

THE IMPACT OF THE IRAN CRISIS ON ITS OSCE NEIGHBORS

HEARING BEFORE THE COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS FIRST SESSION

JULY 16, 2009

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THE IMPACT OF THE IRAN CRISIS ON ITS OSCE NEIGHBORS

July 16, 2009

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
WASHINGTON, DC

The hearing was held at 2:02 p.m. in room B-318, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC, Hon. Mike McIntyre, Commissioner, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, presiding.

Commissioner present: Hon. Mike McIntyre, Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Witnesses present: David J. Kramer, Senior Fellow, German Marshall Fund of the United States; Jennifer Windsor, Executive Director, Freedom House; and Stephen Blank, Research Professor of National Security Affairs, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College.

HON. MIKE MCINTYRE, COMMISSIONER, COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Mr. MCINTYRE. Because of the fact we know that we have voting schedules in progress, we're going to try to start on time and move right along with our witnesses. And we welcome everyone here to the special hearing. This hearing is being held on the impact of the Iran crisis on its OSCE neighbors. I'm Congressman Mike McIntyre, senior member of the OSCE Commission and I've been asked by Senator Cardin to chair today's meeting in his absence.

We know the world has been watching with fascination the drama that began over a month ago with Iran's Presidential election. As of today, no one knows what will be the outcome of the unrest that followed the announcement of a landslide victory. Just as the situation continues to unfold inside Iran, so does, among Iran's neighbors, the concern where they're watching events there with emotions ranging from curiosity to anxiety.

The purpose of this hearing is to examine the implication of these events in the neighboring and nearby OSCE republics, especially those of the former Soviet Union. Of course, there are many differences between those secular states and the theocratic Iran. But in the post-Soviet space, super-Presidents have generally overwhelmed institutions while removing the public from politics through rigged elections and through suppressing street protests—I'm sure, what you have seen on the news.

Russia and Belarus have largely managed to keep things in check but other CIS states have experienced post-election unrest,

including Armenia, Azerbaijan, and most recently, Moldova. Have they been watching Iranians risking their lives in protest and in themselves, nervously wondering if even there, why could this not happen here? Or why not happen here again? So these are questions we want to examine as we hear from our witnesses today.

In the dynamic of state-society confrontation and repressive states, precedent has a special importance. Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has said as much in his June 21st sermon claiming that those who organized the demonstrations quote, "thought that Iran is another Georgia," close quote. In the post-Soviet space, governments and publics closely watch what goes on in other countries. If opposition movements and civic activists who have lost faith in the prospect of democratization are heartened by news of post-election street protests elsewhere, then we know that ruling regimes are appalled and concerned and pay attention carefully to what's happening.

The May 2005 massacre in Andijan where Uzbek authorities shot hundreds of demonstrators followed only 2 months after the post-election demonstrations in Kyrgyzstan, which led to the ouster of then president Askar Akayev. Was Uzbek President Karimov signaling to his own people and to his neighbors that the wave of Rose, Orange, and Tulip Revolutions would spread no farther? Once again, these are questions that we want to examine with our witnesses today.

Indeed, the precedent of street protests that result in regime change is the No. 1 nightmare of repressive governments. So it's not surprising that the new Russian President not only rushed to congratulate Ahmadinejad but then went to Cairo in a clear counter to President Obama's speech in that capital stated that Russia opposed Western attempts to promote the move of democracy in the Arab world.

What, then, are the likely or potential implications of the events in Iran on post-Soviet states? We look forward to hearing our expert witnesses examine this question and we want you to be as candid with us as you will. Now, given the restrictions we have because of votes, we would ask the witnesses not just to read their statements but to highlight their statements to make sure we have time to hear from the other witnesses before we get interrupted by what could be a long series of votes.

So we have a very distinguished group of witnesses. Their full biographical information is available on our Web site, which is www.csce.gov. We are honored to have them. They have many honors behind and before their names but rather than consuming further time, we want to hear from the witnesses. We do appreciate their time today and I'm grateful for their willingness to come before us: David Kramer, Jennifer Windsor, and Stephen Blank. I believe now all three witnesses have arrived.

David Kramer is Senior Fellow at the German Marshall Fund, was until January the Assistant Secretary of the State of Human Rights, Democracy and Labor. We are pleased to see him again in this new capacity. And Mr. Kramer, we'll proceed with your testimony.

**DAVID J. KRAMER, SENIOR FELLOW, GERMAN MARSHALL
FUND OF THE UNITED STATES**

Mr. KRAMER. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. It's an honor to be back here with the Commission. I had the distinct honor and privilege to have been a member of this Commission when I was in my last capacity at the State Department. This is not an unusual position for me to be on this side, though, of the table. And it's a good opportunity to discuss this subject.

Before I do so, if I may, Mr. Chairman, I do want to commend the Commission in particular for the trip that it made to Belarus recently and securing the release of Emanuel Zeltser and also for the outstanding statement that was issued about the need for the government in Belarus to continue to liberalize and undertake reform before there could be a real change in U.S. policy with sanctions toward Belarus. And so I wish the commission similar success in travels elsewhere in the region.

Mr. Chairman, I think what we have seen in Iran over the past month is not a new phenomenon; it's something that we have been seeing throughout the world, frankly—certainly in the OSCE region. And I think what has happened in Iran is likely to intensify efforts by governments that have engaged in repressive tactics, authoritarian regimes to make sure that they stay in power and do everything they can to preserve the status quo. We saw this after the color revolutions in Ukraine in 2004, Georgia in 2003.

And what I think we see is lack of accountability, a distrust of populations, unwillingness to hold really free and fair elections. These are all common tendencies that I think we also saw unfold just last month in Iran. And these regimes tend to study each other and learn lessons from each other and that includes clamping down on nongovernmental organizations, on protests that may take place after particular events such as elections, repressing civil society and things of that sort.

And I think what we have seen is that they view elections, they view any type of democratic movements as a threat to their current position and that's something that they don't particularly want to tolerate. Yet I think it's also fair to say that their efforts are likely, over time—perhaps it will take weeks, months, year, maybe even decades in some cases when we look at, say, Burma—that these efforts are going to fail and that the populations in these countries will lose patience with regimes that engage in this kind of behavior and will demand more accountability and more freedom for themselves. And that's something I think we should encourage everywhere.

Mr. Chairman, in getting ready for this hearing, I thought back to what happened in Ukraine in 2004, with the efforts by the previous government to try to rig an election and achieve a result that did not reflect the will of the Ukrainian voters. And I remember the decision made by Secretary of State Colin Powell on November 24th, when he went to the podium in the State Department briefing room and said in a very clear manner, we cannot accept this result as legitimate because it does not meet international standards and because there has not been an investigation of the numerous and credible reports of fraud and abuse.

Now, there are many differences between Ukraine in 2004 and Iran in 2009. And yet, in thinking about that, I couldn't help but wonder if perhaps there had been clear articulations of that kind of message with the Iranian election that took place last month. When we look at the region, there are two countries that have elections coming up within the next 2 weeks: Kyrgyzstan next week, Moldova in 2 weeks time. And I think in both cases, we should be concerned—not that there's going to be a repeat of what we saw in Iran but that there are likely to be problems, already have been problems in both countries.

In Kyrgyzstan, I think in the lead-up to the next election, we've seen disturbing developments including the mysterious deaths of an opposition figure, of a journalist, harassment and detention of opposition leaders and shutting down of broadcasts of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. Notwithstanding the importance of our military base in Kyrgyzstan—and I commend the administration for doing everything it could to keep that open—I think we should be stressing to the government in Bishkek that this election is a test of Kyrgyzstan's progress and that failure to pass that test will have a negative impact on our bilateral relations.

Elsewhere in Central Asia, we're seeing similar efforts to maintain the status quo. Just in the past week or so, President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan signed into law new controls on the Internet, which is of particular irony because the OSCE has condemned that law, had urged Nazarbayev not to sign that law, and of course, Kazakhstan is going to be the chair next year of the OSCE.

Moldova, the other place having an election that I mentioned, had an unfortunate development with its first round in April. And certainly, I think we should be strongly encouraging the government in Moldova that the next election that will take place on July 29th must follow much more transparent rules, ballot counting must be open and transparent and that any protests that may occur, as long as they're peaceful, should be permitted and tolerated.

When we look elsewhere in the region—and I will try to move quickly in the interest of time—Azerbaijan, I think, is a country that perhaps has the greatest interest in what has happened in its neighbor, Iran, over the past month. And in fact, given that there are somewhere between 15 and 20 million Azeris who live in Iran, they follow the developments in that country with great interest. The main challenger to Ahmadinejad in fact is an ethnic Azeri from Tabriz and yet the government in Azerbaijan, 3 days after the June 12th election, went ahead and congratulated Ahmadinejad.

For quite some time I think we've seen in Azerbaijan developments where the government there has tried to solidify its control over the situation. It shut down foreign broadcasts of Radio Liberty, Voice of America, BBC. It held a referendum in March that basically paves the way for President Aliyev to remain president for life. And despite the release of some journalists earlier this year, others continue to face harassment or remain in jail for what seem to be political purposes.

And then most recently there have been two disturbing developments: The Azeri Parliament passed legislation, albeit somewhat

watered down after protests from the international community and from within Azerbaijan, that would badly affect NGOs in their sources of funding. And if President Aliyev signs this, it would be a damaging move against many NGOs in Azerbaijan.

And then also just last week, two youth leaders were beaten by unknown assailants but then mysteriously arrested and detained and then charged and convicted of hooliganism and remain in jail despite the protests of many in the international community. We should be pressing President Aliyev and the government of Azerbaijan to veto the NGO law, to free the remaining the journalists still in detention and these two youth activists and return the suspended broadcasts to the air.

Armenia, another country that follows the situation in Iran closely, given the deepening ties between Armenia and Iran, is also a place where we have seen some disturbing developments. President Sargsyan also congratulated Ahmadinejad very quickly after the election. By contrast, a group of Armenian journalists appealed for the release of Iranian colleagues who had been arrested in the aftermath of the disputed election.

President Sargsyan dissolved a taskforce that had been set up to establish or to investigate last year's deadly post-election violence in Armenia in which 10 people were killed. Dozens of protestors remain in jail and here in the case of Armenia, I would argue that the United States should be pressing the Armenian Government for a thorough, credible investigation of the events of March 2008 and end the harassment of journalists and opposition figures and the release of remaining political prisoners.

Georgia has not focused as much on Iran. It has been more preoccupied with its own internal situation. Vice President Biden's trip next week will be an important opportunity to reinforce the U.S. message of further political development, institution-building, separation of powers and constructive engagement with the opposition and I hope that's a message the vice president will take.

Last but not least is Russia. You made reference to Russia yourself, Mr. Chairman, and you noted that Ahmadinejad attended the second day of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization meeting in Yekaterinburg, June 16th, at which Russia and other members of the SCO embraced and congratulated the Iranian leader despite the very serious controversy over the election results.

The authoritarian leadership in Russia since Vladimir Putin's rise to power has been working to establish a system that would minimize any possibility of a color revolution to say nothing of a kind of situation that we saw unfold in Iran. And Russia, I think, despite its economic difficulties and barring some radical change for the worst or absent a major precipitating event like a contested election, which is not likely in Russia given the current state of affairs—Russia really is not vulnerable to the kind of scene that we witnessed unfold in Iran.

Russian officials, I think, will determine that they want to do everything possible to make sure they don't see anything like what happened in Iran and I think that's a conclusion not only Russian leaders will come to, but I think other leaders throughout the region and frankly, throughout the world. And what we saw unfold in Iran and the government's reaction to the protests there are

what we've been seeing around the world for quite some time. And I fear that the events in Iran are likely to reinforce preexisting tendencies toward further cracking down on repression, not toward liberalization even though over time, as I said at the outset, these tendencies are apt to weaken not strengthen the hold these regimes have over their populations.

I think speaking out against these tendencies remains vitally important. It needs to be done by the Obama administration in conjunction with our allies and I would also argue that this Commission, Mr. Chairman, has a very important role in that respect—speaking truth to power. Thank you.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Thank you very much. Thank you for your prior service on the Helsinki Commission and I would also note for our audience that your service as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Georgia, which adds to the great knowledge that you have of those areas.

We did have quite an interesting trip to Belarus while we were at the annual meeting in Lithuania and we were grateful for the opportunity to be able to get Mr. Zeltser freed, which we know made national and world headlines. And we're grateful when we can see that the OSCE representatives can have an impact like that and make headway with a former Soviet republic like Belarus. So thank you for drawing attention to that.

Jennifer Windsor is the Executive Director of Freedom House, one of the leading human rights organizations in the world. And we thank you for your commitment to that. This organization has also had a long history of institutional cooperation with the Helsinki Commission. Freedom House, in fact, has just completed a fascinating study of 21st-century authoritarianism, which is very relevant to the subject of discussion today. And so Ms. Windsor, we welcome you and welcome your testimony.

**JENNIFER WINDSOR, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FREEDOM
HOUSE**

Ms. WINDSOR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for inviting Freedom House to testify here today. Yesterday's brutal murder of one of Chechnya's most prominent human rights activists reminds us of the urgent need for this commission and its work. I have to say that it's actually a privilege and an honor to sit on the same side of the table with David Kramer for a change, who has really been a tireless champion of human rights and democracy.

I want to start first with just looking at some of the key elements of what we know happened in Iran. The Presidential elections that were held there last month, despite not being monitored, were deeply flawed by all accounts. The announcement of an overwhelming victory by the government triggered countrywide demonstrations, the extent and breadth of which took many by surprise. After a short delay and some hopes about divisions that had emerged, the Iranian Government embarked on a systematic, brutal campaign of violence and intimidation against protestors resulting in thousands being detained in an undetermined number of deaths.

The question is whether historians will look back and characterize events in Iran as more like Tiananmen Square than Maidan Square. The answer seems to be the former for now but I caution us because events in Iran are still unfolding. The ham-handed attempt by the Iranian Government to control electoral outcomes, the widespread citizen mobilization engagement and the appearance of fissures in the ruling elite were all key aspects of successful democratic changes in other societies in the past. On the other hand, the absence of date of a unified, disciplined, citizen-led campaign with clear objectives and the ability of the government for now to maintain control over the Iranian security apparatus are more negative indicators.

Events in Iran demonstrated that authoritarian regimes have learned well their own lessons from the past and they have implemented comprehensive, systematic strategies to prevent a genuine popular push for change from emerging within their own societies. It is fitting that President Ahmadinejad's first trip abroad following the contested elections was to Moscow, where he was greeted with open arms. And as described in our report that you mentioned on undermining democracy—copies of which are outside—the Russian Federation has taken a leadership role in its attempts to undermine democracy both from within and outside of its borders.

I see three main parallels between developments in Iran and the former Soviet authoritarian states: One, the attempt to control the flow of information, both through traditional forms of media and increasingly by targeting Internet and mobile phone technologies. Two, measures aimed at reducing the ability of citizens to associate and organize through restrictive laws and through targeted intimidation and repression against key civic leaders. And three, attempts to tightly manage elections by limiting political choices, monopolizing state resources, stuffing ballot boxes and violently repressing dissent.

So in one sense, the lessons of Iran are nothing new to these regimes but we may see further an exacerbation of negative trends that we have seen in this region so far as illustrated by the findings of our latest "Nations in Transit" report. Iran demonstrated that elections may still catalyze widespread public demands for genuine political accountability. This may cause regimes to move even further in the direction that they are already going toward turning the electoral process into a complete sham and upgrading their capacity to suppress demonstrations swiftly and comprehensively.

Authoritarian governments may take steps to further limit freedom of association and assembly and the free flow of information and in particular, to try to protect themselves from the rise of the use of new communication technologies. All of these lead to predictions of an even gloomier future for the post-Soviet societies still under the sway of authoritarian regimes. But while the repressive apparatus of these states seems to be well-developed, the fact that governments are further tightening the screws shows just how vulnerable they are, how nervous that they will not be able to maintain control given their overall lack of legitimacy.

And we must not forget that the Iranian protests have been as inspiring as their repression has been shocking. The global outrage

over the brutal suppression of demonstrators in Iran has generated and reaffirmed the value of democracy and human rights, not as a Western export but as a universal, human aspiration. This is critical given the disinformation campaigns undertaken by Russia, China, and other sophisticated authoritarian states to subvert the meaning of democracy itself. And it may yet inspire activities in these states who have felt besieged and isolated.

Finally, the willingness of countries such as Germany, the U.K. and the new Obama administration to speak out against the repression in Iran should give us some hope—hope that the democratic members of the international community are beginning to find their voice again, that they will unite to defend fundamental freedoms and that international support for those who are on the frontlines of these struggles should not be abandoned but rather increased in this era of authoritarian pushback.

Unity among those who believe human rights to be universal is sorely needed in the OSCE itself, especially if it's going to continue to carry out the critical human dimensions aspects of its missions—dimensions that, as you well know, have been under attack by Russia and its authoritarian allies.

To date, the democratic members of the OSCE have largely failed in efforts to meet this strong challenge. I hope that we can all work together to ensure that the courage and sacrifice of those throughout Iran endures as a challenge to tyranny and not as a dread warning to others who dare to ask that their votes be counted and their voices heard. Thank you.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Thank you. Thank you very much. Dr. Stephen Blank is a Research Professor of the National Security Affairs at the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College. His specialty is on Russia and other former Soviet states. He's published a wide variety of topics including geo-strategy, energy politics and U.S. foreign policy. We welcome him today and look forward to your testimony.

STEPHEN BLANK, RESEARCH PROFESSOR OF NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS, STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE, U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE

Dr. BLANK. Thank you, Congressman McIntyre. It's a great honor to be invited back to this Commission to testify about the impact of the situation in Iran on other OSCE members. I need to say upfront that my testimony and my written statement do not reflect the opinion of the Army, the Defense Department or the U.S. Government. These are my views alone and I'm the only person responsible for them.

What we've seen in Iran is only part of what can only be described as an international movement. We've seen the same thing in Moldova and we've seen mass political protests in Xinjiang and Iran is part of that. And just as Iran is part of a broader international movement, there are going to be significant international repercussions from the suppression of the protests in Iran and for that matter the suppressions of the protests in Central Asia in Xinjiang and Moldova as well.

As my colleagues have described, states have learned the lesson that they cannot permit free elections so we can expect as Ms.

Windsor and Mr. Kramer have testified that there will be further repression against social networking technology, information technology both old and new and repression against attempts by politically minded people to associate with each other, disseminate ideas, form political movements and so on.

We can see this already happening for example in Kazakhstan where the government, I believe panicked quite frankly by what's happened in Iran and Xinjiang, signed an Internet law into being, which is even more draconian than the Russian law and which can serve as a template for further such repressions throughout Central Asia. What's more, this law is a direct contradiction of Kazakhstan's promises made to the OSCE Madrid meetings in 2007 that it would liberalize its media and was signed as a U.S. delegation was traveling to Astana. So it really represents a slap in the face.

The same is true with the Russian response as you described it. President Medvedev openly said in Cairo that we oppose the promotion of democracy in the Arab world. Well, that goes even further within the CIS and as a matter of fact, the Russian Government has at times defined if quote, a threat to the constitutional system in the CIS as the greatest possible threat that it could face, even greater than an invasion.

Democracy is Russia's enemy even more than any particular state may be and as a result, Russia has become both the organizer of the 21st-century version holy alliance against revolution and an alibi for Central Asian governments seeking to obtain support for repressive government. It also is lending them money and may well lend Armenia money in response to Armenia's being taken out of the Millennium Challenge funding precisely to demonstrate its authoritarian solidarity with Armenia. So we should have no illusions about facing a somewhat united counter-revolutionary, if you like, or authoritarian wave.

Beyond the fact of greater repression and greater suppression of political freedoms that we can expect, I think, throughout the region in the short term, I do believe that the Iranian experience underscores—as does the Moldovan—the fundamental weakness and illegitimacy of these governments and the fact that their rulers do know it. To my way of thinking, the Iranian government actually signed its death warrant by trampling on its own legitimacy and authority and showing that it now intends to rule essentially by force, fraud and national xenophobia.

I do believe that, as a result, we will see even less inclination on Iran's part to cooperate in serious engagement with the West in the negotiations on its nuclear project and that it will continue to receive support from Moscow and Beijing to that end precisely because of the solidarity with Iran that they have demonstrated in the past. We will also see greater attempts by Moscow and Beijing to support the dictatorships of Central Asia and the Caucasus and the repressive means that these governments have undertaken to stay in power.

But I do believe also that at the end of the day, precisely because these governments cannot provide either satisfactory political conditions for their people or for that matter satisfying economic conditions over the long term, particularly in terms of the current eco-

conomic crisis that is engulfing the region and the world, that we will see more instability in the area rather than less. Everything in political science and history testifies to the fact that these governments will come under greater scrutiny and greater instability as their regimes demonstrate their incapacity to deal with the situation and resort to greater and greater repression.

Repression may work in the short-term—and we don't know how long the short term is and how long it will take for the bankruptcy of these policies of forced fraud and xenophobia to work; they will obviously be successful in the short run as they have been now—but over the long term, they will fail and lead to a renewed upsurge of popular unrest and perhaps violence.

Both domestic violence and, for that matter, possibly interstate violence—because in many of these states there are minorities that can be targeted, minorities that have kinsmen across one border or another, or because in sighting the population against foreign devils is a tried and true tactic of authoritarian regimes—in either case, I do believe that the Iranian example serves as a caution to other states and as a warning but is unfortunately going to be seen as an example of the dangers of elections and of the success of repression rather than of the need for enhanced political participation and liberalization.

For those reasons it is incumbent upon the United States to stand up and support human rights. These governments have contempt for human rights and for the values inherent in them. They have contempt for the Helsinki Treaty as Kazakhstan has just shown and as Moscow has repeatedly shown. The appointment, for example, of Vladislav Surkov, the ideologist of sovereign democracy, to head a commission with his U.S. opposite member on civil society indicates just the level of Moscow's contempt for these ideas. But the irony is that these ideas will come back, will triumph, I think, in the long term, and people like Surkov will fade into history as will their repression.

But in the short term, whatever length that might be, or the mid-range even, I think we are going to see greater instability and therefore the need for the United States not only to engage these countries diplomatically as it has done for example with Kyrgyzstan and is trying to do with Iran and has done with Moscow, but also to stand up and protest against the violations of international treaties.

We support human rights not only because we believe that it is a universal right and not only because, as the president said in Moscow, because democracy works, but finally—and I think most importantly from an international security point of view—because these rights are enshrined in an international treaty. If we allow states to trample on that treaty, it will not be the last treaty that is trampled on and we will all have to pay a much greater price in the end for our neglect in the beginning. Thank you.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Thank you very much, and thanks to all of you. I know that much has been said about the use of the new social networking media to organize protests in Iran. What do you think the repressive states have learned from this? Ms. Windsor, do you have a reaction to that?

Ms. WINDSOR. Well, we believe that actually the real battleground is in the area of new media and I want to call everyone's attention to a pilot study we put out a few months ago called "Freedom on the Net." It looks at 15 countries, and we're going to expand on that, and how efforts have been made to try to control access to the Internet, content, and use of the Internet.

So it's very clear from that study and from our investigations in the undermining democracy report that authoritarian regimes fueled in many cases by large amounts of petrodollars, have invested an enormous amount in terms of media manipulation and distortion. That surveillance techniques and the ability to undertake surveillance, the technology has evolved greatly. I think one of the questions is whether those of us that are on the side of democracy and human rights are willing to put our efforts and our support to meet that threat.

I think that the fact that the Iranian Government tried to shut down those efforts but yet was unsuccessful to completely do so—the fact that immediately after the Iranian elections China tried to shut down Twitter shows that people are nervous about this. On the other hand, these are programs that their citizens like. What the regimes are trying to do is allow certain types of discussion and use of this—discussion that facilitates their own self-interest—while controlling other discussions.

That's why I think very, very strong statement for freedom of the Internet and a dedicated response by democratic governments to actually invest in hackers for democracy and those that know how to put anti-circumvention software into the hands of these activists on the front lines is extremely important.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Thank you. I don't know if either one of you all had a comment on that before we move to the next question. Yes, sir?

Dr. BLANK. Yes, I would like to take that comment a step further. I think it's important on our part that we have a comprehensive and systematic information policy in Eurasia—not only Eurasia for that matter—regarding democracy and U.S. foreign policy. When the Rose Revolution broke out in Georgia and then a year later the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the Russian answer was that these were all organized by the CIA and by NGOs operating under U.S. Government control.

Nobody in Washington bothered to deny that, which has led to the situation where the leaders of these states in Eurasia in particular now believe this to be the case and the media systematically inculcates this in the absence of any countervailing program or policy. If we are to uphold democratic values and, for that matter, U.S. national interest in Eurasia, we need to devote much more time and resources to the creation and implementation of a systematic and comprehensive information policy that address old and new media and these kinds of new attempts to circumvent the new technology in order to make clear our position, our values, our point and the truth, simply put.

The value of instruments like Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty and Voice of America during the cold war is inestimable. I know from my experience when I was a student in Moscow that people were listening to Radio Free Europe, to VOA, to Deutsche

Welle, to BBC all the time in order to find out simply what was going on and what was the truth. And despite Moscow's best efforts, they couldn't block this completely. We should be doing the same today for the same reasons we did it then and we should be investing the resources and the effort to make sure that our message does get through in a systematic and comprehensive way.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Thank you very much. Mr. Kramer, I'll direct this next question to you initially. President Obama had said that he had deep concerns about the elections initially but that he thought it would be counterproductive for the United States to be quote "seen as meddling" close quote. Later though, he hardened his rhetoric. He said that while he has grave concerns about arrest and intimidation of opposition leaders, repression would not close the door on negotiations with the Iranian government.

Obviously, the United States has major strategic issues to address with Iran which apparently have convinced the White House that regardless of what happens there we have to maintain lines of communication. Do you think the same consideration should underlie U.S. policy toward the former Soviet republics after they hold what are deemed to be bad elections?

Mr. KRAMER. Mr. Chairman, I think it's always best for U.S. policy to rely on truth and to call elections as we see them. I appreciate the challenges that the current administration faces in dealing with Iran on a whole host of issues, in particular Iran's aspirations for nuclear weapons capability. However, I think there perhaps was a missed opportunity to come out more clearly earlier in the process. We were going to be accused of meddling no matter what. And I think there may have been something to be said about being clearer about the election that we saw and then the crack-down following the election of protesters, to speak in the clearest term possible.

I cited Ukraine as an example. There were vast differences between Ukraine 2004 and Iran this year. We didn't have the nuclear issue with Ukraine in 2004, but I think clarity in Ukraine in 2004 was critical. It's not to take away from the people who really deserve credit for turning around things in Ukraine. And those are the hundreds of thousands of people who showed up on Maidan Square in Kiev and demanded that their votes count.

I think it's very important that with elections throughout the region in Eurasia that we insist that elections are free and fair and that includes not simply election day and the counting of ballots; it includes the whole campaign so there is equal access so that opposition parties have the ability to register and to run.

I think we need to apply that standard as evenly and consistently as possible, recognizing that in the real world that is sometimes difficult to do. Having been in a position where we have to take each election based on its own unique circumstances, there nevertheless are common values and common standards not least set by the OSCE, ODIHR that I think we should always apply to these countries.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Do you have any comment, Dr. Blank, on this?

Dr. BLANK. Yes. I believe, like David, that it's necessary to engage these countries for a number of reasons. In the case of Iran, we have urgent issues of international security, even of potentially

war and peace which need to be addressed and if the Iranian government is interested in an engagement it should be pursued.

On the other hand though, I think also an opportunity was missed—we were going to be accused, no matter what we did, same as in Ukraine—we were going to be accused and to its credit, the Bush administration at that time understood that if its going to be accused for stealing in one election, it might as well get up and say the truth before Russia is able to get away with this.

We need to have a clear message that while we seek to engage Iran, and we seek to deal in a straightforward way with its government, we cannot support the electoral fraud and domestic violence perpetrated against people seeking their human rights. The same is true, for that matter, in Central Asia. We do need to engage Central Asia, particularly as there is a war in Afghanistan. And we just did so with Kyrgyzstan to get back the base in Manas, which we clearly believe is of strategic value to us in that war. But that does not mean we have to turn a blind eye to the outrages that are taking place in Kyrgyzstan with regard to its election.

And the same is true for that matter with Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan made solemn promises to the OSCE that it has now gone back on. Somebody needs to call them on that, they need to understand that there's a price to be paid for violating these kinds of promises, and for that matter wanting to be the chairman of an organization with who's credo they obviously do not respect.

The same is true, finally, most importantly with Moscow. For both geo-strategic and human rights principles. First of all, as I said, Moscow is a signatory of the Helsinki Treaty and the associated protocols. We have a perfectly legal right to call Moscow, as they have a right to call us, on derelictions in democratic procedure. If people want to accuse us, for example, about our activities in Guantanamo, they are going to do so. So we should not hold back and refrain from calling a spade a spade with regard to the repression of the media, the corruption of elections and so on.

And for that matter to what's going on in Chechnya and the murder of Madame Estemirova yesterday, which I think we all know who's responsible for that, even if we can't legally prove it. These kinds of things do not benefit the United States if we are silent and we need to prevent violence by speaking up and telling the truth about these cases. So engagement is necessary and once more if we are not engaged with these governments then we have no way of talking to them and they will certainly discount anything we have to say.

The experience of the Soviet Union testifies to this. We were able to persuade the Soviet Union, starting in the 1970s, to let thousands of Soviet Jews out, for example, precisely because we had a robust diplomatic engagement and relationship with Moscow and Moscow saw that we were serious. If we forgo talking about human rights, they will think we are not serious about the issue and they won't listen to us on that and it will be harder for us to deal with them on other issues. Finally, if we don't speak up, nations who resort to these kinds of behaviors at home will carry them out abroad.

I am very concerned that Iran will probably accelerate its nuclear activities now because it will seek to whip up national xeno-

phobia and support not only its nuclear activities but perhaps also its terrorist partners in the Middle East in order to scuttle the peace process and blame us and Israel and the usual suspects, so to speak, for Iran's problems. If we don't speak up, this is more likely than not.

Mr. MCINTYRE. I want to switch gears because of our time constraints. Let me ask you Ms. Windsor, the Freedom House "Undermining Democracy" report stated that another common trait of oppressive regimes like Iran, Russia and others in the use of soft power to project influence abroad. Has Iran's soft power in neighboring states been diminished as a result of some of the news and images that we have seen? Or would you say that authorities have effectively controlled the presentation of developments in Iran?

Ms. WINDSOR. Well, in terms of their ability to—I'm not sure, certainly in Central Asia, and I defer to the experts, I think Iran has been trying to project soft power into that region but without an enormous amount of success to date. So I think that, overall, the Iranian government and the way that it handled events there actually declined in legitimacy even in the eyes of authoritarian regimes if only because they allowed for some period of time massive destabilizing protests to occur.

But, I think that—I just want to reaffirm that the importance of soft power is something that can be exerted by democracies as well. I just want to reiterate that. To the extent that we need to engage, we need to engage with a human rights movement in Central Asia frankly, I think that there has been a tendency by the United States and other democratic countries to allow other interests to take priority over democracy and human rights concerns.

I think that's a flawed long-term strategy. Of course we have a short-term interest in terms of trade, of being able to get arms to Afghanistan. But if we do not speak out against the rapid deterioration of Kyrgyzstan, which was supposedly a colored revolution, not to mention Kazakhstan, that is supposed to be a model of OSCE principles and instead is making a mockery of them, that does not speak out against what is happening in Uzbekistan and frankly does not speak out against what's happening in Russia.

I think that it's going to have longer-term national security implications that are very serious. So these countries, Iran, Russia, others, are always going to try to project their power. The question that we as a democratic community have to face is: What are we willing to do to try to counter that? And let's get serious. And really the report, the message of this report is, we need to get serious about what's going on and project our own soft power—soft power in favor of democracy and human rights, not leaving it out of the equation.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Thank you. I want to ask another question to the panel. Azerbaijani authorities recently arrested two young civil society activists who have been trying to mobilize young people by using Facebook and other Internet outlets. Do you think that the events following the Iranian election had any impact on Baku's decision to initiate what seems to be a very crude and obvious provocation which has drawn international criticism?

Mr. KRAMER. Mr. Chairman, I think certainly what has happened to these two youth leaders is unacceptable. The international

community should be speaking out very loudly. I know that diplomatic efforts have been made on their behalf, but unfortunately they're still being detained and have been denied proper medical treatment after being beaten up. And the people who assaulted them are on the loose or had been freed in fact.

But what we saw in the case of these two youth activists is not, sadly, unusual in Azerbaijan. We have seen a steady deterioration of respect for human rights; we have seen efforts by the government to consolidate its control over society. We saw the referendum, which will give President Aliyev the opportunity to serve for life.

The election last year was not viewed as free and fair by respectable international monitors so there has been a steady deterioration—journalists are subject to harassment and arrest, broadcasts from foreign sources—RFE/RL, Voice of America, BBC—were shut down even though we were promised that those broadcasts could continue while there were good faith negotiations underway to try to solve the issue of foreign broadcast. So the situation in Iran I think will reinforce what have already been existing tendencies in Azerbaijan and I think that should be a source of real concern for us.

Ms. WINDSOR. I would just note that Azerbaijan's scores in our latest "Nations in Transit" report fell further than any other country in that region.

Dr. BLANK. I would just make the point that I think that while it's possible these two gentleman might have been arrested in any event given the nature of the Azeri system, I think that Iran and Xinjiang have heightened fears among the governments of these countries to the point where they are much more nervous about any kind of satire, public protest or even the whisper of a public protest than before. And for that reason—and until and unless there's some countervailing power, that's likely to continue for quite a while to come.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Ms. Windsor, in the Freedom House report issued last month, you identify the common traits, you call them, of authoritarian regimes including Iran, Russia, and China. On balance, do you think the most repressive regimes are encouraged by the developments so far in Iran?

Ms. WINDSOR. The answer to that, of course, again, that's partly why I started off—we don't know actually what the future of Iran is so I think that they were made more nervous by what happened in Iran, that while everything in the short term might be seen as steady, that frankly, the unified outrage of the international community that came out must have disturbed them, because as I said, I think that there's been a lot of stumbling around and apologizing by democratic governments as opposed—for their stances on human rights and democracy when they should have been countering these very sophisticated efforts to undermine democracy and heighten nationalism, which I think has very serious, long-term, negative implications for U.S. security, to engage in mass-media manipulation, illiberal education.

Iran exhibited all of these techniques and what Iran showed is that despite all of that, it didn't work in Iran enough to prevent the protest. So that doesn't mean that Russia isn't more efficient

at it and I think the challenge in Russia is much greater. And I might say, as my colleague Tom Melia spent the last week in Moscow at the Russian civil society summit, those groups were universal in saying two things.

One is, the U.S. violations in Guantanamo and then intention and interrogation were horrific. But they should not mean that the United States should not stand up for democracy and human rights. We shouldn't let that silence our voices internationally. And two, that they want more assistance and contacts with the West. They want to see more Western groups there. They want to be connected more with groups.

And so I think the next stage for this administration—the U.S. administration—is to say, as it's been finding its voice in democracy and human rights, and not without some initial stumbles, that we have been quite cognizant that they need to followup that voice with real action. And that means support and reaching out because one of the main strains of the attack by these authoritarian regimes is that the international community's support for activists inside these countries is illegitimate and is illegal and should be forbidden. And this is happening at the United Nations; it's happening at the OSCE; it's happening at the OAS.

And I think that in the waning days of the Bush administration, there was a sense among the democratic governments and human rights groups and others here that, somehow, perhaps they were right. Let us not let them use their propaganda techniques to convince us that the international community should not be increasing its support. And so I really, again, hope that Iran can actually help mobilize democratic states and get them to reassert their voice and frankly their real, active support for those people on the ground.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Thank you. Gentlemen, I will let either one of you or both respond to this. Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan all belong to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The SCO's charter calls for members to cooperate to fight terrorism, separatism and extremism, all of which can be broadly interpreted of course. But Iran is an observer in that organization but it sought full membership. Do you believe that the events of the last month improve or worsen their chances of joining?

Dr. BLANK. I think that Iran's chances were hurt, first of all because the states who are members see, as Jennifer pointed out, a heightened potential for instability there and they do not want to be dragged into having to defend it. Iran seeks membership in the SCO for a number of reasons but most primarily, I would argue, because of its fears of being attacked by the United States and/or by the West in general. And it therefore seeks to have the protection afforded to it by the SCO's charter, which is a collective security charter obliging members to come to the defense of countries threatened by extremism, terrorism and separatism, however you define that.

There's not one state in that group that really wants to come to Iran's defense against the United States if it comes to that. And second, there's not one of them that really supports the idea of a nuclear weapon state in Iran. They would prefer that issue—the smaller states would prefer that issue to go away and Russia and

China I don't think want Iran to go nuclear but they're not prepared to do anything serious to stop it. But they are not going to let themselves be dragged into a direct confrontation with the United States over Iran.

If you add to that prior consideration the fact that Iran is now shown to be unstable and that both Russia and China know full well that Iran has enormous capabilities for inciting civil unrest in the Caucasus and Central Asia, I think Iran has hurt its chances for the time being, all things being equal, of becoming a member of the SCO any time soon.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Thank you. Mr. Kramer, I'm going to let you have the last word. We're getting ready to wrap up our hearing so—

Mr. KRAMER. Sure. Mr. Chairman, I agree largely with what Steve said with a slight quibble. When Ahmadinejad was in Yekaterinburg for the SCO summit, President Medvedev reportedly expressed support for upgrading Iran's observer status to full membership. And he held a one-on-one meeting with him and deputy foreign minister described the meeting as very symbolic and then also tried to deflect attention from the controversy around the election by saying it was an internal matter, which is a common refrain we hear from regimes like this about problems that occur from these elections.

I agree with Steve that Russia does not want to see Iran become a nuclear weapon state but I don't think Russia will do much about it. They would much rather have us take on that responsibility and burden while they may benefit from developing a deeper relationship with Iran regardless of what happened last month.

Last word if I may, Mr. Chairman, and I appreciate the pressure on your time. I want to pick up on something Jennifer said and I also want to return the favor and say that she and her organization do outstanding work and are a terrific asset for those of us who were in the government and those of us who follow these kinds of issues. And she made an extremely important point, which is despite our shortcomings—U.S. shortcomings, not just over the past 8 years but throughout our history—other governments cite those shortcomings with post facto justification of their own repressive measures. They engaged in repressive activity whether we are the best, most democratic state in the world or not.

And what that means is that we, despite whatever faults we may have, have an obligation to speak up when other states engage in repressive activities, when they pursue authoritarian tendencies. And I think Jennifer was absolutely right that it is vitally important that we speak up—that we speak with a unified voice, meaning not just the United States but all democratic countries around the world have an obligation to speak up whether it's Russia, China, Burma, you name it. The louder the voices and the more voices there are, the better the opportunities are for democracy to grow. Thank you very much.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Thank you. And thanks to all of our witnesses. Thanks to all who joined us today and to the staff who always does a great job in putting these hearings together for us. We will now adjourn the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. May God bless you. Thanks for your service and commitment.

[Whereupon, at 2:58 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

APPENDICES

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE McINTYRE, COMMISSIONER, COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Welcome to this hearing on the impact of the Iran crisis on its OSCE neighbors. The world has been watching with fascination the drama that began over one month ago with Iran's presidential election. As of today, no one knows what will be the outcome of the unrest that followed the announcement of a landslide victory for Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Just as the situation continues to unfold inside Iran, so it does among Iran's neighbors, which are watching events there with emotions ranging from curiosity to anxiety. The purpose of this hearing is to examine the implications of these events in the neighboring and nearby OSCE republics, especially in the former Soviet Union.

Of course, there are many differences between those secular states and theocratic Iran. But in the post-Soviet space, super-presidents have generally overwhelmed other institutions while removing the public from politics through rigged elections and suppressing street protests. Russia and Belarus have largely managed to keep things in check, but other CIS states have experienced post-election unrest, including Armenia, Azerbaijan and most recently Moldova. Have they been watching Iranians risking their lives in protest and nervously wondering "if even there, why not here?" Or "why not here again?"

In the dynamic of state-society confrontation in repressive states, precedent has a special importance. Iran's Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khomeini said as much in his June 21 sermon, claiming that those who organized the demonstrations "thought that Iran is another Georgia."

In the post-Soviet space, governments and publics closely watch what goes on in other countries. If opposition movements and civic activists who have lost faith in the prospect of democratization are heartened by news of post-election street protests elsewhere, ruling regimes are appalled. The May 2005 massacre in Andijan, where Uzbek authorities shot hundreds of demonstrators, followed by only 2 months the post-election demonstrations in Kyrgyzstan which led to the ouster of then-President Askar Akaev. Was Uzbek President Karimov signaling to his own people and to his neighbors that the wave of Rose, Orange and Tulip Revolutions would spread no farther?

Indeed, the precedent of street protests that result in regime change is the No. 1 nightmare of repressive governments. So it is not surprising that Russian President Medvedev not only rushed to congratulate Ahmadinejad but then went to Cairo and in a clear counter to President Obama's speech in that capital, stated that Russia opposed Western attempts to promote democratization in the Arab world.

What, then, are the likely or potential implications of the events in Iran on post-Soviet states? I look forward to hearing our expert witnesses examine this question.

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF DAVID J. KRAMER,¹ SENIOR
FELLOW, GERMAN MARSHALL FUND OF THE UNITED STATES**

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Helsinki Commission, my first time doing so since I left the U.S. Government in January but certainly not my first time as a witness. It was an honor to serve on the Commission representing the State Department while I was Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. I also would like to take this opportunity to commend the Commission and its members for their visit to Belarus in late June, where you secured the release of Emanuel Zeltser, who had been unjustly jailed and deprived of proper medical and legal access. Your statement insisting on further reforms and liberalization from the Belarusian government before there would be further changes in U.S. sanctions policy sent exactly the right message. May you have similar success in future travels to other countries.

Mr. Chairman, turning to the topic of today's hearing, "Iran and the OSCE Neighbors," what we have seen in Iran over the past month is part of a larger phenomenon that we've been witnessing all over the world, including in the OSCE region, for quite some time, albeit to varying degrees: namely, intensified efforts by authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes to stay in power at virtually all costs. This became even more apparent in the aftermath of the "color revolutions" in Georgia in 2003 and Ukraine in 2004. Lack of accountability, distrust of the population, and unwillingness to hold truly free and fair elections are common tendencies among these regimes, and the developments in Iran will only reinforce these tendencies. Authoritarian regimes study and learn lessons from each other, whether in clamping down on NGOs, restricting the press and new media, or repressing civil society. Authoritarian regimes view real elections as a major inconvenience, to say the least, but go through a charade anyway to lend lip service to the "democratic process"—as long as they protect against any surprises. But the beauty of truly free and fair elections is that they can and do produce surprises—i.e., a change in the status quo. And that is why they are viewed as such a threat. That is why color revolutions are viewed the same way—as threats to the status quo or to orchestrated transitions of power.

And yet, through their efforts to stay in power, authoritarian regimes eventually undermine their own positions by exacerbating the lack of trust with their own people, who, over time, lose patience with corrupt, incompetent, and undemocratic leadership. That process may take weeks, months, years, even decades, but rest assured, as President Bush said in his second inaugural address January 20, 2005: "America will not pretend that jailed dissidents prefer their chains, or that women welcome humiliation and servitude, or that any human being aspires to live at the mercy of bullies . . . Eventually the call of freedom comes to every mind and every soul. We do not accept the existence of permanent

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tyranny because we do not accept the possibility of permanent slavery. Liberty will come to those who love it." It is that inevitability, I hope, that leaders in the region will eventually understand, and that further crackdowns and rigged elections are not the answer.

Mr. Chairman, in preparing for today's hearing I couldn't help but think back to 2004 and Ukraine. Specifically, following a second round of presidential elections in that country in which hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians turned out on Maidan Square to protest what they deemed to be fraudulent election results. On November 24, after then-Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich was declared the winner of Ukraine's runoff election, then-Secretary of State Colin Powell appeared at the Department's press briefing and delivered a crystal clear message: "We cannot accept this result as legitimate because it does not meet international standards and because there has not been an investigation of the numerous and credible reports of fraud and abuse," he said. "It is time for Ukrainian leaders to decide whether they are on the side of democracy or not, whether they respect the will of the people or not. If the Ukrainian government does not act immediately and responsibly," he went on to say, "there will be consequences for our relationship, for Ukraine's hopes for a Euro-Atlantic integration, and for individuals responsible for perpetrating fraud . . ."

Then-Senator Joseph R. Biden, at the time the ranking Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee, said Ukraine's leaders should "immediately invalidate the election results, invite an independent commission to investigate the numerous reports of fraud and protect all peaceful demonstrators." Leaders from other countries joined in: German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder declared, "There has been massive electoral fraud." Canada echoed Powell's statement by announcing that it, too, did not accept the election results.

Let me be clear: the people who protested on Maidan Square those wintry days in November are the ones who deserve credit for making sure their votes mattered and for producing a positive outcome from the Orange Revolution, as it became known. Still, Powell's words that day in November and the outspokenness of others provided important support not only for a free and fair election in Ukraine but for the principle of free and fair elections around the world.

That we had relations with Ukraine (albeit testy with the outgoing Kuchma Administration) and thus some leverage, that there were credible election observation missions there including from the U.S., and that exit polls showed the challenger Viktor Yushchenko as the real winner are obvious differences from the situation the Obama Administration faced in Iran in June, where we have no diplomatic relations, no leverage, and there were no credible outside observers in place. The Obama Administration also must contend with the nuclear weapons issue with Iran, an issue that the U.S. didn't have to worry about with Ukraine in 2004. Still, even with these significant differences, one is left to wonder what might have been had we taken a similar position toward Iran in June 2009 as we did toward Ukraine in 2004. Yesterday, more than a month after the Iranian election, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had this to say: "We watched the energy of Iran's election with great admiration, only to be appalled by the manner in which

the government used violence to quell the voices of the Iranian people, and then tried to hide its actions by arresting foreign journalists and nationals, and expelling them, and cutting off access to technology. As we and our G-8 partners have made clear, these actions are deplorable and unacceptable.”

It is worth noting that following the problems in 2004, Ukraine has held two national elections that have met international standards for free and fair elections. It will hold another presidential election this coming January and has an opportunity to conduct three such free and fair elections in a row, which would make it stand out compared to many of its neighbors. If anything, what has just happened in Iran reaffirms how far Ukraine has come since 2004. Its politics may be frustrating and messy, but today’s Ukraine is largely democratic, albeit fragile.

Alas, the same cannot be said for other countries in the region. Two upcoming elections raise particular concerns: Kyrgyzstan which holds presidential elections next week, and Moldova which holds parliamentary elections June 29 that will then determine that country’s next president. Developments in Iran will likely be on the minds of authorities in both those countries.

A poor country with few natural resources, Kyrgyzstan was once thought of as the island of democracy in Central Asia before it went through its own so-called color revolution in 2005. Yet, Kyrgyzstan’s Tulip Revolution, in which former President Akayev deserted office as crowds gathered in protest, was less a true popular revolution than the transfer of power from what was widely viewed as one corrupt group to another. The current government’s inability to meet basic needs—the population endures rolling black-outs, for example—has meant a loss of confidence in Bakiyev and, in turn, in the electoral process. In the lead-up to next week’s election, we have seen disturbing developments recently including the mysterious deaths of a leading opposition figure (Medet Sadyrkulov) and a journalist (Almaz Tashiev), harassment and detention of opposition leaders, and the shutting down of broadcasts of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Notwithstanding the importance of our military base in Kyrgyzstan, we should be stressing to the government that this election is a test of Kyrgyzstan’s progress and that failure to pass that test will have a negative impact on our bilateral relations.

Elsewhere in Central Asia, aside from parliamentary elections in Uzbekistan this coming December and in Tajikistan next February and absent the death of one of the region’s long-time rulers, there is unlikely to be a precipitating event in these countries that would lead to considerable unrest and opposition demonstrations. And to make sure the lid is kept on against any possible problems, Kazakh President Nazarbayev signed into law last week new controls on the Internet. In a striking irony, the OSCE, which Kazakhstan will chair next year, described this new law as repressive and had urged Nazarbayev to veto the bill. This is but one example of a growing number of attempts to control media outlets, including the Internet, in Central Asia, and the recent experience in Iran, where the Internet and text-messaging played a role in the protests, will likely lead to even greater efforts to clamp down. Together with our allies, we need to be pushing back on these disturbing trends.

In Moldova, we saw unprecedented violence and vandalism after the first parliamentary election in April fed by the lack of confidence among many voters, especially younger ones, in a clean electoral process. Unfortunately, one cannot rule out the possibility of a repeat of that situation during the re-run of elections July 29—albeit not on the scale of what we witnessed in Iran. Many Moldovan voters are fed up with the ruling Communist Party and want change badly enough that they may find unacceptable any outcome that would not lead to different leadership. We should be encouraging transparency in ballot-counting and peaceful protest along with the right of assembly. Stern messages should be conveyed now and throughout the election that a repeat of April's events is unacceptable.

Perhaps the country with the greatest interest in developments in Iran is neighboring Azerbaijan. Roughly a quarter of Iran's population of 66 million people is Azeri; this is approximately twice the size of Azerbaijan's population of 8 million and heightens the importance of events that happen in Iran. The main challenger to Ahmadinejad, who reportedly is not very popular within the Azeri-Iranian community, was Mir Hussein Mousavi, an ethnic Azeri from Tabriz. Still, on June 15, three days after the Iranian election, President Aliyev sent a letter of congratulation to Ahmadinejad, expressing confidence that Azerbaijani-Iranian relations would "continue strengthening to meet our peoples' interests." According to eurasianet.org, Azerbaijan's pro-government television channels offered limited coverage of the post-election protests, reflecting nervousness on the part of the government in Baku. By contrast, print media, especially those affiliated with the opposition, offered significantly more coverage of developments in Iran. The bottom line for the authorities in Azerbaijan, as both the President Aliyev and Foreign Minister Mammadyarov made clear on July 6, was that events in Iran were the "internal affair" of Iran—and certainly were not to be emulated.

For quite some time, however, well before the recent developments in Iran, the Azerbaijani government has taken steps to solidify its control. It closed down broadcasts of Radio Liberty, Voice of America, and the BBC earlier this year despite promises that the broadcasts could stay on during good-faith efforts between the broadcasters and Azerbaijani authorities to negotiate a solution. A March referendum to eliminate term limits for the presidency opens the way for the incumbent, Ilham Aliyev, to remain president-for-life given his control over the political landscape. Despite the release this year of several journalists, others face harassment and detention for seemingly political reasons. Most recently, the Azerbaijani parliament passed legislation, albeit somewhat watered down after protests, that would badly affect NGOs and their sources of funding. If signed by President Aliyev, this law would threaten the activities of many organizations. And just last week, two youth leaders, Adnan Hajizada and Emin Milli, were beaten by unknown assailants but then arrested and detained by authorities and tried on spurious charges of hooliganism. They were convicted and sentenced to two months in jail over protests from many in the human rights and diplomatic communities; their assailants, meanwhile, were released.

The U.S. State Department's annual Human Rights Report released February 25 described the situation there this way: "The government's human rights record remained poor and worsened in some areas." It faulted Azerbaijan's presidential election last October for "serious restrictions on political participation and the media, pressure and restrictions on observers, and flawed vote counting and tabulation processes." It also cites harassment, arbitrary arrests, and detentions of critics and political opponents and restrictions on freedom of assembly.

Strengthened in his position after the controversial referendum on ending terms limits, President Aliyev should use his position to launch a liberalization campaign. He should do so not because the West wants him to but because such a move is in Azerbaijan's long-term interests and is the best guarantee against an Iran-like situation unfolding in his country. At the same time, we should be pressing him to veto the NGO law, free the remaining journalists still in detention, and return the suspended broadcasts to the air.

Armenia is another country keeping a close eye on the situation in Iran, given the deepening ties between the two over recent years. President Serzh Sarkisian traveled to Teheran this past April and signed a number of agreements. Some 5,000 Iranian nationals live in Armenia, and according to Iranian Press TV, 79% of them voted for Mousavi, only 15% for Ahmadinejad. Still, Sarkisian "warmly" congratulated Ahmadinejad and "the friendly people of Iran" on the election outcome. "I am confident that together with you we will continue our joint efforts to deepen and strengthen Armenian-Iranian relations in various fields," he said in a letter made public by his office. By contrast, a group of Armenian journalists appealed for the release of Iranian colleagues who had been arrested in the aftermath of the disputed election.

Armenia, too, has its share of problems in the area of democratic reform. The U.S. State Department's annual Human Rights Report noted that in 2008, the Armenian government's human rights record "deteriorated significantly during the year, with authorities and their agents committing numerous human rights abuses, particularly in connection with the presidential elections and the government's suppression of demonstrations that followed." Just last month, days before Iran's election, Sarkisian dissolved a task force established to investigate last year's deadly post-election violence in Yerevan in which ten people were killed; the reason given was the task force members' failure to "rid themselves of their political agendas." The opposition Armenian National Congress Party said it will continue to investigate the very sensitive events of March 1-2 instead. Dozens of protestors arrested in last year's demonstrations remain in jail. Controversy also surrounds May 31 municipal elections in Yerevan, which opposition parties allege were fraudulent. A Council of Europe election observation mission concluded that the municipal poll was largely "in compliance with European standards," notwithstanding "serious deficiencies" observed in some voting stations. The U.S. should be pressing the Armenian government for a thorough, credible investigation of the events in March 2008, an end to harassment of journalists and opposition figures, and the release of remaining political prisoners.

In Georgia, the reaction to events in Iran has been very quiet. The disagreements between the Georgian opposition and the Saakashvili government have kept their attention focused on their own internal situation. Unlike the governments in Baku and Yerevan, however, the government in Tbilisi has not congratulated Ahmadinejad. In Georgia, the U.S. should stress the need for institutional reforms, including a truly independent judiciary, and constructive engagement with the opposition, and Vice President Biden's visit there next week is an ideal opportunity to convey that message.

Last but not least, Russia. Ahmadinejad attended the second day of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting in Yekaterinburg June 16, at which Russia and the other SCO members embraced and congratulated the Iranian leader despite the brewing controversy over the election results. Russian President Medvedev held a one-on-one meeting with his Iranian counterpart and, according to press reports, indicated support for upgrading Iran's status in the SCO from observer to full member. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told reporters the Iranian election was an internal matter for Iran and praised Ahmadinejad's visit to Russia as "quite symbolic."

The authoritarian leadership in Russia since Vladimir Putin's rise to power has been working to establish a system that would minimize any possibility of a color revolution in Russia, let alone an Iran-like scenario. Even with its economic difficulties and barring a radical change for the worse and absent a precipitating event like a contested election (which won't happen any time soon), Russia is not vulnerable to the kind of scene recently witnessed in Iran. It does, however, benefit from anything that leads to a rise in the price of oil, and events in Iran caused a brief surge in the price. While Russian officials do not want to see more turmoil in Iran, they are likely to draw the conclusion that elections and their outcome shouldn't be left to chance. That is a conclusion, I fear, that will be reached not just in Moscow.

Indeed, what we saw unfold in Iran and the government's reaction to the protests there are what we've been seeing around the world for quite some time. Alas, the events in Iran are likely to reinforce pre-existing tendencies toward further cracking down and repression, not toward liberalization even though over time these tendencies are more apt to weaken, not strengthen these regimes. Speaking out against such tendencies is important and needs to be done by the Obama Administration in conjunction with our allies. And just as it did in Belarus most recently, this Commission will continue to be a vital voice for speaking truth to power.

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF JENNIFER WINDSOR, EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR, FREEDOM HOUSE**

Mr. Chairman. Let me begin by thanking you for inviting Freedom House to testify here today. I might add that it is a genuine honor to appear on the same panel as David Kramer, a dedicated public servant and a tireless champion of human rights and democracy around the world.

You have asked us to speculate on the potential impact that recent events in Iran may have on neighboring OSCE states. To focus the discussion, I think its useful to first summarize a few key elements of what has happened in Iran to date, and then draw parallels between developments within Iran and the post-Soviet consolidated authoritarian states in the OSCE and finally to provide some initial thoughts about the impact of events in Iran on the future of those countries.

RECENT EVENTS IN IRAN: KEY ELEMENTS

While there were no domestic and international monitors, the presidential elections that were held in Iran last month were deeply flawed by all accounts.

The announcement of an overwhelming victory by Ahmadinejad triggered spontaneous, country-wide demonstrations, in at least two-thirds of the 30 provinces, in cities including in Tehran, Tabriz, Isfahan, Shiraz, Isfahan, Rasht, Mashhad, Bandar Abbas, Sary, Qasvin and Yazd. The extent and breadth of the demonstrations took many by surprise, including those in the region. They sent a clear message—that a broad swath of Iranians was deeply frustrated with a regime that denies them any real role in the political life of the country.

The initial few days also brought hope as divisions and disagreements in the ruling coalition emerged. But then the Iranian government embarked on a brutal campaign of violence and intimidation against the protestors, carried out by government security forces and government-sanctioned vigilantes who assaulted individual demonstrators, resulting in an undetermined number of deaths. Thousands of Iranians have been detained.

So, the question we now face is whether the events of the last month in Iran will more closely parallel the Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing or the early days of a Rose Revolution or a reprise of the Maiden in Ukraine. The answer seems to be the former for now, but events in Iran have not yet played out, and frankly we cannot be sure how they will.

Many of the elements that have brought about democratic change in Serbia, Ukraine and Georgia were present in Iran—fissures in the ruling elite, widespread mobilization and engagement, and a ham-handed attempt by the government to control electoral outcomes. But other key elements were missing—including a unified, disciplined citizen-led campaign with clear objectives and a fragmented security apparatus (the Revolutionary Guards and the vigilante efforts of the Basij have succeeded for now to quell significant public protests.)

PARALLELS BETWEEN IRAN AND POST-SOVIET AUTHORITARIAN
REGIMES

Events in Iran demonstrated that authoritarian regimes have learned well their own lessons from the color revolutions, and have engaged in a comprehensive, systematic strategy to prevent such revolutions from occurring in their own societies. The consolidated authoritarian governments in the OSCE, all of which are post-Soviet states, provide apt examples of these trends, as the recently released results from our Nations in Transit study in 2009 demonstrate. The measures that had already been put in place to restrict political rights and civil liberties by the Russian authorities and other authoritarian regimes have been greatly intensified since Vladimir Putin came to power in Russia, and particularly since the popular pushback in Georgia and Ukraine. The findings indicate that these are dark days for democracy in the region. Freedom House now classifies a record eight former Soviet republics as “consolidated authoritarian regimes,” our lowest category.

It is perhaps fitting that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s first trip abroad following the contested Iranian election was to Moscow. The Russian Federation has taken a leadership role in its attempts to undermine democracy within and outside of its borders. As our recent report on *Undermining Democracy: 21st Century Authoritarians* noted “The mechanisms of Russian influence in the former Soviet Union are interference in domestic politics, financial leverage, energy blackmail, and strategic communications, all aided by the strong shared legacy of the Soviet experience.”

Within Russia, and throughout the post-Soviet states, the latest Nations in Transit report illustrates that these regimes are specifically targeting independent media and civil society.

1. Controlling information flow, increasingly targeting internet and mobile phone technology, has become a top priority.

The Iranian regime, like the deeply illiberal ones in the authoritarian states of the former Soviet Union, has unleashed a fearsome brand of media manipulation and control—focused both on disruption and distortion.

Before, during and after the crisis, the Iranian government has sought to isolate its citizens and cut off news of events happening inside of the country, as well as reactions abroad by curtailing access to the internet and arresting journalists. Thanks to brave citizen journalists within Iran and their supporters outside, they have not been completely successful in those attempts, but clearly the current and future key battleground will be the media—new and old.

Throughout the post-Soviet states, governments are focused on controlling the information available to the broad masses of the public and using the media to discredit political opponents and independent civil society.

Of the former Soviet states, Russia is perhaps the most sophisticated in its media management—working to ensure that communication and information flows serve the interests of the ruling elite and virtually eliminating most independent voices. You can find an excellent description of the vast resources that have been

devoted to this cause in the Russia chapter of *Undermining Democracy*.

While there are still independent newspapers in most of the region—except for Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan—television is firmly under government control. Governments in Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan have sought to exclude foreign radio broadcasters such as Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and the BBC, while Armenia censored all media after the post-election violence of March 2008 and Georgia blocked access to Russian Internet media sites during and immediately after the August 2008 conflict with Russia.

Increasingly, these regimes are focused on disputing legitimate online discourse, and given the role of technology in the recent Iranian events, they will likely step up their efforts in this direction. Just last week, President Nazarbayev signed a harshly repressive Internet law that defines everything on the web—including blogs and chats—as media, and thus liable to the harsh punishments Kazakhstani legislation posits for even minor legal violations.

2. Reducing the ability of citizens to associate and organize through restrictive laws and targeted intimidation and repression against key leaders has become the norm.

Pressure from government is also squeezing civil society in many of the countries of the former-Soviet Union. In *Nations in Transit* 2009, the average score for civil society in the post-Soviet states dropped for the fifth time in six years. Regional governments have particularly targeted groups that work on issues of political significance. One after another, they have passed repressive laws restricting public assembly, religious groups, and NGOs, many of which bear striking resemblances to each other. In many cases, these laws are only lightly redacted versions of Russian laws. (In at least one instance of which Freedom House is aware, a national government began discussions of a draft law that in several places still referred not to that country but to the Russian Federation.)

More nuanced harassment and restrictions are coupled with targeted brutality—such as the murder of Natalya Estemirova yesterday in Chechnya—to send a message that any activity to advance civil and political rights in these societies will be punished.

The authoritarian regimes in the former Soviet Union are particularly trying to de-legitimize and block support by the international community for groups and activists inside—in some cases making it illegal for domestic NGOs to accept foreign funds and launching media attacks to portray activists as tools of foreign agents.

The Iranian government has the distinction perhaps of adopting some of the most extreme measures in this area of control over civil society. For the past several years, individuals who had—or were alleged to have—contact with the West were picked up, interrogated and sometimes tortured. In response to the events of the last month, the regime attempted to blame President Obama and the British embassy for interference in Iranian domestic affairs—assertions that were endorsed immediately by the Russian government.

But the consolidated authoritarian post-Soviet states do not lag behind by much. In particular, we are seeing an increasing trend of violence against independent voices in these societies, including

an increasing number of incidents of journalists and activists beaten and murdered; incidents that are never satisfactorily investigated let alone resolved. In this regard, the judiciary's total subservience to the executive branch is a key tool by which regimes maintain control and deny their citizens the ability to enforce their basic rights.

3. Managing elections by limiting political choices, monopolizing state resources, stuffing the ballot boxes, and violently repressing dissent has become the standard operating procedure for authoritarian governments who want the veneer of legitimacy brought by elections without the unpredictability of genuine competition.

While Iran's attempt at election management demonstrated that efforts to completely subvert elections are risky even when the playing field is grossly uneven, its capacity and willingness to use force has nonetheless worked in the short term to keep the chosen candidate in power.

Iran's leaders no doubt wished their managed election had paralleled much more closely with Russia's tightly-managed non-competitive "selection" process that neatly installed Putin's hand-picked successor Dmitry Medvedev in power.

Russia's fellow petro-state, Azerbaijan, likewise held an uncompetitive presidential election last year in which the result was predetermined. Even Georgia, whose leaders came to power through a revolution against so-called managed democracy, abused administrative resources to seriously influence that country's hotly contested presidential and parliamentary elections.

Several attempts to manage elections in the region have caused such public indignations that regimes were required to deploy the type of physical violence we saw most recently in Iran. Armenia's most recent presidential poll, which was marred by irregularities and took place on a decidedly unequal playing field, was followed by lethal post-election violence after the police sought to break up what had been peaceful protests. Already this year, disputed elections in Moldova have produced post-election violence and created a political stalemate that has required a new round of elections.

Undoubtedly, the more authoritarian rulers in the region will see the post-election violence in Iran as a warning of what can happen if a regime lets down its guard, even for a moment. The unfortunate result of this trend is already visible in Kyrgyzstan, where the public is almost totally apathetic about next week's elections, unhappy with both the government and the opposition and convinced that their votes will not make the slightest difference. Initial observations by the ODIHR Election Observation Mission indicate a number of problems in what is widely expected to be a non-competitive, non-democratic race in which government officials will use so-called administrative resources and perhaps even fraud to inflate President Bakiyev's vote count.

THE FUTURE

It is likely that recent events in Iran will only exacerbate the negative trends that we have observed in the former-Soviet space over the last several years. Among the lessons the governments are

likely to take from the Iranian experience is that elections may still catalyze widespread public demands for genuine political accountability. This will cause these regimes to move even farther in the direction they are already going, towards turning the election process into a sham reminiscent of elections in the Soviet Union before perestroika. In all likelihood, regimes in the region will also move to upgrade their capacity to suppress demonstrations swiftly and comprehensively and take steps to further limit freedom of association and assembly and the rise of new communications technologies that have the potential to endanger their continued rule. In all of these respects, the lesson of Iran is nothing new to these regimes; it only confirms what they believe they already know.

Of course, Iran is not the only—nor indeed the most important—factor pushing the more authoritarian regimes in the region in the direction of asserting greater control. The worldwide economic crisis is probably a more important factor in this evolution. In the petro-states of the region, authoritarian governments have had an unwritten agreement with society over the past several years: we will raise standards of living; you will stay out of politics. With the fall of oil and gas revenue, they now find their ability to deliver on their part of the bargain threatened. For the poorer countries of the region, the prospect of political unrest is more direct, as rising unemployment, declining remittances and increasing crime rates threaten the livelihoods of growing swaths of the population.

In many cases, the repressive apparatus of the state is already sufficiently well developed to handle most eventualities. Nevertheless, it is a hallmark of authoritarian regimes to tighten the screws when they fear that their control is under threat, and that is certainly the trend we are observing in much of the region.

In a sense, these steps are an admission by these repressive regimes that as strong as they seem on the surface, the fact that they do not provide any room for citizen participation in the political life of their countries actually makes them quite vulnerable.

And we also must not forget that the Iranian protests have been as inspiring as their repression has been shocking. The pictures of Neda Agha-Soltan, and the global outrage that her death and the violence and brutal suppression of demonstrators around Iran have generated has reaffirmed the value of democracy and human rights—not as a Western export, but as a universal human aspiration. This is critical given the disinformation campaigns undertaken by Russia, China, and others to subvert the meaning of democracy itself.

Finally, the willingness of countries like Germany, the U.K, and the new Obama Administration to speak out against the repression in Iran should give us hope—hope that the democratic members of the international community are beginning to find their voice again, to unite to defend fundamental freedoms and rights—including freedoms of association, expression and the right to an accountable government, based on the rule of law and respect for human dignity. It is essential that they not allow other priorities, including such strategically important issues as Afghanistan, lessen their support for those who are on the frontlines of that struggle. Such support should not be abandoned, but increased in this era of authoritarian pushback.

Unity among those who believe human rights to be universal is sorely needed if the OSCE is going to continue to carry out the critical human dimensions aspects of its mission. The post-Soviet states, led by Russia, have consistently attacked the organization's vital work in monitoring elections and promoting democracy and human rights. Sadly, the democratic members of the OSCE, who remain a solid majority among participating states, have largely failed in efforts to meet this strong challenge. If the OSCE is going to remain a relevant body that fulfills its mission of providing regional security, its members must dedicate the resources and political capital to ensure that all three vital areas of its work—military security, economic and environmental cooperation, and human rights and humanitarian concerns—remain intact.

I hope that we all can work together to ensure that the courage and sacrifice of those throughout Iran endures—as a challenge to tyranny, and not as a dread warning to others who dare to ask that their votes be counted and their voices heard.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF STEPHEN BLANK, RESEARCH PROFESSOR OF NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS, STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE, U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE

The views expressed here do not represent those of the US Army, Defense Department, or the US Government

Senator Cardin, Congressman Hastings, Members of the Commission; it is a great honor to appear before you again to testify about the prospects for democratization and human rights in Eurasia. Despite all the rampant pessimism about the course of democratization, in fact during 2009 we have seen significant signs that Eurasia's authoritarian regimes are in as much if not more trouble.¹ During the first half of 2009 we have already seen on several occasions that the authoritarian structures of government in Eurasia are still precarious. Demonstrations in Moldova, Iran, and more recently Xinjiang both showed the power of the new information technology and social networking programs, and that they can be used to threaten corrupt and repressive regimes that seek to rule through electoral fraud, repression, and in China's case, internal colonialism. There is also no doubt that these manifestations of unrest have serious repercussions beyond their borders. Often the silence or restricted coverage by official media in neighboring authoritarian states concerning these events is itself an eloquent testimony to this impact because the rulers fear the impact of such news upon their populace. We have evidence of such deep scrutiny of Iranian events in neighboring Azerbaijan where the official media was very quiet but independent media thoroughly reported the news from Iran.² Indeed the Azeri government actually called for stability in Iran despite its wary relationship with Tehran, a sure sign of its anxiety over the demonstrations there.³ Similarly members of the Kyrgyz "Citizens Against Corruption" human rights group held a demonstration at the Iranian embassy in Bishkek on June 27.⁴

These reactions to Iran's elections, or for that matter the Moldovan election crisis and the uprising in Xinjiang, all suggest that Eurasian societies (and Xinjiang is part of Central Asia) are still unsettled or are again entering a dynamic phase of political development. As they well know, popular unrest is quite possible in many of these states, especially at a time of economic crisis, and too overt an effort to stage an electoral fraud could be a trigger for such unrest as in Moldova and Iran. In fact, these episodes testify to the inherent fragility of anti-democratic regimes and their susceptibility to internal violence. They also show that honest elections are increasingly likely to unseat or defeat these parties.⁵ We saw large-scale electoral protests in Moldova thanks to the diffusion of social networking technologies followed by subsequent crackdowns

¹ Joshua Muravchik, "Something's Dying In the Streets of Tehran," Washington Post Weekly, July 13-19, 2009, p. 26 for the optimism and Freedom House, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Undermining Democracy 21st Century Authoritarianism, Washington, D.C.: 2008 for the pessimism about democracy's chances

² "North of Tehran," Osservatore Balcani, www.ossevatorebalcani.org/article/articleview/11520/1/407, June 30, 2009; Shahin Abbasov, "Azerbaijan: Monitoring Iranian Events For Political Lessons," Eurasia Insight, June 26, 2009

³ Ibid; "Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Calls For Stability In Iran" Associated Press, June 19, 2009

⁴ Bishkek, AKIPress Online, in Russian, June 26, 2009, FBIS SOV, June 26, 2009

⁵ Muravchik

and repression. Meanwhile in Xinjiang we can see the fruits of a policy that can best be described as internal colonialism with the not unexpected consequences of ethnic discrimination and a recourse to violence since all other avenues of democratic protest are blocked. Here too the government's immediate answer was large-scale force. The most significant example, however is in Iran.

The Iranian government brazenly rigged its recent presidential election. Then it launched high-handed and coercive efforts to strangle the protests that arose in its wake. But by doing so the Iranian government has, perhaps unintentionally, but nonetheless firmly, sent several messages to the world. First of all the Iranian government has made clear its determination to remain in power even at the cost of the regime's legitimacy and authority. Thus it now stands on the brink of becoming a regime that relies on nothing but force, fraud, and nationalist xenophobia rather than its previous legitimacy to stay in power. Indeed, Mohsen Rezai a conservative who was defeated in his run for the presidency and a former Revolutionary Guards commander, warned that "continuation of the current situation would lead us to collapse from inside."⁶ Second, the upheaval at home in the wake of this phony election has fractured the unity of both the clerical establishment and the political elite.⁷ As a result the actual ruling group is smaller and perhaps more cohesive than before but the wider political class is more fragmented and the ruling elite's legitimacy has been undermined by its own actions making it a more isolated group. That situation almost certainly implies a greater resort to internal force, repression, and nationalist xenophobia if that regime is to stay in power. As Jim Hoagland wrote in the Washington Post, about President Ahmadinejad's likely future course, "His reasonable facsimile of a dictatorship is more likely to act as such regimes usually do. They exhibit the same aggressive, chest-thumping behavior in foreign policy to intimidate or impress the home audience."⁸ And that also would therefore entail a likely acceleration, if it is possible, of the Iranian nuclear program if not Iran's support for terrorist groups abroad like Hezbollah and Hamas.

That conclusion is perhaps the most dangerous possibility in this situation. Indeed, Afghanistan's President Karzai publicly worried that Iran's turmoil might end the pattern of relative restraint in Afghanistan.⁹ But there are also other dangerous potentialities in the current situation. Iran is quite likely to step up its efforts to promote revolutionary Shia regimes and movements or radical anti-Western forces in the Gulf or the Levant, e.g. Hamas and Hezbollah or its Iraqi proxies, suggesting more violence in the Middle East, if it feels its room for maneuver or domestic legitimacy

⁶"Iran Defeated Candidate Warns of 'System Collapse,'" Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, July 13, 2009

⁷Mazyar Mokti, Charles Recknagel, "How could Iran's Hard-Liners Choose the Next Supreme Leader?" Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, July 4, 2009; Michael Slackman and Nazila Fathi, "Clerical Groups Defies Leader on Disputed Iran Election," New York Times, July 5, 2009; Thomas Erdbrink, "Iranian Details Alleged Fraud," Washington Post, July 2009; Alireza Nader, "Iran's Real Winners: The Revolutionary Guards," www.rand.org, June 22, 2009

⁸Jim Hoagland, "Mideast hawks, Take wing," Washington Post Weekly, July 13-19, 2009, p. 5

⁹Ibid.

is coming under attack.¹⁰ Indeed, it is likely to refuse to moderate its open anti-Semitism towards Israel even if that is a requirement for engagement with Washington. As the International Crisis Group recently reported,

In conversations with the Crisis Group, and even as they discuss readjustment of some policies, Iran's leaders exclude any softening of their anti-Israel rhetoric and practice which—together with their close embrace of the Palestinian cause—they see as pivotal to their growing regional influence. The Islamic Republic long ago concluded that its uncompromising hostility toward Israel and support groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and Islamic Jihad enabled its significant inroads among Arab and Muslim public opinion and provided it with the means to pressure (and undermine) pro-Western Arab regimes. For them, these are tools that, at this stage at least, are too precious to forsake.¹¹

And to the extent that it feels isolated in the West it will further strengthen what has been the dominant line of its foreign policy, namely an Ostpolitik that looks to solidarity with the Russian and Chinese authoritarian states rather than to the West. That alignment, built on oil and gas, as well as a shared antipathy to democracy would mark an epochal realignment of Iranian political culture as Iran has looked West, not East, for inspiration for several centuries.¹² The International Crisis Group's report's conclusion is of particular interest here, namely,

Bereft of a single, reliable ally, Iran is seeking to diversify and balance its relationships, both as a means of maximizing gains and as insurance policy. Its interest in improving relations with the U.S. is a natural corollary; in theory, this would lessen any security threat; legitimize Tehran's role in its immediate neighborhood (Iraq and Afghanistan); and, through the eventual lifting of sanctions, pave the way to full use of its energy potential despite Russian opposition (this refers to oil and gas where such full use would compete with Russia-author). But, at least as its leaders currently view it, the partnership with countries such as Russia and China is not a temporary stopgap as Iran awaits restored relations with the U.S. and the end of sanctions; it reflects, rather a strategic decision aimed at bolstering independence, vis-a-vis the West. Accordingly they put considerable weight on working through regional institutions such as the Economic Cooperation Organization, the D-8 group, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.¹³

These considerations also help explain and lend weight to the community of interest among states like Russia, China, and Iran concerning the suffocation of all chances for liberal and democratic reform of the political system, an opposition to democracy that is rooted both in these states' internal political structure, their

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ International Crisis Group, U.S.-Iranian Engagement: The View From Tehran, June., 2009, p. 13

¹² Abbas Milani, "Iran: Clerical Authoritarianism." Freedom House, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Undermining Democracy 21st Century Authoritarianism, Washington, D.C.: 2008, p. 30

¹³ "U.S.-Iranian Engagement: The View From Tehran," p. 15

ideologies that have significant points of overlap, and their common anti-American foreign policies.¹⁴

Thanks to the regime's actions, I believe it has, in effect, signed its death warrant. But while ultimately this system cannot survive, or at least its survival is now open to question, nobody can know how, when, or under what circumstances that transformation will occur. Thus its end could well be a bloody one. And the Iranian example, for good or bad, is likely to influence short-term political development in other nearby states, both in the Gulf and in Eurasia. Third, by its no less high-handed efforts to blame the United Kingdom and the US and its threats to put British diplomats on trial it has shown not just its abiding paranoia and willingness to blame foreigners for its defects, it has also made clear that the ruling elite is not ready to enter into genuine negotiations with the West (including the US government) on its nuclear programs let alone stop them.¹⁵ Even if the government is now preparing its negotiating position, this position is unlikely to be one the West, not to mention Washington, can easily accept since it entails allowing Iran to enrich uranium and recognizing it as a regional hegemon in the Gulf and its neighborhood.¹⁶ Not surprisingly officials in Washington, if not elsewhere, have begun to realize that the Obama Administration's efforts to engage Iran directly on this program will probably fail even if such efforts are still ongoing.¹⁷ Even if the Administration continues to pursue the will of the wisp of a serious engagement with Iran as appears to be the case, it is quite unlikely, given Iran's well-developed capacity for stalling and Sino-Russian support for it, that Tehran will feel truly pressured to resolve its differences with the West.

Therefore and fourth, it should be clear that the rigging of Iran's presidential election did not occur exclusively for domestic reasons of staying in power. The leaders of the regime, the Supreme leader Ali Khamenei and President Mahmud Ahmadinejad, do not want to engage in direct talks with Washington lest this expose the regime to Western influence or slow or stop the nuclear program. Indeed there were signs that the opposition, led by Mir Hossein Mousavi, campaigned on the platform of negotiations with Washington and of deemphasizing Iran's nuclear project.¹⁸ But for the governing regime, "The greater tensions with Washington are, the easier it is for the regime to rally supporters, suppress dissent and invoke national unity against a common enemy."¹⁹

Worse yet, from the regime's standpoint,

By contrast, normalization with Washington could entail serious political costs for the regime, possibly outweighing expected gains and triggering internal tensions within leadership ranks. Engagement likely would bring to the surface non-nuclear related issues where Washington's stance might resonate more broadly with the wider public—including the human

¹⁴ Undermining Democracy, *passim*.

¹⁵ Nader: Alan Cowell and Stephen Castle, "Iran Cleric Says British Embassy Staff to Stand Trial," *New York Times*, July 3, 2009

¹⁶ "Iran Develops Proposal For Renewed Nuclear diplomacy," www.nti.org, July 13, 2009; U.S.-Iranian Engagement: The View From Tehran, *passim*

¹⁷ "Iranian Election Aftermath Dims Hopes for Nuclear dialogue," www.nti.org, July 2, 2009s

¹⁸ Alireza Nader, "Mousavi Is the Man To Watch In Iran," *The Daily Star*, March 27, 2009

¹⁹ U.S.-Iranian Engagement: The View From Tehran, p. 20

rights record—or support for militant Arab groups that has been questioned by ordinary Iranians. Many citizens associate the launch of a U.S. dialogue with hope for internal liberalization and could seize the opportunity to press harder for domestic reform.²⁰ [Emphasis added]

That observation was made before Iran's elections. In the present climate it is even more to the point. Under present circumstances the likelihood of an engagement with the US given this context is very small at best. Indeed,

The clampdown serves the purposes of those who feel their grasp is loosened by responding positively to President Obama's offer to negotiate. They raised the threshold of what Obama must swallow to get a deal to stop Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons.²¹

In this context, it is not and should not be surprising to us that Iran's friends, like Russia, stated in their official media that they believed the Iranian elections and subsequent protests were handled by the state in accordance with Iranian law and probably welcomed the suppression of the protests. Certainly Moscow saw nothing wrong in immediately welcoming President Ahmadinejad to Russia, claiming that Iran's election was merely an internal Iranian affair that is nobody else's business.²² It has also made the same claim with regard to events in Xinjiang.²³ Indeed, as long as Moscow and Beijing see in Iran a potential partner rather than a threat we should not expect much progress with Russia or China on Iran. Indeed, those partnership deals with Iran are continuing as China and Iran are presently working on a memorandum of understanding concerning China's financing of major investments to expand Iran's oil refineries at Abadan and Hormuz, a critical bottleneck in its industry.²⁴

Russian analysts, diplomats, and officials are brutally frank as to why they see Iran as a partner. For example, Alexei Arbatov observes that unlike America, Russia does not view North Korea and Iran as potential enemies. Iran also occupies the second or third place (depending on the year) among buyers of large lots of Russian arms, which has helped the military-industrial sector to survive in spite of limited defense orders for the Russian armed forces for many years. Finally, Iran is an extremely important geopolitical partner of Russia's, a growing "regional superpower" that balances out the expansion of Turkey and the increasing U.S. military and political presence in the Black Sea/Caspian region, and simultaneously contains Sunni Wahhabism's incursions in the North Caucasus and Central Asia.²⁵ Thomas Graham, formerly of the National Security Council, concurs in this assessment of Iran, seen from Moscow as the dominant regional power in the neighborhood

²⁰ Ibid., p. 21

²¹ Hoagland, p. 5

²² Uwe Klussmann, "Iranian Leader Finds Support in Yekaterinburg," *Der Spiegel*, June 16, 2009, www.spiegel.de

²³ "China Says Ethnic Violence in Check Amid Heavy Troop Presence," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, July 8, 2009

²⁴ "China, Iran Work On Energy MOU," www.upi.com, July 13, 2009

²⁵ Alexei Arbatov, "Terms of Engagement: WMD Proliferation and US-Russian Relations," paper prepared for the US Army War College conference "US and Russian: Post-Elections Security Challenges. Carlisle Barracks, PA, March 6-7, 2008, in Stephen J. Blank, Ed., *Prospects for US-Russian Security Cooperation*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2009, pp. 147-149

that can project power into the Caucasus and Central Asia as well as the Persian Gulf. Therefore Moscow values Iran's refraining from doing just that by its pro-Iranian policies.²⁶ Russian diplomats confirm this evaluation of Iran's importance to it. Thus Gleb Ivashentsov, the then Director of the Second Asia Department in the Russian Foreign Ministry, told a Liechtenstein Colloquium on Iran in 2005 that,

Iran today is probably the only country in the greater Middle East that, despite all of the internal and external difficulties, is steadily building up its economic, scientific, technological, and military capability. Should this trend continue, Iran—with its seventy million population, which is fairly literate, compared to neighboring states, and ideologically consolidated, on the basis of Islamic and nationalist values; with a highly intellectual elite, with more than eleven percent of the world's oil and eighteen percent of natural gas reserves; with more than 500,000 strong armed forces and with a strategic geographic position enabling it to control sea and land routes between Europe and Asia—is destined to emerge as a regional leader. This means that the Islamic Republic of Iran will be playing an increasing role in resolving problems not only in the Middle East and Persian Gulf area but also in such regions that are rather sensitive for Russia as Transcaucasia, Central Asia and the Caspian region. This is why dialogue with Iran and partnership with it on a bilateral and regional as well as a broad international basis is objectively becoming one of the key tasks of Russia's foreign policy.²⁷

Beyond these considerations Russian officials and analysts have long seen Iran as a useful partner for Russia in thwarting US policies in the Middle East and Gulf and in restoring Russia's status there as a major player whose interests must be respected. Andranik Migranyan, an advisor to President Boris Yeltsin and an unapologetic defender of Russian primacy in the CIS, then told Iran News in 1995 that,

In many areas Iran can be a good strategic ally of Russia at [the] global level to check the hegemony of third parties and to keep the balance of power—Russia will try to further cooperation with Iran as a big regional power. We will not let the West dictate to Russia how far it can go in its relations. Of course, we will try at the same time not to damage our relations with the West.²⁸

Similarly, at a 1995 Irano-Russian roundtable, speakers outlined the enduring geostrategic rationales for Russo-Iranian partnership, if not alliance. These rationales endure to this day.

The speakers alluded to the quest by Iran and Russia for an identity and to Russia's political determination to prevent any country from dominating the region [Central Asia and the Caucasus]. It was stressed that Iran and Russia are natural al-

²⁶ Thomas E. Graham, "The Friend of My Enemy," *The National Interest*, No. 95, May-June, 2008, pp. 36-37

²⁷ Remarks of Ambassador Gleb A. Ivashentsov, Second Department for Asia Director, Russian Foreign Ministry, "Iran's Security Challenges and the Region, Liechtenstein Colloquium Report, I, Liechtenstein and Princeton, NJ, 2005, p. 39

²⁸ Tehran, IRNA in English, March 8, 1995, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Near East and South Asia, (Henceforth FBIS NES), 95-045, March 8, 1995, p. 51

lies with distinctive natural resources and the predominance of any third power should be prevented. This is related to the manner in which the two sides define their strategic objectives. It was also stated that Russia's influence in Central Asia and the Caucasus should be treated with respect and if domination is not the objective cooperation is possible.²⁹

INTERNATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Meanwhile Iran's and Moldova's election crises and the rioting in Xinjiang already have international implications going beyond the boundaries of their own countries. Unfortunately those implications in the short-term are likely to be negative ones, insofar as prospects for greater liberalization, not to mention democratization, of these societies are concerned. The experience of watching the Iranian elections and their aftermath as well as the rioting in Xinjiang will probably lead Eurasian rulers to conclude that they must act even more resolutely to ensure that future elections cannot under any circumstances lead to a change in regime. As noted above neighboring Azerbaijan, itself a non-democratic state, has closely watched events in Iran. It has limited state reporting of events there lest the idea of popular protest in Iran gain traction in Azerbaijan. While the Azeri government has urged the return of stability at the earliest possible date, opposition and independent media have concentrated on the challenge to the Iranian regime clearly intending to use Iran as a stand-in for Azerbaijan.³⁰ But it is by no means alone in its concern over Iran.

This situation will probably replicate itself in other Eurasian countries where the official media and the government will seek to restrict knowledge of events in Iran and Xinjiang while opponents of those regimes will use those events as symbols of what they are criticizing in their own governments. Indeed in Kazakhstan it is already happening as President Nazarbayev, despite OSCE appeals and the fact of prior promises of reform and democratization in advance of Kazakhstan's becoming the OSCE Chairman in Office in 2010, has just signed the restrictive and draconian internet law. This law will allow local courts to block websites, including foreign ones, and to class blogs as media which makes them susceptible to prosecution and repression under the law.³¹ This law would thus restrict freedom of expression via the Internet and has already aroused a large amount of controversy.³² Indeed, according to US experts this law is even more draconian than Russia's law and could easily serve as a template for other Central Asian governments.³³ It also serves as a slap in the face to the US as it was signed right around the time that a high-level State Department delegation came to Astana. Beyond the fact that Nazarbayev openly advocated limitations on the freedom of the Internet, there have been recent massive hacker attacks on opposition websites and

²⁹ Tehran, Abrar in Persian, March 7, 1995, FBIS-NES-95-052, March 17, 1995, pp. 71-72.

³⁰ Abbasov; North of Tehran, "Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Calls For Stability In Iran"

³¹ "Kazakh Leader Signs Law Curbing Internet: Activists," Reuters, July 13, 2000

³² Ibid.

³³ Remarks of US NGO experts at a meeting with them in Washington at the Center for Strategic and International Studies CSIS meeting with them in Washington, May 28, 2009

internet resources.³⁴ Andrey Richter, an expert from the OSCE, has confirmed that this law completely contradicts the promises made by Kazakh authorities concerning civil and human rights.³⁵ But it clearly aims to forestall the kind of networking we saw among the opposition in Moldova, Iran, and Xinjiang.

Therefore and more negatively, we can and should expect Eurasian governments to learn from these events that they must not under any circumstances allow truly authentic and free elections that can change the nature of their political leadership to take place. It already is the case that the imminent elections for President in Kyrgyzstan appear to be a foregone conclusion and every effort is already being made to ensure that outcome. But we may expect that elsewhere in Eurasia, including Russia, that the authorities will see to it that opposition candidates cannot run, mobilize popular support, gain access to funding or media, and certainly gain any control over the actual counting of the votes. Kazakhstan's internet law is a case in point. Likewise, the appointment by Moscow of Vladislav Surkov to represent Russia in a bilateral commission with the US government on problems of civil society indicates both Moscow's contempt for us and for democracy and its determination to squelch any such manifestations of an independent civil society or election campaign.

Moreover, in any case these regimes will try to ensure beyond any doubt that the outcome is foreordained and then ratified as legitimate. In practice this suggests the following developments across Eurasia:

- We can expect increased interference with the operation of free media and in particular a crackdown on the information technology of social networking, i. e. the internet. Again Kazakhstan exemplifies this trend but it is not alone as its law will inspire others to follow in its footsteps. Authoritarian regimes' success in this endeavor to date calls into question the hitherto unquestioned assumption that this technology inherently favors freedom and its supporters.³⁶ This repression can also go beyond suppression of the free use of the internet and of other forms of information technology and social networking to include periodic or at least intermittent efforts to isolate the country from foreign media, including expulsions of foreign writers, denial or visas to them, interference with the internet, and increased threats if not use of repression against news outlets and their reporters. These threats need not include violence, they can be effectively implemented by economic means, denying revenue from advertising, or by what Russians call telephone justice, i.e. telephone calls from authorities to compliant editors. This also means greater efforts to develop a "patriotic" media and mobilize popular support around those tamed and docile "house organs." So it is quite likely that those repressions of new and older media will also be accompanied by favoritism for the "patriotic" media and the systematic inculcation of nationalist xenophobia, something we see already in China, Russia, and Iran.

³⁴ Sergey Rasov, "Outside the Access Zone," Moscow, politkom.ru, in Russian, April 21-22, 2009, FBIS SOV, May 8, 2009

³⁵ "Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Calls For Stability In Iran"

³⁶ "Undermining Democracy: Strategies and Methods of 21st Century Authoritarians," *Undermining Democracy*, pp. 3-4

- Increased restrictions upon opposition political movements are also likely. This repression will occur, not just in terms of their freedom of communication or access to the media, but also in terms of the right to assembly and publicly protest their condition. Invariably this also entails heightened forms of repression, not just in Iran or Xinjiang where thousands have been incarcerated for varying durations but also in Russia where the Ministry of Interior (MVD) and the Federal Security Service act together to repress dissent.³⁷ In Iran we can already see that the regime has essentially blanketed the country with police forces and some officials have threatened the opposition with heavy jail terms or even with being labeled enemies of the state.³⁸ And in Xinjiang the authorities have followed suit and threatened any demonstrators with the death penalty.³⁹ This likely trend also means more show trials and repressions like that of Mikhail Khodorkovsky that is currently taking place in Russia. These kinds of show trials may also be used to settle factional and clan scores in Central Asia whose states are governed by clan and patron-client politics.⁴⁰ Since the greatest danger is a division within the elite these trials have a “salutary and educational” effect upon any elite figure who thinks it would be to his interest to defect to the opposition. Thus in whatever form they appear these trials will be, as Soviet rulers intended, both educational and a deterrent to political activity in their impact.

Here we should remember that Russia once again has a Gulag with political prisoners in psychiatric institutions, repressiveness and insecurity of property and the reintroduction of a “boyar”-like retinue around an all-powerful ruler who rules through a state-sponsored cult of personality.⁴¹ The numerous reports of the Russian authorities’ fears of social unrest during a time of economic crisis and their adoption of new repressive measures to deal with them suggests that a strong effort will be made to suppress any sign of political unrest in Eurasia at the first moment lest it connect with growing economic grievances. Indeed, Russia has also recently enacted many new regulations designed to forestall and repress any expression of mass unrest due to the economic crisis. Kazakhstan’s efforts to ban the book of Rakhat Aliyev, the internet law, and the current purge of former high-ranking officials on corruption charges also opens the door to the possibility of a larger campaign to stifle any potential political opposition. Similar phenomena can be expected and should not be ruled out in other Central Asian states, especially given a prolonged economic crisis that could shake the pillars of the state in these countries.

- Along with the growth of repression and electoral chicanery we can also expect a growth in officially sponsored xenophobia. All these societies have existing or potential ethnic conflicts or manu-

³⁷ Yekaterina Savina, “In the MVD’s Department For Combating Extremism They Are Convinced That ‘Almost Everyone Can Be Influenced, Pressured, and Convinced to Cooperate,’” Moscow, *The New Times*, in Russian, June 1, 2009, FBIS SOV June 27, 2009

³⁸ Sam Dagher, “A Peek Inside Iran Shows Protests Fading Under Withering Gaze,” *New York Times*, July 9, 2009, www.nytimes.com

³⁹ Edward Wong “China Official Threatens Death Penalty After Riots,” *Ibid.*; China Says Ethnic Violence in Check Amid Heavy Troop Presence,”

⁴⁰ Joanna Lillis, “Kazakhstan Corruption Scandals An Indicator Of Clan Infighting in Astana,” *Eurasia Insight*, July 10, 2009

⁴¹ Jonas Bernstein, “Lev Ponomarev: Russia has Four Categories of Political Prisoners,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, February 13, 2008.

factured and readily available “foreign devils” that can be accused, as were the UK and US, of seeking to undermine the political integrity of the state and of its regime. We already see a disturbing rise of ethnic violence in Russia as well as such officially sponsored campaigns against the US and the West. For example, immediately after meeting President Obama, Prime Minister Putin donned an all-black outfit and gave political blessing to a groups of Russian bikers called “night wolves” (Nochnye Volki) who were riding down to Sevastopol to take part in a 65th anniversary of the city’s liberation from Nazism, but also to make the point that Sevastopol and the Crimea are Russian not Ukrainian.⁴² It would be easy for Moscow, which already has long conducted a campaign of vilification against Georgia, to do the same to Ukraine for allegedly selling out to the West and betraying the Russian people and nation.

We also see in China, for example, an apparently popular internet movement against the Uyghurs that expresses a strong Han nationalism. Such sentiments also exists in Russia where an aggrieved Russian nationalism can easily be turned against Muslim migrant workers or other more traditional political targets and could easily be organized and channeled into a basis of mass support for further chauvinism and repression there and in China.⁴³ And in the other authoritarian states it also would not be unduly difficult to manufacture such a campaign if necessary. The rioting in Xinjiang shows us that authoritarian states, even reasonably well developed ones like China, cannot solve the problems of internal colonialism and ethnic minorities who are thereby oppressed by an undemocratic political regime. Whereas in Iran or Russia the regime might find military adventurism abroad tempting, others may do so at home and target ethnic minorities. Certainly we are already seeing this in the wake of the current ethnic crisis in Russia.⁴⁴

Moreover, in many of these countries, including Russia, China, and Central Asia, regime leaders still accept the Leninist paradigm that their countries and governments are menaced by linked internal and external enemies. Thus they regularly accuse of NGOs of being in the CIA’s employ and claim that these so called color revolutions really represent US efforts to undermine them and are instigated by the CIA, NGOs, etc. Indeed, the head of Iran’s largest think tank openly stated that the “improved relations with Washington often ended up with “velvet revolutions,” political upheavals that were directly organized by the U.S.⁴⁵ Therefore he logically concluded that Iran may not draw any benefits form a dialogue or normalization with the U.S.⁴⁶

This statement clearly illustrates the linkage between domestic and foreign policy considerations in Iran and in similar governments. And for those reasons ethnic violence, directed against mi-

⁴² Joshua Kucera, “Vladimir Putin, Biker Dude,” <http://trueslant.com/joshuakucera/2009/07/08/vladimir-putin-biker-dude/>, July 8, 2009

⁴³ Sean Roberts, “The Information War Over the Urumqi Riots and the “Netizens” of China: Are We Witnessing the Dawn Of a New Era in Han Chinese Nationalism?” *Central Asia and Kazakhstan* <http://roberts-report.blogspot.com/2009/07/information-war-over-urumqi-riots-and.html>, July 10, 2009

⁴⁴ Catherine A. Fitzpatrick, “Central Asia : As Some Labor Migrants Leave Russia, Hate Attacks Continue,” *Eurasia Insight*, July 10, 2009

⁴⁵ U.S.-Iranian Engagement: The View From Tehran, p. 21

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

norities or just simply protracted repression and discrimination against political opponents or targeted minorities are by no means out of the question. But it also points to the following shortcoming of U.S. policy that will plague all efforts to improve our position in Eurasia until and unless it is addressed. Since the US government has never bothered to develop a coherent information policy for any of these regions it has never bothered to acknowledge or deny these charges, leading the masses to believe that there is some veracity to them, especially as they are endlessly reproduced in keeping with the tradition of the big lie. This failure precludes and inhibits our ability to work effectively either for US interests or for political liberalization, not to mention democracy in Eurasia.

- This increased xenophobia will invariably reinforce preexisting disposition to display a hostile attitude towards the US on issues of foreign policy concern to us like Iranian proliferation or Russian foreign policy in the CIS and Russian policy towards Iran, and the enlargement of Europe, not just NATO. Indeed, we can expect intensified efforts at still more collaboration on the part of these governments to set up not just an alternative value system and ideology concerning democracy and international relations more generally, but also counters to organizations like the OSCE. The CIS' use of member states' election monitors to verify the "democratic procedures" of their elections and thus make a mockery of the OSCE and democracy will probably grow in frequency. Russia is already calling the Iranian election "an exercise in democracy" and respects their outcome.⁴⁷ Gleb Pavlovsky, one of the most prominent "political technologists" of the Putin regime observed, as did analysts from the Public Projects Institute that in Russia 'democratization' as such is "redundant, if not harmful."⁴⁸ So while the system needs 'modernization' "we will not let anybody touch this system to dismantle it."⁴⁹

The point is that despite their confident statements' to the contrary, these regimes' behavior indicates that they are so aware of their inherent fragility that they know very well that the spread of democracy in any one nearby state immediately puts them all at risk. As the Public Projects Institute report stated, democratization of Russia cannot be a priority. Instead the priority lies in effective management for otherwise "any attempt to suddenly abandon the long-term trend of gradual democratization will only lead to political radicalization and further reaction." Moreover, preventive measures must be taken since during this crisis, as in war, everything will be changing very quickly and unexpectedly.⁵⁰ These remarks underscore the governing elites' sense in these states that while the regime might look unbreakable; any sustained reform push puts its viability into instant doubt. Consequently to them ultimately there is no difference between the spread of democracy or military defeat in their peripheries because it will amount to the same thing, the loss of their power. It is not for nothing, for example that in 2006 Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov wrote that for

⁴⁷ "Russia Respects Iran's Election Results, Ties To Continue," Reuters, June 22, 2009; "Russia Rest of G8 Clash On Approach To Iran," Reuters, June 25, 2009

⁴⁸ Moscow, ITAR-TASS, in Russian June 10, 2009, FBIS SOV, June 10, 2009

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Moscow, Interfax, in Russian, June 10, 2009, FBIS SOV, June 10, 2009

Russia wrote that the greatest threat to Russian security was efforts to transform the “constitution” of any of the CIS members.⁵¹

Therefore we can expect more resistance to the US’ calls for democratization and human rights, which, in fact, have been attenuated under the present Administration. It makes no sense to demand that states like Turkmenistan conform to human rights obligations when we refuse to press China or Russia, the latter being a signatory of the Helsinki treaty, to uphold their treaty commitments. Kazakhstan’s contempt for us and for its sovereign promises to the OSCE is another example of the problem. Since Russia is in many ways an alibi for other Eurasian states this makes pressing it doubly important even if Moscow does not like to hear it. For if we refrain from doing so, this only tells Russian leaders that we are not serious in our commitment and that they can therefore disregard us with impunity on this and other issues.

We need to understand that absent constant foreign pressure the upheavals in Eurasia can only frighten local leaders into clamping down even more because there will be nobody to stop them from doing so. Furthermore the failure to date of the protest movement in Iran, though I believe its ultimate vindication is assured—although nobody can say how, when, or under what circumstances that triumph will occur—will only stimulate greater authoritarianism and repression across Eurasia, greater solidarity among these states, and the consequent frustration of US interests. After all these leaders will have learned that elections are even more dangerous than they originally feared and that repression and manipulation work.

We should therefore remember that our interests and values are not opposed to each other as so called “realists” would have it. The defense of human rights, especially those guaranteed by international treaties like the Helsinki treaty, is a paramount geopolitical interest and value of US foreign policy. We support human rights and democratization not because it is moral, though we believe that, not because we are better than others, which is untrue, and not only because democracy works for the betterment of all communities though we believe we have seen the truth of that assertion. In Eurasia, if not elsewhere, human rights, democracy and the right of foreign governments and organizations to scrutinize publicly the conduct of other signatories of the Helsinki treaty and its protocols are a matter of international law that binds everyone equally. If we fail to uphold the ancient dictum that “Pacta Sunt Servanda” (treaties must be upheld) on these issues then we should hardly be surprised that the perpetrators of those violations will engage in more truly destructive activities like nuclear proliferation, mass repression, ethnic violence and even the incitement of local wars.

A continuing commitment to both human rights and to international dialogue affirms our ongoing seriousness of purpose and puts our adversaries and those who define us as their adversaries like Russia, China, and Iran, on the defensive. We should understand that the Fascist temptation in Eurasia is a strong one, in many cases it is the “default option” of governments that cannot

⁵¹ Sergei Ivanov, “Russia Must Be Strong,” Wall Street Journal, January 11, 2006, p. 14.

and will not govern democratically and therefore must resort to such means to stay in power. Therefore if we are silent in the face of those actions and policies we will neither achieve our interests, nor successfully defend our values.



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