeconomic challenges, Powell has attributed the strength of Spanish freedom and democracy to the country's membership of the European Union. 'Right now, we have the highest level of political polarisation ever since democracy was restored in 1978 ... this is why the European dimension ... is absolutely fundamental. I think, as is true of Italy, probably Greece, if it were not for the EU, I think frankly a lot of our democracies simply would not be viable. It is thanks to the fact that our democratic political systems are locked into the EU system that they can survive.'

João Carlos Espada claimed that the survival of liberal democracy in Europe is dependent on political polarisation. He structured his remarks on the work of Ralf Dahrendorf; the title of his paper, 'Populism versus Vanguardism: An unfortunate dichotomy', stressed the role of the 'vital centre' and the importance of distinguishing between 'constitutional politics and normal politics.' Espada began by saying that he is not concerned about the state of democracy in Portugal as much as he is more holistically concerned about the state of liberal democracy worldwide. 'I'm afraid there is nothing very special about Portugal. Here, as elsewhere in Europe and the United States, I think we are witnessing the rise of far-right parties.' Espada attributed this to the failing of what Dahrendorf termed 'the vital centre.'

By vital centre, Dahrendorf 'did not mean one centrist party, but ... the mutual respect between a main party from the left of centre, and another party from the right of centre.' The vital centre is defined as an agreement about the general rules of politics and those rules belonging to the constitution. This should be distinguished from the day-to-day rivalry between different parties, which Dahrendorf referred to as 'normal politics.' Espada marked this distinction as fundamental; democracies can solve problems across rival views only if the views are underpinned by constitutional politics. 'These lessons from the past should be taken seriously in the present, facing the rise of populism in Europe. Liberal democrats should aim to avoid the rise of unfortunate dichotomies and the weakening of the vital centre.'

In the subsequent discussion, the discussants explored the parallels between their presentations and the factors which concern them about the stability and future of Southern European democracy. This included a loss of public trust in government institutions, the impact of the 2008 financial crisis and the war in Ukraine, along with anxieties about attacks on free speech in public fora and the rise of right-wing populism in Europe.

Talia Kollek

...South-Eastern Europe

Panel: *Ivan Vejvoda (IWM), Kerem Öktem (Ca' Foscari), Jessie Barton-Hronešová (Chapel Hill)*

Chair: *Othon Anastasakis (Oxford)*

For better or worse, this region of Europe has often punched above its weight, occupying a larger proportion of European headlines than one would expect based on its territorial share of the continent. Yet, in light of the war in Ukraine and the resulting economic fallout, the continental spotlight has shifted away from the Balkans. This panel session brought three rather disparate countries together under the umbrella of democratic backsliding and an uncertain future. The panel provided some comprehensive, yet often deeply personal, accounts of the state of play in their key countries of focus (and, in the case of Ivan Vejvoda and Kerem Öktem, countries of citizenship): Serbia, Turkey, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, respectively.

Vejvoda's intervention started out as a lamentation of Serbia's rather long list of missed opportunities in the past, followed by a somewhat unexpected, albeit persuasive, display of unflinching optimism for its future. As a direct participant in the ultimately successful popular resistance against Serbia's wartime president in the 1990s, Slobodan Milošević, Vejvoda believes that the fight for freedom is, by definition, an ongoing exercise. 'Freedom has to be won on the streets.' Unfortunately, this is no less true in Serbia today than it was almost three decades ago, as the country has regressed in most international indices of freedom and democracy under the rule of President Aleksandar Vučić and the Serbian Progressive Party. The past and the present were often intertwined in Vejvoda's intervention, sometimes through striking contrast. '*Politika* [a long-standing Serbian and formerly Yugoslav daily newspaper] used to have some of the best foreign correspondents in Europe. People from all over the Eastern Bloc would read it to find out what was going on.' Today, *Politika* is one of many outlets, in both the electronic and written press, that have been usurped by the government and unashamedly enlisted into its propaganda machinery. Vejvoda seems to view much of today's greyness as a follow-through of old errors. 'As history was ending [in the late 1980s and early 90s], we [in former Yugoslavia] opted for nationalism. We were like some idiots who go the other way on the highway, but we turned out to be harbingers,' he said, in a reference to the broader (re-)emergence of nationalism and identity politics in Europe in recent decades, which has potentially challenged Francis Fukuyama's controversial notion of the 'end of history'.

Yet, somewhere halfway through Vejvoda's intervention, his despair for Serbia's past and present gave way to a range of open opportunities for its future. 'The opposition is finally getting its act together' – referring to an ongoing attempt by opposition politicians in the country to form a united front against Vučić. He drew attention to their new slogan: *Pravac Evropa* ('Direction Europe'). In what remains the only European country that has not introduced sanctions against Russia in response to its invasion of Ukraine, and where most of the population attributes the blame for the war to the West, it is indeed striking that the opposition is uniting around a pro-European message. In hindsight, after weeks of massive protests throughout Serbia in response to a tragic school shooting on 4 May 2023, which has drawn attention to and inspired outrage at the habitual celebration of violence and aggressive rhetoric by pro-government politicians and journalists, Vejvoda's assessment that President Vučić's hold on power might be waning appears prescient.

Vejvoda's hopeful conclusions were followed by a very different intervention from Jessie Barton-Hronešová. She took a deep and insightful dive into the endlessly complex day-to-day political landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina. She referenced several high-profile recent scandals, such as an unenforced prison sentence against the prime minister for improper purchases of medical equipment during the Covid-19 pandemic and plagiarism accusations against the wife of the Bosniak member of the country's tripartite presidency, a hospital director. She also shed light on what she dubs a 'crisis of representation' in the country, where the Office of the High Representative, established after the post-war Dayton Agreement in 1995, wields an unprecedented level of power for a modern sovereign country, which he currently seems to be using to the benefit of ethnic Croats.

In her presentation, Barton-Hronešová further focused on the Republic of Srpska, one of the two federal units in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is mainly inhabited by ethnic Serbs and has been ruled for years by Milorad Dodik, a close ally of Serbian President Vučić as well as Vladimir Putin. In fact, the war in Ukraine has been echoing most ominously in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as 'many people began to get their suitcases ready in February 2022', presumably in the expectation that Russia would win the war and embolden Dodik in his long-stated aim of secession for the Republic of Srpska. Barton-Hronešová argued that many of the 'tricks' of Dodik's democratic backsliding had been taken straight out of Putin's playbook, such as declaring defamation a criminal offence, his persecution of the LGBTQ community, and his 'foreign agent' laws forcing foreign mainly Western-funded NGOs to register under a special status. To top it all, Dodik's allegedly waning popularity, which might at first glance appear to be a silver lining, is in fact an added cause for concern, as this might prompt him to double down on his anti-Western and increasingly authoritarian course. Vejvoda made a brief response to Barton-Hronešová's intervention; although he did not dispute her overall assessment, he pointed out that Dodik does not seem to be enjoying Vučić's unconditional support and that most Serbian citizens would not approve of an independent (let alone re-united) Republic of Srpska, both of which factors might keep the risk of secession low, at least for the time being.

With the upcoming first round of Turkish presidential and parliamentary elections taking place on 14 May 2023, many of the challenges raised earlier in the session came up again as Kerem Öktem gave a concise and captivating overview of the highly eventful two decades of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's rule in Turkey. He highlighted some key moments in Erdoğan's slide towards autocracy, such as the centralisation of his own party, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), since 2011, the first clear instance of electoral manipulation during the rerun of the 2015 parliamentary election, and some more internationally familiar developments, such as the failed coup attempt and ensuing government repression in 2016, the de facto presidentialisation of the country since 2018, and several others.

On the then-upcoming elections, Öktem seemed to share the cautious optimism exhibited by most Turkey-watchers and scholars prior to 14 May 2023, mainly rooted in a series of reasonably credible opinion polls giving a slight advantage to the largely united opposition. Öktem pointed out what is perhaps the most idiosyncratic feature of Turkish elections: regularly high turnout rates of over 80 per cent that are unattainable for most Western countries, a phenomenon all the more admirable in a context of not-infrequent electoral manipulation. While he did treat the possibility of an opposition victory seriously, he was also adamant that the elections 'would be neither free nor fair'. Two weeks later, two of his three expectations were vindicated: turnout reached 87 per cent and reports of irregularities abounded, although probably not to an extent sufficient to have affected the outcome. Contrary to Öktem's concern about Erdoğan's potential refusal to concede in the case of defeat, Turkey must now brace itself for an even more formidable challenge: surviving another five years of Erdoğanism.

The ensuing discussion reinforced the sense of bittersweet expectations about the future of the region. Lea Ypi reflected on some (mostly similar) backsliding challenges experienced by her core case study and country of origin, Albania, while also throwing demography into the mix by referencing the record-high waves of emigration. Othon Anastasakis, who chaired the session, drew attention to the recent election of Jakov Milatović, an Oxford-educated economist, to the presidency in Montenegro after three decades of controversial rule by Milo Đukanović.

Towards the end of the discussion, I challenged Vejvoda's optimism about Serbia's future foreign policy course, pointing to ever-decreasing rates of support for EU membership among the population. 'But throughout their history, Serbs have always looked to the West, not to Moscow – just think of all the great Serbian writers and scientists who educated themselves in Vienna, not at Lomonosov. Some things don't change that easily,' Vejvoda responded. He might be right.

Kristijan Fidanovski

...Ukraine

Panel: *Yaroslav Hrytsak (Ukrainian Catholic University), Nataliya Gumenyuk (Kyiv), Marnie Howlett (Oxford)*

Chair: *Paul Chaisty (Oxford)*

Yaroslav Hrytsak started his presentation with reflections on changes in Ukraine over the last two decades in relation to its democratic transition. After Euromaidan, the motto 'Freedom is our religion' became very popular in Ukraine, and it is that message which it conveyed to the broader world. At the same time, the regime in the country remained hybrid and had even slightly slipped down the democracy index before the full-scale invasion.

Nevertheless, Ukraine is characterised by several significant democratic dynamics that emerged in recent decades. The World Values Survey shows that, since the 2000s, there has been a dramatic shift in values in Ukraine from survival towards self-expression, which is associated with a transition to democracy. Moreover, contrary to expectations, the war has not reversed this shift. Trust in the government has increased significantly after the full-scale invasion. Furthermore, the differences between Zelensky and Putin and their countries' respective political establishments are striking. Ukraine's leaders are mostly in their forties, whereas Russia's are in their mid-sixties and seventies. This signifies another crucial development in Ukraine – the rotation of elites. Second, there is a shift to civic identity, which co-exists with ethnic identity in Ukraine. These positive changes are as important as the democratic indicators.

However, Ukraine has to be cautious of several dangerous developments, which are unfolding currently and might become salient after the war. One of the challenges is that Zelensky has introduced 'populism with a human face' in Ukraine, which risks transforming into authoritarianism. Another crucial issue is dealing with the widespread societal trauma resulting from the war. Related to this is the issue of justice: people want punishment for Russia, but they also want justice for those fighting on the front line. Hrytsak argued that there is a worrying tendency of a decrease in the number of volunteers because of exhaustion, people escaping the draft, and a small part of society becoming radicalised and moving towards exclusionary nationalism.

The extent of these developments will depend on how long the war continues. The war is a huge crisis but also a major opportunity. For a country to make the transition to democracy takes fifty years on average. The war can easily accelerate this process, but this requires an effort made not only by Ukraine but also by the international community.

Nataliya Gumenyuk stated that the idea of freedom is very practical in Ukraine. For people who have spent days and weeks under shelling, freedom is being able to get out of the basement and go back to their houses. For people who have been detained and tortured, freedom means simply getting out of captivity. For people in Berdiansk, freedom is getting out of the occupation.

Having interviewed Ukrainians and documented numerous war crimes, Gumenyuk has observed a shift in the idea of freedom: from ‘freedom from and against tyranny’ to a more positive notion of freedom as having control of and owning one’s liberty. She argued that in the past, Ukrainians did not have a state that felt like it was *for* them, but with the war, they started to appreciate and respect different state institutions and services. They realise that they do need a system to effectively fight and withstand the war, which is becoming more important for the idea of freedom than the image of people protesting on the streets.

Most of those who are currently fighting on the front line have made a conscious choice to do so, because there is no mandatory military service in Ukraine. Although many people have the opportunity to leave, they have decided to stay with their communities. The government feels it is important not to restrict this freedom of people to make decisions for themselves. In Ukraine, there is also a widespread feeling of guilt and of not doing enough, which can turn into a productive force of being able to do something and being able to do more. Paradoxically, the feeling of guilt is being denied in Russian society, which comes with the idea of disempowerment.

Another issue is freedom of speech and its relation to security in Ukraine. Military censorship is necessary since this war is an internet war, and visuals and instant reporting on the ground are used by Russia to target people better. For some time, there was also self-censorship among journalists with regard to discussing the issues of corruption and criticising the government. However, there is no longer a taboo on reporting the uncomfortable truth, which indicates that Ukraine does retain freedom of speech despite the war.

Gumenyuk disagreed with some of Hrytsak’s points on prospective problems in Ukraine but did mention other problems of the lack of skilled people and professionals to tackle the challenges Ukraine faces. Based on her assessment of the mood in the army, she also argued that despite the war, there is no risk of militarisation of Ukrainian society and the military: everyone wants to return to civilian life, and people will not miss the war.

Marnie Howlett raised several questions crucial for research on the concept of freedom in the context of Ukraine. She emphasised the need to make a distinction between freedom for individuals and freedom for the state. In Ukraine, people predominantly equate their freedom with the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state, as surveys show. Before the full-scale invasion in 2022, even people in the oblasts of Ukraine, such as Chernihiv, which were not directly affected by the military action in eastern Ukraine since 2014, were afraid of Russian troops and weapons piling up across the border and, therefore, were not living entirely freely.

It is also important to examine how freedom in and for Ukraine is viewed and conceptualised in the West. It is often argued that Ukraine is fighting for freedom not only for itself but also for the West. For the West to support Ukrainian freedom and to fight for it together with Ukraine, it is necessary to develop an understanding of what this freedom is. In the West it is predominantly viewed in terms of Ukraine's fight for freedom from Russia, but this does not capture the positive aspect of the fight for human rights, individual liberties and values in Ukraine.

The discussion that followed the introductory statements touched upon a broad range of topics. In particular, Ada Wordsworth, an Oxford graduate student, working with an organisation repairing homes and supporting communities in the Kharkiv region, KHARPP, emphasised the problems faced in the reconstruction of the region. In some of the most affected areas, the population is dependent on humanitarian aid. While the material damage that Russia has done to some of these communities is reversible, the nature of the occupation has made reconstruction much harder. In Ukraine, Russia was primarily targeting the local leaders. After the communities were de-occupied, they remained 'beheaded', stalling the organisation of aid distribution and reconstruction. In the regions close to the battlefield, the provision of electricity and de-mining is complicated and sometimes impossible. One has to accept that, after being rebuilt, many of the cities and towns will not be the same, and many people will not return.

A related point about the reconstruction, raised by Timothy Snyder, is the allocation of money through the local authorities rather than the central government, so that the selection process of local leaders can already begin. Although Zelensky is public-facing, his team is often not transparent in its decisions. Gumenyuk also agreed with the idea of strong constraints accompanying Western aid allocation. She stressed that Ukraine is not doomed by its history, and does change with the generations. Regarding the notion of freedom, Snyder mentioned that the question of what freedom is, which the West has been unable to resolve, might be resolved by Ukrainians. He connected the two notions of freedom and argues that 'freedom from' is important because of 'freedom to'.

Finally, questions on justice, Russian war crimes and the responsibility of Russians were raised. Currently, there are more than 80,000 cases of alleged war crimes registered in Ukraine. The majority of them are to be investigated in Ukraine, but the government aims to use any possible avenue to prosecute Russia. However, prosecutions of those directly responsible for atrocities, thus avoiding a debate on

collective guilt, can be a way for the general Russian population to escape the process of reflection and realisation of their responsibilities and complicity in the crimes. The new reality of the war requires new models for justice, new ways of reconciliation and a reconsideration of what is considered 'realistic'. It is a long process involving generational change.

In his research, Hrytsak has come to the conclusion that most of the people who pushed Putin towards the invasion were not Russian hardliners but Russian liberals. Currently, there is no initiative for reconciliation coming from the Russian opposition, and the fact that the annexed territories, including Crimea and parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, belong to Ukraine is not mentioned in the public messages that Russian liberals try to convey. However, this is precisely what is crucial for the start of the reconciliation process because sustainable peace is not possible without justice.

Sofia Horbachova

...The European Union

Panel: *Nathalie Tocci (IAI), Charles Grant (CER), Mark Leonard (ECFR)*

Chair: *Hartmut Mayer (Oxford)*

The war in Ukraine has fundamentally shifted the way in which freedom is perceived in the European Union. Whereas the basic pillars guaranteeing freedom within the EU remain the same, the emergence of the multipolar world order has made Europeans rethink the ways in which freedom should be secured by the European project. Founded as a post-1945 peace project, the EU is increasingly adopting the language of power politics. Ursula von der Leyen promised a ‘geopolitical commission’ and Josep Borrell claimed that Europeans have to learn the language of power.

There is a growing expectation that Europe should become a geopolitical actor. Enlargement, traditionally viewed as a process of spreading a liberal agenda, is increasingly perceived as a strategic necessity to secure our frontiers, whereas international trade, previously seen as a beacon of cooperation turning adversaries into friends, is now scrutinised as a sphere for rivalry and economic dependency. This inherent tension between values and strategic considerations is becoming increasingly apparent in the EU’s political debate. This dichotomy mirrors the strategic shifts within the European project. Is enlargement a tool for strategic hedging or a process championing EU values? Should we promote international trade or decoupling? Finally, is European unity upheld by our shared values or by shrewd calculations on how to proceed further in the face of diverging interests?

Those considerations dominated the mood of a discussion in which participants clashed over the recent trajectory of the European project. There was a widespread disagreement over whether the current state of affairs is a cause for optimism or not. The notion of freedom had been extended to unorthodox areas, such as energy security, health policy and investments. This transition from freedom to security – from values underpinning freedom to means of safeguarding them – reinforces the sentiment that multipolar rivalry has returned for good.

In his opening statement, Mark Leonard captured that mood, arguing that emerging as a peace initiative, the European integration is now a war project, with the EU being at the forefront of embracing the Ukrainian struggle for self-determination. Leonard also addressed the growing dichotomy between values and interests, stating that the

EU came as a post-national universal project, whereas now we are 'sort of captivated by the ethnic nationalism of Kyiv'. What we observe is the fusion of the two different ideas of freedom. Constantly searching for means of legitimacy, the EU has internalised the struggle through its bureaucratic paradigm and institutionalised instruments like the EU peace facility procuring armaments for Ukraine. Leonard claimed that these 'align and fuse, this sort of ethno-nationalist, military struggle with the kind of procedural bureaucratic approach of the EU'.

Leszek Jażdżewski summarised this process as a stable emergency. 'Philip Bobbitt described it as a temporary transformation of democracy into a sort of autocratic way of management, but then we can come back to democracy, whereas autocracies cannot transform themselves in this way.'

Leonard pointed out that the fusion of those two freedoms into a single project brings together 'a vast amount of the political spectrum from Giorgia Meloni and Jarosław Kaczyński to Macron and people in other places. And we've been doing a lot of polling on Ukraine. And what you see is a fascinating situation where if you polled people on questions to do with Ukraine, you get very similar responses from supporters of Kaczyński's Law and Justice party in Poland and the German Greens.'

The big question, though, is how durable that project is. Leonard warned that, with a prolonged conflict, Europeans would become worn down by the war and become indifferent to Ukraine, whereas Ukrainian migrants would become subject to sinister undertones from the 2015 migrant crisis.

However, there was more optimism among other participants. Nathalie Tocci saw the EU's geopolitical role as a positive development promoting freedom across its frontiers. Against the alleged fusion of ethno-nationalism and Brussels bureaucracy, she argued that the EU has rediscovered freedom as a power of attraction, a powerful appeal that still resonates. This has become especially apparent in the power of enlargement. 'What the war has done, and this goes beyond Ukraine, has highlighted really that in Europe, there are no buffer states.' Yet not everyone agreed with this view. I raised the point that the Copenhagen criteria ensuring democratic progress have become overshadowed by strategic hedging; upon receiving its candidate status, Bosnia has met few of the Copenhagen requirements, and came as a balancing act to Moldova. Even to consider a candidate such as Moldova, a country marred by corruption and a secessionist republic on its territory with a Russian army, would have been simply unthinkable a decade ago.

Tocci responded that the uneasy balance between interests and norms has been with us all the time, and that the 2004 enlargement was equally driven by that compromise. It worked well and is a force for positive change.

Notwithstanding the norms/interest divide, Charles Grant highlighted the wider reverberations that another enlargement would have in weakening the Paris-Berlin control over the EU's development. This would not only change the balance of power

but also add more countries in the East, whose primary motives are concerned with security, having close links to the United States. Grant added that it would be difficult to soften Paris and Berlin's stance on enlargement, and possibly there would be 'a lot of variable geometry and new structures considered'.

There is a risk that new structures would be created, just as Mitterrand wanted in the 1990s to drop Central and East European countries in institutional 'purgatory' – having them a little closer but not letting them in. This, in fact, was raised by Leonard, who claimed that, whereas there is a consensus that Ukraine and Moldova 'would have to be part of the European family in the European space. And we need to find an institutional way of showing what, on the other hand, is unquestionably true – that it would be terrible for France and Germany to enlarge the EU and to allow Poland and Ukraine to outvote them on different issues, which is why they'll never ever accept that. Unless they change the meaning of membership, so that it doesn't look like membership at the moment. That is pretty clear. Nobody's going to give up any vetoes on anything.' He added: 'If you really want to kill it, you link Ukraine's membership to Albania's or Kosovo's membership, but even better if you link it to Turkish accession. Then, you can have a joint referendum to kill everybody's membership prospects.'

Nonetheless, Leonard pointed to an interesting aspect where disagreements over enlargement can be seen as positive, and as strengthening European unity. Disagreements mobilise people, they bring them together to the table and, unlike Brexit, which was a negative cleavage, enlargement could become a positive, constructive one – bringing people together to discuss the future of the European project.

However, within the realm of internal disagreements, some worried whether we are united at all, whether our unity still derives legitimacy from our values. Zakaria Al-Shmaly asked at what expense we are keeping the unity. 'How much are we willing to capitulate to Orbán? And what and how much are we willing in Greece to have far-right ministers join the liberal parties?'

Throughout the discussion on unity, Tocci claimed that in the face of formal rules, the attempt to make Poland and Hungary respect the rule of law did not work, yet she added that instead 'the internal economic conditionality has worked in really quite remarkable ways.' This sentiment seemed to be shared by Kalypso Nicolaïdis who added that the European Parliament 'voted that the first hundred bids under the Recovery programme be completely transparent. That's a big thing. Many of us have been advocating this: which firms are getting what money to do what. To me, that's a huge democratic progress in the EU and democracy has to be linked with funds that might open some doors in the conditionality in Hungary and Poland.'

The situation in the Council is different to those in the Commission or the Parliament. Hartmut Mayer claimed: 'There's a salami tactic on releasing funds and there is the inter-institutional one. And we might see a disappointing story that we think we have done through conditionality, but then through salami tactics and releasing, we get

disappointment.’ What is more, Leonard extended the claim, arguing: ‘Poland and Hungary might lose a little bit of money, but it’s had absolutely no impact on the state of freedom in either of those countries. And could even be counterproductive, certainly in Hungary in terms of shaping the politics, so I don’t think we should be congratulating ourselves at all.’ The far-right Freedom Party coalition government in Austria in 2000 should be a cautionary tale about how little manoeuvring there is to influence internal politics. He added: ‘I don’t think there’s very much you can do from Brussels to affect it. It has to be an indigenous change – small amounts of money or even big amounts of money are not particularly effective tools for shaping national politics.’

During the discussion, participants also clashed over the traditional notion that Europe emerges stronger with each crisis. Vaccine procurement, energy mix and the acceleration of green deal legislative action were cited by both sides as examples of growing resilience to or shortcomings of Brussels’ policymaking.

Little was said about the twilight of European universalist claims and championing human rights. Whereas twenty years ago Europe aspired to spread liberty and progressive agendas throughout the world, it has now recognised that its universalist particularism is not shared elsewhere. Europe is now increasingly concerned with preserving its liberties at home. This had been aptly reflected towards the end of the discussion by Grant who pointed out that a black-swan event upsetting freedom in the EU, and the entire project itself, is becoming more and more probable: Marine Le Pen winning a French presidential election.

With an uncertain future ahead of us, Leonard claimed that we should prepare for the worst while hoping for the best. These are difficult times but freedom and the European project are worth fighting for.

Jan Farfal

...European Media

Panel: Sylvie Kauffmann (*Le Monde*), Katrin Bennhold (*New York Times*), Alan Rusbridger (*Prospect*)

Chair: Rasmus Nielsen (*Oxford*)

Much of the conversation over the course of the session revolved around two interrelated themes: first, freedom of the press and the role of media independence in Europe; second, the trust, or loss of trust, in media institutions in Europe and the United States.

In his opening remarks, Rasmus Nielsen began with a broad overview of the state of democratic backsliding and media freedom in Europe. Considering traditional media sources, such as newspapers and television broadcasting, Nielsen relayed the sobering statistic that one in five people in the European Union live in a country with, at best, a partially free press. Countries with an unfree or partially free media landscape are those where state broadcasts, controlled by the country's ruling party, function as the primary or single form of traditional media within the country, as well as those where media bodies are either rewarded or punished by the party in power. Critically, Nielsen argued that the EU has done practically nothing to stop these violations of media sovereignty and press freedom, and that the governmental bodies and oligarchs who have taken over traditional media organisations have faced no tangible consequences for their actions. Nielsen then moved on to discuss the role of digital media. At the same time as digital platforms have enabled billions of people to express themselves freely and publicly, he noted that both corporate and governmental actors have tried to control expression on these digital platforms (and succeeded in doing so), drawing a connection between the challenges faced by traditional media and digital media today.

Nielsen's remarks were followed by an opening statement from Sylvie Kauffmann, former editor-in-chief of *Le Monde*. Kauffmann first acknowledged the presence of corporate and governmental influence, as described by Nielsen, within the French media infrastructure. Although, as she noted, it is not atypical in France for wealthy CEOs from other industries to own newspapers and television channels, producing a potential conflict of interest, Kauffman focused her remarks on the precarious state of media freedom in Central and Eastern Europe. With reference to a recent report published by the Committee for Editorial Independence, Kauffmann examined the

situations of four countries in the region – Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic – highlighting the ways in which the media environments in these countries were similar and the ways in which they differed. A key similarity was a recognition among each country’s public that they lived within a state of limited press freedom and that freedom of the press was a necessary feature of democracy. A key difference was where the threat to freedom of the press was emerging from: in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, the threat came primarily from the business interests of media source owners and the conflicts of interest therein, whereas in Poland and Hungary, the biggest threat to press freedom came from the government. For so-called ‘illiberal democracies’ such as Hungary, Kauffmann noted that the two institutions most regularly under attack were the judiciary and the media; but whereas judiciaries could, through the support of the EU, often evade sustained attacks from party politicians, the media often could not. To conclude, Kauffmann made the crucial point that a weak independent media – that is, one free from the influences of either corporate or governmental stakeholders – poisons not only the political life but also the social life of a country.

Kauffmann’s discussion was succeeded by an opening statement from Katrin Bennhold, who began to shift the conversation towards questions of public trust in the media. With reference to a Polish newspaper that had identified itself as an ‘opposition’ media source that Kauffman had discussed earlier, Bennhold argued that even if a newspaper did not identify itself as an opposition newspaper, it would still become an actor in the national culture wars as a result of the current political and media climate. She found this to be particularly true for her own institution, the *New York Times*, which had become embroiled in American culture wars around Donald Trump’s campaign and election to the US presidency. Bennhold perceived the *New York Times*’ misunderstanding of Trump’s candidacy and his base of support in 2016 as leading to a loss of trust in the institution, with Trump voters in particular viewing the newspaper as a disreputable source. Nielsen concurred with this view and agreed with Bennhold’s later assertion that the relief felt among American left-leaning voters and media bodies following the 2022 mid-term election was naïve, suggesting that Trump voters’ perception of the media had not changed despite the Democratic party’s electoral success. Bennhold’s proposed solution to this loss of trust was an increase in humility among the journalistic establishment and a diversification of writers within the newsroom in terms of race, gender and particularly class. At well as offering an optimistic way forward, she acknowledged that while organisations such as the *New York Times* have a deeper understanding of Trump voters’ grievances than they did in 2016, they can still struggle to address these grievances in a productive way.

Pivoting away from the media situation in the United States, Bennhold echoed Nielsen and Kauffmann in her call to discuss the blind spots of the Western European media establishment, bringing up the example of former French President Jacques Chirac. After press interviews, Chirac and his staff would regularly try to discard journalists’ notes taken during the interviews, as well as tamper with or update quotes given to journalists on the record. Bennhold’s anecdote about Chirac sparked a conversation among the panellists about the way that some European politicians have attempted

to control their own media coverage. Kauffmann recalled a recent instance with French President Emmanuel Macron. Like Chirac, Macron and his staff had been known to edit interviews in a way that would be politically beneficial. A recent POLITICO story had revealed that Macron and his staff had modified the transcript of an interview with the president before it was published, a revelation that had shone a negative light on both France and the French media. Although Kauffmann had attempted to reduce the political influence on journalism during her time at *Le Monde*, the problem proved too vast without the support of collaborative media institutions, and she described the practice as ‘perverse’ and ‘terribly unhealthy’ for the functioning of a free press. Bennhold recalled that the *New York Times* had been unable to secure an interview with former German Chancellor Angela Merkel because the newspaper refused to allow the Chancellor’s staff to review and edit interview transcripts before publication. Kauffmann noted that the practice of politicians reading and authorising media reports was standard among the Western European press, and Bennhold added that this practice had been going on for as long as she had worked as a journalist on the continent.

This exchange was followed by the remarks of Alan Rusbridger, former editor-in-chief of the *Guardian*, current editor of *Prospect* magazine and Chair of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Rusbridger addressed the question of lack of trust in the media by discussing the decline of local media bodies. While a few major, elite media organisations are succeeding in the current financial environment, the vast majority of local media organisations are struggling. The result is a division between a small set of well-informed readers, such as the paid subscribers of the *New York Times*, and the rest of the population, who receive their news from untrustworthy or deeply partisan news sources. A ‘cancerous’ lack of trust emerges from this division, one that Rusbridger argued could already be observed with the discrepancies of news coverage on the Covid-19 pandemic, the faults of which could be seen as a preamble to future coverage of climate change. Like the panellists before him, Rusbridger addressed the influence of corporate and governmental actors on media organisations, citing the example of Evgeny Lebedev, a Russian-British businessman who owns the *Evening Standard* and was elevated to the House of Lords by former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson in 2020. While the most-trusted media body in the United Kingdom is the BBC, even this institution has recently been targeted by the government and the rest of the press. Furthermore, public broadcasting is not itself resistant to external influence, as signalled by the resignation of BBC Chairman Richard Sharp in April 2023 over a breach of transparency rules over his dealings with Johnson. In recognition of the challenges of media freedom and independence such as these, Rusbridger concluded by saying: ‘Even in what we think of as a stable and supposedly “enlightened” democracy ... it doesn’t take much to see how that begins to ebb away.’

Following further discussion among the panellists, the conversation opened up for questions from attendees. Antonia Zimmerman, sustainability and climate policy reporter for POLITICO Europe, asked the panellists whether they perceived a tension for media institutions between restoring trust and the retention of readers. Specifically, Zimmerman was interested to hear the panellists’ opinions on how media bodies

could increase their coverage on the issue of climate. Kauffmann acknowledged the difficulty of the issue and spoke about the need to balance less complex topics such as style and living with rigorous reporting on issues such as foreign affairs, which do not resonate as much with readers in terms of relative engagement. However, she noted that *Le Monde* maintained a considerable section reporting on climate. Rusbridger related the issue of retaining readers to the loss of trust in media institutions, citing the example of a recent article in a Sunday newspaper that featured eighteen anonymous quotes. While such a story might adhere to journalistic conventions, he argued that such reporting reduces transparency and therefore reduces the trust in media bodies. Bennhold argued that perhaps the best way both to regain trust and to retain readers was to write stories that are complicated, surprising and humanising. This sort of reporting could subvert readers' expectations and therefore keep them engaged.

Ana Martins posed three interrelated questions for the panellists. The first, harking back to earlier discussions of the loss of trust in media bodies, asked how communications institutions could be reorganised in order to rebuild trust among readers and viewers. Martins' second question was about how the business model of news organisations was impacting their coverage, and her third question was about emerging formats to communicate reporting, such as podcasts and Substack. In response, Rusbridger spoke about the business model of his former organisation, the *Guardian*, where news coverage is freely available globally rather than hidden behind a paywall. Such a model increases the accessibility of information, but he noted crucially that such a business model could not work at a local level. Bennhold argued in turn that audio formats such as podcasts are the future of news media, both for their heightened emotional power and for the direct connection they provide between the interviewee and the listener. Kauffmann addressed the questions in part by pointing to the EU's forthcoming attempt to legislate against conflicts of interest in the media across the continent and the steady rise in media literacy among the general public. Nielsen ended the panel discussion with a positive intervention, arguing that reporting during the Covid-19 pandemic was, in some senses, a journalistic success. Interviewing individuals on the front lines, such as doctors and nurses, rather than pundits, served to rebuild some confidence in institutions at a time when reliable information about the pandemic was severely lacking. On this hopeful note, the panel was concluded.

Alexandra Solovyev

...European Universities

Panel: *Michael Ignatieff (CEU), Shalini Randeria (CEU), Christoph Marksches (BBAW)*
Chair: *Roger Goodman (Oxford)*

This panel addressed the state of academic freedom in European universities and beyond. With a particular focus on the Central European University (CEU) and its expulsion from Hungary, the panel discussed the battle for academic freedom embedded in a wider political context that extends beyond national borders. Participants concurred that the attack on the CEU is symptomatic of a broader trend in which certain populist or authoritarian governments seek to eliminate counter-majoritarian institutions, including universities, in order to consolidate power in an illiberal democracy and educate a 'national bourgeoisie' which is loyal to the ruling regime. Moreover, the discussion raised the issue of academic freedom in the context of growing geopolitical competition between China and the United States. As we are witnessing a shift towards great power competition between these highly interdependent superpowers, new challenges arise for international academic exchange, knowledge sharing and dissemination, as well as the integration of academic research and national security interests. The panel thus delved into the complexities surrounding academic collaboration, the changing funding landscape, and the need for a comprehensive understanding of academic freedom in the digital age.

What is academic freedom? In his introductory statement, Christoph Marksches, president of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities and former president of the Humboldt University in Berlin, argued that there is still a lack of clarity in defining, measuring and hence understanding academic freedom. Provocatively, he asked: 'But can we really measure academic freedom? What are the elements of and the criteria by which we measure this intangible concept?' Marksches pointed out that academic freedom is often simplistically perceived as freedom of thought – a perspective that reflects 'a male professor's ideal at the writing desk, unhindered by external constraints'. However, it is far from clear who the subject of academic freedom is: is it the individual scholar, the academic institution, students or even wider parts of society? According to Marksches, this one-sided definition has long distorted our view of the limitations of academic freedom. For example, by reducing academic freedom to a professor's freedom of thought, 'we have neglected important dimensions of inequality related to academic freedom'.

After all, even in the ‘fortress of academic freedom, Europe, female students have only embraced certain freedoms in the last century. Or perhaps never, given certain backlashes?’

Shalini Randeria, current president and rector of the CEU, echoed Markschie’s points on the lack of clarity on academic freedom. Referring to the case of Ahmed Samir Santawy, a CEU master’s student who was detained in Egypt for eighteen months after returning to his country of origin to conduct fieldwork, Randeria highlighted: ‘What we often forget is, who is the subject of academic freedom? It’s not just the university, and the professors but also the students. Why are the students subjects? Because they are often surveilled by their governments when they’re abroad.’ Therefore, students face limitations on the topics they can explore and issues they can address in public. Moreover, the scope of their dissertations and whether they can be made accessible to the public become crucial concerns. These considerations raise questions about who can access students’ academic work and the potential risks that students may therefore encounter. According to Randeria, this particularly underscores the need to examine the multifaceted challenges faced by students in the realm of academic freedom, extending beyond the confines of the classroom or campus. The panel agreed that it is particularly concerning when students find themselves under surveillance even within the supposed protected space of the university.

Michael Ignatieff, rector emeritus of the CEU, made a strong case for considering the global dimensions of the protection of academic freedom – especially in an era increasingly characterised by political, economic and also intellectual competition between the United States and China. To illustrate this complicated interplay of national, regional and global challenges to academic freedom, he pointed to a side aspect of the CEU case. Ignatieff noted that when the CEU, a European- and US-accredited institution and strong advocate of academic freedom, was forced to relocate from Hungary to Vienna, Orbán instead invited Fudan University from China to come to Hungary and take CEU’s place.

This allows us to suddenly see some global dimensions in the story. Fudan ranks number 39 in the world reputation ranking of universities. So this is a great institution with a tremendous reputation in the natural and social sciences, but it has made a commitment in its constitution as of 2019 to abandon reference to academic freedom ... and replaced it with obedience to the leading rule of the Communist Party of China. So you begin to see what happened here: They have replaced an institution committed to international standards of academic freedom with a university that is not.

Ignatieff further argued that the attack on the CEU and academic freedom in Hungary is part of a broader strategy to establish an illiberal democracy, aiming to eliminate counter-majoritarian institutions such as the Supreme Court, the media and universities. Soft autocrats like Orbán use educational systems to create and reproduce

an elite loyal to the regime. ‘If you ask Orbán what he’s doing sociologically, he will say: “I’m using national institutions to create a national bourgeoisie. And I’m giving the national bourgeoisie a rationale to stay home and get rich, get rich with me.”’

Ivan Krastev added that demographics play a key part in this story. The fear of population decline looms large in small states in Eastern Europe. ‘The idea that we cannot reproduce ourselves, the idea that we are demographically shrinking, is becoming a total obsession.’ Krastev further argued that the interesting story about Hungary is that, because of the nature of the Hungarian language, Hungary is trying to develop an island state in Europe. In part, this is Orbán’s ideological project. In part, it is typical of small states: ‘global universities are a major agent of denationalisation’, especially in Europe, where ‘leaving’ a country (exit) is an easy option, while ‘voice’ is difficult. As global universities tend to benefit mostly the big states, small states increasingly tend to rely on patriotism, nationalism, but also clientelism to keep their ‘youth’ at home.

In this context, Randeria drew attention to a significant development occurring not only in Hungary and Poland but also recently to some extent in the United States, where new illiberal institutions of higher learning are being established alongside traditional universities. ‘There is a whole ecosystem of these new kinds of institutions. They’re not really universities but something between a think tank, a party cadre, and a school or institute of advanced study.’ In Hungary, the Mathias Corvinus Collegium was set up to prepare the ‘next patriotic generation.’ According to its own statute, it is ‘ideologically independent, but not value-neutral’, and its aim is to ‘represent Hungarian interests.’ In Poland, the Collegium Intermarium was founded in 2021. It has two parent institutions: the ultra-right-wing Catholic organisation Ordo Iuris and the Polish government’s National Institute of Freedom.

These institutions – and regimes – actively seek connections with right-wing, conservative politicians, scholars and journalists from the United States, making for an illiberal exchange of ideas. Both Randeria and Ignatieff highlighted Orbán’s recent invitation of Tucker Carlson to Mathias Corvinus Collegium as a prime example of this illiberal transatlantic exchange. Leonard Bernardo, the senior vice president of the Open Society Foundations, expressed concern over the importing of illiberal models from Hungary to the United States. He specifically mentioned the case of the New College of Florida, a small liberal arts college which Ron DeSantis is attempting to transform into a conservative institution similar to Hillsdale College in Michigan. ‘For this purpose, he [DeSantis] is basically abolishing tenure, changing the board and, because it’s a public institution, doing whatever he wants.’ During a recent visit, Bernardo engaged with faculty members from larger higher education institutions in Florida and raised the issue of the lack of solidarity towards New College. He reportedly found out that they are all ‘unbelievably intimidated’ and that those who have tenure are frightened of losing it.

Reflecting on the examples of Hungary and Poland, and also the United States, Randeria argued that it is crucial to consider the glorification of anti-intellectualism

by populists and soft authoritarian governments as part of the academic freedom debate. Those regimes uphold the belief that the ordinary, uneducated individuals of their respective societies hold superior views to those involved in academic discourse. This perspective essentially equates all opinions, blurring the distinction between freedom of speech and academic freedom. At this point, a central conundrum arises concerning the relationship between protecting freedom of speech and preserving academic freedom. As Randeria put it: 'While academic freedom carries a responsibility and an obligation to uphold truth, freedom of speech probably does not. Therefore we really need to make a distinction between protecting freedom of speech and protecting academic freedom.'

Ignatieff pointed out that the debate on academic freedom pays too little attention to the question of what happens to academic freedom in a global context in which China and the United States are increasingly in competition. He argued that although the United States and China are important trading partners and strategic rivals, their intellectual partnership has often been overlooked. 'What are the implications for the world of de-globalisation, where we increasingly find ourselves in a great power competition between China and the United States, with allies lining up on both sides? It's not just de-globalisation of the economy, it's not just friend-shoring of production lines, but it also has crucial implications for international academic exchange and the circulation of knowledge.' During the globalisation era, we witnessed the productive opening up of exchanges between societies with different political systems, resulting in economic, intellectual and scientific advancements. Hence, there is a close interconnection now between Chinese and American science, particularly at institutions like MIT or Caltech. Ignatieff stressed that China – as opposed to Putin's Russia – had embarked on an intriguing strategic gamble by establishing 'an authoritarian single-party state with constant access to leading technologies and intellectual property of the twenty-first century'. By doing so, this closed society had wagered that it can participate in the global knowledge economy. Over the years, this cooperation has evolved into a collaboration between equals, with China now boasting two universities, Tsinghua and Beijing University, ranked among the top twenty globally.

However, Ignatieff argued that geopolitics is steadily becoming more and more adverse to the furtherance of this academic collaboration and exchange. 'We now find ourselves in a new era defined by the United States' National Security Strategy of 2022, which promotes a "narrow yard, high fence" approach. This policy involves limited collaboration and heightened surveillance in certain areas such as dual-use technologies.' While there remains an undefined space for continued intellectual collaboration, the extent of this narrow yard and the height of the fence are unclear, according to Ignatieff. Unfortunately, Ignatieff argued, discussions on academic freedom in the Western world often overlook this issue, 'focusing instead on more parochial concerns like "woke" culture and political correctness'. However, considering academic freedom in this context sheds enormous light on the geopolitics of the twenty-first century, where the United States (and also China) is grappling with the challenge of reconciling its economic and intellectual interdependence with national security objectives.

In the face of these complex challenges, the panel concluded by emphasising once again the need for a comprehensive understanding of academic freedom and the need to recognise the global politics of academic freedom, which will increasingly shape our future.

Josef Lolacher

Freedom in Europe: Dimensions, Dilemmas and Prospects

Panel: *Ivan Krastev (IWM), Anne Applebaum (JHU), Lea Ypi (LSE)*
Chair: *Kalypso Nicolaïdis (EUI)*

Kalypso Nicolaïdis began with a set of questions for the panellists. Given the previous discussions, how should we engage with freedom's discontents? How can the past seventy years of post-war freedom be made fit for purpose for 'democracy with foresight', to prepare for the long term? How can liberalism be given the 'muscle' to survive in the world, and what are the conditions for its continuation? What does the global infrastructure of freedom look like? How should we 'freedom thinkers' relate to the 'freedom fighters' out there?

The first panellist, Anne Applebaum, began with Katrin Bennhold's remark the previous day that 'freedom' resonates more than 'democracy' – whether in Hong Kong or Burma, Iran or Venezuela. However, in the case of Europe, there is a need to focus on democracy, especially in its mundane and clearly defined senses. 'We should bear in mind, following Isaiah Berlin, that different forms of freedom clash with each other. But this is precisely why we need a system that balances between what people want, which offers checks and balances, and a way of weighing these trade-offs. The post-war model of liberal democracy is still able to give most freedom to most people at any given time. This is the system that the EU offers, and it is the only thing that works. Our only real hope is in preserving this system, which is under dire threat.'

One question we have to ask is: why are people afraid of freedom? This question is at the core of why there is a surge of political parties and movements that attempt to undermine freedom. Part of this is a response to rapid change, which leads people to react, to want things to slow down and halt, and to look for predictability. People hear arguments and they want silence. They often look backwards to a time when such change supposedly did not happen. Applebaum noted that the small-town childhood familiar to many in Europe and the United States in the 1970s does not exist anymore in the same way, especially because of the advent of social media. This is one part of understanding the desire to resist change, which is fuelling populist rhetoric and also exacerbated by Russian promotion of anti-liberal ideas. One key is to understand that social media creates fear and division, and that certain rules can

be designed to enhance conversation. The aim is to make people more comfortable with freedom and, through social media, to connect with different movements around the world.

Ivan Krastev continued the discussion about freedom. He noted that the primary context in which freedom is invoked in Europe was in the anti-lockdown discourse during the pandemic. 'It is the only place where people in Europe are shouting freedom. The conceptual basis of this invocation is a fetishistic understanding of individual freedom, which resists not the dictatorial state but resists social norms. It is based on: "in a world of uncertainty, no one knows better than me"'. There is a belief that nobody knows anything anymore, and there is a strong aversion to trusting governments or experts. As Martin Wolf commented: 'Living today is like living in a casino.' Covid might be more important than Ukraine in shaping how freedom is discussed in Europe.

Krastev pointed to the plural word 'Homelands' in the title of Timothy Garton Ash's latest book. In English, to feel free and to feel at home are synonymous. Being at home means you understand what is going on, and that you are understood. The Minister of the Interior in Italy recently mentioned meeting an older woman in a city with many migrants. She said she had not left her apartment for years, and when asked why, said it is no longer her neighbourhood, for the smells are different, things have changed. There is a strong drive for nostalgia, and lack of appreciation for changes in one's country. For the past seventy years in Europe, peace and freedom have been synonymous, peace is freedom and freedom is peace. Why was it so difficult for Europeans to believe that war could happen? Key assumptions of the European project were questioned: that economic interdependence guaranteed security, that military power didn't matter, that changes in political identity had made war impossible. In Ukraine there is now a need for existential nation-building, a heroic project, whereas Europe was always a post-national project, and this may be a gap in mutual understanding.

Lea Ypi referenced discussions with Garton Ash over the past few months – she pointed out that they agree on substance but not on terms. To her, liberalism without capitalism is socialism. Her goal is to point out the pathologies of liberalism and capitalism. The idea of legitimation is at the heart of liberal democracy. People are born free and equal, and agree to sacrifice and jointly submit to collective political authority, rather than to the divine right of kings or other arbitrary power. In the emergency rule during Covid, or during the EU financial crisis, the suspension of norms invoked democratically legitimate authority, as if it was a delegation of authority to the state. In reality, this has been a piece of liberal propaganda. We are not equally subject to laws. Liberal society is not free from fear, and it may even be worse than the state of nature. Some people are more free than others, some lives are more worth living than others. Emergency rule can be short term, but it can tell us about the society we live in: unprecedented concentration of power, unaccountable actors and the illusion of democratic legitimacy. Liberalism exists in a curious relationship with capitalism, and their combination generates three kinds of pathologies.

First, from the perspective of moral anthropology, the liberation of individuals from traditional authority ends up in a situation of ‘private vices and public virtues’; there are problems of selfishness, of distrust and of desiring luxury goods, which is tied to the need to impress. This is often combined with indifference to the fate of the most vulnerable and the displacement of communal feelings. Second, from the theory of the state, there is the need of state power to guarantee commercial society, and as states outsource issues of taxation and welfare, this at best patches up domestic inequality at the cost of international anarchy. Third, from the theory of economics, the celebration of commercial society led to efforts to expand this model to the extra-European world. The spectre of empire is essential to liberalism, though it is often brushed aside as a by-product. In general, as liberalism attempts to disperse power, it generates its own power structures and pathologies and unfreedom. Liberal structures of power are anonymised and dispersed, and its psychology breeds selfishness and indifference rather than outright aggression. It is harder to fight, but if we really want liberalism, we have to end up in a different place than liberal *perestroika*.

After these initial presentations by the panellists, the session moved into a lively and spontaneous discussion. Krastev noted the unclear status of the state in liberalism today. The voter is no longer a soldier today, so what is the relationship between the electorate and the state? Applebaum pointed to capitalism’s evolution; that we have collective control over how it develops, and that it has been challenged over the centuries from both the left and the right. Krastev noted that socialism was easier to imagine in the early twentieth century, when there were more bounded national economies. It is more difficult to conceive of today with the flow of migrants and shifting demographics. Ypi argued that if capitalism has been reformed, it is not because of itself, as its logic is simply the accumulation of capital, but through challenges by the state and other actors.

Martin Wolf raised a point about the economy, which has been absent so far. Must Europe become a state with power, and how is capitalism part of that project? Gesine Schwan brought up the distinction between political and economic liberty. The core of all social democratic discussion is to keep political freedom within various kinds of capitalism; what are the alternatives? Anne-Marie Slaughter wanted to bring in the social dimensions of freedom, especially in reference to Patricia Clavin’s point in a previous panel about patriarchy. The freedom of women in past decades is key, but has not been discussed. She pointed to some possible case studies, such as Danielle Allen’s plurality network and the cooperatives in Emilia-Romagna. Timothy Garton Ash argued that liberalism and capitalism need not have an intrinsic connection, but that the specific connection has to do with twenty-first-century financial capitalism, which is destroying the separation between wealth and power, and bringing us close to hereditary plutocracy. What restrictions would we place on private ownership?

Ypi returned with a few points to questions from the audience. She emphasised the role of inequality in spurring radical critiques, and the need to go back to revolutionary social democratic movements, for example back to Eduard Bernstein before social democracy was wedded to the nation state, so we can think beyond just

winning seats in the national parliament. She also pointed out that financial capitalism didn't come out of nowhere; it arose from the failure of welfare state social democracy. There may be no need to abolish private property, but there is a need to limit ownership by a few individuals of the major means of production. Krastev added that there is a difficulty in discussing nationalisation in the age of data, as it is not about industries but about digital information. In addition, Europe has boxed itself into a corner, having set up a notion of power based on regulation in a globalised world, which defines power on Europe's weaknesses not its strengths. But if the Americans and Chinese decouple, for example, who are we to regulate? It is difficult to think of Europe as universalist today, since it is a declining power. Perhaps it is easiest to be universal at the peak of power or when powerless.

Timothy Snyder refocused the discussion on the social dimensions of freedom. We are not born free, but whether we are free depends on institutions around us. Freedom is a transgenerational process; childhood, for example, requires family as well as state. The United States is haywire for not accepting the role of the state, so the family has to go it alone. Krastev mentioned a Russian saying that there are two things Russians cannot choose: their parents and their president. There is also a cultural issue here, in that the Kremlin's line is now: if you go with the democratic West, tomorrow they will make you choose your own parents as well. He concluded with the point that one good thing about socialism was that it looked at the present from the future. Ypi joined at the session's conclusion by saying that even if socialism has failed, we can work with the failure. Capitalism has also failed, and people are not happy with fixing it only at the margins.

Lucas Tse

The Future of Freedom

Panel: *Francis Fukuyama, former and current Dahrendorf Scholars, and members of the Dahrendorf Network*

Chair: *Rana Mitter (Oxford)*

The final session delved into the question of how Europe will evolve in the coming decades. To address this, the session provided a platform for the younger generation to voice their perspectives. The participants included over thirty current students and alumni of the Dahrendorf Programme. Francis Fukuyama conveyed his expectations for the concept of freedom in the forthcoming years through a video message. The initial responses to Fukuyama's message were provided by five Dahrendorf Scholars, followed by additional reflections from the broader Dahrendorf Network. Furthermore, insights were gathered from the wider audience through their comments and contributions.

Four key themes emerged: the end of history, pluralising the meaning of freedom, freedom in the age of climate change, and responsibilities facing the younger generation. These themes illuminate crucial aspects related to the future of freedom in Europe.

Fukuyama's video message began with a discussion of the year 1989, which marked the onset of US hegemony in terms of military, political, economic and ideological power. However, the subsequent turning points of the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the 2008 financial crisis brought about a recalibration of global power dynamics. From a geopolitical standpoint, the rise of Russia and China presents new challenges and uncertainties regarding the future of global democracy. Socioeconomic aspects, such as the emergence of new information technologies and the transition away from fossil fuels, have become vital topics of discussion.

In his video message, Fukuyama revisited his seminal 1989 article 'The end of history' and concluded that the outcome of history was more likely to be a fusion of liberal democracy and market economy. While the notion of the end of history has sparked ongoing debates, the core ideas put forth by Fukuyama remain highly pertinent in the discourse surrounding the current and future state of freedom. Throughout the session, participants traced back to the original conclusion of Fukuyama's text:

The end of history will be a very sad time. The struggle for recognition, the willingness to risk one's life for a purely abstract goal, the worldwide ideological struggle that called forth daring, courage, imagination and idealism, will be replaced by economic calculation, the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands.

Several participants raised critical questions regarding the Cold War prism that, in their view, underpinned both the video message and the original thesis. They viewed this perspective as indicative of nostalgia and melancholia rather than an accurate diagnosis of the current global landscape, a perceived 'liberal inability to mourn the loss of a Cold War framework for freedom.' Participants called for rethinking what freedom signifies in the twenty-first century and emphasised the necessity of emancipating the concept of freedom from the confines of Cold War frameworks. They advocated for understanding freedom as the pursuit of self-determination free from domination, as well as recognising the interconnectedness between individuals.

Another participant commented on the characterisation of the end of history as 'sad' and 'boring,' challenging the notion that boredom necessarily equates to sadness. They reflected on the history of the European Union, tracing it back to the European Coal and Steel Community. This pragmatic foundation served as the basis for all the values-based frameworks established within the EU. This is also relevant in light of the discussion of EU enlargement, drawing on Marx's idea of the base and the superstructure, that if the economic material interests or military security interests are absent, it becomes challenging to engage in conversations about values. There are reasonable grounds to embrace boredom at the end of history and see it in a more positive light.

From the departure point of 1989, participants contemplated the ongoing struggle for freedom and its evolving nature. Participants highlighted the fact that the meanings ascribed to freedom have shifted over time and across generations. They emphasised the importance of a liberal democratic model that enables individuals to negotiate the meanings and priorities regarding freedom. A question that arose from these discussions was whether we are genuinely free to talk about freedom in all directions. While the United States continues to be seen as a bastion of liberalism, it simultaneously grapples with the fears surrounding the transformation of its demographic composition into a more multi-ethnic and multicultural society. These fears have, in part, nourished the discourse around liberalism. In response, participants called for the creation of a new discursive space where meaningful discussions on the redefined meanings of freedom can take place. Meanwhile, participants recognised the existence of past issues and historical baggage that could hinder our discussions on the future of freedom. They sought to create a more inclusive space to address these past issues properly.

Building upon the review and critique of history, participants explored how to infuse contemporary values into the concept of freedom. The discussion mined the vital aspects of freedom and its intrinsic connections to the core values of democracy, justice and security.

On freedom and democracy, one participant pointed towards the significance of recent election events around the world, including the elections of President Biden in the United States, President Lula in Brazil, and the Turkish election between Erdoğan and Kılıçdaroğlu, which was seen as a pivotal event with ripple effects for the future of democracy in the Middle East, Europe and the world. Participants underlined the ongoing democratic processes in shaping the trajectory of freedom.

On freedom and justice, participants highlighted justice as a crucial prerequisite for freedom. One participant specifically directed attention to the political landscape of Turkey and how it might become an intriguing case in the near future, with a democratic system that endorses a form of egalitarian capitalism with much emphasis on social justice. However, it also exhibits distinct social characteristics compared with the Western world, particularly in terms of the balance between freedom, liberty and values such as family, community and connection.

On the relationship between freedom and security, one participant examined the context of the Russo-Ukrainian War and its impact on freedom of speech. It was observed that in such situations, freedom is intertwined with predictability and a degree of safeguarding, which are deemed essential for ensuring stability. The discussion extended to the challenges of reconciliation and establishing accountability after the war. Moreover, the motivations behind the enlargement of the EU were considered. Participants pointed out that a compromise exists between the value of freedom and the desire for security and stability. The concept of freedom was further expanded by one participant as being closely tied to the sense of community, belonging, and the assurance of being cared for. These discussions served to pluralise the meaning of freedom and paved the way for more nuanced interpretations of freedom in contemporary times.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment Report (2023) has sounded the alarm on the intensification of climate change. This phenomenon raises significant questions regarding the ecological boundaries of human activities and has shaped the notion of freedom in a distinct manner. The urgency of dealing with climate change makes it both an unpredictable threat multiplier and a constant feature of our time. Consequently, any discussion on the future of freedom necessitates addressing the pressing issue of climate change.

Participants highlighted that climate change had prompted a reconsideration of the boundaries of individual liberty. In the context of liberal democratic systems, individuals have gained greater empowerment while becoming more threatening to each other. Humans have assumed the role of controllers of nature, exerting a

significant impact on the environment. Participants cautioned against the oversimplistic assumption that ending the reliance on fossil fuels and adopting green technologies could automatically lead to a freer world. Climate change inevitably asks everyone to re-examine the limitations of individual freedom in the light of endless resource exploitation and waste generation.

A closely related discussion revolved around the willingness of Europe to make sacrifices to achieve planetary goals and the extent to which it is prepared to do so. These points have received serious consideration among the new generation, who are increasingly inclined to take action. From an intergenerational rights perspective, thinking about freedom entails contemplating the constraints being imposed on future generations by the reluctance to make fundamental changes in current societal structures.

However, participants also questioned whether the trade-off of personal freedom is sufficient to solve the climate crisis, presenting two main perspectives. First, doubts were expressed about the capability of both liberal and authoritarian governments to govern and tackle such a problem successfully. Young people's frustration and impatience with democracies' perceived inability to address climate change effectively were highlighted. The credibility of the new generation in solving the climate crisis was also called into question. Additionally, the discussion broached the topic of whether a 'benevolent global dictator' would be necessary to fix climate change.

Second, there are profound inequalities in the face of climate change, and the topic itself has become a factor that exacerbates inequalities worldwide. Participants raised a critical question of who is free to think about climate change as an issue of freedom and pointed out that today's climate movement largely remains a privileged movement. In addition, participants drew attention to the stark disparities in freedom experienced in different contexts, especially for the most vulnerable members of societies, including women, LGBTQ people, rural populations, and marginalised communities in the global South.

Observing climate protests and climate justice movements in Europe, participants recognised the interconnection between individual duties in addressing climate change and the required political and structural transformations. In this sense, climate change poses a challenge to capitalist production. It is impossible to speak meaningfully about freedom without involving discussions about capitalism. Participants pointed out the need to initiate conversations about what has failed in capitalism to avoid being trapped in the view that there is no alternative version of freedom. There is growing urgency to critically examine the growth imperatives and the inherent contradictions between the capitalist economy and the demand to address climate change properly.

The final question is: what is to be done as we enter these turbulent times? At the heart of this discussion lies the dynamic between the self and the broader societal framework, with one participant drawing upon Hannah Arendt's discussion of the

relationship between the individual, society and the state. In the digital age, society has become increasingly polarised and atomised, with differing opinions and perspectives emerging even among the younger generation. These divisions are particularly evident in the climate crisis. The new generation bears a tremendous weight of responsibilities, hearing a resounding call to action. The choices they confront are both personal and carry significant implications intertwined with broader social structures.

Regarding social responsibilities, participants agreed on the need to fight for a free and open society, which is crucial for the future of freedom. In particular, climate change cannot be solved in an unequal and closed society. Regarding national responsibilities, there is a pressing need to admit the problems of globalisation and capitalism and negotiate conflicting values, which is seen as a fundamental aspect that liberal democratic systems are designed to facilitate. Additional points raised by participants included the necessity of revisiting the foundational elements such as coal, steel and transportation, and upgrading GDP to reintegrate nature's contribution. Moreover, there was a call to move beyond the focus on material well-being and explore pathways to allow humans to flourish.

Regarding global responsibilities, the younger generation has felt the deep interconnectedness between the past and the present, the self and society, and the intersectionality of contemporary challenges. This understanding has particular implications for the EU to transition into a post-colonial project, because ignoring the lasting effects of colonialism risks enabling the weaponisation of anti-colonial discourses by authoritarian leaders. Decolonisation, therefore, should commence within Europe itself.

The new generation will play an active role in all these discussions. In facing the future, there is a consensus to interrogate our actions and uphold the spirit of liberty. Participants acknowledged the final point raised in Fukuyama's video: 'There is no automatic mechanism that propels history forward, apart from the agency that individuals exercise.' Rather than being passive subjects facing uncontrollable forces, recognising and exercising human agency are crucial in effectively addressing our time's new challenges and circumstances.

Ruihan Zhu

Participants in the 2023 Dahrendorf Colloquium

Eric Abraham
Abid Adonis
Zakaria Al Shmaly
Hande Yalnizoglu Altinay
Roy Allison
Othon Anastasakis
Lucia Annunziata
Anne Applebaum
Alec Ash
Tanya Baldwin
Lionel Barber
Anthony Barnett
Jessie Barton Hronešová
Ezgi Basaran
Dimitar Bechev
Leonard Benardo
Katrin Bennhold
Miguel Berger
Paul Betts
Dominic Burbage
Lenka Bustiková
Julia Carver
Annabelle Chapman
Paul Chaisty
Anna Chimenti
Sophia Clark
Patricia Clavin
Guy Collender
Paul Collier
Adele Curness
Christiane Dahrendorf
Daphne Dahrendorf
Ellen Dahrendorf
Nicola Dahrendorf
Olivier Yasar de France
Anne Deighton

Faisal Devji
Annette Dittert
Patrizia Dogliani
Marguerite Dupree
Peter Eigen
Joao Carlos Espada
Natasha Fairweather
Jan Farfal
Kristijan Fidanovski
Francis Fukuyama
Danuta Garton Ash
Timothy Garton Ash
Roger Goodman
Charles Grant
Petra Guasti
Nataliya Gumenyuk
Helen Haft
Katharina Hasewend
Sofia Horbachova
Carys Howell
Marnie Howlett
Yaroslav Hrytsak
Andrew Hurrell
Will Hutton
Michael Ignatieff
Robert Illiffe
Leszek Jażdżewski
Daniel Judt
Mehmet Karli
Sylvie Kauffmann
Talia Kollek
Alex Kuo
Nora Kürzdörfer
Ivan Krastev
Selma Kropp
Ellen Leafstedt

Mark Leonard
Josef Lolacher
Xiaoyu Lu
Christoph Markschies
Ana Martins
Hartmut Mayer
Margaret MacMillan
David Madden
Giuseppe Marcocci
Pascal Marty
Annalena McAfee
Ian McEwan
Luisa Melloh
Anand Menon
Gabriele Metzler
Rana Mitter
Andrew Moravcsik
Helen Mountfield
Jan-Werner Müller
Fraser Nelson
Kalypso Nicolaïdis
Rasmus Nielsen
Eamonn Noonan
Kerem Öktem
Richard Ovenden
Karl-Heinz Paqué
Ann Pasternak-Slater
Chris Patten
Joanna Plucinska
Charles Powell
David Priestland
Nigel Purse
Gideon Rachman
Craig Raine
Shalini Randeria
Sophie Rau

Sigrid Rausing
Adam Roberts
José Maria Robles Fraga
Wolfgang Rohe
Francois-Joseph Ruggiu
Jacques Rupnik
Alan Rusbridger
Gesine Schwan
Michal Šimečka
Dorian Singh
David Siroky
Anne-Marie Slaughter
Glenda Sluga
Timothy Snyder
Alexandra Solovyev
Samuel Sorokin
Wouter te Kloeze
Sarah Tegas
Nathalie Tocci
Adam Tooze
Rick Trainor
Lucas Tse
Ivan Vejvoda
Tim Vlandas
Katarzyna Walecka
Karolina Wigura
Stuart Williams
Andreas Wirsching
Zbig Wojnowski
Martin Wolf
Ada Wordsworth
Reja Wyss
Lea Ypi
Sylvie Zannier
Antonia Zimmermann
Ruihan Zhu

The Dahrendorf Programme

The First Fifteen Years

The Dahrendorf Programme dates its origins to an event I organised in 2009 for the eightieth birthday of Ralf Dahrendorf, the leading British-German social thinker and third Warden of St Antony's. He and I both knew that he was dying. Public tributes were paid by Jürgen Habermas, Fritz Stern and myself, followed by a small workshop at which a group of intellectuals associated with Ralf debated the future of liberty and liberalism in the immediate aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis. A record of what was in effect the first Dahrendorf Colloquium can be found in the booklet *On Liberty: The Dahrendorf Questions*.

Ralf died shortly thereafter. Michael Göring of the Hamburg-based Zeit Foundation, with which Ralf was closely associated, then suggested to me that we should repeat this every year. The Dahrendorf family was very happy with the idea. And so the programme was born, finding its natural and highly congenial home in the European Studies Centre. The birth of the Dahrendorf Programme therefore coincided with what I call the 'downward turn' for liberal Europe after 2008.

The programme has three interlinked elements:

The annual Dahrendorf Lecture and Colloquium. Dahrendorf Lecturers have included Ronald Dworkin, Martha Nussbaum, Gesine Schwan, Michael Ignatieff, Timothy Snyder and Catherine de Vries. For a full list, see below. On www.sant.ox.ac.uk/research-centres/dahrendorf-programme-study-freedom/dahrendorf-lecture-and-colloquium-0, you can also find links to video or audio recordings of many of the lectures. The Dahrendorf Colloquium sometimes take the form of a workshop, as in 2009, and sometimes, as in 2023, a larger conference. Often these are closely linked to the current research project.

Dahrendorf Scholars. Three graduate students every year are selected in an open competition, to work with the programme on its current research projects, prepare the annual Colloquium and write a Dahrendorf Essay on a subject of their choice. So far we have had forty-two Dahrendorf Scholars, many of whom have gone on to do interesting and important things in their own chosen spheres. They are listed below. On www.sant.ox.ac.uk/research-centres/dahrendorf-programme-study-freedom/dahrendorf-scholars-and-essays you can also find links to the texts of many of their essays.

Research projects. Our first major project looked at the challenge of combining freedom and diversity, in a comparative study of Britain, Canada, France, Germany and the United States. The final report, co-authored by Kerem Öktem, Edward Mortimer and myself, was published as *Freedom in Diversity: Ten Lessons for Public Policy from Britain, Canada, France, Germany and the United States*.

Our second project was even more ambitious: a global, transcultural investigation of free speech, documented on a thirteen-language website Free Speech Debate: www.freespeechdebate.com. This contributed significantly to the writing of my book *Free Speech: Ten Principles for a Connected World*. The book, and the larger project behind it, were recognised with the British Academy Prize for Global Cultural Understanding.

In 2019 we launched a project examining how Europeans in general, and young Europeans in particular, see Europe – and what they want and expect from the EU. Our in-depth interviews, expert interviews, seminars and EU-wide opinion polling are documented on the Europe's Stories website: www.europeanmoments.com. A group of participating students produced a challenging final report, *Young Europeans Speak to EU*, which was presented in several European capitals, including Berlin, Prague and Brussels.

In 2021, I was very glad to be joined as co-director of the programme by the historian Paul Betts. Together, we have reversed the gaze in a new project called Europe in a Changing World. Having looked at Europe from inside, we are now examining Europe as perceived by – and in its complex historical, cultural, social and political relations with – five major non-European powers: China, India, Turkey, Russia and the United States. (Hence the acronym CITRUS, a group identification disliked almost equally by all of them.) For this enterprise, we have partnered with major universities and institutes of advanced study in continental Europe and the CITRUS countries: Ashoka University, Delhi; European University Institute (EUI), Florence; Higher School of Economics (HSE), Moscow; Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna; Peking University (PKU), Beijing; Sabanci University, Istanbul; Remarque Institute at NYU, New York; Stanford University, California; and, in Berlin, the Cluster of Excellence SCRIPTS (Contestations of the Liberal Script) at the Freie Universität Berlin and the WZB Berlin Social Science Centre.

Beside monthly Zoom webinars across sixteen time zones, with the participation of students and faculty from all these places, and expert research on particular themes, we have partnered with ECFR to conduct opinion polling both in Europe and in the five CITRUS countries. The 2022 Dahrendorf colloquium was a launch conference for this project. Almost all participating institutions have held related conferences of their own. All details can be found on the Europe in a Changing World website (www.europeanmoments.com). A book publication is planned for 2024. A second phase of the Europe in a Changing World project, involving more in-depth research on Europe's relations with the CITRUS countries, is planned for the period 2024-26.

Needless to say, none of this would have been possible without the generous support of many funders. They are listed on the relevant websites and publication pages, but on this occasion we would particularly like to thank the Zeit Foundation, which supported the programme for many years; the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, which remains an important partner; and the Mercator Foundation, which provides substantial core funding for the Dahrendorf Programme and its Europe in a Changing World project.

If you would like to know more, or would like to be involved in any way, please email us on dahrendorf.programme@sant.ox.ac.uk.

Timothy Garton Ash

Dahrendorf Lectures 2010–2023

2010

Adair Turner, House of Lords

Wellbeing and Inequality in Post-Industrial Society

2011

A. C. Grayling, Birkbeck College, University of London

Usama Hasan, Middlesex University

Charles Moore, *Daily Telegraph*

Is Nothing Sacred? Free Speech and Religion

2012

Ronald Dworkin, New York University

How Universal is Liberalism?

2013

Martha Nussbaum, University of Chicago

Combining Freedom and Diversity: The Challenge of Religious Difference

2014

Ulrich Beck, University of Munich

The Cosmopolitan Outlook: How the European Project Can Be Saved

2015

Craig Calhoun, London School of Economics and Political Science

The Dream of a Democratic Public in Britain and Europe

2016

Robert Post, Yale University

Free Speech in the University

2017

Gesine Schwan, Viadrina European University

Society and Democracy in Germany

2018

Michael Ignatieff, Central European University

The Defence of the University in Illiberal Times

2019

Timothy Snyder, Yale University

Europe's Story: Phoenix or Phantom?

2020

Norbert Röttgen, German Bundestag

Germany, Europe and the West

2021

Catherine de Vries, Bocconi University

What Do European Citizens Want the EU to Be?

2022

Xiaolu Guo

Dreams and Reflections: A Chinese Artist's Discovery of Europe

2023

Timothy Garton Ash, University of Oxford

Europe Whole and Free

Dahrendorf Scholars and Essays 2010–2023

2010

Dominic Burbage, *A Letter from a Young Christian to a Liberal*

Andreas Knab, *A Bargain with Fate: To Diffuse the Threat of Online Jihadism, We Must Stick to Our Guns*

Christopher Kutarna, *Democracy, Unbundled Objectivity, Subjectivity, and the Search for Common Ground*

Xibai Xu, *Neoliberalism and Governance in China*

2011

Jacob Amis, *‘Quiet Spring’: Jordan and the 2011 Arab Uprising*

Katharine Engelhart, *Bosnia’s Three-Headed Beast: Sejdic and Finci vs Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Case for ‘Reasonable’ Discrimination*

2012

Annabelle Chapman, *Towards a ‘Parallel Polis’? Creating Freedom in Belarus*

Andrew Clark, *The Successes and Failures of Egyptian Secularism*

Rutger Kaput, *The Wilders Case: A Politician on Trial*

2013

Katherine Bruce-Lockhart, *From Hate Speech to Self-Censorship: The Role of the Media in Kenya’s 2007 and 2013 Elections*

Bassam Gergi, *For Jobs and Freedom, Fifty Years On: The Struggle for Racial Equality in the Age of Obama*

Rory McCarthy, *Who Is Threatening Free Speech in Post-Revolutionary Tunisia?*

2014

Max Gallien, *Last Thoughts of Al-Bernameg: Bassem Youssef and the Egyptian Struggle for Freedom of Speech*

Ava Hess, *Covering the Aesthetics of Resistance*

Yu Tao, *Religious Diversity in Contemporary Chinese Scholarship*

2015

Jalal Imran, *Violence and Non-Violence in the Arab Spring*

Monika Richter, *Western Support for Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe*

Suzanne Robin, *Dieudonné: Free Speech Gone Wild*

2016

Helen Haft, *Article 148 – The Aftermath of Punk Prayer*

Renzhi Li, *Reading Isaiah Berlin in China*

Iris Nxumalo-De Smidt, *Epistemic Communities of Freedom in Sub-Saharan Africa: Negotiating and Refashioning Womanhood in Africa*

2017

William Allen, *Representing Freedom and Force: How Data Visualisations Convey the Complex Realities of Migration*

Xiaoyu Lu, *Double Dissidents: Chinese Students Returning from the West*

Jonathan Raspe: *‘Das wird man ja wohl noch kritisieren dürfen!’ Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Criticism in German: or Why the Jews are to Blame for the AfD*

2018

Yasmina Abouzzohour, *Red Lines in the Kingdoms of Benevolent Dictators: The Role of Freedom of Speech in the Potential Pathways to Democracy in Different Authoritarian Settings*

Robert Gorwa, *Glasnost! Nine Ways Facebook Can Make Itself a Better Forum for Free Speech and Democracy*

Milica Radovic, *The Yugoslav Wars as a Taboo in the Western Balkans*

2019

Jihane Benamar, *Never Again the ‘Gendarme of Europe’? Morocco’s Changing Role and the Migration Question*

Auguste Breteau, *In Defence of European Border Policies? Integrated Border Management, Development without Accountability, and the Role of European Partners in the Securitisation of Lebanon*

Maeve Moynihan, *Project Ireland 2040: the Freedom to Migrate in Ireland’s Future Vision of Itself*

2020

Valerie Gutman, *Home, Freedom, and European Identity: Perspectives from European Graduate Students in the Age of Brexit*

Ellen Leafstedt, *‘Why Russia is Europe and the EU... Not So Much’: the Reimagining of Russia’s Place in Europe*

Reja Wyss, *The European Divide on Climate Change: The Fridays for Future Movement in Poland and the Future of Europe*

2021

Iyone Agboraw, *Identity: Betwixt Silence, Choice and Fear*

Laura Ballerini, *Can Medical Humanitarianism Ever Be Neutral?*

David Saveliev, *False Promises and Real Hopes: What the Belarusian Protests of 2020 Can Tell Europe*

2022–23

Abid Adonis, *Europe and Online Freedom: How the EU redefines the Geopolitics of Cyberspace*

Julia Carver, *Putting Europe on the (Virtual) Map: How the EU’s Development of External Action Cybersecurity Policies help us to understand the EU’s Evolution as a Global Actor*

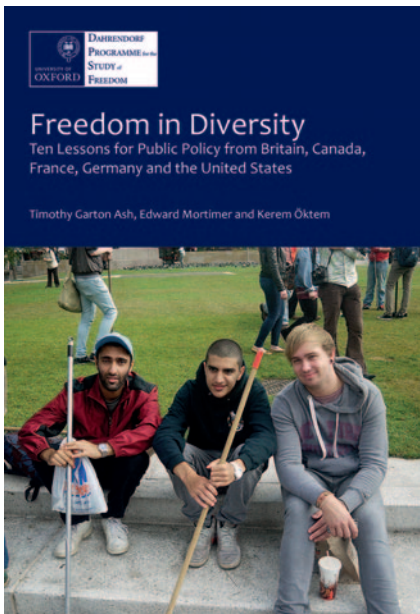
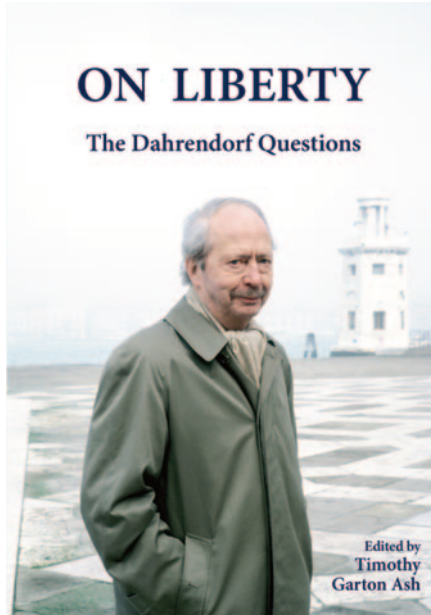
Olivier Yasar de France, *The Contested Concept of Freedom*

Talia Kollek, *‘So-Called Gender Freedoms’: The Western Origins of Russian Transphobia*

Alexandra Solovyev, *The Repatriation and Restitution of Cultural Property: From the Nineteenth Century to Today*

Ruihan Zhu, *Chinese and European Approaches to Climate Change*

Publications and Websites



www.freespeechdebate.com/

10 Principles
For each area, agree or disagree with the principle and vote.

- Libelhood**: We - all human beings - must be free and able to express ourselves, and to have received and give information and ideas, regardless of borders.
- Violence**: We must make means of violence for groups, nations, organisations.
- Knowledge**: We allow no borders against and secondarily character for the spread of knowledge.
- Journalism**: We require unimpeded, diverse, plurality, inside so we can make use of them in decisions and participate fully in society.
- Diversity**: We require cultures, ideas and views, ethnic, ability, social, all kinds of human difference.
- Religion**: We respect the beliefs of our neighbours, but not necessarily the content of the belief.
- Privacy**: We must be able to control our privacy and to counter 'stark' on our regulations, but not prevent security that is in the public interest.
- Secrecy**: We must be encouraged to challenge all kinds of freedom of information justified on such grounds as national security.
- Icebergs**: We believe in the freedom and other systems of communication across regional and national borders, to both sides and multiple powers.
- Courage**: We decide for ourselves and face the consequences.

www.europeanmoments.com/young-europeans

Europe's Stories
Connecting past, present & future

Home | Overview | Opinion polls | Reports & briefs | Messages to EU | Products | Learn more | [Go to Changing World](#)

THE EUROPE'S STORIES REPORT

Young Europeans Speak to EU

"This is a first among single European politicians should read. Young Europeans are the continent's most important asset in order to build a new, more united, 'Big Five' Europe that can openly question it. They are not afraid to speak with a single voice but they have a distinctive voice."

Eva Glawatski, author of *The Right That Failed*

[Download full report](#)

PDF report_018

www.europeanmoments.com/changing-world

Europe's Stories
Connecting past, present & future

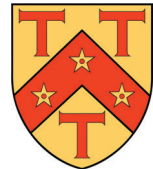
Home | Our Network | Opinion polls | Conferences | [Go to Europe from within](#)

Living in an à la carte world: What European policymakers should learn from global public opinion

[Our Network](#) | [Opinion Polls](#) | [Conferences](#)



DAHRENDORF PROGRAMME
at the
EUROPEAN STUDIES CENTRE
ST ANTONY'S COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD



*We are most grateful to Stiftung Mercator and
the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung für die Freiheit
for their financial support*

STIFTUNG
MERCATOR



FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
STIFTUNG Für die Freiheit.

**Three essays on Europe and Freedom.
Thirteen sessions of the 2023 Dahrendorf Colloquium.
Fifteen years of the Dahrendorf Programme.
Contributors include:**

Othon Anastasakis	Yaroslav Hrytsak	Charles Powell
Lucia Annunziata	Marnie Howlett	Shalini Randeria
Anne Applebaum	Will Hutton	Jacques Rupnik
Jessie Barton-Hronešová	Michael Ignatieff	Alan Rusbridger
Katrin Bennhold	Sylvie Kauffmann	Gesine Schwan
Paul Betts	Ivan Krastev	Michal Šimečka
Lenka Bustiková	Mark Leonard	Anne-Marie Slaughter
João Carlos Espada	Josef Lolacher	Glenda Sluga
Patricia Clavin	Christoph Markschiess	Timothy Snyder
Anne Deighton	Hartmut Mayer	Nathalie Tocci
Faisal Devji	Helen Mountfield	Tim Vlandas
Francis Fukuyama	Jan-Werner Müller	Karolina Wigura
Timothy Garton Ash	Fraser Nelson	Andreas Wirsching
Roger Goodman	Kalypso Nicolaïdis	Lu Xiaoyu
Charles Grant	Rasmus Nielsen	Olivier Yasar de France
Nataliya Gumenyuk	Kerem Öktem	Lea Ypi
	Karl-Heinz Paqué	



ISBN 978-1-3999-8006-7

