



New York Democracy Forum



and the Campaign for a UN Democracy Caucus present:

UN Reform, Democracy and Human Rights

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Thank you Carl. I must say I am probably the only man in the room who thinks it utterly appropriate that you should host the President of the United States and myself on the same day. [Laughter] I see absolutely no anomaly in that.

I am very grateful to you and Noel Lateef of the Foreign Policy Association for hosting this event and series. I am delighted to be one of the speakers. I must say you've got quite a lot ahead. I know both Larry Diamond, who I've known for some years and dealt with a lot during his time in Iraq, is going to give you a very provocative account of what, as he sees it, the squandered opportunity of building democracy there after the American led intervention.

But also Anwar Ibrahim, who is also someone I know and from who one of my favorite letters ever received, was drafted on the back of a cigarette wrapper of one of his defense lawyers, thanking me for trying to organize some pressure here in the U.S. against his imprisonment and incarceration. Of course, he wasn't allowed to send out regular letters, so one got that classic prisoner of conscious communication on the back of a cigarette package.

So this is a great series and I am rather humbled. I actually feel humbler about the speakers who are to follow, rather than following your guest of earlier in some ways Carl!

But let me just jump straight in say in the role that I now play as Chief of Staff for Kofi Annan. I was sort of just going through my inbox, coincidentally, preparing my remarks for tonight, and what were the issues that were right there in front of me? First, this flare up over the new Iraqi constitution, where it was UN officials in Baghdad who blew the whistle and said you can't make a last minute change in the rules of this referendum on the constitution – you can't appear to further disenfranchise the Sunnis if this thing is going to be legitimate. So just this week, this critical change which really appeared to

have endangered the whole exercise was reversed, to lower the bar of those who want to get a vote to oppose the constitution.

Just a week or so before, we'd had the election in Afghanistan, where the whole electoral support exercise had been managed by the UN in its different forms, although involving many different organizations in terms of providing assistance and support to that extraordinary but difficult exercise with its successes, but also some disappointment in terms of the level of the turnout.

I looked to those bits of my in tray that represent problems immediately ahead. In November there is an election in Haiti which is already extremely troubled in terms of will the preparations be complete enough to allow that election to be one which is legitimate in the eyes of the Haitian people, but also in terms of neighbors and the international community.

If I turn to the other part of the title, human rights, I think the brave report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the deaths in Uzbekistan and the efforts to get that on the Security Council agenda. The extraordinary sort of almost Scarlet Pimpernel of the High Commissioner for Refugees to get out of Kyrgyzstan to a safer location those who fled Uzbekistan and spent weeks at risk of immediate revilement in that country.

I think of Zimbabwe and the tragedies still unfolding in that country as we struggle with both the political and humanitarian crises there, and again efforts to bring that before the Security Council. I has now, for the past two months, been raised under other business at the Council as people struggle with that issue.

I think of Myanmar, where a new report sponsored by the former Czech President Mr. Havel and Archbishop Tutu of South Africa, as again there are countries pushing in the Council, I think they have eight votes now, enticingly short of the one vote additional they need to get it on to the Security Council agenda – a discussion of Myanmar.

I think again of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, who at the beginning of this week put out a report on Togo, where there was huge hidden violence surrounding the elections in that country.

And at the center of each of these dramatic human episodes, where lives have been lost, people have put their freedom on the line and there lives on the line, to win freedom, I see the United Nations, there in a critical role, trying to bring some solution which respects the values and principles of human rights and democracy.

And I see us when we succeed never doing it alone, but at the center of a network of likeminded peoples and governments and organizations sharing a common agenda of pushing the promotion of democracy and finding partners inside each of those countries to work with in that push. And similarly pushing for a stronger regime of human rights protection, and again doing it through internal allies and outside partners.

I think when we look at those situations I've taken from my inbox, if you like, but the inbox of a man who sits down the corridor from the Secretary-General and has some say in determining what the Secretary-General's priorities are every day, to me it is a very simple way of describing the global importance of this organization, and the need for it to mobilize that importance from the easily passive one of just being there, observing and managing processes without end, of mobilizing that into a real power and force for good and change and the promotion of these objectives in the world.

It was that vision which led the Secretary-General, earlier in the year to put out his report called "In Larger Freedom," which borrowed from a phrase of the original Charter of the United Nations, and which conceived of freedoms not just as political freedoms but equally economic and social freedoms, and a concept that they were intertwined, and that you couldn't enjoy one if you couldn't enjoy all.

The Secretary-General has this vision that it is by returning to that concept of freedom that the UN can renew itself and reconnect to people everywhere in terms of delivering things which are important to people and how they live there lives. Hence the priorities he recommended to member states for the summit we've just had, which came out of this "In Larger Freedom" report, and he said the United Nations really must be refocused on development in its broadest sense, development to meet the Millennium Development Goals of halving poverty, development also in terms of the humanitarian assistance which we must deliver to victims of war and disaster everywhere.

And then a second big building block of this refashioned United Nations, which is security. Security indeed for those of us living in cities like New York subject to this explosive growth of terrorism, aided by technology changes which allow militarized weapons and other weapons categories to be carried easily across borders to be used not just by armies but by terrorist groups of different kinds.

But security also for poor people, for whom that is a much less relevant threat than crime in their huge cities with under supported police forces and weak justice systems. Security for the women trying to make their place in the workplace, in countries where their rights are not fully protected, and for their daughters, seeking to go to school in societies that don't allow the rights for girls in education, let alone follow career advancement.

And hence, that beyond the traditional sense of security there needed to be this concept of human security, a security system which delivers for everybody, rich and poor, powerful and weak alike in terms of making the world a safer place.

And underpinning it, there must be a third pillar, a vision of democracy and human rights. A security which is just based on force, and not on people's participation and the chance for them to fulfill their rights, particularly their political rights, through debate and inclusion in the democratic processes of their country is always going to be a false security, one which has the seeds of its own destruction in it.

So, hence, the three big pillars of Kofi Annan's new UN – development, security and human rights and democracy. That was what member states took to the summit in a complicated negotiating process that went through many months. It largely, believe it or not, made it through the summit in tact, in that on the development side, we've seen not just legislated at New York in this meeting of world leaders, but in critical steps towards that at the meeting of G-8 leaders in Gleneagles and meetings of the World Bank and IMF and many other fora, the putting together of an extraordinarily ambitious effort to double development assistance to Africa in the next five years and increase development assistance overall by \$50 billion in pursuit of these Millennium Development Goals -- and related to it changes in debt relief and the trading system as well.

And on the security side a bold new idea for a Peacebuilding Commission, an effort to bring together the social and economic and political strategies to deal with failed states into a coherent whole, so we don't get stuck in these peacekeeping operations without end.

And also, perhaps critically for all of this, a concept of a responsibility to protect, the idea that when a Darfur or a Rwanda happens, the international community has an obligation to intervene, a requirement to intervene, a critical potential new change in international law and responsibilities.

And finally, a huge revamping of the human rights machinery at the UN. We kind of just got in there – it's sort of holding on by its fingertips. We didn't get as much agreement at the summit as we would have hoped as to what exactly this new Human Rights Council to replace the discredited Human Rights Commission would look like, but we agreed it would be created and details will be hashed out in the coming weeks.

To underpin this, a management restructuring of the UN to deliver on this. I can come back to that in our question and answer period, but suffice it to say that it is very, very striking to me that having led UNDP for six years, I was leading an organization that had its bottom line in that every year we had to go back to the donors to raise resources. We also had very strong and powerful developing country constituencies, or program countries as we call them, where UNDP works, and both these groups, our client program countries and our donor countries, demanded performance and results from us, and when we didn't give it, they could sort of vote with their feet and take their resources to other organizations, and that kind of market like discipline has made UNDP and UNICEF and other parts of the system very effective.

It's not available to us in the Secretariat. We can't go out to raise money for peacekeeping operations and wait until we get it before we mount them. We can't go out to raise money to organize un-sexy things like global conferences in New York, or the basic administrative backbone of the UN. These are utilities for the international system which we have to assess contributions for from the full membership, but by doing that we lose some of that sort of market-based discipline in terms of how the organization performs, that is available in the funds and programs. We've got to find ways to create more of a result and performance based culture in the UN Secretariat, and we also, I see

one or two ambassadors here so I can't resist saying, we also have to find a way to get the ambassadors and particularly their staff who sit in our various management committees to back off a bit and give us some space to run the organization with more independence from their friendly but rather micromanaging advice at times. Imagine having 191 bosses who want a say in every staffing decision we make.

So there is a lot of change ahead of us, but I want to step back from that and say what this reform means for this issue of democracy particularly. One of the things the summit confirmed and we've already set up was the taking up of a proposal President Bush made a year ago for a Democracy Fund, and that has been established and some \$40 million already put up. And I'm glad to say that the U.S. is not the biggest contributor, nor are some of the other likely suspects. I suppose we could run a sort of lottery on this in the room and I bet none of you could guess who the largest contributor is. It's India.

It makes sense, it is the largest democracy in the world, but it is not necessarily the country you normally find at the top of donor lists. I think its an incredibly encouraging sign of the way democracy, and support for democracy, is moving beyond the U.S. and the traditional promoters if you like, to countries that have every bit as much to be proud of in terms of the way they have established democracy in their own lands, and so India is a great partner and leader on this, as are obvious other countries such as Chile and many others.

And I believe it will be a critical part of a strengthened repertoire of democracy promoting instruments we have. Between the UN and UNDP, on average, every two weeks somewhere in the world there is an election we are supporting. These two bits of the UN, the Department of Political Affairs where the Electoral Support Division is located, and UNDP, between us we are the biggest international procurer of electoral supplies. We are doing a huge amount in elections, in trying to build a culture of democracy, in promoting the rule of law, in promoting governments around issues of accountability and transparency.

And now my successor, the new administrator of UNDP, Kemal Derviş, has set as one of his additional new priorities, support to free media in developing countries. I think it is moving strongly, and as I said at the beginning, the National Endowment for Democracy and its implanting arms, the NDI and the National Republican Institute and many others are critical partners, the American Bar Association is another one, in terms of promoting these kinds of democratic activities around the world.

I want to just come finally to the idea that is underlying much of the debate about democracy at the UN, you know, this suggestion of should the UN be paired down to just a group of democratic nations, and if it can't be, should an alternative Democracy Caucus be created, which becomes a substitute for UN action?

Interestingly, that debate first played itself out when the UN was formed, because the term United Nations, after 60 years, we think of as a universal term involving all countries. A club with no barriers to entry of any kind, its universality its key strength.

But the term United Nations was actually brought by the allies, as a term they had actually used to describe themselves during the Second World War. It was an exclusive term used by a group of countries who saw themselves as the global defenders of democracy and the rule of law, these very principles.

But what happened over 60 years? They recognized that to implement those principles, you need a global organization. What is the point of an exclusive club of the like-minded if you can not reach beyond it to the kind of countries I mentioned in opening – Iraq, Afghanistan, Haiti, Uzbekistan, Zimbabwe, Myanmar, Togo. They wouldn't be involved in such a club of the like-minded, though I suppose Afghanistan may have crossed the barrier or maybe Iraq, but other countries would be excluded, the very countries one wants to reach to promote democracy in.

And it doesn't stop with democracy if you think of any of the global issues we are now grappling with. Avian Flu this week, for example, a lot of the Avian Flu outbreak, if it begins, will begin in non-democratic countries. It will begin in China and Vietnam, and move rapidly to places like New York City possibly. But would you want an international organization that only could have democracies talking to democracies? I doubt it. It is critical on public health as much as the promotion of democracy, that we have truly global institutions, where you can reach to everybody, not just the like-minded, but those that disagree as well.

Well, if you are going to have a club of everybody, does that disempower you as democrats to promoting change? And here, my argument is not at all. You need a democracy caucus within the United Nations. The Community of Democracies is one effort to create such a caucus. It offers you democrats the opportunity to vote as a block on issues. If you care enough about membership at the Human Rights Council, then democracies should combine and challenge traditional group ways of voting.

That's not for me as a mere civil servant a recommendation, it's a suggestion, that within the membership of the UN there are ways for countries to organize themselves to promote values which they hold dear, wherever there regional location in the world, and to therefore use within this global universal institution, the power of common commitment to democracy to promote goals.

I think that is the way a Democracy Caucus needs to work. Not outside the UN as an alternative grouping of like-minded states, but within it, to promote these values across the whole membership.

Let me close with one other observation. I've been in and out of the UN all my life. I'm not a lifer on that sense. I rather pride myself on the larger part of my career that I've spent outside working in the private sector promoting democracy, as Carl said, and doing some other things. But I am enough of a lifer, and have devoted enough of my career to this wonderful organization, to have just been left with one sour feeling about the events of the last year.

There is probably nobody at the UN who is identified more with having sought to repair the relationship with the United States than myself, and Carl hinted as much in introducing me. I am very proud of that. I believe that you can not have a United Nations that does not work well with the United States. There will be disagreements, but there has got to be a basic relationship of trust and partnership around shared values and objectives.

When that breaks asunder as it did on Iraq, you have to find ways of repairing it. You can't get away from the fact that the huge overwhelming majority of our membership opposed the war in Iraq, and in that sense, a breakdown was inevitable. What you can do is try to get beyond it, to repair relationships and find that in the next phase of Iraq, you have a lot in common and can work together on a whole other set of issues, from public health to humanitarian relief to political action in many theatres around the world where there are common objectives. You can rebuild trust and cooperation around those issues.

But it can never be at the expense of the voice and participation of the rest of the membership. They can not feel that the U.S. is allowed so much say in the institution that it leaves them marginalized and frustrated on the side. For me, the sour taste in my mouth left from this world summit we've had was we did manage to get a pretty good summit outcome despite an awful lot of politics around it, right until the last moment.

And we had a summit in which the U.S. – John Bolton and I went to Washington together last week and addressed Henry Hyde's committee and every word of his was worth a hundred of mine, because he said this summit is a success, the UN is reforming, and the Congress should support it. And that was a critical thing for him to say for us.

But there is another side to this, which is back in New York, a lot of member states who have been loyal members of the UN for decades, feel rather marginalized by recent events. They feel that their voice isn't heard on many issues, and that there is such a projection of U.S. power on the institution today that they are not heard in the way they think they should be. And that is wrong.

We have to find a way to of making sure that democracy at one level is the right of small and weak countries to be heard in the United Nations. That is as important a voice of democracy as those of us desiring to see that elections are held in as many countries as possible. That is another level of democracy. But in a sense, we'll betray that level if we don't right here in the governance of the United Nations itself, make sure that the voice of the weak and the poor in terms of nation states is heard here as much as we want it to be heard at the ballot box in national elections.

Thank you very much.

