

SUPPORTING DEMOCRACY: PRESSING THE RE-SET BUTTON ON  
INTERNATIONAL POLICY  
30 April 2009

Session 1  
DISILLUIONMENT, REALISM, AND RENEWAL IN THE DEMOCRACY  
DEBATE

VOIGT: We've never been skeptical about promoting democracy, but we've been skeptical about American concepts, and we still are.

MELIA: The challenge for them and for us is to make sure that they don't throw the democrats and dissidents under the bus.

FRASER-MOLEKETI: We don't see disengagement with countries that are described as non-democratic as an option.

LAURENTI: What do we have to show for this engagement with the military leaders in Myanmar or with Zimbabwe? What has it produced?

FRASER-MOLEKETI : Looking at the Zimbabwean situation... I think it's also going to be counterproductive if we imagine that both multilaterally or multi-nationally ours is to promote and sharpen conflicts between the different parties in government.

MELIA: Unfortunately now, in both Kenya and Zimbabwe, we have an example of elections where the incumbent loses but doesn't have to leave – and the winners and the losers, in a kind of shotgun marriage, form some kind of a hybrid government in which there is no longer any opposition.

VOIGT: You cannot create a democracy from outside, you can only be supportive of development if there is a demand for democracy.

MELIA: The Germans and many other Europeans came late to the support of Solidarność in Poland in the 1980's. On the other hand, the American trade union movement was very much out in front – even out in front of our own government and out in front of our European trade union colleagues.

WALKER: It's important to acknowledge the success in Eastern and Central Europe.

VOIGT: I do not give up on Russia in terms of democracy, but it will take years or decades, and the same is true of many other parts of world.

BRIDGETT JONES: It seems, in some ways, that the voices of the “realists” are louder these days.

MASSING: People from the West now are toxic, and regimes use assistance from those countries, like the United States or Europe, to say that these local activists are being co-opted by the West.

GUÉHENNO: Countries that have been under the control of colonial powers and who see sovereignty as a big protection against dominance of more powerful countries.

FRASER-MOLEKETI: It was not the North that inspired our thrust for democracy. We looked at struggles in the South; we looked at struggles on the African continent; we looked at Latin America.

ROSENTHAL: The norm today in Latin America is to follow democratic governance, and the countries that are not following it are sort of excluded.

BALDO: African Union has also outlawed unconstitutional changes in government, by denying putschists from sitting in the club.

CANCELA: There is a component that is critical for me – that is the relationship between democracy and development.

EL-MIKAWY: Sometimes what we do in non-political areas, such as trade and climate change, can also affect democracy.

CANCELA: How do our populations feel about the democratic system? This is a very important question regarding also the economic crisis we are living in.

KERBUSCH: You have to find a way that is not in any way in the long run against the basic interests of countries to provide a minimum of social and economic development and a minimum of adequate governance to guarantee people what they need in public services.

MASSING: Is it overreaching in Afghanistan to try to democratize the system?

VOIGT: We are, in Afghanistan, not seen by everybody as a liberator. We are seen, when you use force, as an occupier.

MELIA: Democratic transitions almost never happen in a gradual or predictable sort of way.

GUÉHENNO: It is a remarkable way of managing very deep tensions without creating conflict.