

RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY
UNDERMINING DEMOCRACY: 21st CENTURY AUTHORITARIANS

PANEL II: AUTHORITARIANISM IN PRACTICE:
CHINA, IRAN, RUSSIA, VENEZUELA

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RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH
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CHRISTOPHER WALKER: If I could ask everyone to take their seats. If everyone could take their seats, please. I'd like to thank everyone for coming. The first panel is a tough act to follow. I'll try to achieve the same level of harmony that Jeff Gedmin achieved during the first discussion. Maybe not.

We'll take a little bit of a different look. The first panel was, I think, a terrific window into how difficult it is to get your arms around, A, the nature of the threat, the diversity of the challenges that are out there, and then what an appropriate response from the democracy should be really looking at the larger picture.

We've crafted the second panel to take a closer, country-specific look and we're really delighted to have three wonderful experts here. Their full bios are in the reports that have been disseminated just in the first handful of pages, so you can find that there. I'll do a very brief introduction for each of them when we speak. We have a video interview from our Iran analyst that we'll show first and then the three experts that are here with us will give short introductory remarks. I'll have some questions for them and then we'll open up to the floor for discussion.

One thing I'd share with the audience concerning this project, which was a joint effort, as it been noted before – of Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia and Freedom House – is a wonderful cooperative effort. We took quite an extensive period of time to fashion the countries we looked at and the ways we looked at them. So this is something that started in late 2007, really to get our arms around what countries would be most appropriate to evaluate in terms of a modern contestation of democratic values and standards.

We convened some working groups over that period with really a wonderful group of experts that helped us hone in on the ways in which we could properly assess these countries not only in the typical garden variety ways in which authoritarian states ply their trade, but also to look a little bit more at the arguments they were using, the strategies they were using rhetorically, in addition to other tools in their toolbox. And we settled on the five countries that are in the report for a variety of reasons.

They were regionally diverse. They all are exerting influence beyond their borders in one fashion or another, regionally and in some instances globally. Certainly China, Russia, and Iran in certain ways are engaging other actor, states, and organizations. That is really un-ignorable.

So we felt this was important to take a look at these states that have this sort of reach and ability to project influence and then we took a look at the ways in which they were doing that. The first panel took a good look at the response to the sorts of challenges that the United States and the democratic world confronted in the recent past, but even going back to the Cold War. What I'd like to emphasize in this panel is looking forward at the challenges that are there in a group of states that in our findings present formidable challenges. The four countries, I think, that are of a kind, at least in fundamental ways – China, Russia, Iran, and Venezuela – in those instances you have the state projecting power in various shapes and sizes.

Pakistan was included not because it's monolithically similar to the other four, but more due to state weakness and the ability of non-state actors and others to project illiberalism and

extremism. We felt that was important – both Pakistan in its own right, but also as it related to its impact on Afghanistan.

So this is one of the features I would emphasize. If you look at the projection of influence, one of the shared features was an illiberal profile, whether you're talking about China, Venezuela, with varying degrees. Three of the countries we examined are not free by Freedom House analysis. Two are partly free. That's Pakistan and Venezuela. So they are diverse countries, different traditions, different locations. What we really sought to get at was what was similar, dissimilar, and where the chief challenges were coming from.

Just a couple of thoughts on that count. If we take China and Russia as examples, it's clear that, to a significant degree, the authorities in these countries have devoted political will and resources, with varying degrees of effectiveness – that's something that can be debated – but they've really made an effort to craft arguments, to shape the organizations that they're participating in. One of the features of the 21st-century states that we looked that was they are engaged. They've been welcomed into a wide range of supranational organizations, regional bodies. I think the key is to look at what they're doing in that engagement. It comes back to what Jeff Gedmin mentioned in the first panel. What is the quality of the engagement?

I don't think anyone would rightfully argue that a plausible and viable approach would be rank isolation or disengagement. I think the question is, having engaged so deeply on an institutional level, on an economic level, what properly can the community of democratic states do to engage on the basis of standards and values? So I think that's one of the things we'll try to get to in this discussion.

What we'll do now is take a very quick look at the video, which is an interview with Professor Abbas Milani at Stanford University. He wrote the Iran report in the Undermining Democracy study. After that, we'll have each of the other panelists that are here with us speak for several minutes, and then we'll get into the discussion.

(Begin video segment.)

MEHRDAD MIRDAMADI: Thank you very much for being with us today. Could you start with explaining about the main subject of your paper and also very briefly the findings of it?

ABBAS MILANI: The main subject of the paper was the methods of social control in Iran or more specifically the Iranian clerical version of authoritarianism, kind of a repressive tolerance combined with very brutal use of force when necessary is in my view the way the regime controls the society. My sense is that its opposition has tended to underestimate both its cunning, its ability to be both long-term planning and brutal in the short term.

I think the regime has serious structural liabilities that in the short term, tactically, it is a very nimble, clever, authoritarian form of government. But I think it is beset with internal strife and, what's most important – (inaudible) – obviously, is the economy that I think is going to be what will eventually be its undoing.

MR. MIRDAMADI: Thank you very much. In your paper, you also talked about the kind of policy Iranian government is employing for the media control. My next question is about this kind of control policies. Could you please describe the key impact of the Iranian government's media control policies as it relates to the broader sense of democratic developments in the country?

MR. MILANI: Well, one of the most important forms of control is monopoly over the media. Iranian radio and television is completely dominated by the state, but because it is not trusted by the people, the people are increasingly relying on Internet or satellite television or BBC, Voice of America for their news.

The regime also is fighting on several other fronts. Iran has one of the most active blogs – 18 million Internet users in Iran. That's estimated that there are 500,000 bloggers in the Persian language, and the regime is very active in controlling it. They're active in confusing it with the supporters. And when all fails it brutally suppresses Web bloggers. One has just died in prison, as I'm sure you know.

So there, too, they use a combination of propaganda and brute force when need be. And they work on multiple levels. And they're very, very aware of the dangers that the Internet causes for them. The people are increasingly wired in Iran and it's increasingly sophisticated in breaking the regime's hold and the regime's filtering system. And there is a wonderful game of cat and mouse that is going on.

MR. MIRDAMADI: In what ways are Tehran's policies hardening democratic, rule based developments beyond your own borders.

MR. MILANI: Well, the regime is – by one account, there was a report that came out two days ago in Tehran, and it suggested that Iran in the last year-and-a-half has spent more than four billion dollars supporting groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, many other radical groups in the Muslim world. And they see themselves essentially as being champions of an alternative model to Western democracy. I think we have to understand that they generally, I think, see themselves as advocates of an alternative model to what they think is a troubled Western model of democracy and capitalist development. Although the model was framed in Iran, the advocates of the regime still try to propagate it and those who haven't experienced it in the Middle East, for example, might still harbor some romance about this model. That's partly, I think, why the regime has some popularity amongst the Muslims in the Third World.

At the same time, the fact that they stand up to the U.S. and Israel gets them some credit. And that combination gave them some popularity amongst the people. The basic fundamental game of democracy the clerics do not trust and they find this to be part of their Western, colonial game.

I think if we go back, we have to remember that this is a regime that essentially follows the lines of 1905 Ayatollah Nuri, which said clearly that democracy is a trick of the colonial West, that we want instead a government based on Shariah. Everywhere they find this idea, at

the most paradigmatic level, they propagate it. And I think it's a serious challenge to democracy everywhere.

MR. MIRDAMADI: Professor Milani, thank you very much.

MR. MILANI: My pleasure.

(End video segment.)

MR. WALKER: Thanks for that. I'd like to now introduce Professor Perry Link. Before I introduce him, I'd like to express our profound thanks for his willingness to modify his calendar and schedule to join us. He's flown over the ocean overnight to be here today. So we're very grateful for that.

Professor Link is a professor emeritus of East Asian studies at Princeton University and has the chancellorial chair for teaching across disciplines at the University of California Riverside. And among his many works, he's co-editor of "The Tiananmen Papers" with Andrew Nathan. And with that, I introduce Perry Link.

PERRY LINK: Thank you, Chris. Is this on now? It works? Yes.

The paper that I wrote with Joshua Kurlantzick for this project starts by pointing out that at June 4th, 1989, whose 20th anniversary we're now observing, the communist party of China's moral standing or as political scientists say, its legitimacy, was at a nadir. There were popular complaints about corruption and special privilege that were very widespread and the idealistic language of socialism was completely empty by now. Nobody believed it. The People's Liberation Army opened fire on the people. The rural economy had been partially liberated, but the modern urban economy was still widely perceived to be locked in this authoritarian working system; in short, not a model for anybody, not a model for Chinese people.

But now, 20 years later, there's been this economic boom that we've all noticed and the party is tolerated, even in certain circles popular. And here I'd need, though, to interject – to use my friend – my new friend Jim Traub's still here – who said in the previous panel that there've been surveys showing that 90 percent of the population is satisfied with the government or something like that. The Pew Institution does this Asia barometer doesn't find these kinds of things. Jim himself noted the problem of doing this kind of survey in authoritarian societies, but it's really much more complex than that – the whole Chinese culture doesn't like to give the wrong answer to questions, especially when they're posed by foreigners or officials and so on.

People like – I've spent my whole life studying Chinese language and literature and the reason I have always done that is I like to get a popular thought. That's what really has interested me for my whole career. And I don't take those series at all seriously. They are extremely misleading and it's sort of a joke. I'm not blaming Jim. A lot of people do this. Take them seriously – you shouldn't.

I would say maybe 20 to 30 percent of the populace is more satisfied than it was 20 years ago, sure, because of the – this is this middle class that also came up in the previous panel – the middle class that was supposed to have led inexorably, as Bob Kagan articulated the theory, to democracy and hasn't. And Bob was right about that. But that middle class is, yes, satisfied, maybe even happy and I can't get off on that angle.

The intellectuals who led the movement 20 years ago were dissatisfied and they were the gadflies and so on. And they've been more or less co-opted now. And here I wonder if my new friend Peter, Peter Beinart – is he still here? No. Because he said at the last panel that a good idea would be to bring a bunch of students from authoritarian countries to our – if Peter wants to come to any campus – Princeton or the University of California – we're flooded with Chinese students. They're more from there than anyplace else. The sciences in our universities live off graduate students from – they're good graduate students. I'm for and I agree with Peter there, but to suggest that we're not doing that is wrong and to suggest that doing that automatically feeds into a democratic development back home is wrong – basically wrong.

These things are hard to predict in the long run, but in the short run, those elite students who come over here and get educated in our universities go back to China to plug into the middle class that is aligned now with the authoritarians. Because Bob Kagan is quite right. There has not been the balancing of the authority with the middle class. Quite the opposite, there's been a sealing of that. Zhao Ziyang, whose memoirs just came out the other day, in his later years – we know from several sources – came to the view that there was, as he called it – this is Zhao Ziyang's views – “a political, economic intellectual elite” that has fused and stays on top of the rest of the society.

So there is below that elite a lot of popular resentment that can be measured in – one way to measure it is the number of incidences that are big enough that the public security ministry has to repress them. And if you make a graph of that, that's been going up since about the year 2000 rather steadily. Until last year, it was about 120,000 per year. That's one about every four minutes – for those of you who have a calculator – that are big enough that they need to be repressed. Why does this popular resentment not get into a movement though and get into the headlines and so on is because the regime is very attuned to it. And as soon as anybody gets organized, then yes, the ministry of public security comes in and puts it down.

This has led to what some political scientists, including my friend Andy Nathan, are calling resilient authoritarianism for the case of China.

Twenty years ago at the Tiananmen uprising, some people were predicting the downfall of the party and that hasn't happened. What has replaced it is this resilient authoritarianism and here's where the question of a model for this project becomes relevant. This resilient authoritarianism does become a model.

I don't think – it's not that it's pushed abroad so much as that it stands there and is admired by authoritarian elites elsewhere, who seek modern formulas for maintaining their power while also growing their economies. And even has incurrence among average people around what we use to call the Third World, who see it as an efficient way to get things done.

Some popular opinion in India, who feels frustrated with India's higgledy-piggledy democracy that everybody loves, including me, but they view China as really getting infrastructure built faster and so on. So in that sense it is a model, even if it's not pushed as a model.

And it seems even more attractive, I would say, in the last half year, because of the worldwide economic downturn that started in the West and so that the luster of the alternative to it has decreased a bit.

And China's rulers have seen the opportunity to present this model. And I said a moment ago, don't push it. But let me take that partly back. I've co-authored this paper with Josh Kurlantzick and he's got a number of things – I'll tick them off – that show ways in which it is consciously pushed. One is to offer aid and investment without human right strings to elites in developing countries. Another is to run training programs in China for foreign officials and students. Another is – Bob Kagan mentioned this a moment ago – giving diplomatic cover at the U.N. and elsewhere to authoritarian regimes. I don't think that the Chinese authoritarians like the Sudanese and the Burmese authoritarianism. Bob was right. It's the commonality of the interest in the fact that it's authoritarian that leads the Chinese regime to want to protect the others in diplomatic circles.

Recently, the Chinese regime has made some movements to establish a global news service, to present the communist party of China's views worldwide in a sort of a Chinese version of Reuters or something like this. And this is a very important point. The neutering of concepts of democracy and human rights by giving them ambiguous definitions that no one can argue with. Human rights also should include development and health and of course everybody believes that, but if you let the focus of human rights be pulled over into that kind of discussion, it's a way that the original ideas that many Chinese people pursue themselves, can be in a sense countered and neutered.

Towards their own people, the Chinese regime uses a combination of political pressure, censored information, and money to induce people to see for themselves that it should be in their best interest to go along or in a standard cliché, to love the country and love the party. And it's interesting that internationally too, essentially the same tools – political pressure plus money – are used to shape the behavior of other countries, including western democracies. You want help with your economy? Okay, but you'd better not mention human rights. You want access to the Chinese Internet market? Perhaps you should respect our rules on political censorship. You people want some lucrative commercial contracts with us? Perhaps you'll see fit not to receive the Dalai Lama. You want to cooperate with us on global warming? Perhaps you will avoid public comments of our 1989 Beijing massacre, even though your visit coincides with its 20th anniversary and even though you have a longstanding reputation for speaking out on such things.

Now, many Western democracies have approached China in recent decades on this theory of constructive engagement that came up in the previous panel as well, the basic premise of which I remind you has been that through contact, democracies automatically will change. Recently, scholars have begun to use the term "reverse engagement" as companies like Yahoo cooperate with the Chinese government in catching cyber dissidents, as former U.S. officials earn consulting fees by introducing Western business elites to that political, economic,

intellectual interest group Chinese elite; as academics are making reputations by writing books with titles like “Beyond Liberal Democracy.”

Now, of course, I am in favor of academic freedom as much as Robert Kagan is. The point is to ask in engagement with China exactly who is changing whom. And this point actually goes a little farther even than Kagan went. He was saying that theory doesn’t work, but this theory of reverse engagement argues that the flow is actually going the other direction even to mature democracies.

Now, the good news in all this is that the China model is no juggernaut. There’s considerable fragility in it. The hundreds of thousands of protests per year I mentioned before. In the last decade, something we call (wage ?) supporting rights consciousness is pretty pervasive and it seeps pretty far down. Garbage collectors and so on, they get mistreated. Petitioners and poor people even have this idea of rights. I know it’s no carbon copy of human rights as the Western world conceives it, but it’s not that far away either and it’s strong and growing. Internet bloggers are out of control. The regime invests a lot in controlling them and does that, but there’s this big cat-and-mouse game and they keep finding ways to get around the firewalls. And the popular bloggers in China now who don’t necessarily listen to anybody but their own voices and their audiences have readerships that are bigger than a lot of provincial newspapers, in the millions of hits they get on their blogs. This leads to an insecurity in the regime.

How much time do I have? Just a minute. Okay. I’ll leave out my examples of insecurity. You can ask about them later if you want.

But in the developing countries in Asia and Africa, too, there’re some signs of popular pushback against the incursion of China’s elite authoritarian model. And you can read more details in the report that Josh Kurlantzick and I have written.

But our conclusion is that the jury is very much out on the question of whether a Chinese authoritarian model can thrive and spread in the modern world. It really is a close call because you’ve got the push development of the model and you’ve also got this fragility inside, and I don’t know what’s going to happen.

But our main – Josh and my main advice to the world’s democracies – if the world’s democracies listen to a couple of scholars – is not just to stand and watch, but to speak out about democratic ideals and to speak to all of the Chinese people. We had a question in the earlier panel that was very good on that, I thought. Speak to all of the Chinese people, not just the government. And be sure that democracy’s diplomats around the world are ready to counter the claim that authoritarianism is a smart way to run the world. I’ll stop here.

MR. WALKER: Perry, thank you very much for those cogent and eloquent remarks. I would really commend everyone to the China report, which has both a very detailed articulation of the ways in which the Chinese authorities are re-conceptualizing terms. For example, freedom verse control on the Internet is reframed as chaos compared with order, and this is something that’s pushed assiduously. It also has wonderful detail on the sorts of things that Perry began to

enumerate – the ways in which the Chinese authorities are investing enormous resources beyond their borders to shape views and advance their interests.

With that, I'd like to introduce Daniel Kimmage, who is a wonderfully talented person. I'll let you look at his bio but I was marveled that his language skills and his scholarly acumen on a remarkably diverse set of countries and regions of the world. He was kind enough to author the Russia report here. And with that, Daniel.

DANIEL KIMMAGE: Thank you, Chris. And let me begin by saying it's a great pleasure to follow the first panel, which was an outstanding example of the sort of productive narcissism that is very characteristic of democracies, and I would note woefully absent in the authoritarian countries we are looking at today.

Let me begin with the historical context. And, you know, history presents occasionally innovations that call for new paradigms. And in the 20th century, of course, the great innovation was modern totalitarianism in Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia.

And it took us some time to develop a vocabulary for talking about these regimes. Hannah Arendt's "Origins of Totalitarianism" appeared in 1951 and really kicked off that process. She focused primarily on the Nazis.

And the discussion, I think, sort of came full circle decades later when François Furet in 1995 published the "Passing of an Illusion" about the end of communism in which he talked about the totalitarian twins of fascism and communism.

Now things have changed quite profoundly. And in the first decade of the 21st century, I think we're seeing the emergence of another innovation which is modern authoritarianism. And what we're doing today is I think we're in the early stages of figuring out what these regimes are about, what is the best way to describe them, what are their core characteristics, what do they have in common with each other, how do they behave, what do they mean for democracies, and where do they fit into the course of history.

Now, of course, this is an ambitious agenda and let me offer a small contribution to kicking this off with a brief description of Russia and then summarize this as quickly as I can the essence of my report.

And I isolated four things that I think are really core characteristics of Russia today. And the first is what I call selectively capitalist kleptocracy. And Russia today has a market economy, but that economy is very subject to the whims of an elite that would be very ripe for criminal prosecution in a real free market society with a functioning legal system.

Now, this Russian economy consists largely of the embezzlement of budgetary funds, graft, kickbacks, tax evasion schemes, and grossly unfair business practices. Now, of course, we have all of that here. In Russia, however, these are not aberrations. These are the essence of the system.

Now, kleptocracy, of course, is associated primarily with regimes like Mobutu's Zaire. And it's not a perfect term for Russia. Outright theft was very common in the early years of the post-Soviet regime and most grotesquely so during privatization. But it's no longer a systemic hallmark. In its petro-state incarnation, Russia even has a large stabilization fund and substantial hard currency reserves. But the essence of kleptocracy is that the machinery of the state serves private gain before the public good. And that's as true in Russia today as it was in Mobutu's Zaire.

The second characteristic is what I call informal influence groups. Now, in Russia, these influence groups form an invisible power structure that's parallel to the formal institutions like ministries and the parliament. These groups control assets, they compete with other groups for assets; they pull at the mechanisms of state power to further their interests. The influence that they wield serves to secure their hold on assets in the absence of real property rights.

Now, these influence groups vary quite widely. Some of them are based on a corporate solidarity like being a veteran in the KGB. Others rest on shared business interests like the financial empires of the surviving oligarchs. And still others tap experiential bonds.

And here you have a group of friends in St. Petersburg who summered together in the 1990s, formed a cooperative, and then went on to immense wealth and power when one of the members of this cooperative, Vladimir Putin, became president in 2000. Most of the clans or influence groups in Russia are held together by more than one type of glue. But they all have a vested interest in preventing movement toward a more transparent, democratic and law-based system because that would undercut their informal powers and threaten their stranglehold on the economy.

The third characteristic I've isolated in Russia is what I call "decorative democracy," and what others have called "managed democracy." And I would define this very simply as the preferred political system of an elite that grudgingly accepts elections as a necessary evil, but rejects one inconvenient feature of elections, which is their unpredictability. And in practice, decorative democracy is really just to grab bag and dirty tricks. You have legal ruses that inhibit the formation of political parties, state-controlled media promoting certain candidates and denigrating others, biased election commissions ignoring gross violations. It's a very, very long list.

The aim however is a predetermined spectacle that allows the elite to devote most of its time not to good governance, of course, which would be key to holding power in free and fair elections, but to the more pressing pursuit of deriving maximum material gain from selectively capitalist kleptocracy, as described above. And in other words, decorative democracy resembles democracy on the surface. In reality it's not democratic at all.

The fourth characteristic is ideology. Now, ideology in Russia is a little strange because the Russian elite cares a lot more about yachts than it does about ideas. Still, most of the members of this elite suspect that ideas are necessary, particularly in the political system that provides for very little real communication between rulers and ruled, and of course they have a certain Soviet fondness for the idea of a unifying ideology.

So what we find in Russia are many officially-encouraged attempts to create this sort of ideology. And the ingredients are very interesting there: Soviet statism, ethnic Russian chauvinism, a discourse of national renewal, and a lot of anti-Western xenophobia usually packaged as anti-Americanism.

Now, a final observation on Russia is that in its foreign policy, Russia's guiding principle is not the same sort of abstract notion of national interest that you find in a democracy, rather it is the much narrower interest of the elite: energy exports and cozy ties with like-minded regimes where it is easier to do the sort of business abroad that they do at home. The style is usually quite thuggish. And this is a consequence of the three great formative influences on the Russian elite, which are the gangster capitalism of the 1990s, the KGB legacy, and a territorial zero sum understanding of relations between states that comes directly from the Cold War playbook.

My final comment on Russia is that the Russian system today is quite mature. It is evolving, but I'd argue that it's no longer transitioning so I would urge people to stop looking for liberals or reformers in Russia or wondering whether the good Medvedev will squeeze out the bad Putin. I think this is a system we're going to have to deal with for the foreseeable future regardless of some of the individual people.

Finally, let me close with some remarks on U.S. policy, which was discussed very extensively in the first panel. I would just say very simply that a new start is a very good idea. And I think the administration is doing the right thing by extending a good faith offer of friendly engagement.

I would simply say we need a plan B if that doesn't work out as we hope. America and Russia have profoundly different systems of government and our interests are very different on many major issues. I don't think this is a tragedy. Navigating the waters of conflicting interests is the essence of statecraft and diplomacy. We can talk about how to do it, but I'm confident that the new administration will be up to the task. It won't be easy. And I think, in the end, we simply need to be realistic and realize that opportunities for friendly cooperation may prove to be very limited.

As a final observation on Russia, let me say that the real story in Russia over the last 10, 20 years, I think is – or even longer – is one of quite dangerous decline. Seventy years of Bolshevik misrule in Russia ended in ruin and defeat. And when a decade later Vladimir Putin called the collapse of the Soviet Union the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century, most listeners in the West were either baffled or horrified.

But most Russians, they thought back to their daily lives in the 1990s, a decade that was, by any reasonable standard, the greatest catastrophe most of them had ever experienced and they generally nodded in agreement.

Now, what I would say is that that catastrophe of the 1990s was an extension of the Bolshevik disaster. From its beginnings in 1917 to its end in 1991, the communist experiment wrecked much of Russian society and culture. It laid the groundwork for the dismal 1990s when

a mafia-minded elite grabbed power and money with very few democratic checks or balance. An economy took shape around things dug out of the group, and scape-goating unfortunately emerged as a national idea. This unholy trinity of political dysfunction, economic imbalance and social acrimony is not the stuff of a national renaissance.

I think it marks instead the twilight of an empire that stood at full height for over a century through the czars, through the commissars. Today we see it in a very tense crouch with just enough composure to be bitterly nostalgic about the fear it once inspired in others.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. WALKER: Thank you, Daniel.

We'll move from one resource dependent case study to another. We'll move to Javier Corrales who's a professor at Amherst College, a widely published expert on Venezuela and we'll have a few minutes from him and then we'll start the discussion. Thank you, Javier.

JAVIER CORRALES: Thank you very much. In the interest of time, I'm going to make two points: one on international politics and one on domestic politics.

On international politics, I think everybody in the room knows that Hugo Chavez, the president of Venezuela, is today the most anti-American president of the region. Second – well, I still think that Fidel Castro is president. Now that Fidel Castro is no longer president, yes, Hugo Chavez, we all know, is the most anti-American.

What I would like to remind people of that this policy of anti-Americanism, anti-globalization, anti-capitalism more than an effort to try to balance the United States is an effort to try to get the progressives of the world become enchanted with the new version of authoritarianism. This is the one case that we have in the report of a left-leaning anti-capitalist system with very similar characteristics in terms of what they do to democracy.

And this ideology of challenging the United States is ultimately an ideological effort to try to get more apologists especially from the part of the left in the world. Now, not the entire left, center left spectrum is fooled by this, but in many instances I have seen moments in which there is still a lot of romanticism.

On the point that I want to make regarding domestic politics, let me give you one fact. I know that we have discussed a lot of facts, but please this might be the best one that I could use to try to illustrate how I view the way that the Chavez government is controlling society.

Between 1999 – here's the fact – between 1999 until 2008, state sector employment grew by 53.5 percent; private sector employment by 28 percent. This is very odd in a country that is having the most magnificent economic period in three decades, a consumption boom like in no

other Venezuelan has seen. A moment when you would think an oil state should be thriving with business, what you have is a stagnant private sector and an expansive state sector.

A lot of what I write in my paper is building on that idea of how this form of statism serves as a form of cooptation as well as all the policies that are in place to deliberately shrink to private sector, to ensure that the private sector becomes each and every time less central to Venezuelan politics.

And that's why I used the figure of employment. Fewer and fewer Venezuelans over time are relying on the private sector and more and more so on the state. And this assigns the state an enormous leverage because in many Latin American countries, to get a job with the state ensures – well, you pretty much can retire while you work. You don't have to work very hard and you have a very nice pension and this is something that many Venezuelans – not just Chavistas – like. This is a very important tool, that tool that the government uses in not only offering jobs to people but also in denying jobs to people as well as a whole array of policies designed to bring the private sector down.

The rhetoric works absolutely well. This is a regime that exists to defend the people against the oligarchs. And so, what you have is a policy of anti-development because I think and many people are convinced that unless you have both a vibrant state and an even more vibrant private sector, this is a way to bring ruin to the country. But that is a longer term outcome.

In the short term, what you get is the capacity of this regime to be able to survive even in a country that at some point not too long ago was very proud of its democratic history, its ability to be able to alternate elites in office, even to bring nontraditional political parties into power in the 1990s. And why is it that this has now been possible – this new regime, this new form of authoritarianism has been consolidated in Venezuela? If I had to pick one statistic, I would come back to that one that I started with.

If I had more time – I don't have it – I would give you a second fact and that is drug expansion in Venezuela. One of the consequences of expelling the Drug Enforcement Administration is that if you're a drug trafficker, where do you want to go and do your trafficking? The one place where you don't have the Drug Enforcement Administration working and the FBI, and that is Venezuela. So we have seen almost a third to half of the drugs produced – and cocaine produced in Columbia now being shipped abroad through the Venezuelan platform.

This is interesting that we find the only regime in Latin America at the moment that does not think that this is a national security threat. And in many ways, the reason is because part of how this government operates is to create an environment of criminality that is ultimately threatening not just to the middle sectors, but also to the private sector, which is the way that I will go back to my initial point that this idea of expanding statism to the detriment of the private sector is the version of authoritarianism that we are observing in Venezuela.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. WALKER: Thank you, Javier, and thank you all three. Just an observation that follows from some of the comments, and that is getting a handle on the differences and the challenges provided by the contemporary authoritarians where we observe in the report that the model is no longer a Cold War model.

The sorts of environments in which ordinary citizens are operating and certainly in China and Russia would be unrecognizable for those living in the era of Mao or Brezhnev. The authorities today are much more astute and nuanced in permitting certain freedoms, certain pieces of information, but are also equally astute in preventing what could be described as politically consequential discussion and certainly organizing in coordination. This is sometimes referred to as coordination goods – the ability to share information, the ability of civil society and alternative political voices to coordinate and mobilize.

On this count, just going back to the first panel, there was a discussion about the options available to the United States and the West and the methods of dealing with these challenges. And on the one hand – on one pole, as it was argued, you had coercion; on the other hand engagement. And one of the points that was raised is how you meaningfully communicate with an engaged wider society in these countries. And Perry alluded to this in his remarks.

But it's a tricky challenge because in the Chinese case, you could say there's an element of coercive persuasion used by the Chinese authorities with their own public by domination of the airwaves, by the enormous investments in controlling the Internet. Notwithstanding the space that's generated despite that control by ordinary Chinese citizens and bloggers, it's still fair to say that the level of contestation offered by the authorities, both through administrative and bureaucratic controls and also through the commercialization of censorship, which has emerged and is referenced in the report.

I wonder if you might share some thoughts on just in terms of principles or in terms of the fundamentals, without getting into specific programs, projects, initiatives, what we should keep in mind for engaging broader society – because I think you could argue there's probably an opportunity cost for not doing that, for not signaling to these societies that we value their views, their perceptions, and their own aspirations for greater responsiveness in human rights.

MR. LINK: I feel guilty starting because I used more time than anybody else before. Maybe you guys should start.

Yes, the main reason for speaking to the Chinese population, not just the government, is that a lot of them want to be spoken to. A few months ago the Charter 08, about 300 leading intellectuals from all kinds of fields signed, and it snowballed for a while until the government cracked down on it. People like that have an inflated notion of how much Western democracies and their governments are going to support them. It's disappointing to them when they don't get support and don't get talked to.

I don't mean in intervention here. I just mean moral support. You like our ideas, as you've written them down in Charter 08, or you like South African truth and reconciliation ideas, you like the Taiwan constitution ideas, you like the U.S. Bill of Rights. They took language from all these sources. Fine, we support you. Just a statement of moral support from a high American official would have done a lot of good in that case.

The argument that you need to respect the sensitivities of the other side very often in the rhetoric, anyway of the American government and other Western democracies too, I think, becomes respecting the sensitivities of the authoritarians who are running the government that you're talking to. There's a lot of people beyond them. This is why I'm such a big supporter of Radio Free Asia. And Radio Free other places in principle are the same.

In connection to that, though, there was a lot of talk in the earlier session about the problem of tradeoffs, as, if you do this, you can't do that, and how big the tradeoffs are. Even Bob Kagan acknowledged near the end that even he sees the tradeoffs. Anybody sees the tradeoffs. It's a question of how big they are.

The reason why I don't think those tradeoffs are all that big is that people's minds are complex, including people inside the government. There are levels in their minds. And here I don't have time to give you all my evidence. I just want to give one anecdote, though, that illustrates it. I could give you dozens of others like it.

A few years ago when Andy Nathan and I did, "The Tiananmen Papers," that was extremely controversial and nervous, you know, in the Chinese government. Their reaction to that was radioactive. I was at Princeton in my office and a delegation of Chinese officials came over, pretty high academic officials, to talk about scholarly exchange, and we had a nice luncheon and so on and talked about exchanging students and joint research projects and stuff.

They came to my office later to continue the discussion, and by that time there were just two of them. One of them went out to the men's room. The other one said, do you have "The Tiananmen Papers"? Yes, I did. I took it off the shelf, signed it, gave it to him. He said, do you have an envelope you could put it in? And I put it in an envelope before the other man came back. It's just an anecdote, but as I say, it's not an isolated anecdote in my experience. There are people in the system that have levels of what they think.

When you think of a tradeoff, and you either have to accommodate the government or not, you're overlooking the fact that even people in the government have got levels where you can talk to them. They want to be talked to, or they want to have these connections. When Zhao Ziyang memoirs came out, I was in Hong Kong just the last couple of days, and they were sold off the shelves of the bookstores immediately. But we heard from Bao Pu, the editor, who was in Hong Kong, that a whole bunch of them were bought in advance by Beijing to bring back to read. In order just to criticize? Well, maybe not.

The world is much more—at least between the United States or the Western world and China – is much more porous than this. On the surface the people within the authoritarian system have to, in formal contexts, stick with the line and go through the functions and so on.

But to say that – to assume that all the way down to the bottom of their thinking they're the same as what shows on the surface is a naïve assumption.

And if you talk openly – you don't have to be aggressive. Just a dignified talk about democracy, about ideas, Charter 08, I bet there are a lot of people – in fact, I know there are people in the Chinese government that are very interested in and supportive the ideas in Charter 08. But they could never say that, and in public contexts they would denounce it. So you have to keep this psychological-levelness in mind when you talk about the problem of tradeoffs. It's not nearly that austere of yes and no.

MR. WALKER: Pose a question to Daniel and Javier, start with Javier. There was mentioned earlier in the day of the impact of Venezuela's largesse and oil wealth outside its borders. Could you explain what in your view the principal impact of that has been? It seems to me that it's not so much promoting authoritarianism as it is undercutting the sort of governance initiatives that have emerged through a variety of mechanisms and are very important in what Jim Traub described as kind of the struggling democracies. They're rife throughout the southern hemisphere.

So if you could quickly put that in context to give some sort of sense of the impact these investments and engagements have had.

MR. CORRALES: Sure. In the paper I talk about the fact that Venezuela has become a giant of a country in the hemisphere because it has developed a very significant foreign aid package. It is the beginning of what one could say a humanitarian rogue state, that through humanitarian projects or things that are veiled as humanitarian it is welcomed everywhere. This is an interesting discovery because, unlike, say for example, Cuba, Cuba, during its hard-core years what it was doing was exporting revolution and guerrillas. It's only now that it focuses on doctors and coaches.

Venezuela exports corruption, and the way that it does this is it basically offers up subsidized oil to regional countries, or even financial terms, or even just small cash disbursements to governments. And what that does is it lessens the demands on the part of other countries and recipients of this aid to have to come to the West. It lessens – that's the effect, number one, because it's so much easier to get a no-questions-asked grant, subsidy, favor from Venezuela than it would be to apply for a loan at the World Bank, or to deal with a German aid agency. So it does that.

And the second thing that it does is, what Chavez has been very good about is that in the 1990s, when the region was enjoying its big transition to democracy, this course became very moderate. Both the left and the right, everybody celebrated this, began to treat each other with cordiality and began to treat each other the way that you treat your opposition in a democracy. Here's my opponent. Chavez, change that. The opponent now is the oligarchy. Therefore, we don't need to negotiate, we don't need to listen to them, we don't need to protect them, we don't need rights for them.

This course is spreading elsewhere and people who are not necessarily Chavistas find it interesting that one could get away with this type of discourse. And if on top of that the discourse comes with a little bit of cash from Venezuela, who may not want to be a Chavista in Latin America if you are a president? Who may want to go against this? Which is one of the reasons, I think, that it has been incredibly difficult, and in my opinion one will never see a coalition of Latin American democracies against Chavez. It just won't happen. And this is a triumph of Venezuela's foreign policy – and secondly, an emulable (ph), replicable elsewhere model that other governments could adapt.

MR. WALKER: Thank you, Javier. And Daniel, you've covered in great detail the internal mechanics of the Russian system in your report. Could you offer one or two examples you think are important in recent years of the projection of influence beyond the borders, and which way that's been impacting some of the institutions you mentioned in your report.

MR. KIMMAGE: Okay, let me start just very quickly. We've had a lot of discussion about coercion versus engagement and I want to make three very simple points before I get to the projection of Russian influence. And the first is that some of this has to do with definitions. We do not have to accept the definitions of authoritarian regimes about what constitutes coercion and what constitutes engagement. You know, there are regimes from Uzbekistan to Russia that will look at any sort of comment, any sort of mention of democracy as an infringement on national sovereignty. We are not obligated to accept that definition. That's the first point I would make.

And the second is that we should make it quite clear when we talk about these things, when we make them priorities in our foreign policy that we do so not in an instrumental way but in a principled way. We're not doing this as a way of bludgeoning the Russians to get some sort of concession in a separate area but because these are principles that we actually hold.

And the third point I would make is that this does raise the issue of leading by example, and that's why we do have to be very careful to see that the way that our governments act, and the things that we do are in accordance with the principles we proclaim elsewhere. So I just wanted to make those three points on this issue of coercion and engagement.

On the projection of Russian influence abroad, I would say that basically the phrase I would use is sort of the export of corruption. There's a certain tendency to look at Russia, and many people will see parallels with the Soviet past and see the Russian elite as retaining imperial mindset that wants to recreate the Soviet Union. I think things are in a sense more crude and more pernicious today.

The Russian elite is primarily motivated by its financial interests, and it simply finds it easier and more productive in a way to deal with regimes that are the same way. It's easier to negotiate an oil contract when they can discuss it in the familiar language of kickbacks in sort of back room discussions. I think that that's the preference, and that the influence, particularly in what they define as the near-abroad, has mainly been to make sure that they are dealing with a similar system because that is easier, and it is more beneficial to their interests.

If you look at specific examples of Russian engagement with their allies or their neighbors in the near-abroad, as they define it, they can be very tough. Look at what happened in Georgia. They can be fairly sophisticated and nuanced. I would argue that the basic interest of the Russian elite is simply to, you know, from our perspective, prevent movement toward greater democracy, transparency, and accountability in those places.

I would argue it's not motivated by some imperial mindset but by a much cruder set of motives. That said, it is very difficult to counteract, in part because the mechanisms they use to promote this are very unprincipled.

MR. WALKER: Thank you very much, Daniel. We have just a few minutes for questions. I think there's a microphone here and then we'll move to our close. Yes, we have a question here.

Q: Excellent presentations. My name is Joel Starr. I was the former deputy assistant secretary in legislative affairs. I'm not here to defend the Bush administration either, although I think we did a lot of good things down in South America. For example, we doubled foreign assistance to \$1.85 billion. We forgave \$19 billion worth of foreign debt. We increased the Peace Corps by 30 percent. But there's obviously more work to be done and the Chavez influence is spreading.

So my question is directly to Professor Corrales. What would you recommend be the roadmap for the Obama administration in South America to stem the Chavez tide of influence?

MR. CORRALES: When you started to praise the Bush administration, many of those things I recognize are true, I thought you were going to say that the best thing that Bush did for Latin America was to create this rapprochement between Washington and Brasilia. The rapprochement between the United States and Brazil that took place during the second Bush administration, the second Lula administration, is probably the most significant geopolitical change in U.S.-Latin American relations that I have seen since maybe since the missile crisis.

Who knows whether this was just Bush being clever, or whether this is going to become a policy of the United States of America which is going to continue. Why do I mention this in response to your question about what to do about Chavez? I think that with Chavez, which is a regime, as many of these that uses nationalism and anti-Americanism as one of its cards, you cannot engage it in sort of like, let's pick a fight, let's go and fight. So you need to find allies elsewhere. You need to be able to contain it on the periphery, on the outer sides.

Bush was, I think, and especially Tom Shannon, very smart in making sure that in the last three years of the Bush administration the U.S. government would avoid a direct confrontation. It was almost like talk-to-the-hand approach, and that disarmed him in many ways. Now this isn't perfect, but it was better than the policy of trying to contain it frontally, of trying to create a coalition against Chavismo.

And finally, the most important forces that have contained Chavismo have been political parties in democracies that are in the opposition. Those are the ones that are our best allies in

fighting Chavismo because they don't want Chavista-like forces in their own countries. So insofar as we promote democracies elsewhere and we make sure that other parties in other countries are strong, we have one more instrument that the United States can use. But it is, I agree, a difficult strategy.

I too wonder what exactly Obama means, President Obama means when he says we're going to engage in a new beginning, whether we're going to leave this area of talk-to-the-hand into, okay, let's talk about things that will ultimately undermine the larger struggle, which is to make sure that these regimes don't continue to spread elsewhere.

MR. WALKER: We have time for a couple more questions. I note that Senator Cardin has arrived. We're grateful for his presentation here. So if we have one or two more questions. One in the back.

Q: Hi, my name's Will Dobson. I'm a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. I should say, full disclosure, my office is next door to Bob Kagan's. But all the ideas don't necessarily transfer, in any case. And I'm also, more relevantly, working on a book that very much touches on what the panel's talking about today, so I appreciated hearing all your comments a great deal.

You could make a distinction between techniques and capacities, and I'm interested in hearing what you all have to say in making that comparison. Mr. Kimmage made the point that we're just in early days of trying to identify the character of this thing that we're putting our arms around, modern authoritarianism.

In thinking about capacity, we have a notion of thinking of the Chinese Communist Party as being this ossified, Leninist machine, and political scientist David Shambaugh has pointed out there has been more elite turnover in the Chinese Communist Party than we've seen at any point, absent a purge, since 1917. In fact, a political incumbent has a better chance of holding onto their position in any Western democracy than one does in China.

So it's clearly a robust system in its capacity. The reasons for those dismissals are varied, as Professor Link knows, but part of it is based on performance, and the performance legitimacy that the Chinese state has achieved.

I'd be curious in hearing across the other examples, in the case of Venezuela, in the case of Russia. We could also talk about a country that was not mentioned today, Egypt. Whether you see that capability, that robustness in the system. Thank you.

MR. WALKER: What I might do is take one more question here, and then we can address those and wrap up.

Q: Hi. I'm Dong Dao Wu (ph) with the service of Radio Free Asia. I have two simple questions. My question is, Chinese communist government has effectively wiped out Chinese nationalism against Tibetan uprising last year. Western countries have the notion and this fear of this Chinese nationalism, if there is still Chinese nationalism. They also think the Chinese

government can also succeed in erasing Chinese nationalism against those Chinese dissidents that Chinese people who are also longing for freedom, democracy, and liberty. That's my first question.

And my second question is, what I get a sense from Perry Link's talk is that, are you saying that this silent diplomacy doesn't work, that there are some Chinese expert who are saying that the Chinese silent diplomacy works better for the Chinese government, but what I get from you is that you are saying something different. Thank you.

MR. WALKER: Sir, if you have one quick question and then we'll have the panelists respond.

Q: Hi, Mark Hernantrack (ph), (Liberty ?) Foundation. I had the pleasure last fall of attending a global seminar in Salzburg and we talked a lot with Jianghuo, who was talking a great deal about Chinese democracy. It occurred to me that the Chinese would like to characterize themselves as democratic, and talk about the Chinese way of cooperation as opposed to the Western way of confrontation and competition.

What strikes me is that, well, if we think of China as being non-democratic and it continues on the economic rise that it has in the past few years, I think that at some point we're faced with a situation in which we have to say that one of the chief arguments in favor of democracy for non-democratic countries has been undermined, namely that democracy is necessary for economic prosperity.

If we embrace the idea, on the other hand, that China is a developing democracy, a Chinese form of democracy, not quite the Western way, we'll avoid that type of consequence. And at the same time it makes me wonder, when I talk about engagement, coercion, how 2009 United States will engage with or coerce, say, 19th-century United States insofar as things like human rights are our concerns. So those are the questions.

MR. WALKER: If I could ask each of the panelists just to take a minute, in the shorthand you're able to respond. If you want to start.

MR. LINK: The Chinese characteristics democracy is the term that the government uses. It's not the same as real democracy. I like your term, decorative democracy. That shows a sort of a vulnerability in the Chinese government, and I would guess in the Russian government, too, to the criticism that you are authoritarian and we have to use this decorative democracy, right? No democracy goes around saying we have to have decorative autocracy to show that we're respectable. So there's a tacit assumption that real democracy is really what matters there.

On silent diplomacy, that again, that's a tactic of the authoritarians to say, you want to get something done, keep it quiet. You and I can talk in quiet. Don't publicize it. That really tells you exactly the opposite, that what's going to get something done is to be open about it. And it's not true that the Chinese government doesn't respond to public pressure about human rights. In the early 1990s, when MFN was live in these halls, it worked quite well. So that's a trick of the

authoritarians, to say that silent diplomacy works. It works for them because if you're silent and they're silent and they put it in the wastebasket and nothing happens then they're all done.

On nationalism, can nationalism be used to attack dissidents, yes, it is. Dissidents, my friends who are dissidents get called fatenhua (ph), anti-Chinese, which is self-contradictory. They are Chinese but they get labeled as anti-Chinese as a way of trying to say that the mainstream of Chinese nationalism is behind us, the government. If you're out of the mainstream then you are anti-China. Anti-party and anti-China become synonyms.

On the ossified, elite – I'm sorry, the elite turnover in the Communist Party, you know, with all due respect to my good friend David Shambaugh, I don't think he's quite right about that. I don't think there is a robust turnover, but I'll leave it to my fellow panelists to talk about the turnover in the other countries.

MR. WALKER: Daniel?

MR. KIMMAGE: Yes, very, very briefly on capacity. I think one of the biggest problems with all the authoritarian regimes, and specifically Russia, is that this is very much a question mark. One of the great benefits of dealing with democracies or societies that have a certain amount of freedom and richness of information is that they are more predictable. There are certain parameters for what they do. You can use a very simple benchmark, that if a major leader is assassinated in a democracy, we have a fairly good idea of what procedures will come into place to ensure political continuity and stability. In authoritarian countries that is often not the case at all, and the international system and policy-makers don't like that level of instability and that level of uncertainty.

I would argue this is one of the difficulties in dealing with authoritarian regimes, is that they are often perfectly stable and placid until they are not, and then all bets are off. And the argument I would make is that specifically in Russia the nature of the political system with this fakery of democracy and very limited communication between rulers and ruled is that when problems begin, the distance between problems and catastrophic failure can be very short. I would say that that is the primary danger.

I don't have a more satisfying answer than that, but I think that this issue of capacity is an important one, and that's one of the reasons why it is broadly speaking in our national interest to see and encourage movement toward a more transparent, accountable, predictable and stable system in these countries.

MR. WALKER: Thank you, Daniel. And Javier, closing thought?

MR. CORRALES: Closing thought. What to pick. On technical capacity. If you are an authoritarian state and you are in the business of trying to have supporters, you want to recruit people to be on your side. One thing that you're going to use is technical capacity in determining who's going to be on your ship or not because that's an unnecessary way of excluding people. So that's one of the reasons why in Venezuela you don't see the salience of technical capacity necessarily because to try to introduce technical capacity on the part of the

state to run all kinds of issues of governance and management would mean having to fire a lot of people. The amount of oil that Venezuela has, this is a cliché but it's true, allows the state to be inefficient.

And on the question of opposition and cooperation and these two definitions of democracy, my understanding of liberal democracy is that it's not one of these extremes. In liberal democracy you need to have both the cooperation of the opposition as well as the contestation of the opposition. To think in these polar terms in my opinion has never been a definition of a liberal democracy. It is, if you will, the more hybrid understanding rather than the most cultural specific of all, and that's the concept of democracy that I like, based on what I see. Thanks.

MR. WALKER: Well, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of the panelists, both for their wonderful presentations today, but also for the work they've invested in this project. And I would really encourage everyone to read their reports. They're first-rate. So thank you for that.

And I'd also like to take the opportunity to introduce Jennifer Windsor, who's Freedom House's executive director, who has her own introduction.

JENNIFER WINDSOR: Thank you, Chris. I'd like to introduce a very special guest, Senator Benjamin Cardin. For those of you that do not know him, Senator Cardin is really a leader in the U.S. Senate on human rights. He is currently the chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. He has been a commissioner on that commission since 1993, and he also serves as vice president of the OSCE parliamentary assembly. And without a longer introduction so we can spend the time listening to him, Senator Cardin.

(Applause)

SENATOR BENJAMIN CARDIN (D-MD): Jennifer, thank you very much. I really very much appreciate that you all are here, that you found it important enough to be here and talk about "Undermining Democracy: 21st Century Authoritarians." And as I was listening to this discussion, and I found it fascinating, as we talk about democracy, what is democracy? And I think perhaps one of the major problems that Americans have had historically is that we define democracy and expect the international community to accept our way of democracy. And there isn't just one way of democracy.

Democracy is living principles that we understand, but it is important that we try to promote democratic institutions. So as we look at what we believe democracy is all about, we talk about free elections. Yes, that's important. We talk about a legislature that has some degree of credibility in the way that the parliamentarians have been elected: an independent judiciary, very important; a free press so people can get information; human rights – again, not our definition of human rights but the international definition of respect for human rights, the rule of law. All that is important.

It was John F. Kennedy that commented, that said that democracy is not perfect but it doesn't put up walls to keep people in. That's very appropriate on the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, where we had a divided city, a divided country, and a divided continent. But we try to understand what brought down that wall of division in Europe.

I would just point out, it was people that were behind that wall, that had a yearning for freedom, that didn't give up hope, that knew that there was a better way. And it was groups such as Radio Free Europe, such as Freedom House, and such as the Helsinki Commission that gave those freedom fighters behind the wall, behind the Iron Curtain, living in autocratic societies, the hope that there would be a difference and it was worth fighting for.

So I come here today to say that we need your help. The NGOs that are working on behalf of freedom and democracy, you've got a hard job ahead of you. Things aren't going well in many parts of the world. The Helsinki Commission, that I have the honor of chairing, we have a lot of work to do.

President Obama gave a major speech this morning our time in Cairo to reach out to the Muslim community, to say to the Arab world that the United States really wants to engage the international community to try to make things better for all. It was a major opportunity. I was in Croatia this past week meeting with academics around the world literally and members of Congress, talking about political Islam, and trying to figure out ways in which we could get democracy flourishing in parts of the world that really don't understand the institutions of democracy.

As I was telling Jeff a little bit earlier, Radio Free Asia came up in those discussions because getting reliable and professional and independent information is critically important for those who believe there's a better way for their country, and they need to have that independent information and source.

So I come here today as a United States senator to say that we need Radio Free Asia, we need Freedom House. And yes, we do need the Helsinki Commission today. When I first started on the Helsinki Commission we worked on issues concerning the Soviet Union and trying to get people out of the Soviet Union. They were important issues. Today we're working on issues of equal importance. What to do about the way that Russia has regressed. And they have regressed on many of the principles of democracy.

What do we do about Belarus? What do we do about other parts of the OSCE region that we see regression. We're concerned about what's happening in Bosnia today, a country that was gradually put together that appears to be coming apart. So we need your help if we're going to be able to fight the authoritarians of today, and they're there.

Our annual meeting was in Kazakhstan, a wonderful country, making a lot of progress, but it's certainly not a democracy when the president can run for re-election with virtually no one running against him and the parliament can be 100 percent his own party because no one else has a chance to even run. And this is a popular regime. It's not that he isn't popular. He is popular. But the institutions of democracy are not there, and it's not the American institutions. It's the

institutions that allow people who yearn for freedom the opportunity to participate in their government. That's what this is all about. This is what we're fighting for. This is what America stands for. And we're trying to make progress.

There was another young American who traveled to Europe 45 years after President Kennedy, who's now the president of the United States, President Obama. What he said when he was in Berlin not too long ago, and I quote, "What has always united us, what has always driven our people is a set of ideals that speak to aspirations shared by all people, that we can live free from fear and free from want, that we can speak our minds and assemble with whomever we choose and worship as we please."

We should never take those principles for granted. We fought long and hard for those principles, and it is evolutionary. It's not static. Our definition of freedom has changed over the years. Our principles of democracy have matured over the years. The interesting point in Croatia this past week, when we were talking about what contributions America has made most to democracy and to freedom, to human rights, the issue that came up more and more were women's rights. And think where we were a couple hundred years ago, or even 100 years ago, or even 50 years ago. Certainly we have matured over time, so we have to understand the international community better than we do. The NGO community is vitally important.

So in the Helsinki Commission we try to understand this. We try to understand what's going on, not just in the OSCE states, which are 56 in number. But we're working very aggressively now in the Mediterranean area and we're expanding to the Middle East. We think the principles of Helsinki, which speaks to human rights, economics, and security, and the interrelationship between those three baskets. People cannot be free, cannot enjoy democracy unless they're safe, they have security. They can't be free and have democracy unless they have economic opportunity. And they can't be free and have opportunity – democracy, unless they have respect for human rights.

It's kind of remarkable that in 1975 all the countries of Europe, Canada, and the United States came together with these principles. There was no disagreement. We didn't have a problem defining democracy. We defined it internationally by the Helsinki principles as to what democracy is. Every country signed on, including the Soviet Union. They were excited to do that, to show to the world their system, which could not stand up to that scrutiny and ultimately was dissolved.

So these principles are universal principles. We don't have to debate them any longer, and now we're finding countries such as Afghanistan coming in to Helsinki as a partner, agreeing that these are the principles that they want their country to adhere to. I've suggested that Iraq join OSCE as a partner. I think it would be helpful to a country that really has significant problems of identity.

I hope that we will expand the OSCE into more regions, so we don't have to continually try to redefine the basic international principles of democracy.

With your help – and I really do appreciate the fact that you’re here participating in this conference. I have a lot of confidence in our country. I think the United States will continue to lead internationally on the principles that we believe. It’s wonderful to have a president who has self-examined our own country and recognizes that Guantanamo Bay is the icon internationally of abuse, and closing Guantanamo Bay is an important statement by President Obama, and to make it clear that this country made mistakes when we allowed torture, which we never should have done.

It’s nice to have a president who understands the principles of our country, but also understands that we are subject to international scrutiny. And if we’re going to have the credibility to lead internationally then we have to self-examine conduct in our own country.

I am proud of America. I think this country has done so much internationally, has done so much to promote democratic principles, not only here in America but around the world. And I want us to be more effective. I really do believe that we will be. And President Obama being in Cairo today gives us that opportunity to expand America’s influence internationally, not for the sake of American values but for the sake of international values. Your participation here today also makes that more of a reality.

So congratulations on this conference and we look forward to working with the groups that are represented and the people who are interested in being advocates internationally for the principles of democracy. Thanks.

(Applause.)

MS. WINDSOR: Well, I could try to summarize all of the discussion but that would probably take us another three more hours, and I think it would be impossible. But I have to say that it’s been excellent discussion, debate, and I want to thank every panelist. And the questions and engagement from the audience has been really vital. And I want to thank our partners, Radio Free Europe, Radio Free Asia. I want to thank the Smith Richardson Foundation that made this whole endeavor possible.

I think that – I want to say that I am not without hope for the future state of freedom. I think that the issuance of this report is not to say that all is lost and that democracy and freedom is on retreat everywhere in the world. But it is to say, these are pernicious regimes and we need to understand more what they’re doing. And then we have to figure out how to translate that understanding into action, which is always the most difficult.

Certainly democracies tend to argue with each other, and in coming up with common policies more than oftentimes authoritarian regimes do. And every U.S. president wants to put their stamp on what I think has been an enduring American commitment to freedom and democracy and its advance around the world.

I for one was heartened by the president’s speech today, and it was nice that he organized that speech exactly on the day of our conference. Therefore, he couldn’t be with us today, which I’m sure he would have.

But I think that the challenge goes not only to the U.S. government and to other democratic governments, but to the international community at large, including individuals and groups around the world that are committed to this, which is, we need to figure out what is being said, what is being propagated, and what are the best ways to make sure that the contrary message is heard, and that the incentives for freedom and democracy, for governments to realize their own people's aspirations continue to reinforce the advance of human rights and freedom.

With that I won't try to go any further, but just to say thank you so much for all the world that not only everybody here today but those who couldn't be with us here today have put into this. Thank you all for coming, and let's figure out how to translate this into an action agenda.

(Applause.)

(END)