NEXUS INSTITUTE

Nexus Conference 2017

The Last Revolution

Saturday, 18 November | 9.30 AM — 4.00 PM

National Opera & Ballet, Amsterdam

Speakers

Antony Blinken — Aleksandr Dugin — William Fallon
Sheikh Rached Ghannouchi — Aileen Kelly — Moisés Naím
Pankaj Mishra — Nelofer Pazira — Shaha Riza — Dominique de Villepin
Leon Wieseltier — Michael Žantovský — Zhang Weiwei

Programme Nexus Conference

Saturday, 18 November 2017
National Opera & Ballet, Amsterdam

9.30 AM	Welcome *Rob Riemen*
9.45 AM	Keynote lecture *Dominique de Villepin*
10.45 AM	Intermission
11.15 AM	I. THE WORLD OF POWER Panel discussion with *William Fallon*, *Pankaj Mishra*, *Moisés Naím*, *Shaha Riza*, *Dominique de Villepin*, *Leon Wieseltier* and *Zhang Weiwei*, moderated by *Rob Riemen*
1.00 PM	Lunch with complimentary refreshments
1.45 PM	II. THE WORLD OF FREEDOM Panel discussion with *Antony Blinken*, *Aleksandr Dugin*, *Sheikh Rached Ghannouchi*, *Aileen Kelly*, *Nelofer Pazira* and *Michael Žantovský*, moderated by *Rob Riemen*
4.00 PM	Book signing

The conference will be held in English.

To attend the Nexus Conference please register online at www.nexus-instituut.nl. The entrance fee includes refreshments for lunch.

The programme may be subject to change. For the latest information on the conference and its speakers, please see our website.

Nexus Conference 2017

The Last Revolution

Paris, 1850

In his hotel room, a Russian exile is writing down his thoughts on the failed revolutions of 1848 and 1949, to which he was a witness. He left his homeland in 1847, never to return, revolted by the despotism of the Tsar and the tyranny of intellectual and moral backwardness. He is even more disappointed by the fact that the European revolutions failed to deliver the freedom they promised. But he realizes that they could not have delivered on their promise, because the revolutionaries were possessed by an ideological utopia rather than having their minds set on actual freedom, and because the masses did not really desire freedom at all. To his disappointment, his friends like Garibaldi, Mazzini and Jules Michelet failed to understand this. Despite all this, he publishes an issue of his journal *The Bell* every week, like a Russian Voltaire, driven by his personal passion for the freedom of each human individual and his conviction that without this freedom and the moral values it requires, no civilized society can exist. His intellectual independence, his qualities as a writer and his struggle against all forms of tyranny won him the posthumous admiration of such diverse figures as Tolstoy, Nietzsche and Isaiah Berlin. These three intellectuals, facing the same question — how to defend freedom from the powers of illiberalism — were inspired by the words Alexander Herzen, a socialist, liberal and European humanist *avant la lettre*, wrote in his Paris hotel room in 1850 while working on his book *From the Other Shore*:

> The old, official Europe that one can see is not asleep — it is dying!
>
> The last frail and sickly vestiges of its former life are scarcely sufficient to hold together for a time the disintegrating parts of its body which are striving to combine afresh and to enter into new forms. At first sight, there is much that is still normal; things run smoothly, judges judge, the churches are open, the stock exchange hums with activity, armies manoeuvre, palaces blaze with light, but the soul of life has fled, everyone is uneasy at heart, death is at our elbow, and, in reality, nothing goes well. […] The masses want to stay the hand that impudently snatches from them the bread they have earned — that is their fundamental desire. They are

indifferent to individual freedom, to freedom of speech; the masses love authority. They are still dazzled by the arrogant glitter of power, they are affronted by the sight of someone who stands apart. By equality, they understand equality of oppression; afraid of monopolies and privileges, they look askance at talent and allow no one not to do what they do.

Yasnaya Polyana, 1869

At home, 200 kilometres south-west of Moscow, Leo Tolstoy is writing a second epilogue to conclude his epic work *War and Peace*. He has been working on the book for seven years — years in which he, as a novelist, used the power of his imagination to address the fundamental questions historians had failed to answer. What is the power that moves peoples? Why do people do what they do? In antiquity, it was thought there was a divine power to which people were subjected. The modern science of history knows better. But, Tolstoy noted, it only seeks to describe the *expressions* of power, rather than studying and explaining its causes. It does not answer the important questions: What is power? Where does power reside, and why? Why do people obey great men? And what makes them great? When and why do people rise up to resist power? Why is slaughtering a whole nation at the command of an emperor justified, while killing a single human being is murder? How free are people? Does man have a free will? What is freedom? What is the relationship between freedom and inevitability? What makes people free? What causes historical events? Is it God, or Reason? Is history guided by laws, or are human beings responsible for their own fates?

Prinkipo, 1930

On this island off the coast of Istanbul, another Russian exile has been residing for the past year. Unlike Alexander Herzen, he did not leave Russia willingly. Like the princes in ancient Byzantium, banned to this 'Princes' Island' by the ruler who feared their power, Leon Trotsky was imprisoned here by Stalin. Trotsky is writing his *History of the Russian Revolution*, a history that is also, in large part, the story of his life. Together with Lenin, he led the October Revolution of 1917 which ended the centuries-old rule of the tsars. He was the chief strategist and commander of the Red Army which, against all odds and expectations, with few resources and in the middle of the chaos of the First World War, managed to emerge victorious. Together with Lenin, he was also the main ideologue of Bolshevism.

The questions Tolstoy pondered are not Trotsky's questions, because the latter already knows the answers. There is no God, but history *is* subject to laws, and, as he writes in his preface, 'the discovery of these laws is the author's task.'

A first law is the role played by the power of the masses:

> The most indubitable feature of a revolution is the direct interference of the masses in historical events. In ordinary times the state, be it monarchical or democratic, elevates itself above the nation, and history is made by specialists in that line of business — kings, ministers, bureaucrats, parliamentarians, journalists. But at those crucial moments when the old order becomes no longer endurable to the masses, they break over the barriers excluding them from the political arena, sweep aside their traditional representatives, and create by their own interference the initial groundwork for a new regime. […] The history of a revolution is for us first of all a history of the forcible entrance of the masses into the realm of rulership over their own destiny.

Other historical laws, on Trotsky's account, include: the fact that capitalism is a curse to mankind and is doomed to vanish; that the future belongs to socialism; that the Party alone knows the truth and the laws of history and is therefore unable to tolerate democracy; that the freedom of the masses will be guaranteed by the dictatorship of the proletariat, and that all counter-revolutionary forces must be opposed and made to disappear in the dustbin of history — for the sake of the paradise to be established on earth.

Unlike Herzen, Trotsky was convinced that, once the masses were liberated from their capitalist chains, they would learn to be free, so that they would 'become immeasurably stronger, wiser and subtler […] The average human type will rise to the heights of an Aristotle, a Goethe, or a Marx. And above this ridge new peaks will rise.'

At the end of his *History*, Trotsky sums up what makes the Russian Revolution different from all other revolutions:

> The historic ascent of humanity, taken as a whole, may be summarized as a succession of victories of consciousness over blind forces — in nature, in society, in man himself. Critical and creative thought can boast of its greatest victories up to now in the struggle with nature. The sciences of nature have already reached a point where man is clearly about to become master of matter. But social relations are still forming in the manner of the coral islands. […] In comparison with monarchy and other heirlooms from the cannibals and cave-dwellers, democracy is of course a great conquest, but it leaves the blind play of forces in the social relations of men untouched. It was against this deeper sphere of the unconscious that the October Revolution was the first to raise its hand.

The Russian Revolution, Trotsky's revolution, would be *the last revolution*, because it laid the foundation for a new culture where the world of power would serve freedom:

> The aristocratic culture overthrown by the October Revolution was in the last analysis only a superficial imitation of higher Western models. Remaining inaccessible to the Russian people, it added nothing essential to the treasure-store of humanity. The October Revolution laid the foundation of a new culture, taking everybody into consideration, and for that very reason immediately acquiring international significance.

Trotsky was convinced that this last revolution had definitively destroyed the world of power that had enslaved the masses for so long, and that a new world of freedom would be established according to irresistible historical laws. But there were no such laws. It was a dream — a dream that would soon turn into a nightmare of global proportions. Bolshevism did not bring freedom, but rather the destruction of freedom, truth, goodness and beauty; the destruction of what it means to be human. Trotsky's answers to Tolstoy's questions were no answers at all, but rather eliminated these questions. This, too, is in the nature of all forms of totalitarianism: the drive to eliminate existential questions.

In 1943, while the struggle against totalitarianism is raging in all its intensity, the Jewish philosopher Simone Weil is asked by Charles de Gaulle's Free French movement to write down her thoughts on how European civilization is to be regenerated after the war. Her efforts result in a long essay, titled '*L'Enracinement*'. In this manifesto for a new civilization, she states:

> An educational method which is not inspired by the conception of a certain form of human perfection is not worth very much. When it is a matter of educating a whole people, this conception should be that of a civilization. It must not be sought in the past, which only contains imperfect models; far less still in our dreams of the future, which are necessarily as mediocre as we ourselves are, and consequently vastly inferior to the past. The inspiration for such an education must be sought, like the method itself, among the truths eternally inscribed in the nature of things.
>
> Four obstacles above all separate us from a form of civilization likely to be worth something: our false conception of greatness; the degradation of the sentiment of justice; our idolization of money; and our lack of religious inspiration.

A fifth obstacle, we might add today, is the fact that the fundamental questions that shape our world have been ignored, or eliminated from public discourse altogether. Let us return to Tolstoy's big questions: What is power? What is freedom? And what would be the last revolution, which would establish the rule of freedom for all time to come?

If Thomas Hobbes, one of the most brilliant thinkers on the phenomenon of power, writes: 'In the first place I put for a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual restless desire of Power, after Power, that ceaseth only in Death'; and if a no less brilliant thinker like Friedrich Nietzsche concludes that human existence is determined by the 'will to power'; and if even Simone Weil, who hated the hunger for power more than anyone, is forced to infer that 'there is no other force on this earth except force'; then all these voices are but an echo of the account of the origin of mankind in the Book of Genesis, which declares that man is created to rule over nature. The desire for power, the possession of power, the exercise of power is an indelible part of human nature.

Yet because there are humans, and not a single human being, peoples, and not a single person, and because every human individual is shaped by instincts, by contradictory emotions, but also by a sense of values; we are also creatures that need order: social order, a world order, a way of life — the ideal of civilization described by Simone Weil.

An ideal of civilization is determined by the dominant world views, and world views are shaped by the ruling powers and by what we deem to have power and authority. But this raises further questions…

The most important question to shape the past and future of mankind and the world is: which powers work towards the good, and which powers are forces of evil? Which powers liberate and which oppress? Which powers unite humanity and which divide it? Which powers allow a civilization to flourish and which aim to destroy it?

Then there are the theological-philosophical questions: does our world view, our ideal of civilization, aim at a higher order (of God, or of the Greek *logos*); at the natural order (laws of nature); or is mankind wholly free to determine its own social order?

There are also many sociological questions. The powers determining our current world view are science, technology and capitalism. Why are these powers so dominant today, and how do they determine our world view? What are the *arcana imperii*, the hidden powers in our society, of which we are unaware? What do we make of the fact that humans today have the power to not only dominate nature, but also to destroy the planet? Are the powers that rule us today guided by ethics, and if so, which ethics? Which values hold power over us? And, as we live in a mass society, we must ask the question: what is the power of the masses, and why do the masses always desire authority?

Next, we must ask the political-philosophical questions: Why has democracy as a form of political power entered a state of crisis? Is it because, as

Montesquieu holds, democracy cannot exist without cultivating virtue, and we have lost all sense of what virtue is? Or was Rousseau right when he claimed in his *Social Contract* that democracy is but wishful thinking: 'Were there a people of gods, their government would be democratic. So perfect a government is not for men.' Is present-day populism the salvation of democracy, or is it nothing but a new version of the dictatorship of the proletariat, encouraged by intellectual philistines? Why is 'illiberal democracy', which promotes God, Family, Tradition and the Fatherland, the political power of choice for so many? And what is the role of religion in our social order? For Catholic philosophers like Romano Guardini and Jacques Maritain, Christianity is the essence of the democratic spirit. But Rousseau, the great champion of equality, radically disagrees:

> We are told that a people of true Christians would form the most perfect society imaginable. I see in this supposition only one great difficulty: that a society of true Christians would not be a society of men. […] Christianity preaches only servitude and dependence. Its spirit is so favourable to tyranny that it always profits by such a regime. True Christians are made to be slaves, and they know it and do not much mind: this short life counts for too little in their eyes.

The changing world order will also have a great impact on our world view and ideal of civilization. How do science and technology shape the world order? What is the impact of globalization and immigration? What will it mean if the *Pax Americana* is exchanged for *America First*? What will the world order look like with Russia or China as new superpowers? Is there an international legal order, or is what the Athenians told the defeated Melians in Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War still true: do the strong determine what is right? So what can safeguard the international legal order? What is the relation between right and might?

The psychological questions are no less important. According to Simone Weil, the greatest obstacle to our civilization is our mistaken conception of greatness:

> Our conception of greatness is the very one that has inspired Hitler's whole life. When we denounce it without the remotest recognition of its application to ourselves, the angels must either cry or laugh, if there happen to be angels who interest themselves in our propaganda. […] The only punishment capable of punishing Hitler, and deterring little boys thirsting for greatness in coming centuries from following his example, is such a total transformation of the meaning attached to greatness that he should thereby be excluded from it.

But what conceptions of greatness do we cultivate? Who holds power in our societies? Which world view and which ethics do they cultivate? And what is the psychology of power? Unlimited power leads to corruption, arrogance, even madness. How can we impose limits on power? And who possesses moral power? On what grounds? What power does moral power have in a world obsessed with power? For what is the power of evil?

And finally, the historical question: how do revolutions happen?

II. THE WORLD OF FREEDOM

The brilliant Italian humanist Giovanni Pico della Mirandola is only 24 when, in 1487, he publishes his ode to freedom, *De hominis dignitate* ('Oration on the Dignity of Man'), in which he puts these immortal words into the mouth of the Deity:

> We have given you, Oh Adam, no visage proper to yourself, nor any endowment properly your own, in order that whatever place, whatever form, whatever gifts you may, with premeditation, select, these same you may have and possess through your own judgment and decision. The nature of all other creatures is defined and restricted within laws which We have laid down; you, by contrast, impeded by no such restrictions, may, by your own free will, to whose custody We have assigned you, trace for yourself the lineaments of your own nature. I have placed you at the very centre of the world, so that from that vantage point you may with greater ease glance round about you on all that the world contains. We have made you a creature neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, in order that you may, as the free and proud shaper of your own being, fashion yourself in the form you may prefer. It will be in your power to descend to the lower, brutish forms of life; you will be able, through your own decision, to rise again to the superior orders whose life is divine.

No matter how elegantly freedom as the essence of mankind has been worded here, the Deity forgets one crucial fact, a fact recorded in His own story of the Creation: the freedom of man begins with rebellion! Only by refusing to obey and by eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil does humanity attain the freedom with which its history begins. Our freedom is always the result of a *choice to be free*; to orient your thinking against the established order and to be aware that you are responsible for the choice between good and evil.

And so the predicament of human existence began. We are free, and yet we are not free; we desire freedom yet we fear it. Freedom has friends, but

also powerful enemies. Freedom is the highest thing we strive for, but it is not everything. And what does it mean to be free? How does one become free? What is the difference between freedom and arbitrariness? Can freedom and equality go together? What is a free society? Or a free world? What guarantees and protects freedom?

The answers we give to these questions will determine our world view, an ideal of civilization, the world in which we live or would like to live. Wise men and women in all cultures have sought to guide us in this labyrinth of our existence. A few voices from the history of Western culture:

Socrates: There can be no freedom without justice.

Cicero: Freedom can be attained though care for the soul and the search for wisdom.

Luther: There is no free will, only a servile one; only grace can save us.

Erasmus: There is free will, and it should be used to do good.

Spinoza: To be free means to liberate yourself from fear, ignorance and prejudice through the use of reason; political freedom — democracy — is needed to cultivate spiritual freedom.

Schiller: Do not be tyrannized by *utility*, the great idol of our times; only the beauty of the arts can restore humanity to its lost dignity.

Dostoyevsky: The striving for the man-god, the deification of man, will destroy freedom.

John Stuart Mill: The greatest dangers to democracy are mediocrity, conformism and the tyranny of the majority.

Abraham Lincoln in his *Baltimore Address:* 'The world has never had a good definition of the word liberty, and the American people, just now, are much in want of one.'

Marx: People are enchained by socio-economic structures.

Freud: People must be liberated from their own illusions.

Rosa Luxemburg: Trotsky was wrong; without democracy, Marxism as a liberation movement has no future.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt: There are four freedoms that should be safeguarded across the world: 'Freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear.'

Thomas Mann: 'Never believe the demagogues: if fascism comes, it will come in the name of freedom.'

Albert Camus: 'If one does not believe in anything, if nothing has any sense and if we cannot affirm any value, then everything is permitted and nothing has any importance.'

Hannah Arendt: 'Freedom as an inner capacity of man is identical with the capacity to begin…'

Isaiah Berlin: Pluralism is the essence of a free society.

William Faulkner: Destroying privacy is to destroy individual freedom.

Now then, looking at ourselves and the world in our mirror palace of 'selfies', what is *our* answer to these questions: How free are we really? Is our will free, or servile? What is our response to the four obstacles that, according to Simone Weil, stand in the way of building a civilized society: our false conception of greatness, the degradation of the sentiment of justice, our idolization of money and our lack of religious inspiration?

How much inequality can a free society endure? How democratic is a mass democracy? There can be no liberty without a liberal education, the sages teach us; but which educational institution still offers such an education? And how do we value the arts? Is Dostoevsky right when he asserts that the man-god will destroy freedom, or will the man-god rather bring the ultimate freedom? If freedom, like power, must have limits, then what are they? What lessons can we learn from the fact that the French Revolution ended in bloodshed and the Russian Revolution in totalitarianism, but that the American Revolution succeeded? Is *America First* still *The Land of Freedom*? And if not, will the European Union be strong enough to carry the flag of freedom instead? How can an international legal order be established and protected in a world increasingly dominated by authoritarian regimes? If pluralism is the hallmark of a free society, then why are we building walls, and why is nationalism gaining ground? What are the liberating powers in our world? And which powers take away our freedom?

There can be no freedom without a moral awareness, without the ability to choose between good and evil. But where is our moral compass for making this choice? The truth will set us free, writes John the Evangelist — but which truth, and how? What does truth amount to in the post-truth era?

Vince in bono malum, 'Overcome evil with good', is another well-known saying, which is echoed in the phrase from Star Wars: 'May the Force be with you.' This is an expression of the fact that throughout history there have always been brave people who *do* rebel, who revolt, who have helped the powers of good triumph over evil.

In the past century Nazism, Stalinism, colonialism and the apartheid regime were all overthrown; civil rights and civil freedoms were gained

through struggle; workers, women and homosexuals successfully fought for rights and equality; democracies where no one stands above the law have emerged all over the world… But nothing of value may ever be taken for granted, and in a society where little is known because even less is read, this warning by George Santayana is only too true: 'Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.'

Liberalism, socialism and feminism were the liberation movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. What will be the liberation movement of the twenty-first century? Who will be the individuals who have the courage to go against the established powers; who will revolt? Where will they find their strength?

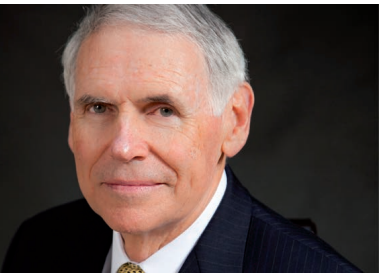
To his great disappointment, Alexander Herzen realized that the revolutions of 1848 and 1849 failed because the masses did not really want to be free. But what is needed to transform the masses into individuals of a united humanity, which cherishes freedom and human dignity? Would that not truly be the last revolution?

Rob Riemen
Founder and president of the Nexus Institute

Speakers

ANTONY BLINKEN (United States, 1962) is an American diplomat and foreign policy expert. As Deputy Secretary of State under President Obama he led the diplomatic efforts to combat ISIL, to reorient foreign policy towards Asia and to address the global refugee crisis. Before that, he acted as Principal Deputy National Security Advisor to President Obama and National Security Advisor to Vice President Biden. Blinken graduated from Harvard and Columbia Law School, and is currently a managing director of the Penn Biden Center for Diplomacy and Global Engagement and the Herter/Nitze Distinguished Scholar at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. He is the author of *Ally Versus Ally: America, Europe and the Siberian Pipeline Crisis* (1987), and regularly contributes to *The New York Times* and CNN.

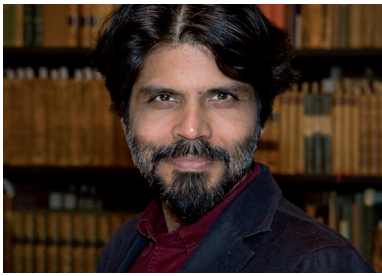
ALEKSANDR DUGIN (Russia, 1962) is a political philosopher. He is the founder of the Eurasian Movement in Russia and the foremost theoretical proponent of Eurasianism, which holds that Russia has a unique cultural position in between Europe and Asia that is incompatible with Western modernity. Dugin gained a PhD from the University of Rostov-on-Don and was head of the International Relations Department and the Center for Conservative Studies at Moscow State University from 2008 to 2014. He is a staunch critic of liberalism and a strong and influential supporter of President Putin. Among his many books the most prominent is *The Fourth Political Theory* (2012), in which he argues for a new form of politics that supersedes aspects of liberalism, communism and fascism.



WILLIAM FALLON (United States, 1944) is a four-star admiral, who retired from the US Navy after a distinguished forty-year career of military and strategic leadership. He has led US and Allied forces in eight separate commands and played a leadership role in military and diplomatic matters at the highest levels of the government. As head of US Central Command, he directed all military operations in the Middle East, Central Asia and Horn of Africa, focusing on combat efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. He previously led US Pacific Command for two years, and was serving in the Pentagon as Vice Chief of the Navy on September 11, 2001. After his retirement, Fallon worked as Chair of the Advisory Board at the Center for International Studies at MIT and was a partner in several businesses. He still serves as a member of the US Secretary of Defense Science Board and of the American Security Project.

SHEIKH RACHED GHANNOUCHI (Tunesia, 1941) was educated at Tunisia's Zaytouna University, and then continued to study philosophy in Cairo, Damascus and Paris. He then became active in politics by setting up the Islamic Tendency movement, before he became affiliated with the Ennahdha party. Because of his political activities he was imprisoned from 1981 to 1984, and again from 1987 to 1988. After his release, Ghannouchi left Tunis as a crackdown had started. He settled in London where he lived as a political exile for two decades, until his return in 2011, after the Tunisian revolution. Ever since the Tunisian revolution in early 2011, Sheikh Ghannouchi has played a key role in the success of the Ennahdha party as president during the 2011 elections and in the formation of the ruling Troika coalition. Ghannouchi has been an advocate of the compatibility between Islam and the principles of pluralism, freedom, modernity and democratic governance. His views and writings are influential in Tunisia and across the Arab and Muslim worlds.

AILEEN KELLY (United Kingdom) is a historian specialising in the history of ideas, and in Russian intellectual history in particular. She taught in the Department of Slavonic Studies at the University of Cambridge and is a Fellow of King's College there. She is the author of the books *Mikhail Bakunin: A Study in the Politics and Psychology of Utopianism* (1982), *Toward Another Shore: Russian Thinkers between Necessity and Chance* (1998) and *Views from the Other Shore: Essays on Herzen, Chekhov and Bakhtin* (1999), and has been a regular contributor to the *New York Review of Books*. In 2016, she published the monumental biography *The Discovery of Chance. The Life and Thought of Alexander Herzen*.



PANKAJ MISHRA (India, 1969) is an essayist and novelist. He won the Art Seidenbaum Award for Best First Fiction for his novel *The Romantics* (2000) and wrote several highly acclaimed books on history, politics and philosophy, including *An End to Suffering. The Buddha in the World* (2004), *Temptations of the West. How to be Modern in India, Pakistan and Beyond* (2006) and *From the Ruins of Empire* (2012), as well as literary and political essays for international publications including *The New York Times*, *The London Review of Books*, *The Guardian*, *Foreign Affairs*, the *New Republic* and the *New Statesman*. In his latest book, *The Age of Anger. A History of the Present* (2017), Mishra gives a stunning account of the troubles affecting contemporary society, arguing that the resurging forces of populism and nationalism can be explained by going back to the roots of Western modernity. For his work, Mishra received the prestigious Leipzig Book Prize for European Understanding and the Windham-Campbell Literature Prize.

MOISÉS NAÍM (Libya, 1952) attended the Universidad Metropolitana in Caracas, Venezuela, and holds a master's and PhD degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He is a fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and currently works as an internationally syndicated columnist and a contributing editor to *The Atlantic*. Naím has served as Venezuela's minister of development, director of Venezuela's Central Bank, and executive director of the World Bank. He was also the editor-in-chief of *Foreign Policy* for fourteen years and is the author of many scholarly articles and more than ten books on international economics and politics. His book *The End of Power* (2013) has been published in 18 languages and was selected by *The Washington Post* and *The Financial Times* as one of the best books of the year.

NELOFER PAZIRA (India, 1973) is an Afghan-Canadian director, actress, journalist and writer. She grew up in Kabul; after living through ten years of Soviet occupation, she and her family fled to Pakistan in 1989, eventually ending up in Canada. Pazira holds a degree in Journalism and English Literature from Carleton University (Ottawa), and a master's degree in Anthropology, Sociology and Religion from Concordia University, Montreal. She has also received an honorary doctorate of law from Carleton. In 1996 she returned to Afghanistan, a journey portrayed in the award-winning film *Kandahar* (2001). She went on to direct the documentary film *Return to Kandahar* (2003) and the film *Act of Dishonour*, about honour killing and the plight of refugees, which she also wrote. Pazira was president of PEN Canada, a prominent writers' organisation, and she is the founder of the Dyana Afghan Women's Fund, which promotes education for women in Afghanistan.

SHAHA RIZA (Libya, 1953) is an activist striving for democracy and reform in the Arab world. She graduated from the London School of Economics and St. Antony's College, Oxford, writing her thesis on the subject of Tunisian-Egyptian relations from 1956 to 1965. Riza is currently a Gender Specialist at the World Bank, where she has been working in different capacities since 1997. For over 25 years, she has focused on engaging and supporting civil society in developing countries, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa with a special focus on women and women's organisations. Prior to that she worked at the US National Endowment for Democracy, where she created and directed its Middle East programme. On many occasions, she has provided guidance and advice to funding entities both in the US and Europe interested in initiating political development programmes in the Middle East.

DOMINIQUE DE VILLEPIN (Morocco, 1953) is a French statesman. He grew up abroad and moved to France in 1968, where he graduated from l'Institut d'Etude Politique de Paris (Sciences-Po) and l'École Nationale d'Administration. He began his career as a diplomat in Paris, Washington D.C. and New Delhi, before he was appointed as Chief of Staff by President Chirac from 1995 to 2002. Appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2002, De Villepin managed the Iraq crisis on behalf of France and upheld the French position against war at the United Nations. In 2004, he became Minister of the Interior and then served as Prime Minister of France from 2005 to 2007. During this period, he committed himself to boosting employment and reforming the labour market, to reducing deficits and public debts, as well as to stimulating growth. De Villepin wrote various books, poetry collections and essays, including *Les Cent-Jours ou l'esprit de sacrifice* (2001), on Napoleon, and most recently *Mémoire de paix pour temps de guerre* (2016), on peace building and international challenges.

LEON WIESELTIER (United States, 1952) is one of America's leading public intellectuals, a distinguished critic and prolific writer. After his studies at Harvard and Oxford, he quickly became the principal literary editor for *The New Republic*. After more than thirty years at this influential journal, he left in 2014 in protest of managerial changes to found the new journal *Idea*, which aims to revive the tradition of the legendary *Partisan Review* and promises to become one of the most influential cultural-philosophical publications in the United States. Wieseltier, whose moving diary *Kaddish* (1998) phenomenally addresses the eternal themes of loss and faith, freedom and predestination and the significance of traditions, is a devoted Jew. He wrote *Against Identity* (1996) and translated Yehuda Amichai's poetry for *The New Yorker*. He is currently the Isaiah Berlin Senior Fellow in Culture and Policy at Brookings, the world's most influential think tank, and writes as contributing editor for *The Atlantic*. He regularly publishes articles on a wide variety of social issues, with a sharp eye for the central problems of our time, setting the standard for serious cultural discussion.

MICHAEL ŽANTOVSKÝ (Czech Republic, 1949) is a diplomat, politician, writer and translator. In November 1989 he was a founding member of the Civic Forum, the organization that coordinated the overthrow of the Communist regime, for which he became press spokesman. In January 1990 he became the Spokesman and Press Secretary for President Václav Havel. Žantovský later served as the Czech ambassador to the United States, to Israel and, until 2015, to the United Kingdom. From 2012 to 2015 he was president of the Aspen Institute Central Europe, and since 2015 he has served as Executive Director of the Václav Havel Library in Prague. A prolific author, translator, lyricist and journalist, Žantovský has translated into Czech more than 50 works of contemporary English and American fiction, poetry, drama and nonfiction. Especially noteworthy among his publications is his biography of his long-time friend, *Havel: A Life*, which was published to great acclaim in English, Czech, and several other languages in November 2014.

ZHANG WEIWEI (China, 1957) obtained his PhD in International Relations at Geneva University, and currently teaches the same subject as a professor at Fudan University in Shanghai. He is the Director of the China Institute at the same university, and works as a board member at China's National Think Tanks Council. In the mid-1980s he worked as senior English interpreter for Deng Xiaoping and many other Chinese political leaders. Zhang wrote extensively in Chinese and English on China's political and economic reforms, China's foreign policy and its model of development. He is also the author of the award-winning China Trilogy: *The China Ripple* (2008), *The China Wave* (2012) and *The China Horizon* (2016).

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