



***The Light that Failed: A Reckoning* Wins 30th Annual Lionel Gelber Prize**

For immediate release: March 10, 2020 (Toronto, Canada and Washington, DC) **Sara Charney**, Chair of the Lionel Gelber Prize Board, has announced that the winner of the 2020 Lionel Gelber Prize is ***The Light that Failed: A Reckoning*** by **Ivan Krastev** and **Stephen Holmes**, published by **Allen Lane/Penguin Random House Canada**.

Here is what the international jury, chaired by **Janice Gross Stein**, had to say about the winning book:

“This book, full of sparkling insight and subtle analysis, explains why liberal democracy failed to become a universal ideology despite its victory over communism. The authors show how Western triumphalism of the 1990s failed to take into account the distinctive history and culture of states that were seeking to imitate and embed democracy. Although the peoples of former communist countries joined the EU and NATO and signed up to liberal values and the rule of law, they became alienated by the corruption and inequality that followed. The analysis of politics and culture in the former Eastern Europe is original and riveting. Krastev and Holmes show how Russia and China learned from a West that betrayed its own values and broke its own rules. This account of how liberalism lost its way is candid and incisive but it is not pessimistic. There is no reason why illiberalism and nativism should continue if ‘chastised’ liberals learn from their mistakes and *The Light that Failed* will surely help them do so. An original and important book for our times.”

Ivan Krastev is a permanent fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna and the chairman of the Centre for Liberal Strategies in Sofia. A contributing opinion writer for the *International New York Times*, he is a founding board member of the European Council on Foreign Relations and author of the widely acclaimed *After Europe*.

Stephen Holmes is Professor of Law at NYU School of Law and the author of many books on liberalism, including *The Anatomy of Antiliberalism*. His work focuses on the history of liberalism, the disappointments of democratization after communism, and the challenge of managing globalized threats within the framework of liberal constitutionalism.

The **2020 Lionel Gelber Prize jurors** are **Janice Gross Stein** (Jury Chair, Toronto, Canada) **Cameron Abadi** (Berlin, Germany), **Sir Lawrence Freedman** (London, England), **Margaret MacMillan** (Toronto, Canada and Oxford, England), **Kishore Mahbubani** (Singapore), and **Jeffrey Simpson** (Ottawa, Canada).

The winning book was selected from a shortlist which also included ***The Narrow Corridor: States, Societies, and the Fate of Liberty*** by **Daron Acemoglu** and **James A. Robinson**; ***Power to the People: How Open Technological Innovation is Arming Tomorrow’s Terrorists*** by **Audrey Kurth Cronin**; ***The Unsettling of Europe: How Migration Reshaped a Continent*** by **Peter Gatrell**; and ***Roller-Coaster: Europe 1950 – 2017*** by **Ian Kershaw**.

This year marks the 30th Anniversary of the Lionel Gelber Prize, a literary award for the world’s best non-fiction book in English on foreign affairs that seeks to deepen public debate on significant international issues. The Lionel Gelber Prize was founded in 1989 by Canadian diplomat Lionel Gelber. A cash prize of \$15,000 is awarded to the winner. The award is presented annually by The Lionel Gelber Foundation, in partnership with *Foreign Policy* magazine and the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Toronto.

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More About ***The Light That Failed: A Reckoning*** by Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes, Winner of the 2020 Lionel Gelber Prize:

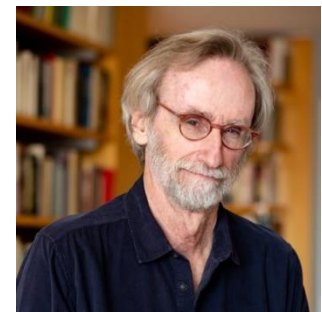


When the Cold War ended in 1989, hopes for the spread of liberalism were high. Yet the attempted transformation of the Eastern bloc gave rise to a bitter repudiation of liberalism itself, not only there but also back in the heartland of the West. The geopolitical stage seemed to be set for a performance of *Pygmalion* but we ended up with an adaptation of *Frankenstein*.

Why did the West, after winning the Cold War, lose its political balance? Why did the attempt to help Eastern European countries reorganize their societies result in a shocking rejection of liberal democracy's basic principles? Why did post-communist Russia turn from a potential ally to an outright enemy of the West? And why has America's experience of serving as an ideal model led it to turn its back on the world?



Ivan Krastev



Stephen Holmes

In this brilliant work of political psychology, Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes argue that the supposed end of history turned out to be only the beginning of an Age of Imitation. And although imitation can bring nations together, it can also tear them apart. Reckoning with the history of the last thirty years, they show that one of the most powerful forces behind the wave of populist xenophobia that began in Eastern Europe has been resentment at the idea of becoming mirror images of the West. The Trump revolution, in turn, represents an ironic fulfillment of the hubristic promises that nations exiting communist rule would come to resemble the United States. In a strange twist, Trump has elevated Putin's Russia and Orbán's Hungary into models for his own rule.

Written by two imminent intellectuals bridging the East/West divide, *The Light That Failed: A Reckoning* is a momentous, disquieting book that sheds light on the extraordinary history of our age.