



# PROJECT *on* Middle East Democracy

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*Georgetown University*

## **“Globalizing Autocracy, US Foreign Policy and Democracy Assistance”**

Wednesday December 10, 2008

National Press Club 2-5pm

On Wednesday December 10, Georgetown University hosted an event at the National Press Club entitled, “Globalizing Autocracy, US Foreign Policy and Democracy Assistance.” A list of participants will accompany the notes of each panel.

### **Panel I: Causes and Consequences of Authoritarian Globalization**

**Tom Melia**, Freedom House

**Dan Brumberg**, Georgetown University

**Larry Diamond**, National Endowment for Democracy

**Michele Dunne**, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

**Tom Melia** said freedom is in retreat, and Obama’s international diplomacy will be a vital aspect of democracy promotion policy through Ambassadors Rice and Clinton in the OAS and the UN, etc.

**Dan Brumberg outlined 4 types of authoritarian regimes: 1) core states** like Russia, North Korea, Iran, Venezuela and China; **2) allied states** such as Sudan, Equador, Serbia, etc; **3) pragmatic and opportunistic countries** such as Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, Somalia, Chad, etc; **4) and contested and ambiguous regimes**, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan.

He also said high oil prices have fueled authoritarianism. He said 77% of all oil is controlled by national oil companies, western companies control less than 10% of all oil, and Iran’s national oil company is one of the most inefficient in the world.

He did say however, most of the authoritarian regimes he outlined at the beginning of his talk were authoritarian long before the oil spike of 2005. **Therefore, oil wealth does not create authoritarianism but it enforces it. But the inverse is not true either. Low oil prices will not make these countries more liberal, they will still remain authoritarian.**

**Larry Diamond** had several points. He began with **4 negative trends for democracy: 1) there is equilibrium for total number of democracies around the world**; it hovers around 60-63%; **2) there is a gathering rollback of democracies**; **3) significant link between rollback and bad governance**; **4) these new democracies lack strong institutions creating public disaffection.**

Then he moved to 4 positive trends for authoritarian regimes: 1) good authoritarian performance aided by oil boom; 2) creates a model of authoritarian capitalism; 3) authoritarian learning “best practices” of effective domination, and share information between regimes; 4) the War on Terror insulates authoritarian regimes.

He then offered some good news: **1) Democracy remains the only valid political system in that it resonates morally with people; 2) increasing spread of democratic norms in international institutions and organizations; 3) authoritarian regimes only have performance legitimacy; 4) emergence of global civil society.**

And finally he concluded with **policy recommendations: 1) the President-elect misses an opportunity by neglecting a carbon tax—it puts autocrats out of business and saves the planet; 2) maintain/increase opposition movements; 3) increase international broadcasting; 4) win the technology race between autocrats and democrats; 5) think selective engagement with authoritarian regimes; 6) consolidate unfinished and weak democracies.**

**Michele Dunne** spoke about cooperation between Arab governments, especially between ministers of interior, justice, information, and senior police officials.

She said these groups have been meeting consistently over the last 30 years. This practice has been encouraged by the international community, especially by organizations like Interpol because of concerns like drugs, terrorism, human trafficking, etc. **She focused on the 1998 Arab Convention and the Suppression of Terrorism which causes problems for human rights, liberalism and democracy: 1) rendition of suspects and preventative detention; 2) concept of counterterrorism; 3) rendition of *political prisoners*;** here she pointed to a report by Human Rights Watch entitled, “Black Hole: Fate of Islamists Rendered to Egypt” (<http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2005/05/09/black-hole>).

**On the concept of counterterrorism she said the convention specifically prohibits the detention of political dissidents yet it still happens, and “assaults” on heads of state have come to include verbal attacks thereby curtailing freedom of expression. Moreover, Arab information ministers in January 2006 moved to regulate access to the Internet, and in February 2008 did the same for satellite broadcasts.**

She then moved to discuss some positive trends, saying the status of Human Rights organizations has improved. It is independent journalists and bloggers that remain vulnerable.

Notes continue on next page...

## **Panel II: Challenges for Democracy Assistance Programs**

**Thomas Carothers**, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

**Ambassador Gerard Stoudmann**, International Foundation for Electoral Systems

**Carina Perelli**, International Foundation for Electoral Systems

**Gerald Hyman**, Center for Strategic and International Studies

**Thomas Carothers** introduced the panelists and acted as moderator.

**Ambassador Gerard Stoudmann** spoke of Russian reassertion, Chinese interest in Central Asia, lack of consistency and double standards from the West.

**Carina Perelli** highlighted failures in Latin America when they attempted to ignore local custom and culture. **She said that both efforts at democratization and globalization have weakened the state. This presents a challenge now as we try to help build a state that in many ways is no longer there.** We attempt to reform the judiciary but our efforts are undercut when we have to maintain institutions like schools and police.

She had a double caution: 1) use of the word “bad guys.” We can't use an us versus them mentality. “The axis of evil does not exist.” 2) Globalization has different effects on state and non-state actors.

**She concluded by saying we must customize our attempts at democracy promotion to regional contexts.**

**Gerald Hyman said there is a political backlash against democracy from both regimes and populations. Regimes are responding to the intrusion of foreigners, and incursions on their sovereignty. Populations are despondent to the failure of democracy to change the status quo.** But distinct from the previous panel, Hyman said “there has not been as much erosion [of democracy] as some think.”

He said the perception of a crusade against Islam has poisoned democracy promotion, and “we will be living with the Iraq legacy for a generation.”

**He also said we have to broaden the democracy project beyond a North Atlantic one. We need to see Asian democracies take a greater role. He would like to see involvement from actors like South Korea, Brazil, Japan, Qatar.**

**During the Q&A Michele Dunne took issue with Hyman's assertion that Iraq had poisoned democracy promotion for a generation. She was adamant in saying anti-American Militarism translates to anti-American democracy promotion,** to which Hyman eventually agreed.