



2009 Foreign Policy Initiative Forum on Advancing and Defending Democracy

September 21-22, 2009

On September 21 and 22, the Foreign Policy Initiative (FPI) held its 2009 FPI Forum on Advancing and Defending Democracy. The event took place at the W Hotel in downtown Washington, D.C. and featured conversations with former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, Governor Mitt Romney, Senator Jon Kyl, and Senator John McCain. Experts and dissidents participated in panel discussions on democracy and human rights, Iran, Russia, Iraq, and the political and military dimensions of the war in Afghanistan. Summaries, transcripts, and full video coverage of panels and discussions have been made available at:

<http://foreignpolicyi.org/event/advancing-and-defending-democracy-summary>.

Key Quotes from “Forum on Advancing and Defending Democracy”

Afghanistan

“I do not understand or perhaps I have never seen a disconnect like this between the military leadership and the White House on an issue...Every day that goes by, if you are not pursuing a strategy for success and implementing it as quickly as possible, it puts young Americans' lives in more danger.”

— Senator John McCain (R-AZ)

“This is not time for Hamlet in the White House. I have no problem with the President being deliberative but the time for deliberation hopefully has been invested over the past several months in extensive discussions and negotiations.”

—Governor Mitt Romney (R-MA)

“This is why I defend President Obama, at least for a while, at least for a few weeks of deliberation and indecision. If he is still in November where he is today, I will not be defending him, but I think where he is at this moment is understandable.”

— Michael O’Hanlon, Brookings Institution

“I think we haven’t fought this war with full capacity or anywhere near full capacity, and the time has come to adjust. And I think it will only happen and will rally the country if the President takes the lead in defining not only the importance of the success here, but also of a strategy that is resourced, that can convince the people that there is a reasonable relationship between the ends that we seek and the means that we are devoting to achieve those goals.”

—Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq

“The real war in Washington must be to achieve and maintain the will of the American people, because without that, the capabilities are sure to prove insufficient, and strategic patience is sure to wane.”

— Lt. Gen. Mark Kimmitt

Russia

“It’s hard to imagine any Russian quid pro quo that would be worth compromising the principle that we can support our NATO allies, even in Eastern Europe. It’s even harder to justify our ‘turn about’ if the Obama administration did not negotiate a quid pro quo from the Russians. It’s not apparent that was done.”

—Senator Jon Kyl (R-AZ)

“My fear is that what we will see is an encouragement of Russia to push harder and demand more in the post-START negotiations with the United States, in particular linking offensive reductions in nuclear arms to missile defense, putting more constraints on our long-range, precision, conventional strike capabilities, including trying to capture any future U.S. bomber. I know Secretary Gates has just made the announcement of a potential future U.S. bomber.”

— Former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Eric Edelman

U.S. Foreign Policy

“Our friends around the world are asking themselves, ‘Is it better to be a friend of the United States or a foe?’ And that has dramatic implications for the future of freedom, democracy, human rights and free enterprise.”

— Governor Mitt Romney (R-MA)

“The Obama administration has already announced they will not honor [the Honduran election]. In fact, they went further and just withdrew the visas of the 15 Supreme Court justices. Now this is waging war against democracy.”

— Newt Gingrich

Iran

“I think after June 12th [Iranian election], there was sort of a perceptible deflation of hope [within the Obama administration]...nobody was quite sure how this was going to unfold because it's still unfolding. June 12th was one of those sort of cataclysmic moments that changes things.”

— Ray Takeyh, Former Obama State Department Advisor

“I think engagement is toast. It was always toast, but I think there was a certain optimism in certain quarters, particularly on the left, believing that somehow engagement might just barely be possible. I think it was an aftershock of President Bush, but I think June 12th decisively buried that.”

— Reuel Marc Gerecht, Foundation for Defense of Democracies

Democracy Promotion

“When you go to Cairo and meet all smiles with Mubarak, and give a Cairo speech that actually plays down democracy, I think that's creating an enabling environment for Mubarak to continue what he has continued now for decades.”

— Elliott Abrams, Deputy National Security Advisor

“There was the huge gap between the soaring rhetoric of [President Bush's] freedom agenda and the inconsistencies in the application of that agenda. This unfortunately created the impression that democracy was a club to be used against regimes, autocratic regimes unfriendly to the U.S. but not against those regimes with autocratic tendencies who were friendly.”

— Kenneth Wollack, National Democratic Institute President

“Ask the dissident, ask the democratic activist of what they need. I cannot speak on behalf of all of them. I can speak myself, I need moral support, first of all.”

— Saad Eddin Ibrahim, Middle East dissident

“The militaristic approach was unsuccessful [for] the last administration, but the current administration, I believe that the current policy that they don't mention to human rights and they just want to follow – deal with the Iranian regime about the nuclear issues and stability or security issues, I think similarly it goes in the wrong direction.”

— Ali Afshari, Middle East dissident