

**RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY
UNDERMINING DEMOCRACY: 21ST CENTURY AUTHORITARIANS**

**PANEL I:
21ST CENTURY AUTHORITARIANISM AND THE “BATTLE OF IDEAS”**

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INTRODUCTION:
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WILLIAM TAFT: We're going to get started in a minute or so. (Pause.) All right, seeing no more stragglers, I think we'll get started. We have a lot of ground to cover. My name is Will Taft. I'm the chair of the board of Freedom House and I'm delighted to be here, together with our cosponsors of the study, "Undermining Democracy," which I hope you all have seen a copy of, which we are releasing today. It's about 21st-century authoritarians, or at least five different – a study of five different states of that sort.

And Freedom House is delighted to be able to join with Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, and with Radio Free Asia in undertaking this study and having this meeting this morning. I will say for Freedom House – and I will be brief here – that we of course are well known for publishing, each year, our study of freedom in the world. It's called "Freedom in the World," and it reviews the status of freedom all around in the 190-plus countries. And each year, we grade them and see how they are doing.

We have been concerned over the last several years, for three years actually, of – at least on our grading scale there has been a negative trend in the course of freedom after some years of progress in this area, and about a decade or so, but the last three years have been somewhat negative. Of even more concern is that of the aspects of freedom that we track, freedom of expression and freedom of association we consider to be of the greatest importance, and also they tend to be – and we have seen history, and we've been doing this for some 40 years or so – they tend to be leading indicators of where the overall status of freedom in a country is headed, so that if freedom of expression is sort of the first thing to feel constraint where all freedom is on the way out.

So having seen this trend over three years in our studies, and particularly having to do with freedom of expression and freedom of association, the negative trend there, we were pleased to undertake, with Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty and Radio Free Asia, the study of five countries to see what was happening here. Where was this pushback of authoritarianism – by authoritarianism, I should say – the pushback on freedom coming from, and what were the methods that were being used in these efforts?

And we identified five countries that we were going to look at, and you will see what they are – China, Russia, Iran, Venezuela and Pakistan – as countries where we would study the different methods and practices of the leaders of those countries, both as to what they were doing inside their states and as to how they were perhaps even exporting some of their policies, and in a relatively more shameless way, let me say, than originally or than earlier, promoting the views – the benefits, let's say, as they saw them, of authoritarianism and progress in various areas other than freedom of expression and freedom of association and general exercise of political rights and civil liberties.

So we have looked at that and the result is the study that you see. And I commend it to you. We're going to have a great discussion here this morning from some very distinguished panelists, and we're hoping also for participation by some of the members of Congress, and we're grateful to the senators, who have made available this room for us. And I would like to start by saying at this point that I want to turn over the podium here to Libby Liu, who is the head of Radio Free Asia, and she will say a few words. Libby?

LIBBY LIU: Thank you. Welcome, everyone, and thank you for coming this morning. This morning, for fun, I pulled the homepages of Xinhua News in Mandarin and in English for June 4th. The headlines are about the central government pumping money, public spending into the public works, and all the faces involved in the General Motors bankruptcy. It is the 20th anniversary of the Tiananmen Massacre, and in China it is a total news blackout. It's not in the Chinese version; it's not in the English version.

Why is it missing? Because if the authorities had their way, it never really happened. Everyone in this room knows June 4th was a pivotal event in the modern Chinese democracy movement, but in China the discussion is absent. We'll talk today that this is just one part – one small part – of China's growing strategy of suppression. Radio Free Asia's job is to break through that artificial silence.

Radio Free Asia was born from the events of Tiananmen, born right here in the U.S. Congress. We'll continue to bring our listeners the news that's left out by state-controlled media. This is the information age, and in the information age, it is information itself that's most feared and most needed. And this is the reason we are involved in this terrific project and we thank you so much for being here. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. TAFT: Thank you very much, Libby. The next task that I have – and we are hoping that some members of Congress, senators, will be coming to join us, and if they do and when they do, we will certainly – my heavens, well, what luck. (Laughter.) We are hoping and our hope is fulfilled. I understand Congressman Hastings is here and – very good.

I'm delighted then, and we will immediately want to turn over the podium here to you, Congressman. But first, just very briefly, a word about Congressman Hastings: He is a very respected voice in international affairs and in human rights. He is, I think most importantly for our purposes, the co-chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. And, in fact, in 2007 he became the first African American to chair that commission.

He previously served as a member of the U.S. House Committee on International Relations, and also previously held the position of president of the parliamentary assembly of the OSCE. He is also a member of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission. I'm delighted to be able to introduce Congressman Hastings this morning, and particularly pleased with his association with the OSCE, which I know the former chair of Freedom House, Max Kampelman, did so much to bring about and strengthen in its early years. So if you are ready, Congressman, we will give you the floor.

REPRESENTATIVE ALCEE HASTINGS (D-FL): Thank you very much –

MR. TAFT: Thank you.

REP. HASTINGS: – for that warm introduction. I'm anxious to hear what I have to say.

(Laughter.)

MR. TAFT: We all are.

REP. HASTINGS: Let me begin by thanking all of you, and especially Jennifer and Libby, Freedom House and all our radio services – Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty and Radio Free Asia. I genuinely commend all of you for convening this timely and important conference. We gather at a time of transition. Libby spoke very briefly. I heard some of her comments as I was coming in. As a relatively new administration takes the reigns and as we wait to see what content will be given to the democracy agenda of this new administration – and I'm sure today we wait with bated breath at the remarks that are scheduled to be made in Cairo.

We're all here, I assume, because we want that agenda to be both broad and deep. And I believe that President Obama's efforts to repair the good name of the United States will better position our country to lead in democracy promotion efforts. I was witness to the diminution of our reputation. For 14 years – really now 15, just coming from an economic conference in Dublin and going to Vilnius in July for the annual meeting of the OSCE – during that 14-year period, rising from rapporteur to vice chair of committee to the chair of a committee, then to vice president in the governing structure, and president in the governing structure, the first American to hold that position, I would and still do talk with many colleagues.

In Dublin, Saturday night, I sat at a table with men and women that I've known for 14 years from countries ranging from Austria to Denmark to Germany to Ukraine. And we were talking about our long friendship and the fact that we have interfaced with each other. But those same men and women, during the run-up to many things that took place in the last eight years, were very critical of our country. Now they hold expectations. I personally think those expectations are much too high for any individual or country to achieve, but at the same time, it brings an opportunity for us to do as much as we can as fast as we can.

If we want to lead, we must lead by example, and that means respecting the rule of law and human rights at home and abroad. And it also means, for me, as I begin to tool legislation to deal with the critical subject of Guantanamo, that sometimes the law, as we know it, needs a new architecture, and that needs to be manifested by the bodies of law in order for us to achieve a new status and to calm this nation down about the status of those persons that are in Guantanamo.

I regret that democracy promotion was, to some degree, tarnished by our government's actions and the rhetorical association of that goal with the invasion of Iraq. Of course, setting a good example will hardly be enough to get dictators in Iran or North Korea, Venezuela to follow suit, but it may help our credibility with those countries which might stand with us as allies in the effort to bring democracy to a greater part of the world.

If anti-democracy regimes are going to work together, and it seems that they are, pro-democracy governments have to work that much harder, and we must work together. As we in this room seek to support our government in this endeavor, I'd make three observations. First, I

think we have to be realistic about a paradox of democracy promotion. That is, for some government leaders, it is decidedly not in their personal interest to support democratic reform if it means their removal from power. A rhetoric which emphasizes regime change may not be very helpful in the near term.

Second, free and fair elections remain a cornerstone of democracy, and we should not pull back from our commitment to them. At the end of this month I will miss perhaps the biggest vote that's going to take place in this session because it seems we always wait for last. I never have understood that dynamic here. But the Friday before we go out of session, I've chosen to go to Albania. And the reason that I'm going to Albania is because they're holding an election, and I think an American presence there is critical. And for that reason I will try to explain to my constituents that working in election monitoring is equivalent to voting on something that I probably voted on 16 times already.

While free elections may be insufficient in and of themselves to establish a democracy, they are nevertheless an essential and necessary element of democracy. We've seen, of course, free elections produce some very unsavory results. I live in Florida. (Laughter.) Think of the Hamas victory three years ago. The lesson there, I think, is that while the United States should continue to support free elections around the globe, we must also be better prepared for the emergence of illiberal regimes. While we support free elections, we must vigorously reinforce the other essential ingredients of democracy from the rule of law to human rights.

Finally, we must also seek to address the economic needs of societies around the globe. If I were to drop a footnote, it was easy for me – I served then, as I do now, on the Intelligence Committee – to see Hamas coming. I learned why Hamas would win an election in Algeria from a woman that was from the Western Sahara and had spent eight years awaiting execution in France. She was a nurse and she ultimately became a lawyer and is one of the more outspoken critics of those who would not adhere to democratic principles.

It was an exciting evening listening to her, and what she told me, when she was a girl the king wouldn't permit girls to be educated. And she said one day two people from the Brotherhood in Egypt showed up in Western Sahara. And the first thing that they did was establish a little bitty school and let girls attend. And she said, then more came and they developed health clinics that had not been available to them. And then more came, and they brought food.

Well, Hamas did the exact same thing right in the face of the world. And yet there were those in the intelligence community and other places arguing that they were not going to win the election. I told them differently. I proved to be correct, because it was a simple proposition. It was the person that brought education, food and health care – education that I didn't like, our country didn't like, but it was education nevertheless.

When democratic change occurs, too often nascent democratic governments are poorly positioned to provide meaningful economic improvements for the people who voted them into office, and as a consequence, democratic toeholds can be lost. In this hemisphere, it was legislation that I tooled as a freshman that caused Aristide in Haiti to be placed back in Haiti.

Eye-ball-to-eye-ball with Bill Clinton – one-on-one on Air Force One – I said to him, Mr. President, you have to give the people an opportunity to let hope attach, and I cited that if we were to build 25 prefab schools, 150 prefab houses, lay some sewers along the city – (inaudible) – and build two or three roads in the outer part of that country, hope would attach.

And, yet, the donors met, and as donors do, they donor-talked and didn't produce the money, and then over a period of time, Aristide was unable to deliver, as is the present government. And here we sit right here in our hemisphere with the poorest country in this area and feel as if, oh, well, that's all right. Footnote there: Darfur isn't all right either. What part of genocide do people not understand? And how is it then that we can ignore the fact that people are being killed every day as we sit in comfort and our voices are not raised other than to say it's genocide and then do nothing? And I think people need to reread the treaty, or at least say that they are hypocritical as they read it. As I said, these improvements for the people who voted for them come difficultly.

In closing, I'd like to recall that this is the 20th anniversary of freely contested elections in Poland, the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the 20th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia to Czech Republic that brought the playwright and sometimes political prisoner, Václav Havel, to the presidency of his country. In a program sponsored by the Library of Congress under the aegis of the librarian, Mr. Billington, I had, in the last two years, two wonderful experiences. One was to have a three-hour breakfast, with two other members, with John Hope Franklin, and another – to have a four-hour breakfast, with two other congresspersons, with Václav Havel.

I asked him – he was not well, but he was spirited – and I asked him how important our Radio Free Europe was to him and what his vision is for it today. It was his lifeline. It was his ability to hear the views, he said, that continue to motivate him. And he said, there are people in areas of the world today – and you know it so well in the organizations that you people – you know that your voices need to be heard. My colleagues who want to cut Radio Free Europe and cut Radio Liberty evidently never had those experiences that Mr. Havel and others like him had and are having.

When I'm in places and speak with opposition leaders, like in Belarus or other places, I learn from them that our voices, speaking truth to power, do a difference make. We should take inspiration from those historic changes that I just cited to, as we seek to extend the freedoms achieved in those countries to others around the globe. Please know that at least in one member of the House of Representatives, you have an ally. I think that there should be more of what you do and I think it should be properly remunerated by those of you that do it. Thank you so very much.

(Applause.)

MR. TAFT: Thank you very much, Congressman Hastings, for those remarks. And they set us off, I think, on a very good course for our discussion of the "Undermining Democracy" study that we are releasing here this morning. So I would, at this point, like to introduce the moderator of our first panel. The panel is entitled "21st-Century Authoritarianism and the Battle

of Ideas.” And to moderate that panel and to introduce our panelists – and I’m glad to see that the airlines have cooperated in producing a full bench – (laughter) – here is Jeff Gedmin, who is the head of the Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. Jeff, you have the floor.

JEFFREY GEDMIN: Well, thank you very much. Good morning, everybody. I would like to thank you, Will, and Jennifer of Freedom House, your colleague Chris Walker in particular, who has played a very important role in this conference in the study. Let me thank Libby Liu and her team at Radio Free Asia, and my colleagues, Diane Zeleny and her team, played a central role from our side in doing this. And to you, Chairman Hastings, that was passionate, eloquent, and of course, from our perspective very useful. (Laughter.) Thank you for that.

I can’t resist telling you that, as you know, with your support, Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty has just completed a move into a brand new, safe, secure facility in Prague. Six weeks ago, when we were mostly complete with that move, we decided to invite your friend, Václav Havel, to come in, not for a big ceremony with all bells and whistles and something to drink and that sort of thing; we invited him in to chair the first editorial meeting in the building.

And it was low-key. It was for tradition, continuity for the future for our employees, and I think, Chairman Hastings, you would have been happy and proud to see Václav Havel at the chair of the first editorial meeting in this new building with members around the table from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Russia, Belarus you mentioned, Central Asia and so forth. So I wanted to mention that to you and I hope you’ll be with us soon there too. But you will have to chair an editorial meeting if you come. (Laughter.)

The panel, which we have here today, is truly distinguished. It’s my pleasure to introduce them and invite them to take the floor. Let me first introduce Peter Beinart, sitting to my right. He is a fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. He is a former editor and editor-at-large of the New Republic. He is also author of the book, “The Good Fight,” and if I may just read from the cover to you: “Once upon a time liberals knew what they believed. They believed America must lead the world by persuasion, not command. That liberal spirit won America’s trust at the dawn of the Cold War. Now, after the failed presidency of George W. Bush, America needs it back.”

We’ll hear from Peter Beinart in just one moment. Let me introduce the other two panelists: to Peter’s right Bob Kagan, scholar at the Carnegie Endowment, historian, essayist, director of a new think called Foreign Policy Initiative. His most recent book, “The Return of History and the End of Dreams.” I hold that us so you can see that as well. Bob Kagan, welcome to you. And then last but not least, to Bob’s right, James Traub, who writes for the New York Times magazine, works for and with the Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect, and is also a prolific writer and author of the recent book, “The Freedom Agenda: Why America Must Spread Democracy (Just Not the Way George Bush Did).”

Bob Kagan, you’re going to be left to defend George W. Bush but I’m not sure you’re going to want to do that. With that, I think the proposition is clear from the study and what Will gave as introduction today, and Chairman Hastings. The proposition is, simply put, that

authoritarians are getting better. They're updating methods. In some ways they're becoming more sophisticated. In some instances they are spending lavishly and the question posed is what to do about it. Peter, would you begin?

PETER BEINART: Sure. Thanks very much. I'll just make a couple of points. The first comes – is this on – from Obama's speech this morning, which I thought was – the thing that struck me the most about the speech in Cairo was his emphasis on moral reciprocity. I think what will get the most attention probably is the kind of – the reciprocity that he talked about between Israel and the Palestinians.

But I think at least as important, maybe more important, was the way in which he talked about moral reciprocity between the United States in our actions and nations – mostly non-democratic nations in the Middle East. You know, he talked about – he was very tough, I thought, fairly tough on the democracy stuff, but he also talked about America's responsibility to close Guantanamo Bay. And he talked about American history, the history of the Cold War, in a very different way than I think Bush and Cheney talked about American history, as this kind of glorious triumph in which America was always promoting democracy on the side of the angels.

He talked about the overthrow of the Mossadeq government in Iran. He talked about – he did not talk about democracy as if America were on the far side of a river, having crossed the river, and therefore basically don't have to be involved in any moral struggle ourselves; I think he talked about it in a way which I think is much more compelling, about America – about there needing to be a sense of movement and struggle – democratic movement and struggle, human rights movement and struggle inside the United States.

We are not a finished product, and although he gets a lot of – you know, he gets attacked a lot for these apologies, I think what he's trying to convey is the idea that we do not simply make demands on others but we see ourselves as involved in a reciprocal series of obligations as well. And that was very clear in his talk about nuclear weapons, which is a really big break from the past administration, also talking about America's obligation to ultimately move towards reducing its nuclear arsenal.

And I think that this is important not only because – and it's a cliché but I think it's true – because our strongest weapon in promoting democracy is the power of America's own example. I think the Cold War bears that out. I think ultimately – I think the strength of the American is ultimately the single best tool we have against authoritarianism, but also for more practical reasons. We have to show, in some ways in the same way that democracies had to show in the 1930s, that we in fact can provide economic prosperity and economic justice better than authoritarian countries. In that way, China is a much more formidable foe than the Soviet Union was, certainly by, say, the 1960s or 1970s. And I think we have to rise to that challenge.

It is not enough for America simply – our allies to be democracies. We have to show, as we did during the Cold War, that democracies could out-produce – could produce prosperity and fairness, equally distributed prosperity in a way that authoritarian countries can't. I think that's part of our challenge. And the other reason that I think America's image around the world is so important is that in a practical matter it's simply much harder to push countries towards free

elections if the populations hate our guts and likelihood of those free elections is going to be governments that are much more hostile to us than the present authoritarian ones.

That puts our interests and our ideals in direct contradiction. The better America's image is in a place like Pakistan or in parts of the Middle East, the less pointed that contradiction will be between our interests and our values. I think one of the things that we sometimes don't focus on enough is that democratic movements are nationalist movements. Democracies ride upon nationalist movements. And in Eastern Europe the nationalism was directed against the Soviet Union, but the bald reality is that in much of the world today, and certainly in the Middle East, the nationalism is directed against us, us and Israel in particular.

And in that kind of circumstance, it seems to me, it makes democracy promotion much more difficult, and whatever we can do, it seems to me, to not put ourselves in the bull's eye of nationalist hostility, the easier it will be for us to promote democracy. And ultimately, I think the more we can do that the more we will get to the place where I think we ultimately have to be, which is that the United States forthrightly, even aggressively, supports democratic elections in which Islamist parties take part, and in which, as long as they abide by the rules of the game, the rules of a free election, we do not take a position on who we want to win.

I think that enormous damage has been done by the U.S. response to the Hamas victory in Gaza. It is very, very understandable why the United States doesn't like Hamas. A good friend of mine from college was blown up in a bomb in Jerusalem by Hamas. I have no love lost for Hamas. And it was clearly going to be a setback in various ways to U.S. interests for Hamas to win that election. Still, I think we made a tragic mistake, in retrospect, by essentially saying to the Muslim world, if groups that we don't like win the election, then we're no longer in favor of democracy.

Should we push Hamas to agree to past agreements? Absolutely. To recognize the state of Israel? Absolutely. But when Israel has elections and produces governments that don't abide by past agreements, that don't, in fact, recognize a two-state solution, we don't therefore say that we don't think it was good that Israel had a free election. We understand that there are political tides that we have to work with.

The last point I would make I that I think most of the time – obviously circumstances differ, but I think we have sometimes gotten into a habit of talking in which we suggest that if you – that coercion is the best or even the only method towards promoting democracy, and so that somehow if Barack Obama is engaging aggressively with Cuba or with Iran, he is seen to have abandoned the democracy agenda.

I think that's not right. There are different cases, and sometimes coercion might work better, but in general I think actually engagement tends to be more productive than coercion in moving countries along the path towards democracy. And in this regard I think we have a very – we still, in popular discourse, have a very misguided understanding about the way the Cold War ended, and in particular about Ronald Reagan's role in ending the Cold War. I very strongly believe – and I think the historical evidence is very strongly on this side – that it was not Ronald

Reagan's early efforts at coercion that led to – that helped to produce the process of dramatic change in the Soviet Union.

It was the very, very intense process of diplomatic and arms control engagement with the Soviet Union, which, interestingly, Reagan started to get serious about even before Gorbachev took power but which allowed Gorbachev to be able to say to this hardliners, we don't need this Eastern European peon security belt anymore because we don't think the United States is going to be a military threat to us. I believe that if Ronald Regan, in 1987, had still acted like Ronald Reagan in 1981 or 1982 – which was what many, many conservative pundits wanted him to do, that in fact it would have been much more difficult for Gorbachev to make those changes.

So we have an image, it seems to me, from the end of the Cold War, an image of unrelenting coercion and pressure leading to the Soviet Union cracking that I think is deeply at odds with the reality of what happened and has in many ways led us astray, it seems to me, about the most productive way in which we are likely to promote democratic change, say in a place like Iran or Cuba, which I think is not unrelenting pressure and coercion and no engagement, but I think is in fact quite intense engagement so we can try to show, as Regan and Schultz so effectively showed Gorbachev, that we are not a threat but that also there are great potential benefits in working with us. I'll stop there. Thanks.

MR. GEDMIN: Peter, thank you. That was a brilliant start, and I think already we would have material for a very robust round for the next hour, and I'm tempted to move us right into the fray but we won't. We'll be restrained and go right to Bob Kagan, who is invited both to present but also, if you wish, Bob start commenting on Peter's comments.

ROBERT KAGAN: I'll pass up the opportunity to comment on Peter's comments. First of all, let me just say that I think that this report that's been produced by all your organizations is extremely important because if there's one thing that wasn't supposed to be true after the end of the Cold War, it was the indefinite survival, if not flourishing, of autocratic regimes.

Peter mentioned academic opinion. Academic opinion was almost unanimous that autocracy was a thing of the past, that there was no way in the modern era of global economics and market forces that modernization on the economic front wouldn't be accompanied by modernization on the political front. That is the entire premise behind the strategy, which Peter is calling for, of engagement with China. The idea is that as long as China keeps moving forward economically, the political liberalization of China must, almost as a law of human physics, must accompany it.

And what this report points out, and a few others have pointed out but which has been very – I must say there has not been a great deal of receptivity to this point – is that quite the contrary, there is no such law of human physics, and at least for the foreseeable future – and I mean, the long foreseeable future, it seems that economic growth and a degree of economic modernization are entirely compatible with continuing autocracy.

And as this report points out, the wealth that is acquired as a result of economic modernization can be used as a tool of maintaining autocracy, both as a means of buying off

public acquiescence to lack of freedom, but also as a means of using new tools of technology, new tools of communications, new tools of more intelligence repression than fire hoses or truncheons that manage to isolate people and keep them from raising any kind of challenge.

China is the great model of success. It is a model that Vladimir Putin very eagerly is trying to copy, offering the same kind of bargain, as long as it lasts, of increasing economic prosperity in return for decreasing political openness. And so, as we look around the world, we see, much to our surprise, the continuing vitality of autocratic government long after it was supposed to have withered away by the natural forces of political and economic development.

The report also points out, as I've also pointed out and others have pointed out, that these autocratic regimes do not exist in isolation from one another. They are in fact cooperating on many different planes in the international system. The most obvious is the protection that they afford each other in international fora, whether it is international human rights fora at the U.N. or on issues that are entirely unrelated to human rights, like nonproliferation, the protection that they afford fellow autocracies in Iran and North Korea, as well as Zimbabwe, as well as Sudan.

Now, we all say, well, you know, why are we doing this? And I don't know why we would ever expect them to do anything else. It is not the business of autocracies to help democracies undermine other autocracies. The Chinese know perfectly well what it's like to be on the receiving end of the liberal democratic world's pressure. For them, Tiananmen Square, although they don't want to talk about it in public, is very much in the forefront of their minds at all times, as it is in the minds of other autocracies, and they know that they dare not allow the liberal democratic world to set further precedence that any kind of pressure or intervention or interference in the internal affairs of autocracies is acceptable.

And so, when I hear the argument that we need to work with Russia on nonproliferation, we need them to help us with nonproliferation, therefore we have to turn at least a partially blind eye to their domestic politics; when I hear that we need to work with the Chinese – we can't exclude them, we need to work with them on nonproliferation, I say have we not seen the record? The record is one of consistent Russian and Chinese protection of the very regimes that we are trying to seek their assistance on. And I think the reason we ignore this reality is because we don't want to pay attention to the fact that autocracies have interests as autocracies, not just as particular nations with particular geopolitical interests, but as autocracies. And it's the unwillingness to face up this fact that I think has led to a lot of confusion in our foreign policy and does so today.

Now, the final thing that I'd like to say is if autocracy is showing signs of flourishing these days, we should not only view this as the failure of a certain model or just maybe, you know, this is the way things are. I think we ought to recognize that we are helping – we are helping autocracies flourish, and we're helping them in several ways. One has been by denigrating democracy itself.

And let's not kid ourselves. We talk about how – the report talks about how the authoritarian governments have tried to redefine democracy or shape our perceptions of democracy. How about our own intellectual class, our own intellectual class which has spent

more than a decade denigrating democracy, writing extensively about what is called illiberal democracy, which, by the way, we used to call autocracy. (Laughter.) You know, the Somozas won a series of elections. I guess they were just a long-running illiberal democracy.

And not only denigrating illiberal democracy, but celebrating this wonderful phrase, “liberal autocracy,” the idea that you can count on these great autocratic leaders eventually, like Moses, to lead their countries across to the promised land. And guess what? They don’t do it except by mistake. (Laughter.) And if anyone thinks that Mikhail Gorbachev knew what he was doing as he lost control first of the internal and then of the external situation in the Soviet Union, then there really needs to be a little bit more historical reading done. But the bottom line is, autocrats are in the business of maintaining themselves in power. They are not in the business of helping a transition away from them. And so the notion that there is such a thing as a liberal autocrat is false.

Finally, there is the question, we are helping them by refusing to respond. Yes, autocracies are flourishing. Yes, they are working together. Yes, in various ways they are promoting autocracy elsewhere in the world, and anyone who doesn’t understand that can read this report and can read other reports about how Russia does use its wealth to fund like-minded peoples in neighboring countries.

China does less of that, but the day may come when they will do it. Certainly – perhaps unintentionally but certainly with great effect, the aid they provide to African dictatorships without raising any questions about how they use that money does not serve the cause of democracy but in fact objectively supports autocracy. And what is our response to any of this? Now, I think that Congressman Hastings talked about the democracies getting together. I must say, any time – and I have personal experience with this – anyone talks about the idea of the democracies getting together, a huge hue and cry is raised about what a terrible thing that would be.

For anyone who has ever been in the business of promoting a concert of democracies or a league of democracies, as I have had the unfortunate experience of doing – (laughter) – I can tell you that I get more criticism from democracies – people who live in democracies – than from people who live in autocracies, oddly enough. And the reason is, we dare not exclude them – we dare not draw a line between the democracies of the world and the autocracies of the world, because then, they’ll feel excluded and we’ll create a division in this world.

Well let me tell you something: The division is already there; they are aware of it; they know that their interests don’t coincide with ours; they are cooperating; they are spending their money; and the only thing that’s not happening is that we’re not. And I think that we ought to get back in the business of doing that because – let’s not kid ourselves about this either – the world swings in pendulums between different forms of government.

And it depends on what the strongest powers in the world do and are. There was a time when fascism looked like it was the new thing; when fascism looked like it was successful in the 1920s and ’30s, you had little fascist dictatorships popping up in the strangest places in the

world. When communism looked like it was winning, you had communist revolutions popping up everywhere, people declaring themselves communists.

When democracy seemed to be the big winner after the end of the Cold War, you had a flourishing of democracy, and now, the pendulum is swinging back again, and it can swing further, and we can live in a world that is more and more populated by autocratic governments – a world that we thankfully escaped from in the 20th century, but which, out of ignorance or lack of will or lack of concern, we may be sliding back to.

So I do think that there is a lot to be done and I want to thank, again, the organizers of this conference and the institutions who have organized this conference for the work that they do, because I think it's extremely important, and in fact, increasingly important. Thanks.

(Applause.)

MR. GEDMIN: Bob, thank you very much. And Peter, I thought maybe, when Bob was going after Gorbachev for losing control, inadvertent crisis, collapse, maybe he was coming after you, but not there, or not yet.

MR. BEINART: I sensed that as well.

(Laughter.)

MR. GEDMIN: Okay, but I said not yet.

MR. KAGAN: It was purely incidental. (Chuckles.)

MR. GEDMIN: I think you're already ready to punch back and he hasn't punched yet. Jim, over to you; you have the floor, please.

JIM TRAUB: Well, thank you very much, Jeff. And I'm delighted to be here. And I'm now going to – I'm going to gratify Jeff's wishes by taking on some of the things that Bob said. But I also wanted to talk a little bit about the report, which I also have a somewhat different take on from Bob. And I come from the side of democracy promotion, as you can tell from the title of my book.

I think there are a couple – I agree that this is a bad thing – this autocratic backlash – and I agree that it exists. I am not as persuaded as the report is that it is as grave a danger as is pointed out. I am not as persuaded about the causes of it, at least the ones the paper identifies. So first, the premise that there is a global, political recession – that is to say, democracy on the retreat; autocracy on the rise. Proof: Freedom House figures have gone backwards in terms of democracy for three years.

Well, the broad political dynamics we're talking about cannot be measured in three years. This is not like inflation or unemployment statistics. If you go back a little bit longer – if you go back over, let's say, a decade – you'll find that the Freedom House figures show a slightly

greater number of countries advancing than diminishing. So just in terms of raw numbers, I don't accept this premise. And I think it would be terrible if it were so; I don't think it is so.

Thinking that it is so, though, tends to lead very much to the view that Bob expressed here and in his book, which is to say that increasingly salient is this distinction in the world between the democratic states and the autocratic states. Now, I have to say, that doesn't correspond to my sense of the world. And I would say it doesn't in two important ways. One that Bob raised, where I just don't really agree – that is to say, the increasingly inescapable need for states to cooperate on a set of issues that don't very much distinguish them according to their internal regime type, whether it is the global financial crisis or nonproliferation or climate change.

Two: I think that the distinctions between Western democracies and Third World democracies are every bit as salient as the distinction between democracies and non-democracies. And in fact, one reason why I am one of those democracy-promoting people who does not believe in a concert of democracies is that I think it rests in part upon the assumption that democratic states will behave similarly in terms of a set of key foreign policy issues. Well, non-democratic states – India, South Africa, Brazil, Mexico – the leading emerging-nation democracies – they don't look at the world that way. They don't denominate their own foreign policy in terms of the fact that they're a democracy or not.

And Jeff mentioned that I also work with this NGO called the Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect, which focuses on this principle of the responsibility to protect, which is the reformulated version of humanitarian intervention. And I can tell you that for us, India – the countries I just mentioned, in fact – India, Brazil, South Africa – are obstacles that I would say, in many ways, are more formidable than Russia or China. So I'm not comfortable with this distinction; I think more is being made of it than is the case.

Then there's the question of the cause. That is to say, how important in this supposed backlash is this increasingly joined-up struggle on the part of autocracies to, in effect, promote autocracy? And I thoroughly accept the fact that it exists, and I think the great thing about the report is that it highlights that. But how important is that? For example, if you look at Latin America, how important is Chavez's autocracy promotion in terms of establishing a beachhead for non-democratic government in Bolivia – I guess also in Ecuador? I mean, this is an area where my knowledge is secondhand and I'm eager to be corrected by anybody who knows the region, unlike me.

My impression is that both capitalism and democracy are on shaky foundations in parts of Latin America because they're seen as not having worked. That is to say, capitalism is identified with neo-liberal formulas, which, rightly or wrongly, is seen as having actually made things worse, not better, in Latin America. And countries like Venezuela, which really did have electoral democracies, did have a free press until Chavez came along and overthrew them, to the great grief of Venezuela, my impression is, also had the same kind of – had a politics built on the same kind of oligarchic social structure that you find in so many parts of Latin America, and democracy, by ordinary people, was perceived as a kind of ping-pong game between different branches of the elite.

So I'm more inclined to think that a failure of democracies to consolidate themselves and a failure of democracies to deliver has more to do with this backsliding that people perceive than the successful, kind of, propaganda campaign waged by autocratic states. And I think it's also important to look at the other side. Why is the Chinese leadership so popular in China? Why do 90 percent of the Chinese people say that they're satisfied with their political leadership? Well, the report says, well because the same communist party leadership produced a situation so catastrophic that the contrast with today is fantastic – who wouldn't be satisfied?

And I think that must be true. But that seems like a kind of niggling and unsatisfactory explanation for an astonishing economic miracle, which has come at the cost of total political repression. You can read Nick Kristof's op-ed piece in today's Times talking about the horror of Tiananmen Square, which he was present at, and then saying, well, but why don't people care about it anymore? And then he said repression, fear – but also, this astonishing economic miracle. So one has to reckon with that success.

I wouldn't say that, by the way, of Russia, Iran or Venezuela; I would say it of China. China has a very powerful model in that regard. So in that sense, I'm not – I'm uncomfortable with this paradigm of fearful democracies, bold autocracies and that line moving between them. Now, what should Obama do? And I'm struck that Peter and Bob both used the word engagement, but in a very different sense. So Peter used engagement, as I understand it, in the sense that, if we accept the legitimacy of other countries's sense of their own interests and deal with them on the respectful basis of that we don't agree with you, but we recognize that this is your view and, in some ways, it corresponds to your situation, we will have more – we will get somewhere, diplomatically.

Bob used it in a very specific, political science sense, which is the belief that if you can incorporate countries into the global economy, they will eventually become democracies, so we should do whatever we can to help China develop and they'll become a democracy – a belief that, he rightly pointed out, has proved to be false, but I don't think a belief that is so widely held anymore. It was a widely held belief; it was a credo. And like a lot of credos about democratic development, it's proved to be wrong. So I don't know that that is so, but now, this engagement question, though, I think goes much more to what President Obama at least thinks he's doing, which is engaging with everybody – engaging with countries which people on the left have urged engagement with – Cuba – engaging with countries which people on the left wouldn't have wanted engagement with – China.

Now, the premise, I take it, of this, is that if we engage with them, we will get these good things that Bob has said is naïve. And that may prove to be so. I mean, let's take an example: Obama's attempt to create a strong coalition against North Korea – to enlist Russia and China – to finally, forcefully say to North Korea, this can't stand, ought to be – he hopes it will be, I suppose – one of the fruits of this engagement with Russia and China. Is it going to work? I don't know. The jury is out.

In the case of Cuba, engagement with Cuba has already produced, apparently, a kind of sea-change in the Organization of American States, which has had an increasingly conflictual

relationship with the United States in recent years. So I think the premise is, if we engage with everybody, good things will happen; we have no choice but to engage with autocrats because we need them to build the structures that President Bush utterly ignored, on non-proliferation and climate change. We need Egypt because it's a partner for peace, et cetera, et cetera.

Now, I'll say a few more things and then stop, but several really fundamental questions arise. One: Is it right that you have to make a tradeoff? Do you have to say to President Mubarak, as we have said, our aid to you will no longer be conditioned on political reform, and thereby we hope that you will be a better partner for peace. I'm not persuaded of that. I mean, I was really dismayed by that. I think that was a mistake. I would be willing to take that risk because, one, Mubarak hasn't delivered very much, two, I don't think he's going to change his own self-interest based on the fact that we are making demands for internal reform.

On the other hand, is it good that we engaged with Cuba in the way that we did, even though Cuba remains an autocratic state? I think, yeah. I think maybe there's a tradeoff there, too. Diplomacy is choosing. And democracy promotion is a fundamental thing in that balance – it is one thing; it is not the thing, especially given that we realize the limits of what we can do. So I don't know how this will play out over time.

My possibly vain hope is that Obama has downplayed the language I would have liked to have heard from him – and I think all of you would have liked to have heard from him – about democracy, in the hope and expectation of repairing a lot that was broken in recent years, and thereby creating a foundation which will allow him to use the language and, maybe, use the policies that would further the cause of democracy in the world.

That's my guess. I mean, it may be that, in fact, they're so allergic to Bush's language and Obama is so deeply aware of the danger of America arrogantly preaching or promoting anything that, in fact, he will retreat into a much more classically realist world. But I think the one thing I would say is that I am more willing to accept that the tradeoffs that he appears to be seeking are in the name of things profoundly worth attaining than I was when the Bush administration effectively abandoned its democracy-promotion policy, starting around 2006 or so, because it felt that it needed to enlist states in the global war on terror and it saw that there was a tension between them.

So I guess, in that sense, I am both dismayed by the lack of democracy language so far in the administration, but I am still broadly hopeful about this administration's ambitions, and therefore, I am at least hopeful that it will incorporate a deep concern about democracy.

MR. GEDMIN: Jim, thank you very much. And Congressman Hastings, thank you very much. I would like to try to connect at least one thread between Peter and Jim, and I'm going to pose a question to two of them and then a separate, but related, question to Bob. Jim – well, Peter raised the question about what you do when authoritarians deliver the goods. And you said, Peter, as I understood you, that China is an example and it's a challenging example. And Jim, if I understood you correctly, you pointed to an apparent lack of widespread interest or energy or dynamism behind human rights or rule of law or democracy in China.

My question to both of you is, how do you know? How do you know what Chinese think? And let me give you an admittedly very imperfect analogy, but nevertheless, just to push the conversation along, in 1988, in East Germany, you still had the Honecker regime in power, and in West Germany in 1988, a year before the Berlin Wall fell, it was pretty much conventional wisdom, left and right, in the academic community, in the journalistic community, that East Germany had evolved to a kind of mild authoritarianism.

It wasn't a democracy, but a mild authoritarianism. Economically, they were doing quite well. It was said it was the crown jewel of the Soviet empire – far better than the other Soviet bloc countries. And it was stable because there was no Solidarity and there was no Vaclav Havel and Charter '77. And within a year, that vanished, and all those assumptions were turned on their head. How do you know, or how do you make assumptions – it's a big country; it's not a monolith – but nevertheless, perhaps you first, Jim, how do you make assumptions about what Chinese want today and what they are or are not satisfied with?

MR. TRAUB: Well, it's a fair question, because obviously, any kind of survey taken in an autocratic state is going to be less dependable than one taken in a democratic state. I don't actually know who's done these surveys. I would be very happy if, you know, IRI or others did them, as opposed to I don't know whom. My impression is that, first of all, survey data bears this out. Second, why shouldn't people feel this way? That is to say, there has never been a case in human history in which so many people were lifted out of poverty so quickly.

Now, we rightly deplore the political costs of that and say those political costs didn't have to be paid. But it is nevertheless a fact that, for tens or hundreds of millions of Chinese people, their economic prospects, their educational prospects, their fundamental life prospects have changed with astonishing speed. That can't be said for the East Germans – not in the least! So the reason why, I think, Peter rightly said that China is a more dangerous model is that communism failed on its own terms – it didn't give people a better life; China, however, has succeeded at that most fundamental of goals.

MR. GEDMIN: Peter?

MR. BEINART: Yeah, I guess I would say, I mean, I'll go with you in saying that we can't assume because the Chinese government is still in power, or because they can mobilize lots of people at a rally, that that means that everybody is happy with the Chinese government. I think your point is well taken, that often, you know, as the famous line goes, a democracy is like a rickety raft and an autocracy is like a proud sailing ship that all of a sudden hits a raft and sinks because you can't see what's going on under the surface.

But I think it's also very important that we not assume, which I think sometimes, we still do, that the Eastern European analogy is apt – that because people in East Germany had a deep hostility to their regime – in fact, their entire state, which they wanted to collapse – that therefore, we should assume the same in China. As Jim said, China has produced, really, enormous material benefits for the people. East Germany is a state that actually would have ceased to exist had they not built a wall to keep the people in, because although East – yeah,

sure, East Germany was better than Albania and Romania, but it was far, far, far less economically successful than West Germany.

East Germany also was under the imperial control of a foreign power, which is to say that East German nationalism was essentially a vehicle against a regime that was seen to be a puppet of a hated foreign power. The situation in China is very different. In some ways, you can argue Chinese nationalism is much more dangerous for that reason, but it also means that it can be used much more effectively against us – that we may be the object of Chinese nationalism, whereas in East Germany, the object of Chinese nationalism was the Soviet Union.

I think that means – that is a very fundamental difference between the two situations, which is likely to have an impact on the ability of a regime to use nationalism to gain the support of its people in a way that I think East Germany was not able to do.

MR. GEDMIN: Peter, thank you. Bob, if I may, I recall reading somewhere a little story – it may have been apocryphal, but I like the story, so I'll use it anyway – that when Reagan first met Gorbachev, he smiled warmly, shook his hand and leaned in and said, let me explain to you why we don't trust you. (Laughter.) And of course, it wasn't Gorbachev personally; he was trying to communicate that you have a system that doesn't have free and competitive press and doesn't have fair and free elections and doesn't have independent courts and doesn't have independent trade unions and so on.

My question to you is, why does it have to be a proposition of either engagement or coercion, understanding that country-to-country, it may be a different strategy? But pick a country like Iran. Why can one not approach a country like Iran in an integrated fashion, where the dialogue tends to security issues, the nuclear program, but also cares for human rights and democracy?

MR. KAGAN: Well, I think the obvious answer is that it can and should. You know, the history has been turned into a cartoon. It's not as if we didn't have engagement with the Soviet Union throughout almost the entire period of the Cold War. The only person who refused to negotiate with the Soviet Union was Peter's friend, Dean Acheson, the great model of modern liberalism.

MR. BEINART: Not actually my good friend.

(Laughter.)

MR. KAGAN: Oh, sorry. And I think that if you were to tell me that our engagement with China was going to include very consistent criticism of their human rights record, as it did, to some extent, during the Clinton years – the Clinton administration, for a while, managed to combine a pretty tough posture on human rights with engagement. Now ultimately, the business interests overruled the human rights interests, but there can be a balance, and I would be very happy to see that restored, rather than, for instance, the new and wonderful administration declaring that we're never going to let human rights get in the way of our relationship, which I don't consider to be the kind of engagement that I think is right.

And certainly, in the case of Iran, I think that we ought to be able to do all of that. I mean, think back on the Cold War – and I've had this conversation with Europeans many times – they're very proud of the fact and their view is that it's really the Helsinki Accords that brought down the Soviet Union. Now, I always have to laugh when I hear them say that, but at least it's a nice thought, and so I say, well, why don't, in dealing with Putin's Russia, we have a Helsinki process with Putin's Russia, then?

I mean, that obviously was not – you don't consider that to have been either futile or contradictory during the Soviet Union, but the fact is, we are pretty much in the position of having a very unquestioning approach, now – certainly, we did during the Bush administration and the Obama administration has merely continued it. I must say, now that the Obama administration has tried to, in policy and practice of engagement with China.

I mean, do we really think that this is a new policy? Do we think that the Obama administration is doing anything with regard to China that Bush didn't do for eight years? It's not as if we don't have a track record, here. So – but we do have a track record of increasingly forgetting about the dimension that you're talking about, Jeff.

MR. GEDMIN: Bob, thank you. And before I open it up to the audience, I'd like to ask, if I may, Peter and Jim one last question: It seems to me, Peter and Jim – and I'm going to stay with Iran for a second – the question is not whether we engage or not, but the quality and kind of engagement. Could you make a comment about what you would like to see and what you would recommend, and may I ask you, do you have concern that when the administration speaks about engagement with Iran, that perhaps they mean the government, not the people of Iran, and one issue – the nuclear issue – and not a broader set of issues? Peter first and then Jim.

MR. BEINART: The first thing I would say is I just think, actually, if you read Obama's speech in Cairo today, I think it's hard to suggest that he's abandoned the democracy – at least rhetorically. I mean, it might not be at quite the same level that it was at the height of the Bush administration for a brief moment, but I think it's – I would imagine it, actually, probably compares pretty favorably, just on a rhetorical level, to where Bush was, as Jim said, after 2006.

I think what's different is how much additional emphasis he puts on things like strengthening the nuclear nonproliferation regime for all countries, or reciprocity in the Arab-Israeli peace process. Yes, it is nice to say that we can do it all – that we can, basically – that we can engage with countries and still pressure them as well. And yet, foreign policy is also about priorities. Foreign policy is about difficult choices, sometimes, about priorities – about which issues on your agenda matter the most. I mean one – maybe it will make Bob happy to hear me bash the Carter administration a little bit – but one of the things that people have faulted about the Carter administration was an unwillingness to prioritize.

I think you could say that the Reagan administration had quite different priorities at different moments in Reagan's presidency. But at each moment, you can argue, there was a clear set of priorities. And I actually think, by the end of the Reagan administration, promoting democracy in the Soviet Union was not actually priority number one – that arms control was

priority number one, although arms control, in a certain way, served that latter purpose. Reagan really abandoned a lot of his hard-line rhetoric towards Gorbachev in those last few years.

So I'm not saying that we should completely – we should abandon calls for democracy and pressure on democratization, but I think one has to be honest and forthright in talking about, well, what are you willing to give up if that kind of pressure is likely to mean that you get less cooperation on other things? And I think that's the kind of hard-headed conversation one has. And I would be happier were people willing to say, yes, the pressure on democracy is so important that we're willing to do it even if it means that we get less – for instance, that we're less likely to get help from Iran on restraining Hezbollah, for instance – that this is more important to us.

Or even if it means that there's less likelihood that we're going to have success in reaching some kind of a nuclear deal. We don't know that the democratic pressure is going to mean that there's less likelihood of success, but I think it would be really flippant to just assume that we can always have our cake and eat it, too.

MR. GEDMIN: Jim?

MR. TRAUB: Peter said just about everything that I was going to say, so I'll just say it all over again. (Laughter.) No, I think that Iran is a really well-chosen example in that sense, because on the one hand, it's a very strange totalitarian state, but among other things, it is a totalitarian state. And if you've ever been in Iran, it's heartbreaking that a country that really has everything is being kept under the thumbs of these medievalists. So it's hard to think of a place where we have a deeper interest in and wish for democratic change – also, one where we have very little capacity to actually make a difference right now.

The difference between what we would wish for and what we are capable of, in terms of Iran's internal political dynamic, is enormous. On the other hand, Iran's capacity to do mischief in the world is immense. Our ability to do something about Iran's capacity to do mischief in the world is greater, I think, than our capacity to influence its internal dynamic. And so in this world of choices that Peter was just describing, it's very understandable that we would say, look, let's focus on the thing that matters hugely that we might be able to do something about, which is their support for Hezbollah and Hamas and, of course, the nuclear nonproliferation issue.

I have very low expectations of success, but I think it is right to try. I also want to just correct a wrong impression that I must have left, given Bob's response. I don't think that the Bush administration didn't engage with China and the Obama administration is doing so – I don't think the differences are actually very important at all. I'm trying to explain to myself, in a way, what I think was the rationale for Hillary's, I think wrongheaded, comment when she went there, that we're not going to let human rights get in the way of all this stuff.

It does go to a different Bush administration failure, which is a willingness to build the structures, institutions, networks and so on that we are going to need in the world we are moving into, on issues where we cannot do it without China – the ones I've already mentioned – which, whatever you may think about China, we can't get there without them.

MR. GEDMIN: Thank you. Now we have the balance of 25 minutes for questions and comments from the audience. And I'll go to Martha Bayles first, and if you would stand, identify yourself and say a word. Identify yourself, Martha.

Q: I'm Martha Bayles. (Inaudible, off mike) – public diplomacy and other subjects. This has been an interesting discussion because the entire focus of your remarks, it seems to me, has been on conventional diplomacy, government-to-government, discussing the democratic agenda as something that diplomats press on other diplomats, in a mixture of other issues.

But the sponsoring organizations at this event have focused almost all of their attention, historically, on American attempts to communicate with the populations of other countries. Radio Free Asia was founded, in parallel, with this reversion to doing business as usual with China, in my understanding, as a kind of parallel track that would push the human rights agenda through this kind of broadcasting effort at the same time that we are engaging the government toward opening Chinese markets and all that other good stuff.

So there's more than one America out there engaging the world, and I'd just be interested to hear, particularly from these organizations sponsoring this event, can engagement with the populations of other countries – with civil society, with democratic organizations and efforts – parallel a different kind of engagement with the government to further these other issues that really do not require, necessarily, the support of the population?

MR. GEDMIN: Martha, thank you. Can everybody, including in the back, hear that question? You're saying no. Well, I'm not repeating it. (Laughter.) I would say there are eight chairs in the front row, please come forward. (Laughter.) Bob, would you take that first, please?

MR. BEINART: He's kind of an authoritarian, isn't he?

MR. KAGAN: Well, obviously, it's true. But it raises a question – I believe someone told me before I got up here that the Obama administration has just canceled Freedom House's civil society program in Egypt. Is that true? Yes? Yeah, how about that. (Laughter.) And I think that, while I'm entirely sympathetic to the idea that the American government can go in one direction while some of these non-governmental organizations go in another, I must say that I fear that the weight of the American government's position is greater, even, than the efforts of the organizations that are represented here, especially if, as seems to be the case, the American government is going to cancel civil society programs being conducted by these kinds of organizations. And I must say, it certainly raises questions about the rhetorical power of President Obama's statements in Egypt if, in Egypt, he has canceled the civil society program.

MR. GEDMIN: Jim, feel free to take up that, but also the broader question: Is this just government-to-government? How does one more effectively engage peoples and populations?

MR. TRAUB: A couple of things: One, I think Bob is surely right that what states say and what states do so totally shape the environment that you can't imagine that it is somehow going to be counteracted by something else. But I do think there's a couple things to be said on

this. There's actually a worse example in Egypt than the one Bob mentioned, which is that the Obama administration has agreed that it will no longer direct funding to NGOs in Egypt which are not licensed by the state, or registered, I think, is the term. And of course, they only register ones that are entirely compliant.

So I think that's really – I mean, as an act of truckling to Mubarak, I think that sends a really terrible signal. But on a couple of different questions, one is the value of public diplomacy, which is to say, a president or other speaking to individuals – clearly, that's what Obama just did in Cairo. So he is someone who is acutely aware of himself as an instrument of public diplomacy, and I would say we've never had a more powerful one. So for better or for worse, depending on what he says, he's going to be our instrument.

In terms of civil society, though – a word everybody likes to use – I do think, actually, as a fundamental instrument in the world of democracy promotion, it's really key that all the stuff we do, as much as possible, not be done by the State Department or USAID or an actual instrument of government, but in fact, be done through civil society – through NGOs. And in fact, NED and IRI and so forth effectively are NGOs, for all their semi-public status. But also, the role of the Open Society Institute, and so on and so on is terribly important. And the promotion of interlocutors on the other side – the promotion of civil society in other countries – is an absolutely indispensable prerequisite for the development of democracy.

MR. GEDMIN: Jim, thank you. Before I give you the floor, Peter, I just want to mention, as an aside to Martha's point, that what Libby and Radio Free Asia does and what we do, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, has this awkward label, but it's always been called surrogate broadcasting. It's not imposing anything; it's not dictating anything; it's not the editorial line of the United States government. It is independent journalism – and it's actually stipulated legally that it's independent – and it's providing the news and information, discussion, debate and analysis that countries would have if they had a free press, or in countries that don't have a fully developed or mature free and independent press.

We, in our work, as you know, Martha, see evidence all of the time – and sometimes, the instances can be seemingly small, but I think, kind of powerful, that when you do find ways and methods to engage populations, it can have great effect. And I'll just mention one small one: I've just come in from Prague. That's where our operational headquarters is. Our Afghan service that has 55 percent audience share in Afghanistan – it's the most popular station in the country – it does music, news, health care, culture, satire – they just told me that they had a call-in with some disabled students in Kabul.

Very simple: They call in and they say, we have exams next week at the university and there's no handicap access. And then, when that's on the air, a minister gets on the air from the Afghan government and says, we didn't know about that and we'll fix it. But then, equally important, comes a debate about handicap students and issues and values of diversity and tolerance and inclusion and so forth. Sometimes it's direct; sometimes it's less direct. To you, Peter – I wouldn't ask you to compliment what we do, but you're invited to – but I would ask you to take, from what Jim said, what else can be done?

You've made an argument against coercion and you've made an argument on behalf of engagement. You've said that priorities are required, and that point is taken. But in societies, pick one or speak broadly – what else can the United States do through government – but to Martha's question – outside of government, to have a richer engagement and support for civil society in a number of these countries?

MR. BEINART: Well, I think one of the most crucial things we can do is to make it easy – easier than it has been in recent years – for foreign students to come to the United States. I think that – and my colleague at the Council on Foreign Relations, Ted Alden, has written a book about this – I think we're overcoming some of the worst mistakes we made after 9/11. But I think the enormous series of difficulties and obstacles that was created, to foreign students coming to the United States after 9/11, particularly from the Muslim world, I think, looks in retrospect very, very self-defeating.

I think there's nothing better that we can do than to have large numbers of those people – those young people from the Muslim world and from other authoritarian countries – come to the United States. And if we divert them away from the United States and they end up studying not in the U.S., but in the Gulf, for instance, instead, or in China, I think they will have a very different set of experiences. And I think we should make every effort, even at the cost of marginally increasing the threat of terrorism, to make sure that we remain relatively open.

MR. GEDMIN: Let's take the next question. This gentleman – if you would come to the microphone, then we'll all hear.

Q: Eli Lake, Washington Times – for the panel. In the current war against terror networks, the U.S. relies upon security services that also serve to prop up unfree countries, so how can the U.S. credibly support democracy promotion and, at the same time, cooperate – I think Obama's – I've written, the New York Times has written – that Obama is increasingly outsourcing hard cases to these security services. So how can the government do both in a credible sense, when oftentimes, our allies in the war on terrorism are also propping up and responsible for the direct repression of a lot of authoritarian and autocracy?

MR. GEDMIN: Eli, thank you. Bob, could you take that first – double standards, hypocrisy?

MR. KAGAN: I think the two Obama people should probably answer it first, since it's their problem now – it's not mine.

(Laughter.)

MR. BEINART: Are you a Bush person by that logic?

MR. KAGAN: No, I haven't, actually, spent all my time talking about how wonderful one candidate or one president is; I've just talked about America.

MR. BEINART: That's because he's no longer in office.

MR. KAGAN: But anyway, you know, that's okay. (Laughter.) As a practical matter, it is, in fact, perfectly possible to cooperate with these oppressive groups and overthrow their government at the same time. We did it in Latin America, you know? We certainly had good people-to-people relations with intelligence organizations in Central and South America at the same time as we were sort of gradually, in our own fumbling way, making it increasingly difficult for their governments to survive.

Most of these services are not doing us a favor when they cooperate on anti-terrorist stuff. They're mostly doing it themselves, anyway. And so I think it's possible. It shouldn't be a hindrance, but I don't want to remove the glaring contradiction that you're pointing out for my colleagues, here.

(Laughter.)

MR. GEDMIN: Well Bob, before we leave you and go to the others, what about a country like Pakistan, which is authoritarian and – I'm going back to what Peter said. Peter didn't use Pakistan as an example – but so essential on the war on terror. It is authoritarian. We do require or need stability there. We do cooperate with security forces that are really quite illiberal. Does that hurt our cause or undermine our credibility there or elsewhere?

MR. KAGAN: Well it has, and it hasn't paid off, either. I mean, this is the great irony. And, you know, I feel like I'm back in the Cold War again, in some respect, especially when I hear Peter's argument for why you have to sometimes cooperate with these authoritarian governments and not put too much pressure on them one way or another.

Guess what? That was the argument in the Cold War; that's why you didn't want to put too much pressure on Pinochet and that's why you didn't want to put too much pressure on the South Korean government and that's why you didn't want to put too much pressure on any authoritarian government because, after all, we need them for this or we need them for that. And it turns out to be a mistake in the long run, and certainly, in the case of Pakistan. So we had this wonderful relationship with the very same people who were supporting the very same people that we are now fighting and who are trying to kill us. And they are part of the problem. So what was the payoff, exactly, for this cooperation?

I think that we should – if the Cold War taught us anything, it's that this clinging to people who claim to be our allies in a certain struggle, lest, if we don't support them, we get this terrible alternative – that turned out to be a mistake in policy in the Cold War and I think it's a mistake in policy in the present situation, too. We would be better off if we have less dependence and less solidarity with the – especially with the security intelligence services of Pakistan – than we had all through the Bush years – I want to make it clear – without any – unquestioningly. And I hope that that is one of the things that changed, although I'm not sure – given what I'm hearing – that that is one of the things that'll change under the Obama administration, since, after all, we have to work with these people.

MR. GEDMIN: Let me go next to Secretary Beinart of the Obama administration for a comment.

(Laughter.)

MR. BEINHART: If I'm not mistaken, there's only one person on this panel who's actually worked for a presidential candidate in the last election and it wasn't Jim or me. (Cross talk, laughter.) And for the record, I also find – although I don't know enough about the details – the move on Egypt to be troubling, like Jim, just to make clear that I don't approve of everything Barack Obama does.

But I think, again, Bob is just not willing to acknowledge any tradeoffs whatsoever. We can always have our cake and eat it, too. And I just think it just flies in the face of reality. I mean, the Cold War is not the story that he tells. The United States was very smart to open to China in the early 1970s even though China was a far, far more vicious, nasty, totalitarian place than it is today. We gained important results. We were smart to be engaged with Yugoslavia when we saw opportunities to basically pry it away from the Soviet bloc under Tito.

And the story of us in our policies towards Latin America, as well – we were sometimes incompetent and fumbling, but basically, the major thrust was basically pushing countries towards democracy – I mean, tell that to the Chileans and the Guatemalans. We were often not a force – we were often a force against democracy because we perceived it to be in our interest to be that way, and that was partly because we had a very longstanding idea that we could allow foreign – which was hegemonic on the American right, certainly – that we could not allow foreign powers to get a base in our hemisphere.

So these tradeoffs are real and they're ugly. And I don't think we can shy away from them so easily. I think what we have to do is see how much leverage other countries have over us. I mean one of the reasons, it seems to me – what Obama's doing that doesn't make a lot of sense to me is I don't think the Egyptians have a lot of leverage over us. I think the Iranians have more. We need more from the Iranians that they could be happy not giving us. I don't see what the Egyptians' alternative is. I think they need this terrorism cooperation with us because they're at least as threatened. And I don't see another place for them to go.

So I think we do have some opportunity to use leverage on Egypt. And in other cases, we may not. And if we're going to risk our relationship with these security services because we're going to put more pressure on the democracy, then we have to have a serious conversation about how concerned we are about these people – these terrorist threats. I mean, we may need to ratchet down the level of fear we have about some of these terrorist suspects if we're willing to create a circumstance in which we're not going to have the intelligence cooperation. And that may be another conversation we need to have.

MR. GEDMIN: Peter, thank you. Jim, comment as you wish, but don't forget Eli Lake's original question – do I summarize correctly, Eli? How do we promote democracy and fight the war on terror at the same time – is that it, more or less?

MR. TRAUB: You know, I'll actually try to answer it specifically because Eli's question reminded me of an incident in, I guess, late 2004, in Sudan. U.S. Congress had just declared that Sudan was committing genocide in Darfur. Several months later, it turned out that the CIA had brought the head of the chief security service in Sudan, who was part and parcel of the machine of genocide, to Langley for a series of high-level secret conferences – spirited them in and spirited them out so that nobody would know that we were having truck with this genocidal figure – because Sudan had very cleverly positioned itself on our side immediately after 9/11 and turned over all sorts of records to us. They were actually quite useful.

And so there, you would say, yes, here is the global war on terror overtly trumping the deepest human rights concerns, which, in fact, the Bush administration was quite good on – better than anybody else – when it came to Sudan. I find it hard to believe that was the right call. And so, in the sense of tradeoffs that Peter was talking about, there is no one answer to your question. There are a set of priorities you have, which have various weight.

I mean, Pakistan – that Bob raises – is a perfect example. Probably, for the first three or four years of General Musharraf's reign, there was no terribly good reason for us to have pushed very hard for the restoration of democracy. One, the Pakistani people were so disgusted by the time he came along in 1999 with feckless democracy that they welcomed Musharraf. Musharraf was still popular; the economy was growing; he was Fareed Zakaria's favorite liberal autocrat, and so on. (Laughter.)

However, it became painfully clear by 2007 or so that this was not the case. One, Musharraf wasn't delivering to us what he had said he would deliver. And two, he wasn't delivering to the Pakistani people what he had said he would deliver and they rose up against him as one in, what to me, is the single greatest demonstration of constitutional faith and passion that the Islamic world has ever seen, when all of these lawyers and then hundreds of thousands of others took to the streets to demonstrate against him. And the Bush administration stayed on his side until the bitter end. That was a dumb tradeoff. And so, I think all one can say is that the weight one gives to these various things will determine the tradeoffs one makes.

MR. GEDMIN: Jim, thank you. We are nearly out of time, but not quite. We're going to take two more, but take them together. And this gentleman here in the third row – and David, if you could come to the microphone – we'll take them together, give the panelists a brief moment to reply and then we'll go to coffee break.

Q: My name is Valeriy Dzutsev, I am a Moscow fellow at the University of Maryland. And I'd like to deliver two messages: one optimistic and one pessimistic. Let me start with the pessimistic one. What the panelists, I think, are grappling with – and partly Mr. Traub has acknowledged – is that there is a certain rise of realpolitik discourse into politics recently, because what we've seen in the recent past has been the U.S. saying, basically, if you are a friend of the U.S., then we support your total integrity, like Georgia. If you are not, then let's have an independent Kosovo –

MR. GEDMIN: I have to say, if this is the first of two messages, you have to edit yourself.

Q: Yeah, okay, that's it. But the second message, which is about Russia – things are not as bad, I think, in the Russian “near abroad,” so to say, because what countries like Ukraine, and even Central Asian countries, are about – they are actually looking for more U.S. presence there, not less. Except of course, they don't, perhaps, want the cheap alternative of EU membership – like NATO membership, maybe, like in countries like Ukraine. But they still are looking forward to more engagement with the U.S. rather than less. So thank you.

Q: Thanks, David Kramer, with the German Marshall Fund of the United States. And I was – in the interest of full disclosure – the last assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor in the Bush administration. And I'm not here to defend the Bush administration, but I am here to ask two questions as a result of a very interesting, provocative discussion by the panel. First, to Mr. Traub: You said India, South Africa and Mexico are more formidable than Russia and China. Could you explain that? I'm at a loss as to what you mean there.

And to Peter Beinart: You, in talking about President Obama's speech today in Egypt, were very enthusiastic and supportive of what he had to say on democracy and human rights and you were very critical of the Bush administration after the Hamas election. And you said, if I understood you correctly, that we said – the Bush administration said – we are not in favor of democracy anymore after that. I don't recall any statement being uttered along those lines.

I do recognize, however, that the administration's support for democracy in the region declined significantly. But if I could read you one sentence from the president's speech this morning, he said, “We will welcome all elected peaceful governments provided they govern with respect for all their people.” So my question is, if Hamas were to win the next election in Palestine, would the Obama administration's reaction be any different than the Bush administration's?

MR. GEDMIN: David, thank you. I'm going to suggest we take it in exactly the order that you suggested, David – Jim, Peter and Bob – and then why not Bob, you, as – among this group – the soft-headed idealist, you should probably have the last word in this democracy conference. (Laughter.) Jim, you first.

MR. TRAUB: Let me respond to each of the questioners. So the question about Russia – one quick thing, which is, the Russians have this hobbyhorse which says, if Western countries could champion the freedom of Kosovo, why couldn't they recognize the need for Abkhazia and South Ossetia to be free? This is a very complicated hobbyhorse, which I won't go into here, but I think there are actually very good reasons why we favored the one and not the other.

More broadly, the Russian near abroad is, in fact, a great skirmishing site for all of these democracy issues. And I don't think we should accept the premise that we supported Georgia because they're our friend and didn't support Russian because they're our enemy. No, it really mattered that Georgia was a democracy – a really flawed democracy with a lot of problems, like most democracies – but I thought it was very important that the Bush administration and also both the Obama campaign and the McCain campaign, to different degrees of intensity, made it clear that that mattered a lot.

And I do worry that that's one place where the Obama administration will fall short in their approaches to Russia. They've already downgraded Georgia, and that's a real source of concern. The other question is what I meant when I said the emerging democracies are a bigger obstacle than Russia or China. I was speaking specifically of this question – of this emerging norm of responsibility to protect. But it's similar to other human rights norms, which is, we know that Russia and China are going to oppose them. We know that Russia and China will talk about sovereignty until they turn blue in the face. That is a given. But where the balance of opinion lies is where the major third world democracies come out on this.

And if where they come out on this is basically the same thing, which is, we mustn't do anything in Sri Lanka because it's Sri Lanka's own business – and that was how the human rights council came out – with the votes either in favor of that view or abstaining from an alternative view – of many democratic countries – including Japan, I'm sorry to say. So if the major emerging democracies take a view which is similar to that of the autocracies, that is kind of curtains for the hope of a genuinely universalized human rights regime.

MR. GEDMIN: Jim, thank you. Peter, as you make your concluding remark, do not forget that Bob has the last word. So don't be gentle.

MR. BEINHART: Believe it or not, I think Bob and I are friends. Or at least, we were before this panel started; hopefully we will be afterwards. I think where we fundamentally disagree – and I think it goes to the first question – basically about the question of whether states are more influenced by ideology or national interest.

I mean, the way I look at the Cold War, in fact, shows that national interest was more important. That's why China and the Soviet Union were at the knife's edge with one another – hated each other more than either hated the U.S. for a good part of the Cold War. That's why China and Vietnam went to war. It's why Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union hated each other's guts. And that that was a very important understanding in our strategy in the Cold War. And that was countries that were linked by Marxism, which is a pretty coherent, well-developed body of ideology.

As I understand what Bob is saying, he's basically saying that this much, much more loose, kind of diffused authoritarianism that links China and Russia and Iran and Venezuela, whose internal systems are actually dramatically different, is going to be so important that we should treat them as some kind of relatively unified bloc.

And I think what he's saying, in his own experiences, when he finds people in the democracies who don't actually buy that view, is that they perceive national interest to be a more powerful force both within the authoritarian governments and, in fact, within the democracies, as well, which I think is the point Jim is making about the importance of national character and national history and why it leads a country like India and South Africa to see the world very differently from us, even though they're also democracies – thank God they're democracies.

The point I would just make on Hamas – I don't think I said that the Bush administration abandoned – said it wasn't in favor of democracy. I think we all agree the Bush administration, in general, moved a little bit away from the democracy-promotion agenda, partly because they realized they had less power over the countries in the Middle East than they thought they did at a certain moment in, say, 2003 – I think we should acknowledge.

My point about Hamas was, they won the election. We set out three conditions: we basically will not accept the results of this election unless you forswear violence, you accept Israel's right to exist and you abide by past agreements. Now, I would kiss the ground if Hamas did all those. And in fact, I might have been willing – I might have myself required a forswearing of violence. So I myself am not a democracy purist. But the other two conditions, in particular, didn't actually have to do with the character of Hamas government in Palestinian territories. They weren't about whether or not they were going to be a truly democratic government. They were about how they dealt with Israel.

And I think that was a mistake. I think we would have been better off essentially swallowing the very painful setback to Israeli-Palestinian peace that Hamas represented in order to be able to have credibility in saying that, basically, we support democratic elections even when they lead to governments that don't share our interests and that are a setback to our interest. In that way, I daresay, in fact, I'm the idealist on the panel.

MR. GEDMIN: Peter, thank you. Bob?

MR. KAGAN: I'm so confused. (Laughter.) Well, I must say, I'm flabbergasted, or I can't speak. In the interest of promoting a new liberal foreign policy, Peter has discovered his inner Richard Nixon. (Laughter.) Every argument that I have heard made for why everybody understand there are tradeoffs – and even I understand there are tradeoffs, and there were tradeoffs during the Cold War – but every argument that was used for why we shouldn't give Pinochet a hard time, for why we shouldn't give the South Korean government a hard time – they are no more less valid than all the other arguments that are being made now about why you shouldn't give Egypt a hard time and why you shouldn't give the Chinese a hard time. Guess what? There are always tradeoffs.

What I find ironic is that most people who call themselves liberals today – including, I daresay, probably Hillary Clinton – look back on those Cold War policies and reflect the same kind of disdain and disgust with them that Peter did. You know, we didn't promote democracy, we were hypocrites, et cetera, and we shouldn't have done that – but now we can do it; now the reasons are good. I don't know what's really changed. The reasons are the same. And my argument is, of course there are tradeoffs.

You know, I'm not making a cartoonish point. I'm making a point that, A, we need to understand that, while it's true that not all democracies agree with each other about everything – not all the NATO countries agree with each other about everything; the United States and Canada don't agree with each other about everything – that needn't be an obstacle to trying to work together.

We have tried much more fantastic ideas, like the United Nations. What's a more fantastic idea than the United Nations about getting everybody to work together? I daresay trying to get democracies to work together will be even a little easier than trying to get all the nations of the world to work together. And yet I don't know too many people – certainly at this table – who say, we shouldn't try the United Nations.

I do think that we need to recognize that to some degree the autocracies have commonalities. Do they have differences, do they disagree about many things, do they have conflicting interests? Of course they do. I'm only pointing out – as the report points out – something that has been neglected, which is the degree of common interest they have as autocracies – not that it's everything that they are, but that it is significant.

I'm asking not that ideological be the determining factor in our foreign policy, but that it return to being a factor in our foreign policy because I think that for a variety of reasons having to do with the expectations after the Cold War and the end of history – which means the end of ideological conflict – we've now segued into “there's nothing we can do about it,” and “after all, we have conflicting interests” – that we have pretty much attempted to drain – you know, this need to not be Bush, which is the biggest amusement in the world.

I'm sorry, David, forgive me. Even before 2006, the Bush administration wasn't seriously promoting democracy in too many places. It wasn't after 2006 that he decided to embrace Vladimir Putin, for instance. It was from the very beginning, after 2001. He saw an ally in the war on terror. He was engaging with China before that. The notion that we have to not promote democracy now because George Bush did such a bad job of not promoting democracy – (laughter) – really strikes me as the ultimate irony. I probably had something else to say, but I'll stop right there.

(Laughter).

MR. GEDMIN: Thank you very much. I would observe, in concluding, that this was a pretty lively discussion. Could you imagine this group, say, 10:00 at night with a bottle of wine? (Laughter.) We're going to go to a short coffee break, but please join me in thanking Peter and Jim and Bob.

(Applause.)

(END Panel I.)