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A QUARTER-CENTURY OF PROMOTING DEMOCRACY

Thomas Carothers

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I salute the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and congratulate it on this important occasion, taking note of the significant contribution that NED has made to democracy worldwide. I would like to highlight what I believe are some of the main advances and achievements of democracy assistance over the past quarter-century and also to examine the challenging road ahead.

The progress of democracy assistance in the past 25 years can be described as democracy aid finding its place. First, it has found its place within U.S. foreign policy. In the 1980s, democracy aid had to struggle to become something more than just a side element of anticommunist security policies, to become rooted in broader prodemocratic principles. Over time it did that. In the 1990s, democracy assistance had to find its place in a U.S. foreign policy that was no longer anchored in a framework of geopolitical strategic competition. Again, democracy aid did that and in that decade increased rapidly, both in dollar amounts and geographical reach.

Second, democracy aid has found its place within and among the broader community of established democracies and international organizations. When the NED was founded in the early 1980s, only Germany was widely engaged in democracy assistance. Since that time almost all the major established democracies, from Britain, the Netherlands, and Sweden, to Australia, Canada, Spain, and others, have become active providers of democracy assistance. In addition, both global and regional international organizations have joined in as well.

Third, democracy aid has found its place within new or struggling

democracies. When this work began to multiply in the 1980s, the idea of outside actors inserting themselves into sensitive political transitions was intensely controversial and often resisted. Over time, however, democracy aid opened many doors, and by the late 1990s, one could almost expect or take as normal that in a democratizing country outside actors would be involved in almost every sector, area, and institution of political life.

As democracy aid found its place in U.S. foreign policy, in the foreign policies of most established democracies, and in democratizing countries themselves, it generated a significant amount of learning and knowledge. There is a great deal more programmatic sophistication today than there used to be, even though some programs still fall short and there continues to be a lack of formalization of the knowledge gained about democracy aid.

In addition, as democracy aid has found its place, it can count many accomplishments to its credit. I do not have time here to offer a quick tour of the world to point out specific processes, institutions, or political junctures in which democracy aid has made a difference. I will instead just point to the fact that thousands, tens of thousands, probably hundreds of thousands of people around the world have been directly touched by democracy-assistance programs in ways that have given them knowledge, understanding, moral support, solidarity, or inspiration relating to their own struggles. Democracy aid was not the driver of the “third wave” of democracy, but it was a useful partner in the process.

The advances and achievements of democracy aid are significant, but today, in the first decade of this new century, we see a new context emerging for democracy assistance, and in some significant ways it is a troubling one. The exact shape of this new context is only just starting to be clear.

To bring the new context into focus, I wish to highlight three things. First, the “third wave” of democracy is over. In 1997, Larry Diamond wrote an article in the *Journal of Democracy* in which he asked “Is the third wave over?” He would not have asked that question had he not suspected that the answer might be yes. He was ahead of the intellectual curve in pointing to an emergent phenomenon that is now clear: The momentum for global democratization has greatly faded or been lost in many parts of the world. This has implications on many fronts, but for democracy assistance it certainly has some profound ones. In the 1980s and 1990s, democracy promoters faced a world that could be divided into two categories. First, there were countries that democracy promoters liked to call “post-breakthrough countries,” in which there had been a significant political opening. Then there were countries that they called “pre-breakthrough countries,” which were still stuck in authoritarian or totalitarian forms of government. In the post-breakthrough

countries, you sort of knew what to do: You tried to encourage the transition dynamic that was occurring. In the pre-breakthrough ones, you tried to help them to develop such a dynamic.

Today the world is very different. The hundred or so countries that were once post-breakthrough countries can no longer accurately be characterized that way. A small number of them have become successful democratizers. Most of them, however, are in a gray zone between consolidated democracy and full dictatorship. Many of them have become semiauthoritarian countries with leaders adept at resisting or distorting reform processes to block democratic progress. In such countries democracy-aid providers must find ways both to counter these leaders' often skillful efforts to coopt or otherwise undermine democracy aid and to encourage real change. Other once-transitional countries are now weak democracies that feature significant amounts of political freedom and even democratic alternation of power but are struggling with shallow political representation, ineffective state institutions, and other fundamental political problems. Simply promoting more political pluralism in such places is not enough.

The remaining authoritarian or totalitarian governments are the survivors—the adaptable, clever ones, the economically successful ones, the resistant ones—who learned how to avoid being swept away by the third wave of democracy. They present a much deeper challenge to democracy promoters than did many of the authoritarian or totalitarian governments of twenty or thirty years ago, which were often brittle regimes.

A second feature of this new context is that democracy promotion is experiencing serious questions about its very legitimacy. We are seeing this both in the pushback from a number of nondemocratic governments that are actively resisting democracy assistance in new and creative ways, and also in a heightened questioning by people in many parts of the world of the value and legitimacy of democracy promotion itself. To some extent, the pushback against democracy aid reflects the increased fear of its potency by autocratic governments. Some were especially scared by the color revolutions and the notion that outside actors can stir up mass civic resistance to authoritarianism.

But more than that is at work. The close association of democracy promotion both with the war in Iraq, a war that is widely seen in the world as a wrongful and even catastrophic adventure on the part of the United States, and with the War on Terrorism, which is seen in the world as a forceful assertion of narrow U.S. security interests, not of any broader underlying principles, has badly hurt the legitimacy of democracy promotion. There is certainly ample room for debate about the value and wisdom of these different policies. The point here is that they have had significant negative effects on democracy promotion, and this is a reality with which democracy promoters must deal.

Third, we are now beginning to see the rise of alternative political

models. In some ways, the third wave of democracy was all about the decline of alternative models; liberal democracy emerged as the only standing political model with global legitimacy. The current decade is witnessing something different. We are seeing a heyday of the strong-hand model of political and economic development, or what some call “authoritarian capitalism,” practiced primarily by China and Russia. It is not really a new model, and it is not really a political ideology, but it has gained ground due to the current economic successes of these countries and their assertiveness on the world stage, where they market this model. So democracy promotion can no longer assume a consensus about the preeminence of democracy among the main geostrategic actors in the world. It has to return to the challenge of engaging in global debates over the very value of democracy itself. Figuring out how to do that well is a challenge that is, as yet, unmet.

I could elaborate on other defining features of the current context, but I think these three are the most significant. There is much less, if any, momentum toward democratization worldwide, the legitimacy of democracy promotion is under serious question, and alternative models are rising. None of this means that democracy assistance is doomed or fundamentally blocked, but it does mean that the initial generation of democracy aid has ended and a new generation is under way. We can mourn the passing of the old generation, and I think it is worth pausing to take note of some of its achievements and advances. Very quickly, however, we have to concentrate our attention, energy, and willpower on these daunting new challenges on the road ahead.

Jean Bethke Elshtain

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When Ronald Reagan rose before the British Parliament 25 years ago to deliver his now famous address, he commented on the approaching denouement of a century that had been marred by a “terrible political invention—totalitarianism.” This, he added, often made optimism about democracy, human rights, and human dignity hard to come by.

But Reagan, a man of sunny temperament, found that optimism nonetheless. Today, we are in another era that tries men’s—and women’s—souls. Yes, the Berlin Wall is no more. Likewise the Soviet Union, al-

though Russian authoritarianism has made a reappearance. There are now strong democracies in Central and Eastern Europe, where a combination of grassroots prodemocracy opposition movements, a supportive American president, and the most extraordinary papacy of modern times generated an irresistible tide of democratic reform. Those were heady days—too quickly forgotten. My students know little of them. The names Lech Wałęsa and Václav Havel mean nothing to them.

But my students know about another threat to democracy—namely, terrorism. Their minds will be forever seared by the deeds of nineteen men who seized commercial airliners and flew them into buildings bustling with people whose only “sin” that day was having gone to work. Unfortunately, only six years since the horrible day of 9/11, America’s cultural response to all of this, especially on the part of many influential opinion makers and public officials, has become strangely muted, querulous, timid. Rather than the resounding call to liberty mounted by American presidents from both political parties—one thinks not only of Reagan but of John F. Kennedy and of George W. Bush in his November 2003 speech on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy—we hear talk from our academic and cultural elite of little more than “blowback,” “American imperialism,” “cultural imposition,” and the predictable “construction of the hostile Other.” It is as if the three-thousand dead in one day were invented by the Bush administration or some combination of other forces for nefarious political purposes.

Perhaps because my perch is in the contemporary academy, it is not at all unusual for me to hear students and faculty declare human rights and democracy to be forms of cultural imperialism and, further, to announce that multiculturalism requires that one make no normative distinction between how cultures organize their internal matters: It is just the way they do things.

We certainly did not say that about Nazism. We did not, for the most part, say that about Stalinism. And we should not say that about bin Ladenism. How could any reasonable and decent person find in this form of reactionary repression anything other than a repulsive denial of human dignity, freedom, and decency? If you are a woman, this hits—or should hit—particularly hard. So why do we hear muted messages from so many of our elites?

Obviously, I cannot answer this question in a few moments, but it seems important, on this occasion, to raise it, and to question the culture of cynical negation that fuels bitter assaults on the United States while “understanding” why radical Islamists “must” resort to terrorism. Looking back on the solid front that the American intellectual community presented against fascism, whether of the left or right (although fascism of the left exerted a fatal attraction on a tiny minority), one wonders why there is not similar solidarity today toward the threat rep-

resented by the totalitarian aspirations and realities of Islamist radicalism, the turning of a world religion into an all-encompassing, violent ideology.

Such solidarity is not incompatible with criticism of particular American policies or presidents. Such solidarity can withstand disagreements about foreign-policy strategies or their implementation. But to pretend that there is no grave threat to ourselves and others, or to claim that it is all about our inventing some sinister “other”—I am tempted to say something quite unscholarly at this point, so I’d best demur and just get on with it!

Here, in a nutshell, is the heart of my argument: Our commitment to democracy and human rights must not waver, even as we are obliged to discuss, critically and candidly, the tensions and complexities involved. There is one perennial conundrum of democracy promotion that I want to highlight today. We all recognize that there are situations where democracy promotion says: Let’s get these folks, whether Maoists or Islamist radicals, into the political process. Let’s make them compete for votes. This, in turn, will make them more accountable than they will ever be if they remain outside the process. A clear and plausible strategy it may seem, but not one without its risks.

Why is that? Because one always faces the possibility that there are groups and movements who will use democratic processes cynically, gain leverage through elections, and then take measures to undermine the democratic processes that have made their own successes possible. This can be a terrible risk. And it is one that we must debate openly, thereby making democracy promotion something that cannot be automatic and must not become formulaic.

Democracy is not without its dangers and discontents. One way we can try to protect ourselves against the sort of direct democracy in which a majority vote trumps all else—a scenario that may yield plebiscitary authoritarianism, or worse—is by always coupling democracy with human rights and internal measures that divide and check power. We are meeting today in Madison Hall at the Library of Congress. One quote on the wall from James Madison captures the problem crisply: “The essence of government is power; and power, lodged as it must be in human hands, will ever be liable to abuse.” For this very reason, I become wary whenever people talk of the “will of the people.” For as history has shown us, once the language of “will” enters politics (whether the will of a particular leader or an irresistible majority), it tends to promote intolerance and to turn the opposition into enemies. Certainly, one can speak reasonably of whether there is sufficient “political will” to carry out this or that specific task. But deploying the word “will” to characterize what goes on in political life among voters or leaders should generally be avoided.

It is better by far to speak of interests, concerns, ideals, and even

dreams. Better by far to think of democracy not as a sacrosanct principle, but as the best way thus far devised to guarantee a measure of human dignity and to establish a measure of fairness as well as freedom. Better by far to share President Reagan's insistence that those of us in the West must never be shy "about standing for . . . ideals that have done so much to ease the plight of man and the hardships of our imperfect world."

Larry Diamond

Larry Diamond is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, and founding coeditor of the Journal of Democracy. His forthcoming book is The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies Throughout the World.

When U.S. president Ronald Reagan gave his visionary speech to the British Parliament at Westminster 25 years ago, the "third wave" of global democratization had yet to be named and was still only a faint trend. The Americas were still only partly democratic, and the biggest, most important Latin American countries were still dictatorships. Japan was the only democracy in East Asia. Africa was still almost entirely authoritarian and Nigeria's Second Republic would collapse the following year. But with a clarity of vision that no political scientist possessed, Reagan grasped the deepening crisis and impending demise of Soviet communism. He understood the possibilities—and the moral imperative—for the United States to lead the way in promoting freedom.

Since Reagan spoke at Westminster, the proportion of democracies in the world has nearly doubled from slightly over a third to 60 percent. In areas where democracy was absent or scarcely present thirty years ago—Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe—it is now the predominant form of government. In the poorest region of the world, Africa, half the states are classified by Freedom House as electoral democracies, and people are demanding political accountability as never before.

Globally, democracy is the only broadly legitimate form of government, preferred by popular majorities in every region of the world that has been surveyed—even the Arab world. Facilitating this extraordinary transformation of regimes and values has been a quarter-century of increasingly dense and sophisticated international efforts to promote democracy and to support democrats in politics and civil society. These efforts have had a concrete impact in fostering transitions to democracy in countries as diverse as the Philippines, Poland, Chile, South Africa,

Serbia, and Ukraine. They have helped to bring about more democratic and transparent elections and stronger, more vigilant civil societies. Without international assistance of the kind that the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and other donors provide, many democratic nongovernmental organizations, think tanks, and independent media could not survive.

There is much to celebrate. But heeding the spirit of Reagan's Westminster message requires a new resolve and redoubled effort. We stand at a fragile and dangerous juncture in the world—a moment of democratic recession. The number of democracies in the world has remained essentially flat for a decade. Since the 1999 military coup in Pakistan, democracy has been overthrown or quietly suffocated in such critical countries as Russia, Venezuela, Nigeria, and Thailand. Other large and important democracies are either functioning very badly, as in the Philippines, or are in a state of suspension, as in Bangladesh. Perhaps as many as half of Africa's "democracies" are better described as competitive-authoritarian regimes.

In the recent public-opinion data lie important clues to what ails the new and fragile democracies. Trust in political and governmental institutions is low and declining. People are disillusioned by corruption, mismanagement, and the abuse of power. Electoral alternation refreshes hope in democracy, but when all parties turn out to be the same once in power, people lose faith in all parties, and ultimately in democracy.

There is a specter haunting democracy in the world today. It is bad governance—governance that serves only the interests of a narrow ruling elite. Governance that is drenched in corruption, patronage, favoritism, and abuse of power. Governance that is not responding to the massive and long-deferred social agenda of reducing inequality and unemployment and fighting against dehumanizing poverty. Governance that is not delivering broad improvement in people's lives because it is stealing, squandering, or skewing the available resources. The Philippines, Bangladesh, and Nigeria lie at different points along the path of democratic decay, but they reflect a common problem. Where power confers virtually unchecked opportunities for personal, factional, and party enrichment, it is difficult if not impossible to sustain democratic rules of the game. The democratic spirit of elections drowns in vote-buying, rigging, violence, or all three.

It is natural to view these problems as pathologies that can be cured with more medicine—that is, with democracy assistance. But the performance of many new democracies reveals a more troubling truth. Endemic corruption is not some flaw that can be corrected with a technical fix or a political push. It is the way that the system works, and it is deeply embedded in the norms and expectations of political and social life. Reducing it to less destructive levels—and keeping it there—requires

revolutionary change in institutions. The kinds of civic and political organizations that NED supports can help to bring about this revolution for better, more accountable and transparent governance. Aid given directly to countercorruption and rule-of-law institutions can also make a difference. But none of this can work without the political will inside these countries to govern with a different logic—one that values the provision of public goods such as education, roads, and public health over the enrichment of private interests.

This is a revolution that democracy assistance can support but not one that it can drive. That is going to require much bolder changes in diplomacy, in foreign aid, and in global institutions, so that we stop condoning and subsidizing with our major transnational flows of money and influence the bad governance that we are trying meekly to combat with our democracy-assistance efforts.

This is a titanic struggle—every bit as profound and fateful as the battle between communism and freedom. There is no way we are going to consign corruption to what Reagan called “the ash heap of history,” in the way we succeeded in defeating communism. But if we do not roll corruption back significantly, then democracy’s remarkable gains since the Westminster speech will themselves be rolled back, and an epochal opportunity to consolidate the advance of freedom in the world will have been lost.

Anwar Ibrahim

Anwar Ibrahim has served as education minister, finance minister, and deputy prime minister of Malaysia. Jailed in 1998, he was the victim of a highly politicized trial and spent six years in prison before the Malaysian Federal Court overturned the charges against him, leading to his release in September 2004. Since then, he has held lecturing posts at St. Antony’s College of Oxford University, the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University, and the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. He is currently advisor to the People’s Justice Party (Keadilan) in Malaysia and serves as the honorary president of AccountAbility.

On reading the historic address of President Ronald Reagan before the British Parliament 25 years ago, I was struck by the president’s account of his conversation with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, in which she said that most Englishmen today would agree with Thomas Jefferson that “a little rebellion now and then is a very good thing.”

John Locke basically said the same thing back in the seventeenth

century. According to Locke, all men have the right to resist the ruler, even of a legitimate political society, if he manifestly abuses his power. When oppressed people resist tyranny, it is not they who disturb government. Locke wrote that rebellion is an opposition not to persons but to authority, and that it is tyrants who are the true rebels. Yet given the gap between Locke's theory and the practice of the preceding centuries, such observations may sound like little more than pious platitudes. Even in today's world, bold statements about freedom and democracy that are detached from real-life experience may be viewed as pompous moral pronouncements.

Today I intend to relate my own experiences regarding freedom and democracy. So let me begin by saying that mine is a real-life story about what it is like *not* to have freedom and democracy. It is about being on the wrong end of the political stick, about unjust decrees administered by unjust politicians, and about the collapse of the rule of law.

The story begins more than thirty years ago when, as a student leader, I was arrested by the Special Branch—Malaysia's shadowy internal-security and policing agency—under a farcical law called the Internal Security Act, which arbitrarily rescinds the civil liberties enshrined in the Malaysian constitution. At the time, I had no need for an attorney because I was afforded no opportunity to defend myself in court (*habeas corpus* has enemies in the strangest of places). What was my transgression? Organizing a few nationwide student protests against the administration for its failure to make good on promises to assist the poor. The government's *modus operandi* was predictable: Evidence of my antigovernment activities was sufficient to paint me as a traitor, and so either I would own up to the crime and issue a public confession, or else take a two-year holiday in federal prison. That was it. No trial. No due process. No jury. With the stroke of the pen held by the minister of internal security, my civil rights were confined to the cold walls of imprisonment for the next twenty months.

Fast-forward to 20 September 1998, barely two weeks after I was dismissed as Malaysia's deputy prime minister and minister of finance. Although the atmosphere in Kuala Lumpur had become tense, not even the egregious injustice that I had suffered a quarter of a century earlier prepared me for the disastrous events that were about to lead my country into political turmoil and even greater depths of unfreedom.

I had returned home after addressing a public gathering at Freedom Square, where hundreds of thousands had assembled to make the call for *Reformasi*. While I was holding a press conference in my home in front of a large audience of supporters, a SWAT team stormed my property and within minutes I was snatched away in an unmarked car on the way to Federal Police headquarters. Some time after midnight, blindfolded and with my hands tied behind my back, I was assaulted—repeatedly—until I finally passed out. Who was my assailant? Not some low-level

thug just taking orders. I fell to the fists of the country's chief of police himself.

This interplay of law and politics was acted out with frightening precision—a combination of brute force and unlimited political power. Yet what strikes me now as much as it did back then is that we were not living in some tin-pot dictatorship. We were in a country claiming to be a democracy that protected the fundamental liberties of its citizens. Yet in one fell swoop, the might of the law knocked me out cold, and it banished me from the halls of power into solitary confinement for another extended “vacation.”

Throughout these ordeals my passion for freedom and justice has grown in intensity, which is why the implications of our conversation today are so grave.

First, we must recognize the global impact of decisions, taken in places where the rule of law is considered sacrosanct, that undermine freedom and democracy. We can beat around the bush or we can call it what it is: a double standard on the part of the United States in its foreign and domestic policy. Tyrants and dictators around the world readily gloat over the so-called wisdom of such transgressions—from the prison at Guantanamo Bay, to the suspension of *habeas corpus*, to the euphemistically phrased practice of rendition. These policies do a profound disservice to the thousands of people struggling to reform societies trapped in the throes of authoritarianism. Thus the war on terror, with all its bluster and bravado, has paved the way in many U.S.-allied countries for brutal and unchecked repression, which in some places threatens to nullify the reform efforts of an entire generation. Can we sacrifice freedom and democracy on the altar of fighting terrorism, or is this not fundamentally at odds with the basic creeds of freedom and democracy themselves?

We must also dispense with the preposterous notion that Muslims are incapable of accepting democracy because of something hardwired into Islam itself. Jefferson taught us of our inalienable rights as human beings, and Muslim scholars have also expounded on the sanctity of life, property, and conscience, and noted that the Prophet of Islam exemplified the traits of an accountable leader. If we are truly believers in democracy, then we must fully support that spirit of dissent with courage and conviction, and recognize that it is only with democratic institutions firmly in place—an independent judiciary, free media, a vibrant civil society—that we can accommodate a broad spectrum of political perspectives, whether modern or traditional, liberal or Islamist, and guard against the excesses of tyranny in all its forms and varieties.

As for those autocrats masquerading as leaders, who (along with their cronies and henchman) advance the self-serving notion that a half-century after independence their people still lack the maturity to handle the responsibility of democracy, what can we say other than to reject them

wholeheartedly and without reservation? In countries with such leaders, elections are largely a façade and the media is complicit in this act of deception. Governments that come to power through such a flawed process cling to it like leeches, and the vicious cycle is perpetuated. This problem must be tackled at its root.

We must also consider a broad spectrum of socioeconomic issues that cannot be divorced from the discourse on freedom and democracy. In India, politics has always taken precedence over economics. But in Southeast Asia, there remain diehard systems which insist that freedom and democracy can be deferred until economic development is achieved. There may be some common-sense truth in the argument that when a person is starving he does not care about freedom or the right to vote. But the lesson drawn from this proposition is false. *Democracy is not about the choice between starvation and freedom. It is about the freedom to overcome poverty and tyranny without compromising in the struggle against either.* This approach is highlighted by the democratic success of Turkey and Indonesia. To be sure, Turkey is still grappling with threats from the military, while Indonesia remains saddled with serious socioeconomic issues. These difficulties notwithstanding, their march toward freedom must not be derailed.

I am here to offer tribute to those friends who remain steadfast in their commitment to freedom and justice. I wish to honor President Ronald Reagan's enormous contribution to the cause of freedom and democracy, and to say that I am proud to be associated with the work of the National Endowment for Democracy. Freedom and democracy are not merely theoretical constructs or abstract moral doctrines to be dissected and debated in academic halls or intellectual forums. On the contrary, they are part and parcel of the self-evident truths that distinguish mankind from the rest of God's creatures, and they are as dear to us as the ruddy drops that visit our hearts and keep us alive.

Zainab Hawa Bangura

Zainab Hawa Bangura is head of the Civil Affairs Section of the United Nations Mission in Liberia. A native of Sierra Leone, she is a civil society campaigner; election-observation specialist; and human rights, anticorruption, and prodemocracy activist. She has received numerous awards for her work.

Three decades ago, as a young schoolgirl, I read a book about President Abraham Lincoln and fell in love with one of his quotations: "As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my

idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no democracy.”

I have treasured this quotation in my memory ever since because, among other things, it associates democracy with personal freedom. As an African Muslim woman, I have experienced both religious and traditional discrimination and biases. Personal freedom, therefore, has a double meaning for me. So it is not surprising that President Lincoln’s words about democracy have stayed with me all these years, and have had a tremendous influence on my life’s work as a campaigner for democracy, women’s rights, and human rights, and on my determination to seek social justice for all.

We are here today to assess the legacy of President Ronald Reagan’s Westminster speech and the record of democracy assistance since the founding of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). In making these assessments, it is important for us to look back to where we began and ask ourselves some simple questions.

First, since President Reagan gave that speech in 1982, how many countries in Africa have successfully changed governments? Furthermore, how many of these countries have had two, three, or even four democratic, multiparty elections? I do, of course, agree with skeptics that some of these elections have been flawed, but the mere fact that they have taken place at all should count as an achievement. None of us would have imagined thirty years ago that some of these African countries would permit the existence of opposition parties, let alone multiparty elections, a relatively free media, and vibrant civil society groups. In the past, those who espoused dissenting views always languished in jail or could even suffer execution after being deemed traitors to the state.

Second, how many African countries and their citizens have refused to allow their governments or presidents to change their constitutions? Zambia, Malawi, and Nigeria are among the many examples. Thirty years ago, African constitutions were worth less than the paper that they were printed on and were continuously manipulated, disregarded, and changed at the whims and caprices of African leaders who had absolutely no regard for them. Now they have become sacred documents—so sacred that they actually determine how long a leader stays in power. This was unthinkable three decades ago.

Third, how many countries now have scores of community radio stations which allow ordinary citizens to discuss issues of governance, to demand accountability from their elected leaders and question these leaders, and to voice their opinions and contribute to discussions on national issues in ways that hitherto would have sent them to prison for life? I am talking about common, illiterate, poor people—not educated professionals such as journalists, lawyers, or doctors, but ordinary men and women. Even Liberia, a country emerging from fourteen years of

terrible internal warfare, has more than forty community radio stations for a population of just 3.2 million people. Ghana and Mali have more than a hundred radio stations each.

Fourth, in how many countries have ordinary citizens confronted their nations' dictatorships and forced them to submit to the will of the people? Most recently in Guinea, trade-union leaders and citizens forced the dictatorship of ailing General Lansana Conté to back down and appoint a prime minister from a short list of candidates presented by civil society leaders. Likewise, in Togo after the death of President Gnassingbé Eyadéma, the ruling party and military leadership had to yield to the wishes of the opposition and organize a flawed election rather than simply impose the late president's son.

The answers to all of these questions reaffirm what President Reagan said on that fateful day: "Democracy is not a fragile flower; still, it needs cultivating. If the rest of this century is to witness the gradual growth of freedom and democratic ideals, we must take actions to assist the campaign for democracy." Indeed these actions have sometimes been too slow in coming, but they have been consistently moving forward despite the slow pace. What all this means is that more cultivation, encouragement, and support are needed in order to ensure that democracy keeps moving forward.

Therefore, while supporting, encouraging, and cultivating democracy and the various efforts of ordinary citizens in Africa and around the world, we must remember what Prime Minister Winston Churchill said some fifty years ago in reference to the challenges of World War II: "When we look back on all the perils through which we have passed and at the mighty foes we have laid low and all the dark and deadly designs we have frustrated, why should we fear for our future? We have come safely through the worst." Yes, indeed, as Africans and citizens of the world, we have come a long way, and the journey has sometimes been torturous and difficult. Hundreds of thousands of our compatriots have perished along the way. But because we have been steadfast, determined, and committed, and have not given up or looked back, we are still on the move.

Along the way, Africa elected its first female president in 2006 in Liberia—and not by chance, but through the concerted efforts and determination of women's and civil society groups who resolved to build a new Liberia. These groups were able to make such bold and independent political moves because they had learned, from several years of democracy assistance provided by groups such as NED, to mobilize and work together for the common good.

What democracy assistance and institutions such as NED have done in the last 25 years, therefore, has been to create the hope that, as President Reagan put it, "a new age [of freedom] is not only possible, but probable." Reagan himself had no illusions about how difficult and

challenging the task would be or how long the journey would last, and so he stated in the final paragraph of that memorable speech to the British Parliament:

The task I have set forth will long outlive our generation. But together, we, too, have come through the worst. Let us now begin a major effort to secure the best—a crusade for freedom that will engage the faith and fortitude of the next generation. For the sake of peace and justice, let us move toward a world in which all people are at last free to determine their own destiny.

The movement that he predicted has begun, and there is no turning back. This is why, despite the disappointments of Nigeria's recent elections, we must take consolation from the refusal of Nigerians to let their constitution be changed to allow the former president an unconstitutional third term. We must applaud them for that achievement, which was a great victory for the Nigerian people and should not be overshadowed by the flawed elections that followed. Such victories, large and small, hark back to what William Gladstone said in 1866: "You cannot fight against the future. Time is on our side."

The train of democracy in Africa is on the move and will not and cannot be stopped or forced to turn back. It is the future. It might encounter bumps here and there, but it will continue forward. It is simply a matter of time until the last bastions of dictatorship—the Robert Mugabes, the Paul Biyas, the Omar Bongos, and the Denis Sassou-Nguessos—will be relegated to the history books where they belong. They are already an endangered species. They will soon be extinct, and the rest of the African continent will be like Ghana, where the stuffing of ballot boxes and rigging of elections are things of the past, and discussions during elections will focus instead on how to foster the infrastructure of democracy.

Our biggest challenge as we celebrate President Reagan's legacy in democracy promotion, however, is to remember, to appreciate, and to understand that human freedom and human dignity are like the two pedals of a bicycle: One cannot move without the other. In fighting for human freedom, we must make sure to address the serious problem of poverty in Africa and around the world. As former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson said, poverty "is the worst human rights problem today." It destroys a person's sense of dignity. Therefore, to ensure the consolidation and sustainability of the advances toward democracy already made, human freedom and human dignity must be treated as the two pedals of a bicycle, the two sides of a coin, or the two wings of a bird. The more economically independent people are, the easier it is for them to make independent political decisions.