

**SUPPORTING DEMOCRACY:
Pressing the Re-set Button on International Policy**

The Century Foundation and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

41 East 70th Street, New York, New York

The Century Foundation Offices

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Agenda

9:00 a.m. Check-in and Continental Breakfast

9:30 a.m. Welcoming Remarks

10:00 a.m. Panel 1: Disillusionment, Realism, and Renewal in the Democracy Debate

- Moderator: [Jeffrey Laurenti](#) (Senior Fellow and Director of Foreign Policy Programs, The Century Foundation)
- [Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi](#) (Democratic Governance Practice Director in the Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP)
- [Thomas Melia](#) (Deputy Executive Director, Freedom House)
- [Karsten Voigt](#) (Coordinator of German-American Cooperation, Federal Foreign Office, Germany)

Democracy, long viewed during the cold war ideological standoff as unreliable and dispensable, in the past two decades has won general recognition as essential to long-term state-building, economic development, and political legitimacy. But the hard-earned international consensus around democracy as the normative political ideal has encountered some erosion in recent years. Democracy promotion in particular has come under suspicion as simply a tool of the national security interests of leading promoters or of their economic interests and ideology—suspicions fanned by seeming subversion of democracy when elections yielded the “wrong” outcome, or by its quiet abandonment in crisis zones in favor of “stability.” But has the disillusionment with democracy promotion gone too far? What have been the successes of democracy promotion initiatives by states, NGOs, and international organizations—and where has it disappointed or failed? What internal and external factors have prompted closed political regimes to open democratic space—and conversely, what factors have thwarted democratization or triggered the unraveling of democratic polities? How successful have post-conflict efforts to implant democratic practices proved, and what conclusions might democratization advocates draw from experience thus far in democracy promotion?

11:30 a.m. Panel 2: Democracy, Economics, and Unforeseen Couplings

- Moderator: [Eddie Webster](#) (Professor, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa)
- [Ian Bremmer](#) (President, Eurasia Group)
- [Gert Rosenthal](#) (Permanent Representative of Guatemala to the United Nations)
- [Austin Muneku](#) (Director of Research and Economics, Zambia Congress of Trade Unions)

While economic crises have brought down seemingly immovable authoritarian regimes, persistent economic hardship may also result in public disillusionment with democratic politics. The linkage between democracy and economics is controversial: Since the 1990s, some have insisted democracy is coupled inextricably with free-market economics, which may have differential impacts on various strata of society. Separately, the economic success of some undemocratic states (most notably China, but also earlier “Asian tigers”) has refreshed an older debate about democracy’s suitability for accelerating economic development. To what extent do publics embrace, or at least tolerate, a political regime based on their perceived economic fortunes, and how may this be reflected in external strategies to strengthen democratic governance? To what extent does an identification of democracy with trade unions and worker interests strengthen or undercut popular or elite support for democratic regimes? Does the durability of democracy-building vary depending on whether civic mobilization proceeds through labor unions or through educated professional classes, and what is the relevance for external assistance?

1:00 p.m. Lunch and Discussion: *The Economic Crisis: A Crisis of Democracy Too?*

- [George Soros](#) (Founder and Chairman, Open Society Institute)
- Moderator: [Richard C. Leone](#) (President, The Century Foundation)

2:30 p.m. Panel 3: Democracy Promotion in the Middle East

- Moderator: [Michael Wahid Hanna](#) (Program Officer, The Century Foundation)
- [Noha El-Mikawy](#) (Governance and Poverty Advisor, UNDP Oslo Governance Center)
- [Shadi Hamid](#) (Fellow, Center for Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law, Stanford University; Director of Research, Project on Middle East Democracy)
- [Marina Ottaway](#) (Director, Middle East Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace)

Nowhere has democracy promotion from abroad proved more contentious than in the Middle East, where authoritarian governments have often ruled fractious societies and where the religiously devout are often sharply—and sometimes violently—at odds with the more secular-minded. Some analysts see regime democratization in such fragile societies as riskily destabilizing, opening the door to extremist takeovers; others see it as an elixir to defeat terrorism by draining extremist movements of public support. What is the strength of the region’s own advocates for democracy in the face of traditional state security concerns, and should external actors seek to contribute to political liberalization in the region? To what extent are external pressures for democratization welcomed as legitimate after the experiences of the past decade? Given the passions that the question of Palestine stirs in the region, should the international community give up on democracy promotion in the Middle East until the Arab-Israeli conflicts are settled?

4:00 p.m. Panel 4: What now? Where to take the cause of democracy?

- Moderator: [Werner Puschra](#) (Director, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, New York Office)
- [Morton Halperin](#) (Senior Fellow, Center for American Progress)
- [Heraldo Muñoz](#) (Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations)
- [Ernst Kerbusch](#) (Former Head of Division for International Cooperation, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung)
- [Masood Haider](#) (UN Correspondent, The Daily Dawn of Pakistan)

What can larger and more prosperous democracies do individually to support democracy where it is fragile or suppressed, and what can they do in concert? What may be the credibility--and the political will--of democratically governed countries in the developing world to assist democratization in other developing countries, and what resources can they bring to bear? In what ways can a sometimes divided United Nations marshal resources and legitimacy for successful support of democracy, and how closely need these be tethered to its broader mission in defense of human rights? How can associations of democratic states, such as the Community of Democracies and relevant regional organizations, reinforce democracy as the preferred political norm worldwide? What role should democracy promotion play in the foreign policy of the Obama administration?

5:15 p.m. Conclusion and adjournment