CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

U.S. DEMOCRACY PROMOTION UNDER OBAMA

WELCOME AND MODERATOR:
JESSICA MATHEWS,
PRESIDENT AND CEO,
CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT

SPEAKERS:
THOMAS CAROTHERS,
VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDIES,
CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT

ROBERT KAGAN,
SENIOR ASSOCIATE,
CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT

TOM MALINOWKSI,
ADVOCACY DIRECTOR, WASHINGTON OFFICE,
HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2009

Transcript by
Federal News Service
Washington, D.C.

Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery

JESSICA MATHEWS: I think we'll begin because we have a wonderful program. I want to welcome you all here today. I'm Jessica Mathews, president of the endowment. It's a great pleasure to be here with you for this discussion.

We all know that with the arrival of the new administration there is an enormous range of foreign policy issues on the table for reconsideration, and one of the big issues that has roiled a lot of commentators for the last couple of months has been whether the range of degrees of freedom on U.S. basic interests is so constraining that in fact there won't be very much change on key issues, and others – where I include myself – believe that we may be in a moment of fundamental repositioning of the United States on the international stage across a whole range of critical issues. And in order to sort of get any clarity on this question, I think the only way to go about it is by going in depth issue by issue, so that's where we're beginning today, with one of the core issues of American foreign policy, namely democracy promotion.

There is certainly a broad consensus that the United States has to move away from the, I would say, toxic Bush legacy in this domain. At home we've got to recapture some of the degree of bipartisanship on these issues that we certainly once had, and abroad we have to attempt to regain the respect of people who have traditionally seen the United States as a beacon of democracy but now may see it either as – its policies in this area either as a substitute or a euphemism for armed pursuit of national self-interests or as a morass of hypocrisy, both abroad and at home.

For its part, the new administration hasn't defined itself on democracy promotion. Secretary Clinton's remarks on her China trip have gotten an awful lot of attention and have been interpreted very broadly by some, but I think that the question of where the Obama administration is going is one that's still very much – on this question very much up in the air. But interest, as the size of this group here suggests, is intense, and rightly so because despite the problems of recent years, democracy promotion is a core American value and a core element of U.S. foreign policy. So today we're going to be looking at where the United States, under President Obama, may be heading on this issue and what it can in fact achieve, given where it is beginning, and we're fortunate, in doing that, to have a terrific panel to lead this discussion.

Tom Carothers is, I think you all know, vice president for studies here at Carnegie, and he has followed this issue, I would probably say, more closely than just about anybody else in Washington for more than two decades. He is a dispassionate, incisive analyst and his writings are – and a prolific writer. We are marking today publication of two important new contributions from Tom, one a policy brief that sets out recommendations for the new administration, and the second a paper analyzing the global state of democracy. I hope you all were able to pick up copies of both of them. And his presentation today is going to draw from both of those pieces.

After Tom's remarks we have two distinguished commentators. Tom Malinowski is the advocacy director in the Washington office of Human Rights Watch, known as a forceful and effective advocate for a range of human rights issues. And Bob Kagan, a senior associate here at Carnegie, is a thoughtful, deep thinker on U.S. foreign policy who illuminates every debate that he's part of.

So we'll start with Tom and then hear from Tom and Bob, and then we'll have plenty of time for audience – for your discussion.

Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery

TOM CAROTHERS: Thank you very much. Every American president over the last 30 years, no matter how he started off at the beginning of his time in office, has ended up becoming substantially involved with democracy promotion. President Reagan framed his policy of countering the Soviet Union in terms of democracy promotion and established some of the basic policies and programs that continue today in this area. President Bush, Sr. may have had strong realist instincts, but with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union occurring on his watch, his administration became substantially involved in establishing U.S. policies as support for democratic transitions around the post-communist world.

President Clinton, as part of his effort to redefine America's security profile and security outlook in a post-Cold War world, settled upon democratic enlargement as one of his key themes and engaged in democracy support activities in many parts of the world. And President Bush, Jr. moved quickly away from his own realist instincts after 9/11 to embrace his global freedom agenda and become substantially involved in democracy promotion for the rest of his presidency as well. And so no matter what he and his team may intend now, President Obama will also very likely find himself confronted with the issue of democracy promotion, and he will find that his approach to it becomes one of the defining themes of his presidency, almost whether he likes it or not.

Democracy is simply too important to ignore. It's central to the aspirations and the destiny of countries and regions around the world, whether it's Latin America struggling to break free from the long oscillation between democracy and authoritarianism once and for all, whether it's the post-communist countries struggling to achieve a consolidated and democratic European identity, whether it's Africa struggling to move beyond decades and decades of poor and damaging governance and political instability, and every other part of the world, each in its own ways.

And as the global power – the greatest global power in the world, America encounters this issue again and again wherever it goes. Democracy intertwines in complex but inescapable ways with our security interests, our economic interest, our sociopolitical interests, our moral interests, and others. And so, overloaded though his agenda certainly is both at home and abroad, President Obama and his team will nevertheless soon have to define an approach to democracy promotion, because if they do not, they will find themselves branded by others in ways that they may not like.

As the new president and his team go about settling on an approach to democracy promotion, I think they confront two main challenges. One has to do with overcoming the problematic and I would say confusing Bush legacy in this domain, and the other has to do with the difficult state of democracy around the world. Let me turn first to the issue of the Bush legacy. Now, some elements of the Bush legacy on democracy promotion are quite clear and I think widely understood by the people in this room. They fall in the category of damage that must be repaired. Because these are well known, I won't linger on them here but just dispatch them in summary fashion.

First, President Bush caused democracy promotion to be closely associated with the Iraq intervention, and more generally with forcible regime change. This, as you know, tremendously damaged the legitimacy of democracy promotion, causing it to be seen in many quarters in the world as a hypocritical cover for aggressive American interventionism. It caused a majority of Americans to believe that democracy promotion should not be a priority of U.S. foreign policy. It caused many people in Europe and other fellow democracies to be wary about associating themselves with American democracy promotion and with the goal itself. It caused many people in the Middle East

in the Muslim world to reject the American message of democracy promotion, even when their own political instincts were pro-democratic. And it facilitated the ability of authoritarian and semi-authoritarian governments around the world to publicly resist Western democracy promotion and to sell this resistance to their publics as necessary defense against foreign hegemonic intervention.

Second, some of the Bush administration's actions in the war on terrorism – above all the legal abuses and violations of rights against prisoners and detainees – badly hurt America's standing as a global symbol of democracy. And the Bush administration's terrible example also encouraged other governments to take repressive measures during their own counterterrorism campaigns and help them laugh off any U.S. pressure for better performance on rights and democracy.

Now, as I said before, these damaging elements of the Bush legacy on democracy promotion are well known. Alongside them, however, are several other elements of the Bush legacy that also weigh on the new administration that I think are less well understood and constitute misconceptions, but they're misconceptions that have the potential to lead the Obama team astray. One of these misconceptions is the idea that the United States has been overdoing elections around the world and that the United States has been equating elections with democracy, and that elections are very dangerous – dangerous because in some cases they produce political extremists or anti-democratic populists, or dangerous because they may result in civil conflict.

Now, this concern that the United States is equating democracy with elections is hardly a new idea. I have the impression that it surface about every three to five years, provoking a spate of critical articles lambasting the United States government for doing so, and some modest media attention. This is a frustrating phenomenon for the U.S. democracy promotion community because in fact, as I think most people here understand, U.S. democracy promotion, programs and policies for the most part do not reflect an exclusive or even an overweening emphasis on elections. And every time I hear some commentator argue that instead of elections we should promote the rule of law or better governance or socioeconomic development, instead I must admit that I groan to myself, knowing this is precisely what we have been doing in the countries in which we are, in most cases, promoting elections. And I'll confess that I also think to myself, if you don't like our elections programs, wait until you take a close look at our rule of law programs – (laughter) – or our governance programs, or our socioeconomic development programs.

Now, I think this idea surfaces again and again, despite a largely contrary policy of reality, for two reasons. First, elections attract attention. They're media events. And when they occur, all this media attention to elections gives the impression that that's all we're paying attention to because that's all others are paying attention to. And, second, U.S. presidents – not just President Bush but other presidents in the past – do sometimes go overboard in heralding a particular election as constituting the arrival of democracy in some crucial country, but they're doing so out of political credit-taking, whether it's Russia in 1996 or Iraq in 2005 and so forth, not because that reflects basic U.S. policy toward democracy.

Now, in the Bush years, the charge that the United States is equating democracy with elections seems to have come first from the high publicity surrounding Iraq's 2005 elections, but it gained force with the schadenfreude and the Washington policy community about Hamas' victory in the 2006 Palestinian elections. People around Washington said, ha, Bush wanted elections in the Arab world; look what he got.

The second misconception – the first being that we are overdoing it on elections – the second misconception coming out of the Bush period, which I think also weighs on the new administration, is the idea that while Bush made a big push on democracy in the Middle East and it turned out badly, and so the new administration had better stay clear of that subject. Now, we don't have time today to go back into the complexities of Bush policy in the Middle East. Certainly a great deal of damage was done, but the damage did not come out of the rather modest effort that the Bush administration actually did make to urge Arab autocrats to engage in political reforms.

Leaving aside the Iraq intervention – which I do believe was largely a security-based endeavor – the Bush administration made only a mild push on democracy in the rest of the region. It did talk openly and sometimes eloquently about the value of democracy in the region, and it did establish some worthwhile aid programs to support that goal. But the pressure was very mild and the aid programs were very modest in scale. America's intimate relations with Arab autocratic regimes was not fundamentally changed or jeopardized – were not fundamentally changed or jeopardized during these years. If anything, the imperative of cooperation on counterterrorism led to a closening of ties with Arab security establishments and Arab intelligence establishments, and repressive forces within the Arab world generally.

And the idea that the political gains of Hamas and Hezbollah proved that an Islamic tidal wave will be the result of any serious process of political opening in the Middle East badly misunderstands the reality of politics in most of the Arab world. The larger message of this decade was in fact the contrary one. Peaceful Islamic parties and movements successfully took part in participatory processes and elections in quite a few Arab countries, and the resulting trend overall was one of greater Islamist moderation, not radicalization.

A third confusion or misconception from the Bush years is the more general idea that the United States just overdid it generally on democracy promotion around the world, and we need a broad realist corrective. I have been struck in recent years that often I would be asked by journalists who would call me and say, so the Bush administration is promoting democracy all around the world; what do you think about that? Or when I would go aboard to give talks, audiences would stand in resistance to whatever I said and say, why is the United States pushing democracy down all of the world's throats?

There was very much this impression that across the board the Bush administration was really just moving on all these fronts, but in fact, leaving aside the Iraq intervention, which is hard to categorize in realist or idealist terms, the main lines of Bush policy were strikingly realist. Towards America's two main strategic rivals, China and Russia, the administration was focused very much on economic and security interests and put democracy and human rights on the back burner.

Giving rising concerns over energy security, the Bush administration was almost entirely realist with respect to energy-rich authoritarian and semi-authoritarian countries around the world. And although the administration tried to cast its war on terrorism as a freedom crusade, in many cases this war on terror reinforced security cooperation with anti-democratic governments. Bush policy towards Musharraf's Pakistan was the epitome of war on terror realism.

Now, the Bush administration did also push on democracy in some places, like Burma and Belarus, but these visible cases were almost always in countries where the United States had few other economic or security interests, and the Bush administration did continue, and in a few cases

fortify, the low-policy mechanisms of democracy promotion, democracy assistance, and quiet diplomacy for democracy, but in most cases these were a continuation of policies and programs that had been established prior to the Bush administration.

Why did we have so much confusion about the basic nature of Bush policy? To some extent Iraq blinded many people. Because the Bush administration talked about Iraq so continuously as a democracy promotion venture and because we argued so much at home and people argued abroad so much about Iraq and got used to arguing about it in those terms, they began to argue about all of Bush policy in those terms. And more generally, President Bush's continuous soaring pro-democracy rhetoric confused people. It was hard not to get the impression from this rhetoric that his administration was thinking and acting constantly about democracy promotion.

In short, the Bush legacy on democracy promotion is a very complex one, which has, on the one hand, serious damage that needs to be repaired, but it also leaves behind some serious misconceptions that need to be avoided. In looking at the Obama team's first month, one can see them trying to react to this complex legacy. Quite commendably, they are taking positive steps to dissociate the United States from some of the damage. They've toned down, rhetorically, the close association between democracy promotion and Iraq. Obama has been approaching Iraq I would say in a serious fashion, looking carefully at the military options and making decisions, and while doing this, he and his team have stopped holding out Iraq to the Arab world and the rest of the world as an example of democratic success and American democracy promotion.

The new team has also stepped away from regime change and instead made clear their willingness to engage in constructive dialogue with hostile regimes that are willing to respond in kind. And they have taken some concrete and I think important actions to repair U.S. behavior with respect to basic human rights in the war on terror.

So these are all necessary and valuable parts of the process of dissociation that has to occur. At the same time, however, they have also given some hints that they may go farther in pulling back on democracy promotion, possibly under the influence of these three misconceptions that I talked about. Both President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, for example, have mentioned the idea that maybe the United States has been overdoing it on elections and needs to focus instead on basic human needs in some countries and not overdo elections.

Both have been noticeably silent with respect to Middle East democracy. For example, when President Obama gave his interview Al Arabiya Television, which was a great thing to do, he stayed away from mentioning the U.S. interest in Arab democratization. And both President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton more generally, in their other major addresses such as the inaugural address, such as Secretary Clinton's confirmation hearing remarks, and in others, have been noticeably quiet about democracy, and I would say almost avoiding the term. And of course we have Secretary of State Clinton's much-publicized remarks last week about not letting human rights issues interfere with the U.S. relationship with China.

So we have these several hints, but I take them only as hints. But before I say more about the approach of the Obama administration, let me now note the second challenge. I mentioned that I thought there were two main challenges. One is this complicated and, in a sense, divided Bush legacy. The other challenge is the global state of democracy. I would say that because we've been so focused in the last five years on the controversies of the Bush effects on democracy promotion,

to some extent we've underplayed difficulties arising from the state of democracy around the world, and these are difficulties that really exist separately from the Bush record and the Bush legacy. These are things that would have faced any president no matter what had happened I think in the last eight or nine years.

What is this situation of democracy in the world? Well, I don't think it's a situation in which democracy is in broad retreat in the world or authoritarianism on the march. As I argue in the paper that we released here last week, the record of democracy in this decade is not as bad as many people assume. The number of democracies has actually increased slightly in this decade, and the number of authoritarian regimes decreased substantially, about 15 percent if one's into statistical measurements. The overall picture is largely one of continuity or, in comparison with previous decades, a stagnation of global politics.

The third wave of democracy has stopped, or at least taken a long pause. Very few countries can today be said to be in a clear state of transition away from authoritarian rule toward democratic consolidation. Instead, the democracy promotion world finds itself confronting three kinds of situations which are different from that traditional transitional situation.

They're trying to promote change in authoritarian societies where the regimes are actively, energetically pushing back against them, or they're grappling with semi-authoritarian regimes that have learned how to play the reform game, how to have certain institutions of democracy, how to absorb democracy assistance without really changing, or in other cases they are struggling to find traction in weak new democracies that have established regular elections and considerable political pluralism, but still suffer from consistently poor governance and weak socioeconomic performance.

None of the three types of cases fits the traditional transitional model – transition model, and this is the world that democracy promotion confronts today. And this has major implications because most Western democracy promotion policies and programs of the past 20 or 30 years have been focused on states where authoritarianism is losing its grip or has lost its grip and where there is a sense of growing democratic momentum. And much of the democracy assistance and support portfolio is based on the idea of feeding off this momentum, facilitating it, building on it, increasing it, whether you're helping elections take place that have been scheduled, whether you're helping a nation's civil society to develop, helping state institutions further reform processes, strengthening civic education and so forth.

This has been the basic methodology in many parts of Latin America, Central and Southeastern Europe, Sub-Saharan African, the former Soviet Union, and elsewhere. In a simple sense, we've been rolling democratic boulders down the hill. Western pro-democracy efforts have been much less successful in countries where such momentum is absent. To take just one of many possible examples, look at the frustrations over Burma. A weak country towards which a very large number of Western democracy promotion efforts have been directed in the last 30 years has, to heartbreakingly little effect, made almost no progress on democracy.

Yet this is the global political landscape today one which lacks any identifiable sense of democratic momentum. This is what the Obama administration confronts. It's a sobering landscape in which gains in democracy are likely to be modest and slow, with incremental change often hardly visible. And we have to add to this picture the additional reality of the global economic crisis. This crisis is putting many new democracies under pressure. Almost every day we see a

headline in a major newspaper about another democratic government facing extraordinary pressures as a result of new economic woes.

Now, the economic crisis will of course hurt many authoritarian governments, although in the short to medium term, this will probably mean a further tightening up in these countries politically, the adoption of xenophobic or other extreme ideologies by nervous power holders. Overall, however, it's hard to imagine that the global economic crisis is going to produce a happy, optimistic, forward-moving period of global politics.

Let's return then to the Obama administration's task. Both these daunting challenges – overcoming the problematic Bush legacy and confronting a sobering global political landscape – create strong pressure on the new administration to back away on democracy promotion. I think it's crucial that the administration not overreact to these pressures and step back too far. I think we should formulate the challenge instead, not as a broad realist corrective, but a more complex repositioning, which entails carrying out the necessary dissociation from the negative parts of the Bush record without slipping into the misconceptions that I have described that arise from the Bush period, and without embracing an overly pessimistic view of a general retreat of democracy in the world.

This repositioning requires some repair and recovery from the past, but also the formulation of a new framework on democracy that is positive and hopeful, even while being modest and realistic. I don't believe that the basis for this new framework will lie in some overarching new rationale that we discover for democracy promotion in the way that 9/11 provided a sudden sense of urgency about the task. The basic case for why democracy support should be part of U.S. foreign policy today I think remains what it basically has been for decades, which is an amalgam of serious reasons, none of which is overwhelming, all of which can be qualified but together add up to something real.

In the most simple terms possible, the United States is more comfortable, safer and better off in a world populated by democracies than one littered by dictatorships. The basic democratic habits of participation, inclusion and openness tend – not always, but tend to promote better governance, more responsible political behavior, more peaceful behavior, better behavior towards neighbors, better behavior toward the planet generally, and many other good things, which on the whole – not always, but on the whole create a more favorable international environment for the United States and its democratic friends.

Now, I think we should take this multifaceted and nuanced rationale for democracy support as a given and not search high and low for a new silver bullet opposition that will attempt to make democracy's case more irresistible or pressing. I think a new framework on democracy promotion should focus instead on a different spirit and attitude toward how we talk about and go about this subject.

Now, as I argue in my new policy brief, fortunately I think a compelling spirit and attitude is right at hand with the election of President Obama. Realist though his instincts may be – and I think it's a realism born out of sense of prudence and caution about not wanting to push the United States onto the world. President Obama embodies exactly the pro-democracy message that the United States needs to turn the page and move ahead. His own personal story, which as we know is a remarkable journey of a search for identity and meaning, both through self-empowerment and

through the application of that empowerment to the betterment of community and society, is not just inspirational but it's the story of democratization – of grassroots democratization that we need to send to the world.

And the story of his election, the story of American democracy at its most participatory and its best, is one that has captured the global imagination as well. And when you add still further to that very basic elements of the new president's political philosophy and style, they also fit well with what I think the world is looking for from the United States. The calm, measured tone, even at a time of national economic crisis, is the tone the United States would like to hear applied to democracy. The instinct toward bipartisanship rather than lone crusades helps us return to a time when democracy promotion was very much a bipartisan concern. And the new administration's emphasis on making government work corresponds exactly to the challenge that many new democracies are also struggling with around the world.

Given that this has been a great democratic moment for the United States, I think it would be odd, but more importantly I think it would be a tremendous missed opportunity not to connect that moment to our foreign policy, to turn inward or to turn away just at the moment when we are finally at our most appealing and our most persuasive on this very count.

And so a new spirit and style regarding democracy promotion, one that emphasizes quiet persistence, bipartisanship, sobriety, making government work, basic empowerment; with such a style and such a message, the administration could then turn to various regions and project such an approach. As the administration rebuilds some credibility in the Middle East for the United States – which it can and I hope that it will – it can then turn to a message of interest in and belief in gradual but real political reform and democratization. If the administration gives some attention to Latin America, it will find a region concerned about its own political stability in the unfolding economic crisis, and quite willing for the United States to become again a constructive partner in helping it get through that crisis and preserve democracy in the region.

In Africa, President Obama can help dispel the growing notion in some quarters of the Western policy community that the West should only focus on basic economic needs and forsake the partial, the real democratic progress of the last 20 years. In every part of the world where he goes, President Obama will be a walking symbol of the value and power of democracy, and in a world unsettled politically by economic crisis and other uncertainties, this message will carry weight. The Obama team must be ready to apply that weight at key junctures when they arise. And democracy policy isn't something you plan substantially in advance. You set a message, you set a philosophy and a tone, and then the world comes at you.

There may be a leadership succession in Egypt in the next several years. The new administration should today begin to send messages to the Egyptian elite that it cares about that process, and when that succession hits – which it will at some point – it should be ready to make clear what America's interests are in that process. As Pakistan struggles to keep a basic democratic consensus together, we need to show that we've learned lessons from the mistakes of the Musharraf period in terms of what our interests are and the relationship between democracy and U.S. security interests in Pakistan.

As Bosnia moves in a troubling and I think dangerous direction, we need to show that we haven't taken our eye off that ball. As Ukraine struggles to stay on track, again we need to show that

we care, that we're involved and we're ready to help. As Kenya tries to move away from a bad election to a more settled political life, we need to show that we don't believe that one bad election means that Africans aren't good enough for democracy, and so forth around the world.

To return to where I started, whether the new U.S. administration wants it or not, the world is going to ask of it where it stands on democracy. Although I believe the decade ahead will be a sobering and a difficult one, I also think very strongly that this administration can put U.S. democracy promotion back on a respected and productive footing. To do so it only has to follow our new president's own best instincts.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to your questions.

(Applause.)

TOM MALINOWSKI: Hello, everyone, and thank you, Tom. It would be a lot more fun if I could disagree with you but you have rudely denied me that opportunity by presenting a set of views that I agree with almost entirely. So I'll try not to go over exactly the same ground, but I think I'll echo you in important respects.

I certainly agree with you that it's really early days with the Obama administration. So much history has been made in the last month that we forget about that, how young this group of people is, how few of them have actually taken their jobs. They are consumed by a very singular crisis, and they are still finding their voice on these issues. I think they stumbled in terms of Hillary's comments on her trip to Asia, which I found disappointing and I disagreed with them in important respects, but I think the reaction to those comments will force them to think hard, and perhaps sooner than they thought they would have to, about how promotion of democracy and human rights fits in with their broader vision.

As you stress, the Bush legacy is a hugely important factor in that intellectual process. President Bush elevated democracy and human right promotion while at the same time giving it a bad name around the world because of the association with Iraq and particularly because of the bad example that we set on a number of human rights issues. And the most important thing I think President Obama can do for the dissidents in China, for the blogger in Iran, for the courageous lawyer standing up for the rule of law in Russia and so on is to make sure that the United States of America never again disappears people or uses KGB interrogation techniques, or throws people in detention without charge forever, and President Obama has begun to do that. That's the most important and immediate thing I think any of us could have expected in the first month.

Now, President Bush spoke to the world with moral clarity, and I think admirably so and sincerely so, but he lacked moral authority. That was the fundamental problem. We now have a president who has enormous moral authority, perhaps more than any new American president in our modern history, and he's got to decide whether and how he's going to use that tremendous moral authority, and that is clearly a work in progress. And I think it's going to be a very intellectual process for him, and we know something from watching this man in the last two years about how he thinks and what his intellectual style is.

He has thought about these things a great deal. I think that some of the skepticism that you referred to about elections – and I agree with you on that point as well – comes actually not from

watching Bush in the Middle East, but his own experience watching his father's country of Kenya and the flawed election there and the subsequent horrible, almost genocidal violence that ensued. He's thought about that. That's absolutely clear. And as he thinks more about this, I think he's not going to take anything for granted, he's not going to trust any assumptions about what we should be doing and have been doing in the past. He is clearly a pragmatist, despite the soaring rhetoric. He's going to be interested in what works. And he is going to weigh, I think, two sides of a very old argument about the role that these issues should play in our foreign policies, two arguments both of which will be made by folks who are trying to appeal to his pragmatic side.

On the one hand, he's going to hear – and I think already has heard – from folks who will say, Mr. President, the paramount challenges that you face in the world right now are an immediate financial crisis, and in the long term a climate crisis. If you want to save the world, these are the things you need to focus on, and you're going to need partners to do that, including countries like Russia and China, that have lousy human rights records but we're still going to need to work with them on those issues. And, yes, democracy and human rights are really important values. The American people hold them very dearly. They have to be part of our foreign policy, but they should be pursued in a way that is separate from and that does not undermine or interfere with pursuit of our core national interests.

And what that means is we should do it by providing assistance to civil society groups, to democracy groups around the world, exchange programs, public diplomacy, and yes, Mr. President, soft power is very, very important, but the key to appealing to the people of the world is to focus right now on their day to day economic concerns and needs. And that democracy stuff, by the way, is really hard. It's hard to get traction with China, with Russia, with Egypt. We've tried over many years with Burma. It hasn't worked. Certainly with Iraq and Afghanistan, you know, we need to lower our expectations, focus on what's achievable. That's not achievable in the short term.

Those are some of the arguments and I'm sure that they're familiar to you, that he will hear from folks who will style themselves as being very pragmatic and realistic. And it's a seductive set of arguments because it demands the least from public officials at the highest levels, from the president and the secretary of state, because, you know, that's stuff that USAID does for the most part. And it demands that the least degree of tension with allies that we're going to need for other issues.

But there is a counterargument, and it happens to have prevailed most of the time in the past, and I think it will prevail in this case again, and it's an argument that says that the promotion of democracy and human rights is not something we do because it makes us feel good or because it's just consistent with our values as a society, but in fact it is a mark of realism even more than it is a mark of idealism. And in making that argument, the first exhibit I would introduce is my favorite all-time State Department cable. It was sent by the U.S. embassy in Baghdad in the late 1980s. This was the time of the Anfal, the genocide against the Kurds in Northern Iraq and a time when the U.S. government felt that we needed to maintain a relationship with the government of Saddam Hussein, and then in fact it was a pretty good relationship.

And the cable concluded, after laying out the broad range of issues that we had with the Iraqis, "Human rights and chemical weapons aside, our political and economic interests run parallel with those of Iraq." (Laughter.) Now, back then – and this is the key point – it was those pesky human rights people, including in the Human Rights Bureau at the State Department that no one listened to, certainly back then, who said, wait a second. You know, if you let an ally get away with

gassing his own people for the sake of a relationship, he's going to conclude he can get away with anything for the sake of a relationship, including things that are going to threaten more core strategic interests, and sure enough, that happened and the rest is a very ugly history that we're still living. You know, in that case it was the human rights people who were the realists in the room and the professionals who were hopelessly, tragically naïve.

Now fast-forward to the other major security crisis that President Obama is inheriting. You mentioned it. It's Pakistan, a country that was exempted by President Bush from his so-called "freedom agenda." President Bush said, you know, Musharraf's tight with us in the war on terror and that's what I care about. And again it was those pesky human rights and democracy people who said, wait a minute, the Pakistani army is actually the problem, not the solution. It's focused its repressive apparatus for years on the moderate democratic forces in the country while protecting extremists in the tribal areas. Our alliance with Musharraf, a questioning alliance, has alienated the very elements of Pakistani society who we need and who are most likely to support more aggressive action against the extremists, and when we get to that moment of action, military force is not going to be enough. What we need is to introduce legitimate government and the rule of law into the tribal areas.

And again it turns out that those pesky human rights and democracy people were right. They were the realists again in the room, as they were with Afghanistan when they were saying, we need more troops, long before the professionals at the State Department and the Defense Department, and that idea – those basic ideas are now a core part of the U.S. military's counterinsurgency doctrine, as promoted by folks like General Petraeus.

Now, why is it that folks like me and Tom and others have been right, I think, about some of these core issues? I think it's partly because we tend to be focused on the ground. Certainly human rights and democracy NGOs are. We dig deep. We get out more and talk to people than some of our diplomatic missions are able to. I think we have a more realistic sense of the more nasty regimes that America has to deal with sometimes around the world, experience with the brutal and cynical way that they operate at home, and sometimes a better sense of their true intentions and what kinds of partners they might make.

I think most important we believe that governance and good governance matter tremendously and that its absence in the sense of injustice and inequity and indignity that it produces is the source of most of the strife around the world. We're less likely to believe that natural forces of economic progress and integration will lead by themselves to peace and democracy in the world; less likely to place faith in behind-the-scenes diplomatic prodding and belief in the insurances that it produces; less likely to believe that mere exposure to American values, our culture, our people, our military will show rational autocrats that there is a better way.

Now, that's not to say that those beliefs, which are so commonly held by American diplomats, are wrong. They are sometimes right, but they are profoundly idealistic beliefs, I would argue, ones that require a leap of faith beyond cautious realism. And again, I think that's the argument that will ultimately prevail because it's rooted in hard experience, and I think there's plenty of evidence that President Obama has thought about these things and actually would agree with that way of looking at the world.

I remembered when I was preparing for this that this issue actually came up in one of the earliest presidential debates on the Democratic side. I went back and looked at what then-Candidate Obama said back in 2007 and it was interesting. He was asked by Wolf Blitzer, "Is human rights more important than American national security?" Not a great question – (laughter) – but it produced a good answer. Obama said, "The concepts are not contradictory, Wolf; they are complementary, and I think Pakistan is a good example. We paid $10 billion over the last seven years and we had two goals: deal with terrorism and restore democracy, and we've gotten neither. Pakistan's democracy would strengthen our battle against extremists.

"The more we see repression, the more there are no outlets for how people can express themselves and their aspirations, the worse off we're going to be and the more anti-American sentiment there is going to be in the Middle East. We keep on making that mistake. As president I'll do everything that is required to make sure that nuclear weapons don't fall into the hands of extremists, especially going after al Qaeda in the hills between Afghanistan and Pakistan, that we've got to understand that if we simply prop up anti-democratic practices, that that feeds the sense that America is only concerned about us and that our fates are not tied to these other folks, and that's going to make us less safe. That's something I intend to change."

And I see a lot of thoughtfulness in that statement, certainly a recognition not just of the connection between our security interests in promoting human rights and democracy but also an understanding that talking about these issues is a way of aligning ourselves with the real day-to-day aspirations of people in countries like Pakistan and elsewhere in a way that's going to make it easier for us to achieve our other goals.

And I think that's in some ways the great challenge and the opportunity for President Obama, finding a way to talk to the world about these issues that's going to resonate with them. And that also requires a bit of a change from the Bush approach because there's a simple declarative style – this is what we believe, we're right, they're wrong – clearly doesn't work. Certainly the messianic style of talking about it almost as if it's a mission from God does not work.

But I think Obama's natural style, if he chooses to apply it to this purpose, will work a great deal. It's going to help him in Pakistan, it will help him in Egypt; I think it will help him in particular in a country where these issues are rarely raised as part of U.S. strategy, and that's Iran. I think it's in some ways one of the keys to unlocking the potential of this president and of this moment and I'm confident that that will be recognized – hopefully not after all the other options are exhausted.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

ROBERT KAGAN: Well, I am so passionately supportive not only the analysis of both Toms but also of what they are trying to achieve that I think the best thing I could possibly do would be to vigorously disagree with them because I fear that anything that I say that agrees with them is going to discredit their position. (Laughter.) So probably, the best thing I could do would be to say, thank you very much and let's move to the questions, but I have a role here so I'll try to play it.

I do think that it would be one of the really cruel ironies – Tom has made this point, but I want to put a real underline under it – if in an effort – in an understandable and perhaps even commendable effort to be the non-Bush administration that this administration steered away from a democracy promotion activity that the Bush administration did not, in fact, undertake. I don't know if you could trace all those negatives in that sentence.

But the fact is that the Bush administration, despite all the rhetoric and despite what I think is proving to be a fairly successful militarized democracy promotion effort in Iraq, was not really engaged in the democracy promotion business at all. Certainly with regard to the two large powers, Russia and China, I think the Bush administration, in a most egregious way in Russia, really turned the blind eye to the gradual but systematic undermining of whatever democracy gains had been achieved in Russia in the 1990s all in the interest of having a partner – and I think, by the way, completely mythical partner – in the war on terror, the so-called war on terror.

And in the case of China pursued the same policy that his father had pursued and really that the Clinton administration pursued in generally ignoring China's human rights behavior, the only difference being he never said publicly that he was going to ignore China's human rights behavior. That's an early innovation of this administration, which I too hope they will get over.

And so, if you really want to be different from the Bush administration, and certainly in the Middle East as well, where despite giving a very aggressive, I think, speech in Cairo – Condi Rice laying down a list of things that Egypt had to do in this election in order to be acceptable to us, then Egypt proceeded to do none of those things and nothing further was said about it. So if you really want to be the un-Bush in this administration, a little democracy promotion would be the right way to go.

As a general principle, I think that realism is in fact unsustainable. Consistent, pure realism is unsustainable as an American foreign policy. I can't think of a president that has ever pursued a consistently realist, which is to say regime ignoring, foreign policy. Even the great realist Bush One actually invaded Panama for reasons that were almost entirely about the fact that Noriega was a creepy dictator. It was not for strategic reasons because everyone knows the Panama Canal was not being threatened by Noriega. It was not simply a matter of drug charges. It really was that he was creepy and then one of his goons hit an American soldier who happened to be female, and Colin Powell was very upset about that.

So the realist position is extremely hard to sustain because Americans have a very hard time not expressing their basic views in dealing with other countries. And the normal pattern of American behavior is an attempt to ignore the behavior of other nations until it becomes so egregious that we sort of spasmodically respond, usually ineffectually, to something that's happened. And I think realistically recognizing our limitation in this regard would lead to a better foreign policy. If we recognize that we are incapable of consistently ignoring human rights and authoritarian governments, we would then have a policy which included this reality and in fact consistently talked about it and recognized that we cannot prevent these things from becoming irritants in relations with other countries, even if we would think we would like to be able to prevent it.

So I would like to see a steadier approach which made it very clear to one and all that this is going to be part of our foreign policy and everyone is going to have to deal with it because we can

do no other. Call us crazy, but we can't help it. And I don't think we do anyone any favors by saying that it's not going to be the case.

Let me just say a few words about the approach, because as Tom has suggested, the easy way out that has been taken over recent decades, over the past couple of decades is to say, let's focus on institution building, on rule of law, on everything except elections because elections are somehow, as Tom suggested, people believe the wrong measure of democracy. Now, this is not only convenient for policy-makers, as the other Tom pointed out, but it also has been given intellectual pedigree by people like Fareed Zakaria, who asks us to look for this mythical beast, the liberal autocrat who can be supported and who will eventually, we're told, will usher in the democracy that we all would eventually like.

Musharraf was, I think, Fareed Zakaria's prime example of this liberal autocrat. And so the theory of why we shouldn't press for elections and more open democratization in places like Pakistan I think has been quite seriously discredited by the reality of Musharraf and other regimes.

And so, I think, you know, in the continuum between should we focus on institution building or should we in fact focus on elections, it seems to me that both the researches of Tom Carothers and others suggest that we're kidding ourselves if we think that mere institution building and mere rule of law support is going to get us to where we need to go because the fact is autocrats are not in the business of permitting the institutions of liberalism to grow which will eventually produce their overthrow. They're in fact in the position – in the business of preventing that from happening.

So in a place like Egypt, I think when the eventual succession crisis comes, it really will be important what the United States does in terms of demanding and using our significant leverage in a place like Egypt to insist on elections. And I also think we should not be afraid of elections – I guess I'm agreeing with Tom here – be afraid of elections in the Middle East. I do not consider it a catastrophe that Hamas won that election. I would like to see more elections in Palestine. I think we should encourage more elections. And yes, if people elect a government that we think has the wrong policies, we are allowed to respond to that accordingly.

When Austria appeared to be on the verge of electing a very unpalatable person a few years ago, the European Union made it very clear that they were willing to suspend their relationship with Austria if they went ahead and elected this person. Now, that is not interfering in the electoral process, but if you can say to the people that if you make this choice, this will be the international response.

And so the fact that Hamas was elected neither discredits the electoral process, nor is it hypocrisy to say, even though you've elected these people, we still don't want to deal with them. I don't think we should have as much trouble with that as we've had.

Finally, I would say, though, let's talk about some of the difficulties that arise. There is no non-geopolitical democracy promotion, which is to say every democracy promotion we engage in has geopolitical implications. You cannot talk about supporting democracy in Ukraine without recognizing that Russia, under Putin, considers this a threat and an imposition and that they will oppose it as they've opposed it in the past.

You cannot talk about supporting democracy in Central Asia, again, without fueling concerns in Russia that the United States and the West are in general moving forward geopolitically. This is an unavoidable fact of life and we shouldn't shy away from it or think that that's reason not to move forward, but we also shouldn't kid ourselves that that doesn't produce a clash. Nor do I think we can only engage in democracy promotion with the lesser powers. We are going to have to deal with the implications of what both Toms are saying in dealing with Russia and China as well.

I think it is of enormous importance to the United States as well as to Europe what kind of government Russia has. It really matters to us that we have evolved from a more democratic system in the 1990s to a more autocratic system today because it shapes Russian foreign policy profoundly. And therefore, in addition to our moral interest and our ideological interest in seeing democracy have some possibility in Russia, I do think we have an unavoidable strategic interest as well and I think that's true of our relations with China in the long run also.

A final, final word about Iraq. Iraq, I agree, has certainly tarnished the image of democracy promotion. That does not mean, however, that the success of democracy in Iraq is not of great importance to us. And the one lacuna I see in the democracy promotion community which is trying to reassert itself today, and I think rightly so, is the unwillingness to see how really important it is to those efforts that democracy succeed in Iraq as well. And that has implications for America's long-term relationship with Iraq.

If you look at American history, our standard operating procedure is we invade a country for reasons that have nothing to do with democracy, we wind up trying to install something like a democratic government, it putters along pretty well while we're still involved, we lose interest, a dictator takes over, and that's the end of it. It's not actually that we sought to promote dictatorships in Nicaragua. It's that dictatorships took over after we lost interest and didn't want to play anymore.

I really hope that the outcome of all the hardship and suffering that we've caused and suffered in Iraq is not that at the end of the day Iraq becomes one more dictatorship. And I think continued American involvement is essential there as well.

So for someone who had nothing to say, I went on for a long time, so I'll leave it there. Thanks.

(Applause.)

MS. MATHEWS: Okay. It's your turn. Who would like to begin? Okay. And just wait for the microphone if you would. And if you would just introduce yourself.

Q: Thank you, ma'am. (Inaudible) – Today. My question is that President Bush started with promoting democracies and human rights around the globe. But how can you promote democracy and human rights when you are borrowing billions of dollars from China, who is the leader of the rogue nations like North Korea, Burma, and even in Pakistan? So do you have an advice for the new administration, President Obama, who you already said is a great lawyer and also he's really – has been talking about promotion of democracy and human rights around the globe?

MR. CAROTHERS: Well, our financial indebtedness to China and our need for Chinese investment in U.S. securities constrains our ability, in a sense, to push China on other issues because

we need them so much. And so it certainly constraints the United States in a sense its political – political activities that it might want to carry out. But I don't think that it undermines the example of the U.S. democracy. The fact that we're having serious economic problems does not mean that U.S. democracy is malfunctioning. And it also does not mean that we've lost the ability to carry out productive, useful, cooperative programs and assisting on democracy in other societies.

There is a danger that world is saying the whole model doesn't work, the whole model that the West has been selling us is flawed and that they were pushing democracy on us. They were pushing capitalism, the whole package is flawed. And there are some people in the world eager to interpret it this way. And I think we have to be prepared for a period in which we have to fight back and argue back and work to show the world that actually it's democracies that can face their financial problems openly, transparently, deal with them in a participatory and in a democratic way, and solve them. If we're able to do that, I think that will be a further good example of the value of democracy, but of course it's going to be difficult.

MS. MATHEWS: Yes, go ahead.

Q: Thank you. Hi, I'm John Glenn from the German Marshall Fund. Thanks very much for a really terrific set of presentations. I guess I'd like to make a comment and then a question if I may. And the comment is that someway the summed up – the difficulties are summed up in the phrase that has been used in recent years of "exporting democracy," which has led its association to both unilateralism, militarism, and arrogance. And I think the one piece out of that I'd like to draw out for a common is that of militarism.

It always strikes me when we hear about this idea that promoting democracy would be – have anything to do with the military must be profoundly puzzling to people who run the National Endowment for Democracy, who have no military whatsoever at their disposal. And it seems to me that this is a much broader part of disassociating the U.S. foreign policy with its military face. And I think there are opportunities here. I'd be curious if you think so as well.

When we look at Afghanistan, we're in an unusual situation now which our secretary of defense is saying that the vision of the United States abroad is too military and is calling for more diplomacy and a rebalancing of this that I think it's consistent with some of the Obama approach. And so in some ways I'd be interested to see whether you see it as an opportunity. Afghanistan is unfortunately one of the hardest cases to imagine sort of a democracy and we have to talk a lot about what that would mean. So maybe I can ask you if you'd just comment please about the question of how we disassociate democracy promotion with the military focus on it.

MR. CAROTHERS: I'm Tom. I have some comments. Let me just make a brief comment. I agree with Bob that we invade other countries usually for complicated – usually a set of security concerns of some type, and then we justify the intervention in terms of democracy. And once we're in the country, we turn to the business of trying to reestablish or to establish a democratic government. And so suddenly we shift gears and we often take it quite seriously until we get frustrated or bored, like in Haiti towards the middle or late 1990s, and we walk away.

And so I think in the first case, we are not going around the world invading countries to try to promote democracy in them. And the idea that the Bush administration kept putting forward in the years of this decade that in a sense that's what we had done in Iraq really did both attain

democracy with the militarism aspect, but it also confused people about why we're using our military and made us look strategically reckless. And people thought, why are you expending a trillion dollars and so much treasure and blood and other things in a country that's so badly suited for democracy? If that's what you're doing, it just doesn't make any real sense. So it had a negative effect, I'd say, on our military as well, in some ways on our strategic posture in the world.

Bob – (inaudible).

MR. MALINOWSKI: Sure, I agree with that. This was a problem accentuated by what happened in Iraq. And one thing I would urge the administration to do is to very clearly state that the use of force is going to be disassociated from democracy promotion. This is not something that we do by force. Sometimes force does need to be used for moral reasons in responding to mass atrocities, to prevent genocide, but as Madeleine Albright, I think, used to say when this issue came up, democracy is by definition a choice. It's by definition something that can't be imposed from the outside, although outside influence and the use of other instruments of power can be very useful in supporting those inside another country who are struggling for those things. I think a related issue, though, is what our goals should be when we do use force and occupy a country as we have in Iraq and Afghanistan. And I think here there is an interesting intellectual debate going on within the military, kind of arguing with itself on these issues.

On the one hand, I think there's a strong sense that we have set the bar too high in Iraq and Afghanistan, that we should not set the goal of staying in these countries and spending American lives for something too grand to be achievable, that we should limit the mission to counterterrorism.

On the other hand, if you look at the counterterrorism or counterinsurgency doctrine of the U.S. military, it increasingly emphasizes that the key to victory is establishing legitimate government and rule of law and a sense among the people that the government that is fighting the insurgents on their behalf is a government that they can trust and support. And as Fred Hiatt pointed out in a recent piece, once you go in that direction, pretty soon you're right back to promoting liberal values of human rights and democracy, so you may as well say that you are.

So I think that's an interesting debate that we're seeing right now and is worth following.

MS. MATHEWS: Bob, you want to add anything?

MR. KAGAN: Well, just – (inaudible) – again, that is actually also not new. American military doctrine going back to the Civil War – and actually the Civil War was the great formative experience when the North occupied the South and had them reconfigure institutions and get rid of a ruling oligarchy that was supporting slavery. We've always been in the nation-building business. If you look at doctrine that led in the Philippine war, in Cuba, at the turn of the century, so – and the reason – there's a reason for this, which is that the basic American assumption is the reason nations behave badly is because they're badly governed. And if you fix their government, then they will behave better. That's a real article of faith. Whether it's true or not, that's an article of faith in the United States. So I don't think it would be – it would be a departure from our history if we separated military nation-building – if we somehow said that there is military action and there is nation-building and the two should never meet, that would be real aberration from our history.

Now, how then to go on and say, but wait a second, that's not what we're about when it comes to democracy promotion. I think it might be good to have declaratory policy. But one thing I'm going – one thing I wanted to add, though, to Tom's point, which is that most of the world always regarded our democracy promotion pretentions as hypocritical and self-serving. There's nothing new about that. I'm sure if you had polled the bulk of the world throughout 60, 80 or 100 years, every time America claimed to be promoting democracy, they would have said baloney. So there's nothing new there.

MR. MALINOWSKI: It's actually nothing new in general.

MR. KAGAN: (Inaudible) – my position, yes.

(Laughter.)

MR. MALINOWSKI: We had a major national controversy over waterboarding during the Philippine occupation.

MR. KAGAN: That's right. They called it the water cure.

MS. MATHEWS: I must say – I have to say that I'm a little troubled by the sense that all of this is so easy. All we have to do is kind of be – correct the obvious Bush mistakes. I question that that – that what you've just described is our counterinsurgency strategy. I don't think that's what it is. I think it is that the two things you have to be able to create are human security and a government not that's democratic but that is capable of delivering services. And that's a long way from democracy, but that I think is much closer to what counterinsurgency strategy actually is.

But I would like maybe just as a challenge as sort of the hard case – and I will get to you – but Pakistan. The hard cases here – always we've got two interests. We've got a government that is flagrantly not democratic, but we have a shorter-term interest that we consider to be overwhelming, of greater importance at a given time. To get from the ISI to a real functioning democracy in Pakistan would take some number of years longer than we feel like we can manage, given the war on terror.

Talk us through – I just had the feeling that if you all slid off a little bit over some of the hard cases that are really likely to trip President Obama up.

MR. CAROTHERS: Well, let's go back to what you said Jessica about isn't it really just the government has to provide security and services? Because here's where we get to the question of legitimacy – that if we need to establish a government which in sustainable in some ways without massive presence, it needs some kind of legitimacy. Now, you could establish legitimacy in Afghanistan and Iraq by providing security and basic services. But what's interesting is that in both of those societies there seems to be talk about legitimacy which is something more than that.

Ayatollah Sistani did not talk about I want a government that provides security and provides services. He says, we have to have elections. Now, he was concerned about having elections because he wanted to see a continuation of the power shift between the Sunni community broadly and the Shia community and he thought elections were a vehicle to doing that. But because of the spread of the norm of democracy in the world, part of the puzzle is if we go an invade a country

which doesn't have quote, "preconditions" or attributes that are going to make democratization very easy, one attribute they may have is they're infected with this democratic idea that legitimacy comes through choice. And they want choice.

One also hears attacks on Karzai by saying, you know – maybe he was chosen in some legitimate fashion, but he's held in power now by the West or by the United States. And so he's losing his legitimacy because he's not really our leader. Of course people are very unhappy about the lack of security and lack of services, but it may not be enough. So we get into the paradoxical situation of being in societies – trying to do a large scale massive political reconstruction and democratization project in societies which on the one hand are very poorly prepared for it, yet on the other hand have this idea of legitimacy being based on popular consent. And I think we're in a way stuck in both Iraq and Afghanistan. We may be able to move to a kind of minimalist option in Afghanistan in which we have very low expectations of the Afghan state, or some even reduction of its territorial reach, but it's not clear to me that that's going to sort of satisfy the demand for legitimacy of the Afghan government by the Afghan people. So I think that's a question mark.

With Pakistan, I don't think – I certainly am not saying that is going to be easy. It's going to be tremendously difficult in Pakistan, again a society which is extremely poorly prepared for democratization, has failed at democracy a number of times in various episodes over the last 30 or 40 years, but it's a question of the alternatives that the military rule took us down and took Pakistan down a troubling path in various ways and fledgling and weak though the nation's sort of civilianized and now somewhat democratic rule is, it's better that we acknowledge that the longer term path in Pakistan to building institutions and legitimacy and gaining control over the national territory is more likely to come from that path than a dictatorial one.

And so we only have limited leverage in helping build that up, but it's better to at least articulate that that's our preferred framework for thinking about what we see as a positive ally in Pakistan, what we think is best for the country. But don't worry, I don't think any of us think it's going be easy.

MS. MATHEWS: All right. Let me give it a sense – okay, I'm going to take three at a time, so we can get through all the questions. Over here and then we'll take two here.

Q: My name is Sherif Mansour from Freedom House. I have a comment and a question. The comment I have is actually an American president once said the job of a president is to do things that should have been done already. And I think that's what Obama has to do with democracy promotion.

The question is that all of our speakers have accurately identified the succession scenario in Egypt as one of the milestones and the challenges that Obama has to deal with. Well, just today, Gamal Mubarak, the son of Mubarak, is in town and he was in Capitol Hill meeting with congressmen offices. And I want our speakers to provide advice on what President Obama should – or his administration should – say to Gamal Mubarak to convey back to Egypt when he returns.

MS. MATHEWS: Great question. Okay, right here and then right there.

Q: Michael Allen with the National Endowment for Democracy. I wonder what significance if any would you attribute to the appointments of Charles Freeman as head of National

Intelligence Council, as somebody who's not only very intimately associated with the Saudi regime, hardly one of the world's most democratic, but also is on record as saying the Chinese communist party was restrained in its response to the Tiananmen Square demonstrations, and who also said that the U.S. should withdraw from Iraq and allow the Shia to establish a dictatorship. What do you think their rationale is for his appointment?

MS. MATHEWS: Okay. Right here.

Q: From the point of view – Steven Kull, Public Opinion.org – from the point of view people in the Muslim world, the question isn't is the U.S. going to actively promote democracy, but is it going to refrain from preventing democracy? The perception is that the U.S., with its military forces in the region, is actively working through implicit threats to prevent the Muslim Brotherhood or Islamists from rising through some democratic process. So the thing is really kind of tipped on its head. So the question I'd like to throw is: Are we ready to simply send the signal that we would not actively work to stop democratic processes that might produce outcomes that are not our first choice in places like Egypt or Jordan or Saudi Arabia or Pakistan?

MS. MATHEWS: Okay. So what do we say to Gamal Mubarak, what about Chas. Freeman, and what about preventing democracy? Have at it.

MR. CAROTHERS: Well, I think with Gamal Mubarak it's very important, first, that he not get treated here in Washington by the new administration as the next president of Egypt and he not be treated either visibly or visually in that way or in practical terms, because people in Cairo are reading the tea leaves whenever Gamal comes to Washington as to how he's treated and there's always – Washington is already ready for him to be president, and you send signals by whom he meets with and what photographs are taken. So first of all I'd be very cautious the level at which – of people who meet with him.

And then secondly, the messages that are conveyed to him in private. I think it's very important that the message be that, you know, Egypt has a constitution with a constitutional process for the transfer of power. Egypt had direct presidential elections – flawed, but at least established direct presidential elections in 2005, and the United States believes that that was an important step for Egypt and like any country that's new at elections, it needs to start improving them and that there are a number of steps the Egyptian government could take now to start preparing for that. Then you'd think about how they administer elections and what bodies they establish or how they – what structures they set up to administer such elections. They need to think about their legislation for legalizing political parties and how they actually effect that legislation in practice.

So it's important that we start sending some messages now saying we care about the rule of the law, the constitution in Egypt, processes that Egyptians have established, and we'd like to help you, Egypt, do that better next time, given that you've started down that road. We'd like to be a partner in that process. So there are visual messages and subsequent messages that I think need to be sent.

With respect to the appointment of Charles Freeman to be head of the NIC, well, I think he was chosen because he's known around town as being a very smart and experienced person who knows a lot about international affairs and is rather incisive. He does have the views that you've described, Michael, but I don't think they disqualify him from government service, and I don't think

that NIC is necessarily a repository of either, in a sense, policy-making and certainly not close to the human rights and democracy issues that are central to many people. I think it is possible for a government to have a diverse set of voices in different parts of the establishment, particularly the analytic part, and still come through with a policy on democracy and human rights that make sense.

With respect to the Muslim world, seeing the United States as preventing that, I agree that's a big problem. The U.S. treatment of Hamas after the elections in 2006 kind of touched an old sort of sore nerve in the Arab world which went back to Algeria in 1991-1992, which is when we do actually have elections – these were in some ways the most free and fair elections we've had in a long time – we elect whom we want and then you don't like it and you try to undermine them.

And so I think that it's very important that the new administration send signals to say that we believe in the possibility of Arab elections and we're ready to accept the outcome in Egypt or Algeria or in Jordan or in Morocco. And so when senior U.S. officials, including secretary of state or president go to these countries, perhaps they can meet with the group of political leaders from all of the parties in those countries which include in Jordan the Islamic Action Front, or in Morocco the Party for Justice and Development or others, and say you're part of the conversation, you're part of the people with whom we meet and whom we take as interlocutors for the political system in this country.

We could also – although it's good to focus on certain secular, liberal, political activists in Egypt and elsewhere, there are also Islamists who are being locked up and tortured by the Egyptian police. We should talk about them too and we should show that we care about those people as well, if we're standing on principle. So we have to be, again, balanced as well serious in the messages that we send when we criticize other governments.

MS. MATHEWS: Tom, do you have – if you – you should leap in if you have anything you want to add.

MR. MALINOWSKI: Sure.

MS. MATHEWS: If not, I –

MR. MALINOWSKI: On the Egypt-Mubarak question, I agree with you. I would add the general point that governments like Egypt – and this goes for a lot of governments that we work with – labor very, very hard to convince American diplomats and officials that what they say and do on these issues does not affect them. You'll never go to – if you're secretary of state, you'll go to a bilat with the Egyptian foreign minister in which he says, gosh, Madam Secretary, you know, you've won, you've convinced me. You know, we're going to release those people because you say we should.

And that they will go to great lengths and they are quite successful, I think, in doing this in trying to persuade us that what we do doesn't matter. And yet what we do matters profoundly to them. As you say, they read the tea leaves, they pore over every little statement that senior American policy-makers make. It's pored over in their press if it's remotely free. They note what we don't say as much as they note what we do say. And I think with respect to Egypt it is interesting that one of the first acts of the Mubarak government after the inauguration of Barack Obama was to release Ayman Nour, the famous dissident. Clearly, that would not have happened were it not for outside

pressure and concern, and if not for the Egyptian government's desire to send a signal to the new administration. So to reinforce what you've said, they need to understand that every signal they send will matter.

I agree with you on Chas. Freeman. I think – you know, I don't think we should pursue a policy of opposing the appointment of everyone that we disagree with, if these issues ever come up in a way in which he actually has a voice, we'll debate him and we'll win that debate. It's not a concern.

And I completely agree with you on the importance on speaking out when anybody in the Middle East is tortured or persecuted, particularly those we disagree with. That's the key, actually, to establishing the credibility of a democracy and human rights policy, especially in the Middle East, and that's standing up when people you disagree with are abused, not just the people who you do agree with.

MS. MATHEWS: Bob, did you want to add anything? Not to agree.

MR. KAGAN: Not to agree. Well, I guess I'd say that I don't think that anything that we say is likely to disabuse the Muslim world of the perception that has been developed not over the last eight years but over the last several decades and that what's going to matter are our actions. I think we had zero credibility with the Philippine people that we would ever cut lose from Marcos until the day that we cut loose from Marcos. And the only thing that's going to convince anyone in the Arab world is when we cut loose from one of these autocrats that we've been supporting forever.

MS. MATHEWS: Okay. Let's do three more, and then – okay, oh, hi – way in the back and them over here in the blue shirt and then over there.

Q: Hi. (Off mike.)

MR. CAROTHERS: Sorry, I think the microphone may not be on. Can you –

Q: Hi. I'm from Chinese embassy. I thought that the latest policy brief from Carnegie entitled "Improving Mutual Understanding Between China and the United States" and I don't know whether do you think there are any misunderstanding between the two in terms of like democracy or human rights between the two countries, and what are the best ways to – or if is there at all possible to bridge the misunderstanding?

MS. MATHEWS: Thank you. Okay, gentleman over here, yeah.

Q: Thank you. (Don Banderas ?), consultant. President Obama has said repeatedly that the issue is of an efficient government and to work on efficiency and what works in the government. You in your papers and in what you've said today have pointed about the efficiency of the democracy promotion work. So my question is: Don't you think there is also a challenge of the quality of the work, not only of the quantity?

MS. MATHEWS: Okay, the gentleman right – yeah.

Q: Hi, I'm Ali Waina (ph), I'm a junior fellow here at Carnegie. My question revolves around the relevance of democracy promotion, because the presentations, they were all centered on – or the disagreements in the presentations centered on how we reposition democracy promotion, but I think that there are two reasons to question whether it's relevant. One being that a lot of countries look at countries like China and say that democracy is a hindrance to growth. So a lot of people look at the democracy badly. So that's one issue. And the second issue is that there are a lot of people, especially living in impoverished countries, who would say that we don't care whether the government up top is democratic, authoritarian, or anywhere in between, so long as we get our basic goods and services. So they might see democracy as being irrelevant.

So is it really a matter of repositioning democracy promotion or articulating a new framework to address people's needs? Thank you.

MS. MATHEWS: Okay, great question. Go for it.

MR. CAROTHERS: Well, I think there are some misunderstandings between the Chinese government and the U.S. government over democracy and human rights. I mean, they're primarily, I think, the U.S. government probably believes that China shouldn't violate basic human rights. China shouldn't torture people. China shouldn't put people in jail because they express their opinions, and so forth. And so I think there are some fundamental disagreements.

Now, there are also disagreements about what's the best path by which China might reach a point where it's not violating basic human rights, including the right to political participation and political choice. The United States and China have a very positive relationship because they have many areas of mutual benefit, but it's possible to have such a relationship and still have some areas of disagreement and I think that's what we have.

With respect to – (inaudible) – to your question on the quality of the work, I agree very much. I mean, one thing that's missing just because of the brevity of these kinds of writings is that the democracy assistance community has been along for some time I think working on its own to try to improve itself, but not getting a lot of help from the top in that process.

USAID is a very, you know, neglected and undernourished agency of the U.S. government that needs some care and attention. It's striking that when we read the Al Kamen column every so often, we have yet to see a single appointment to USAID by the new administration – and that's an unfortunate signal. This is an agency that badly needs reconstitution and re-empowerment if it's going to attract the quality of people, the kind of, you know, strategic thinking, excellence in practical implementation and so forth that would make someone like yourself, who's been on the receiving end of democracy assistance programs in Central Europe, be more impressed by what you see. But that's a longer term rebuilding that isn't really about Bush or about, you know, the problematic legacy of any one administration. It's the tendency of the U.S. government in some ways to neglect this area in practical terms. I think that could also change with an administration that decides that it wants to make foreign assistance more effective, more important and so forth.

Thirdly, on the relevance of democracy from – I see the hour is late, we're past 6:00 – and I guess I've been hearing for – I've been speaking to audiences here and abroad for a long time and I usually get a question that is basically what I would say that poor people don't care about democracy, you don't democracy if your stomach is rumbling. But it just doesn't seem to be the

experience in the world. People seem to care about their own human dignity in terms of being able to say something about who governs them, about how they're treated by that government, and that isn't – you know, you don't lose those concerns if you're hungry. You're still concerned about people coming and knocking on your door 3:00 in the morning under no legal procedures and taking away your husband or your wife. That upsets you, whether or not you're hungry.

And so this basic idea that democracy is for sort of the middle class or the upper middle class or rich countries, I just don't agree with. And I feel that, you know, go to India and spend some time in India and come back and tell me that Indians don't care about being able to say what they think, trying to have a country that respects the law, and the pride they take in making democracy work in a country that violates every precondition for democracy that any political scientist ever invented.

MS. MATHEWS: I'm sorry that we couldn't take more of the questions. They kind of all came in a flood at the end. But I hope you'll join me in thanking all three of our speakers. It was a (fascinating evening ?).

(Applause.)

(END)