

Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2003-2004

Remarks by  
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Committee on International Relations  
Subcommittee on International Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Human Rights  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C.  
July 7, 2004

Good afternoon. I want to thank the chairman, Congressman Gallegly, and the members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to testify on the State Department's second report on efforts in the past year to support human rights and democracy around the world.

I also would like to thank Assistant Secretary Lorne Craner and his team in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor – as well as U.S. embassy staff around the world – for the hard work and dedication that is evident in this report.

In 1982, President Reagan called on the leaders of the free world to take action in support of democracy and human rights. He sought a United States foreign policy animated by promoting human freedom and self-government as its moral and strategic foundation. Speaking to the British Parliament at Westminster, he said:

*“We must be staunch in our conviction that freedom is not the sole prerogative of a lucky few but the inalienable and universal right of all human beings. [...] The objective I propose is quite simple to state: to foster the infrastructure of democracy, the system of a free press, unions, political parties, universities, which allows a people to choose their own way to develop their own culture, to reconcile their own differences through peaceful means.”<sup>1</sup>*

The next year, Congress voted to provide funding for the National Endowment for Democracy, along with four core institutes including the International Republican Institute. In the 20 years that followed, IRI has worked in more than 70 countries to help people to develop their own democratic systems and to make the “infrastructure of democracy” – such things as political parties, legislatures, a free press, the rule of law, and electoral processes – function well and inclusively.

As President Bush said last week while in Turkey, “democracy is the surest way to build a society of justice. The best way to prevent corruption and abuse of power is to hold rulers accountable. The best way to insure fairness to all is to establish the rule of law. The best way to honor human dignity is to protect human rights.”<sup>2</sup>

President Reagan made another important observation in his Westminster speech. Calling for a foreign policy anchored on the promotion of democracy and human rights, he noted:

*“This is not cultural imperialism; it is the means for genuine self-determination and protection for diversity. Democracy already flourishes in countries with very different cultures and historical experiences. It would be cultural condescension, or worse, to say that any people prefer dictatorship to democracy.”*<sup>3</sup>

President Reagan was right, and in his foresight he anticipated the naysayers of our day, who question whether Arabs, or Muslims, in places like Iraq or Afghanistan really want democracy, or if they are even capable of it.

As President Bush said this spring,

*“There’s a lot of people in the world who don’t believe that people whose skin color may not be the same as ours can be free and self-govern. I reject that. I reject that strongly. I believe that people who practice the Muslim faith can self-govern.”*<sup>4</sup>

The yearning for freedom is universal. What is needed in many places is the opportunity to establish democracy and its institutions. As an IRI election observer, I have seen the desire for freedom and faith in democracy in the eyes of voters in Voronish, Russia; in Minna, Nigeria; and in the Siem Riop province of Cambodia. Each of those countries had known totalitarian rule and the injustices that flow from that failed system. These people had experienced the arbitrary and capricious nature of regimes not accountable to the people. They had lived in a world where fundamental human rights were denied and opportunities limited. They had known the dismay and discouragement of having their lives circumscribed and their hopes dimmed. These people longed for freedom and the opportunities freedom brings. They were committed to democracy with a faith that democracy would help them realize their hopes and dreams in a new world where their basic human rights would be recognized and respected. Often walking great distances, these new voters went to their polling stations, some in schools and others in village meeting rooms with mud floors and thatched roofs. They came with hope and determination. They came to exercise the fundamental right of self-determination that is empowering. They came to reclaim a basic human right which they had been denied.

In that same spirit, other people elsewhere are struggling to be able to freely cast their votes for freedom. Just days ago, fourteen Afghans were killed for registering to vote.<sup>5</sup> The remnants of the Taliban are suspected of these killings in a bid to scuttle elections. The United States government, IRI, and others are working hard to help the Afghan people help themselves so that these terrorists do not succeed in denying the Afghan people their right to select their own government. And, in the end, I am confident

the tide of history for democracy and freedom will prevail in Afghanistan as it has in regions of the former Soviet empire and elsewhere. It will prevail because of the spirit and convictions of people like the Afghans, who are demanding that their human rights be honored.

And we should be encouraged that the evidence on the ground is demonstrating that a majority of Iraqis now want representative government.<sup>6</sup> As President Bush has said, “democracy, by definition, must be chosen and defended by the people themselves. Their future of freedom in the Islamic world will be determined by the citizens of Islamic nations, not by outsiders.”<sup>7</sup> The transfer of Iraqi sovereignty last week was an important step toward the democratic elections scheduled for next year. Again, the majority of the Iraqi people are committed to working toward those elections. They have faith that things will be better then.

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IRI’s own recent polling in Iraq confirms this.<sup>8</sup> We recently completed work on a National Public Opinion Survey of Political Attitudes in Iraq, comprising 2,200 household interviews (1,920 valid interviews post-data cleaning) covering all 18 governorates, IRI’s poll is among the largest, nationwide surveys taken in Iraq in recent months, with a margin of error of +/-2.4%. Importantly, this survey also included a 25% rural sampling (drawn from all 18 governorates) making it the first nation-wide poll to do so—all previous surveys focused, for practical reasons, solely on urban areas. The survey was in the field from May 27th-June 11th, immediately preceding and following the announcement of Iraq’s Interim Government.

The poll was implemented by the Independent Institute for Administrative and Civil Society Studies (IACSS), an indigenous Iraqi polling firm, and was funded by the National Endowment for Democracy. Approximately half (50.73%) of respondents believe that Iraq is currently “heading in the right direction” as opposed to approximately 40% (39.32%) who see the country heading in the “wrong direction.” While this is marginally lower than previous polls conducted over recent months, in view of the violence and instability witnessed since early April, the support for “right direction” bears witness to a strong base of optimism among Iraqis.

Looking ahead to one year from today, nearly 65% (64.84%) believe things will be better in Iraq and only 15% (14.79%) of people believe things will become worse.

Tragically, the Iraqi people also are under assault by terrorists who seek to derail progress toward freedom. But they too will fail and the tide of history will prevail. With the help of many in the international community, including IRI, freedom and democracy, I believe, will take root in Iraq.

Professor Jack Donnelly has written:

*“Democracy and human rights share a commitment to the ideal of equal political dignity for all. Furthermore, international human rights norms (...) require democratic government.”<sup>9</sup>*

But the liberal democracy that is sustainable and will protect human rights is about more than the mechanics of voting. A vibrant democracy also requires free media, robust political debate, a viable civil society, protected minority rights, and the rule of law.<sup>10</sup>

As my colleague on the IRI board, Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, has written:

*“We believe that the rights of individuals are most effectively promoted and expanded by and through democratic political institutions – where governments are elected through periodic competitive elections, elections that feature freedom to criticize government, to publish criticisms, to organize opposition and compete for power.”<sup>11</sup>*

It takes time for new, fragile democracies to take root and to grow sturdy enough to withstand the storms resulting from anger over past corruption and the rising expectations of the people. Latin America provides many examples of this phenomenon. As Riordan Roett, director of Western Hemisphere Studies at Johns Hopkins University said regarding a growing impatience with the democratic process in many new democracies in that region, “Latin America is paying the price for centuries of inequality and injustice.”<sup>12</sup> In that region and elsewhere, more work is required, “to root out corruption, repair democratic institutions, and lift [these countries] out of economic implosion.”<sup>13</sup>

Outside help can play a critical role in creating the opportunity for democracy that local people seek. With the support of the State Department, USAID, and the National Endowment for Democracy, IRI is creating new opportunities for democratic advances every day.

Our tool kit includes training, often done by volunteers drawn from congressional staffs and veteran campaigners from across the United States, in the practical techniques of competing and winning elections: party and campaign organization; political communications and message development; get-out-the-vote efforts; public opinion polling and analysis; and outreach to marginalized voter groups. IRI organizes international election observation missions, and trains parties and civil society groups in poll watching in order to verify that the conduct of elections is free and fair.

Elections are important, but democracy requires more than elections. For new office holders and for those in opposition parties, IRI offers training on how to succeed in the period between elections. Here, the tool kit includes training in ethics and public

accountability, conflict mediation and mitigation, leadership training, legislative development, platform development, policy development and implementation. IRI also offers technical advice and support in constitutional design, making federalism work, and specially adapted training for local government officials, public servants, and independent judiciaries.

Politicians are important, but if the members of the subcommittee will excuse me for saying so, democracy requires more than politicians. IRI works with indigenous civil society NGOs that promote democracy, free media, human rights, and the political participation of women, young people, and marginalized regional, religious, and ethnic groups. From Solidarity in Poland, to the South African Institute for Race Relations, to the Directorio Democratico Cubano, to the Cambodian Center for Human Rights, to the Iraqi Foundation for Democracy and Development – IRI’s local partners show true heroism in the struggle to expand freedom for their own countries.

We are proud of our local partnerships, but more than that, IRI believes in the philosophy captured in the old adage, “Give a man a fish, he eats for a day; teach a man to fish, he eats for a lifetime.” Our goal is not to establish some kind of paternal relationship between U.S. funding and expertise, and those who work toward democracy abroad. IRI works to empower local organizations, often offering training for local trainers, who can more effectively spread the knowledge of techniques and ideas to their compatriots – in their own language and in their own towns and villages.

I hope that this summary of the tools we use has been helpful to you, providing some specifics to illustrate what it is that we mean when we speak about advancing democracy worldwide, and implementing President Reagan’s vision in practical ways. For our work at IRI is informed by America’s expansive idealism and faith in the inalienable rights of all men and women, and in our confidence that democracy can help ensure that such rights are realized by all.

Let me now turn to the State Department’s report itself.

First, it is heartening to see that IRI is specifically mentioned in many of the countries in which we are working.

Second, I would like to draw your attention to an important distinction that may not be apparent as you read this report, differentiating between those countries where the struggle to expand and improve democracy is ongoing – the long, hard slog – and those countries that are approaching democracy after a civil conflict, or in the twilight hours of conflict.

One thing we in the United States should have learned by now is that post-conflict reconstruction is difficult, expensive, and takes time. We still don’t have all the answers on how best to achieve the transition toward democracy for a country emerging from bloody conflict. Despite a growing number of cases, including Germany, Japan, Haiti,

Bosnia, Kosovo, and now the recent examples of Afghanistan and Iraq, U.S. foreign policymakers still have no sure playbook for helping that transition.

Keep this in mind as you read this excellent report, because unlike the previous edition, this report includes a statement on the United States strategy for promoting improved democratic practices for nearly every country listed. The U.S. strategy, and that of foreign assistance implementing organizations like IRI, must grapple with the shadow cast by conflict in many places, and we need to think creatively about how we can do so better than we do now.

Conflict affects democratic transitions and the work that we do, just as local circumstances will. While my remarks thus far have addressed the general themes of the report, I will now turn to some specific comments on the regions and countries listed.

### Africa

IRI is conducting programs in eleven countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Six countries in particular are in critical transition periods. The result may either set these countries onto a path to democratic stability, or steer them from it.

**Sudan**—In recent weeks, Sudan has been at the center of international attention for both good and bad. Leaders from both Sudan and the international community were finally able to bring an end to the country's twenty-year civil war with a peace agreement in May 2004. Unfortunately, the current crisis in Darfur is evidence that there is still much work to do to bring peace, security, and democracy to the country. The highly-lauded peace agreement represented a significant, but only first of many steps.

The rape, torture, and murder of black Sudanese by Arab militias is ethnic cleansing—and there is much evidence to suggest that these militias receive support from the Arab government in Khartoum. Over 35,000 black Sudanese have died and over a million more have been displaced. Experts predict that more than 300,000 may perish by the end of the year due to the desperate conditions in which they have been forced to struggle to survive. This humanitarian crisis demands an immediate response. But it also tragically demonstrates the need for the people of Sudan to learn to live with tolerance in a pluralistic society.

In an effort to contribute to the success of Sudan's transition period, IRI has focused on building the foundation for a pluralistic democracy. IRI has been working in the southern part of the country to provide community leadership training to women in order to increase the participation of Sudanese women in civic life. Additionally, the Institute is helping the southern opposition make the transition from a military to a political organization through political party training and, after a peace agreement has been reached, through parliamentary training for participation in the new government.

**Liberia**—A year ago, there were few observers, if any, who would have expected Liberia to be on the path to peace and democracy it is on today. With the end of the civil war and

a new National Transitional Government of Liberia, many of the abuses committed under the previous regime have stopped. There are still cases of abuse in isolated areas of the country where former government and rebels soldiers remain armed and unchecked. However, we have reason to hope that those occurrences will end with the complete deployment of United Nations peacekeepers.

The peace agreement that brought an end to Liberia's civil war mandates general elections in October 2005. One can argue that these elections will represent the country's first, truly democratic elections. To help create a democratic environment for these elections, IRI is conducting a program designed to build the capacity of Liberian political parties to effectively compete and provide Liberians with viable choices. For example, IRI has opened a resource center that will provide political parties with access to computers, photocopiers, reference materials, and other resources required to carry out their activities. As a necessary complement to those resources, IRI is also offering training to the parties on issues such as message development and communication, outreach and mobilization, and party organization and financing.

**Angola**—Although Angola is further into its peace process than the other post-conflict countries mentioned here, the country still has significant ground to cover. A government plagued by corruption has been unable to improve living conditions for most of its citizens despite the end of fighting two years ago. A key step in the country's democratic progress will be the upcoming general elections. However, the government has been unwilling to commit to any timetable for those elections.

Despite the uncertain election schedule, IRI understands that preparations must begin now. IRI is training Angola's political parties for the national elections and to establish themselves as effective democratic parties. Already, IRI has conducted a country-wide public opinion poll that identified specific issues of interest to voters and, subsequently, helped political parties develop issue-based platforms. IRI also has provided media/communications and party organization training in the capital city and in the interior provinces.

**Nigeria**—Nigeria's 2003 general elections represented the country's first successful transition from one civilian government to another. Despite this great democratic achievement, the government has been unable to effectively protect the rights of all citizens. Corruption remains at the heart of the problem. Additionally, religious and ethnic violence continues to affect the lives of Nigerians throughout the country.

After a history of highly centralized and authoritarian government, building the capacity of state and local governments and organizations will be critical to Nigeria's democratic success. These entities also may be the best-placed to combat corruption and mitigate violence. IRI's work in Nigeria is focusing on strengthening state-level political parties and building partnerships between civil society organizations and political parties at both the state and national levels. As part of its current activities, IRI has constructed an innovative program known as the State Party Leaders Academy. IRI has conducted this academy in various states, providing training on topics such as party organization,

outreach and mobilization, and party financing to state parties. IRI also will be inviting political parties and civil society organizations to participate in forums addressing various political issues. These forums will help them identify opportunities to work with one another on common issues.

**Zimbabwe**—Following the 2002 presidential election that many international observers considered illegitimate including the United States, the government persisted in its pre-election suppression of political parties and civil society. Government supporters continue to harass critics within opposition political parties, civil society organizations, and the media with impunity.

The opposition party, Movement for Democratic Change, is challenging the results of the 2002 election in the courts. The MDC has called for the creation of a transitional authority to govern the country until a new election, conducted under international supervision, can be held. Civic leaders continue to press for democracy and the rule of law. IRI remains committed to working with civil society in Zimbabwe to promote a peaceful and democratic environment in this troubled country. IRI's work in Zimbabwe has focused on building the capacity of the country's democratic political organizations. IRI has trained them on message creation and communication, among other topics.

## Asia

The Asian financial crises of 1997 and 1998 sparked *refomasi* movements in many parts of southeast Asia that raised new hope for democracy in the region, but these have now petered out with the return of economic stability and repression by challenged rulers. Authoritarian regimes in Asia remain firmly entrenched, while semi-authoritarian regimes are losing momentum for democratic reforms due to the influence of money politics and weak public accountability. Progress toward democracy in most of Asia is slow, hesitant, and overall quite modest. There is little public pressure for political change in most countries, as citizens exhibit a preference for stability and a doubt concerning the likelihood of major change. The established democracies in Asia, such as Japan, South Korea, India, Taiwan, and the Philippines do little to promote democracy within the region.

**Burma**—The political and ethnic repression in Burma continues to be very troubling. IRI has continued to support Burma's democracy movement. The support is targeted to the National League for Democracy/Liberated Areas (NLD/LA), the wing of Aung San Suu Kyi's party based in the border areas, and to the Political Defiance Committee (PDC), which brings together representatives of various democracy and ethnic groups to carry out non-violent struggle for democracy in Burma. NLD/LA and PDC have used IRI support to develop strategy for non-violent resistance and to organize grassroots political opposition to the military junta. Despite the junta's crack-down on opposition, NLD/LA and PDC have managed to carry on their efforts aimed at restoring democracy to Burma.

**Cambodia**—Elections in July 2003 resulted in a deadlock that may now be ending, but the human rights situation continues to be a source of grave concern. IRI has supported the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR) since its inception in 2002. CCHR conducts public forums across the country and broadcasts daily radio programs to inform citizens of their political rights and to give them a platform to express their views freely. CCHR also investigates cases of political violence and puts pressure on the authorities to prosecute the offenders. The Youth Council of Cambodia (YCC) was created in 2001 with IRI's assistance and, over the past year, has expanded youth participation in politics by organizing voter registration drives and get-out-the-vote campaigns for the July 2003 parliamentary elections and training thousands of students in the basic elements of democracy.

For the 2003 parliamentary elections in Cambodia, IRI conducted a series of missions to assess the entire election process, starting with voter registration in January 2003. These mission culminated in a major election observation in July 2003 led by Christine Todd Whitman, former Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and former Governor of New Jersey. In addition, IRI trained party poll-watcher agents of all major political parties throughout the country to monitor the elections.

**China**—China, while making progress in some areas of democracy and human rights, continues to engage in religious persecution and censorship of the internet. IRI has consistently supported the development of grassroots democracy and self-governance in China for the past 10 years and has sponsored a wide range of innovative activities to promote the improvement of elections and the institutionalization of democratic governance. Based on the belief that increasing the base of participation in local electoral politics is as important as improving the quality of election procedures and administration, IRI has expanded on an initiative started in 2002 to encourage women to run for positions on village committees, and to train them in the fundamentals of good governance. In 2002, IRI also became the first foreign organization to observe urban community elections in China. IRI's work on urban elections has since focused on supporting the development of a unique model for the democratic management of urban communities in Fujian Province, a rapidly developing special economic region in Southern China. IRI is currently working to assist them in the development of a new regulatory infrastructure for democratic elections.

**Indonesia**—Indonesia is one of the few countries in Asia where the reform movement that emerged out of the 1997-1998 financial crises has retained momentum, and on July 5 Indonesians voted in direct elections for the president for the first time. IRI carried out extensive programs to prepare Indonesia's political parties for the legislative elections in April 2004. Through a series of polls and training seminars for all 24 political parties, IRI assisted more than 3,000 candidates and party activists in seven provinces in designing issue-based campaigns. While large campaign rallies still looked like street parades or pop concerts, candidates trained by IRI spoke on the issues of concern to voters. IRI-trained candidates addressed national issues, such as poverty and corruption, in their campaigns and brought up local issues, including clean drinking water and repairs

needed for school buildings. In most of the program provinces, IRI-trained candidates won a larger percentage of the vote than candidates who received no training.

In addition, IRI trained more than 5,000 party agents in election monitoring in all 32 provinces of Indonesia. These party agents, in turn, trained 47,975 party poll-watchers. IRI also developed and distributed more than 900,000 poll-watcher manuals and made the manual available via the internet for use throughout the country. The participation of trained party poll-watchers raised public confidence in the election process and contributed to the success of Indonesia's second free elections since the fall of Suharto.

## Eurasia

IRI's Eurasia division currently works in nine countries in the region. Based on our experiences, we can confirm the judgment in the State Department's report (page 111) that, "the past year has shown mixed results in advancing human rights and democracy across Europe and Eurasia." Four countries merit special consideration.

**Azerbaijan**—Anticipating the October 15, 2003 presidential elections, IRI provided comprehensive political party campaign training to all parties over an eighteen month period. IRI worked with all political parties, both the ruling party and the opposition, and at both the national and local level. IRI participated in the OSCE and the U.S. government effort to bring more than 600 international observers to monitor the October 2003 presidential elections, deploying them nationwide. Although there were a number of areas within Azerbaijan where voting was peaceful and orderly, the observers noted many violations of the new Unified Election Code, including incidences of ballot stuffing, multiple voting, harassment at polling stations by authorities, incomplete voter lists, and a lack of regard for ballot tabulation procedures.

The undemocratic and blatant disregard for the UEC in both the pre-election period and on election day led to civil unrest in the capital city, Baku, when the final ballot counts were announced. On the night of the election and in the days that followed, as many as 25,000 citizens came together to decry election fraud by the government. Ninety political party operatives and leaders were arrested following this protest, some of whom remain incarcerated today awaiting trial. In this discouraging environment, IRI has reoriented part of its program toward youth leadership development in the political parties, hoping a new generation of leaders may emerge to embrace democratic values.

**Georgia**—IRI's board chairman, Senator John McCain, was among the most vocal supporters of official U.S. calls for improvements in Georgia's respect for human rights and democratic practice in 2003 and early 2004. IRI provided training in organizational development and management, and basic campaigning techniques, to all political parties before and after the January 4, 2004 presidential election that brought President Mikheil Saakashvili to power. IRI organized 24 international observers to monitor the presidential election.

**Moldova**—In recent years, as described in the State department’s report, a number of excellent programs were conducted by the U.S. Embassy for local elections in 2003, and these focused on rule of law programs and local governance work. IRI was asked to provide assistance to Moldova’s political parties, and recently launched a targeted training program for all Moldovan parties. We are pleased that the parties have welcomed our assistance. Parliamentary elections in Moldova, planned for February 2005, will provide a crucial test of Moldova’s parties in applying the skills imparted by IRI in the areas of message development, campaign strategy, and constituent communications.

**Ukraine**—The IRI program in Ukraine is focused on enhancing the chances for free and fair presidential elections in October 2004. We greatly appreciate the support of senior officials at the U.S. Embassy in Kiev and here in Washington, who have pressed for the Ukrainian government to permit IRI and the National Democratic Institute to conduct democracy-related programs in Ukraine by registering our programs there. The State Department’s report rightly notes this effort, which ended with the successful registration of our programs in September 2003. However, the Ukrainian government has registered only the specific programs we are conducting now, on the basis of current grants. For each future project, IRI and NDI will be forced to obtain new registration. This may become a significant obstacle to expanding our work in Ukraine, and an unfortunate one as there remains much work to be done there in the critical months following the October 2004 elections.

## Europe

While the progress over the past decade in Central and Eastern Europe has been undeniable and remarkable, there is a continued need for US engagement in the region. Other donors, while making important contributions, tend to be much more focused on aiding individual parties or NGOs. More than any other donor, the United States contribution to democracy in the region has helped the people of Central and Eastern Europe to achieve the successes we’ve seen. This is due, in part, to the fact that only the United States has truly emphasized the need to develop institutions, including governments, political parties, the media, the courts, labor unions, and non-governmental organizations.

Even among the region’s eight new member states of the European Union (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia), there is still a need for US engagement. While elections are now standardized and basic human and democratic rights secure, key institutions remain fragile. Corruption and a continued lack of communications with the electorate mean that governments, political parties, and the judiciary lack credibility and legitimacy with many voters.

Anti-reform parties and movements continue to attract broad levels of support, even in the countries that have seen the most progress. Extremist parties of the right and left have enjoyed resurgent support in recent years, in part because of the failure of democratic parties and leaders to fully adopt modern campaign and communications

techniques. Some of these parties have mildly populist characteristics; others, however, espouse openly anti-Semitic, anti-Roma, and anti-minority views.

Reducing US engagement in the region – especially in the Balkans – risks losing much of the gains of the last decade. For example, democracy programming has been scaled back in Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania, and Bulgaria. Reforms in these countries are only now beginning to take shape and pro-reform forces will find increasing levels of voter resentment as essential changes are implemented. Ethnic tensions remain high in Serbia, Bosnia, and Macedonia and as a result, terrorists and traffickers in narcotics and people (especially women and children) have found a fertile environment in the region.

**Albania**—IRI is implementing the second of a two-year USAID project in Albania, working on a two-part program: First, strengthening the individual leadership and voter outreach skills of Members of Parliament; and second, increasing the involvement of youth leadership in civil society.

In July 2003, 110 young leaders from across Albania were systematically selected to participate in a leadership training seminar in the city of Durrës. More than a dozen Albanian and international NGOs provided information and for participants. In October 2003, more than 300 youth leaders participated as domestic monitors for the local elections. In December, IRI again used its youth network to rapidly organize six focus-group studies as part of the design research for a national youth survey of more than one thousand young Albanians. By mid-January 2004, the IRI youth network again mobilized for the fielding of a nationwide survey. This baseline survey explored the main concerns and views of Albanian youth on the country's political system and prospects for the future. IRI is currently implementing an intensive program of advocacy instruction for young leaders across Albania. This training will involve a series of lectures that will include instruction modules on the fundamental concepts of advocacy, strategic contact with decision makers, media relations, campaigns and elections, strategic management, and comparative advocacy campaign case analysis.

IRI's Parliamentary program and its focus on Members of Parliament (MPs) and their district office training resumed in July of 2003 when the opposition leader from the Lithuanian Parliament traveled to Tirana to address 35 MPs and provide a comprehensive comparative analysis of the Lithuanian and Albanian legislative systems. In January, an expert American pollster addressed more than a third of the MPs in Parliament on the value of opinion research in the political process.

In late January 2004, IRI's Parliamentary Outreach Project launched its selected city approach. IRI interviewed more than 20 MPs to assist in the design of the project, which creates templates of events and activities that can be adopted in whole or in part by MPs who wish to better communicate with their constituents. Program activities include constituent focus groups, media availabilities, public hearings, and town hall meetings. IRI is working directly with selected parliamentary leaders and organizing a series of hearings in targeted districts designed to attract the public's interest and participation at

the local level. Leaders of constituent groups, local experts, and interested citizens will be provided a forum at which they can directly express their views and concerns to their members of parliament. The primary policy areas to be considered include local government issues, youth issues, the business community, women's issues, and the environment. These activities will lead to a Parliamentary seminar including MPs and their district staff, with the participation of a U.S. expert in district office administration. Based on these series of training in selected cities and the seminar, IRI plans to publish a district office manual to distribute to all MPs for their use in their district offices.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina**—In 2003, IRI began a 2-year USAID program in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with three main components: local political party development, state level ministerial communications assistance and policy analysis development. In advance of the October 2003 local elections, IRI is conducting an intensive local political party development program, including a series of regional multi-party campaign training seminars and specific workshops on grassroots organization, campaign tactics, voter outreach, and message development and targeting.

To assist in building legitimacy and confidence for Bosnia's state-level institutions, IRI began working with selected government ministries on ways to improve their communications and outreach with the public. Public opinion polling is used to help ministry staffs learn how to develop, coordinate, and transmit clear messages to the voters.

**Macedonia**—IRI has continued to play a major role in the development of institutions in Macedonia, including political party development, strengthening the role of women and youth in politics, and improving government communications. After the tragic death of President Boris Trajkovski in early 2004, IRI was asked by the US Embassy and the USAID mission to field an international election observation mission for the emergency election. IRI deployed 16 teams of experienced election observers throughout Macedonia to monitor and report their observations of the two election rounds. Observers generally concluded that the election process adhered to internationally recognized standards and was generally representative of the will of the Macedonian electorate, despite occasional instances of voter fraud and intimidation.

IRI also continued its regular program of political party development work with regular strategic consultations with high level party officials, including Prime Minister Crvenkovski and before his death, President Trajkovski. IRI also held several training seminars for youth party activist from various political parties. IRI's program for the remainder of the year will focus on preparing the parties for the upcoming local elections in the fall.

**Turkey**—IRI's work in Turkey continues to focus on the need to engage its massive youth population in political in civic life. Through a network of young people known as GencNet, IRI staff worked to teach young people the skills necessary to identify community problems and to take appropriate steps to correct them. The GencNet initiative includes training for youth activists, partnerships with Turkish NGOs,

community-based projects, and a popular website. The GencNet project contributed to a recent reform in Turkey that lowered the age of eligibility for public office.

This year, IRI a new component of its program to encourage youth participation in Turkish politics: mayoral candidate debates. A week before the country's local elections, IRI co-hosted youth-oriented debates with the Turkish Inter-University Debate Society for candidates in major districts of Ankara and Istanbul.

IRI also continued its work with its longtime partner organization Ka-der, to encourage greater women's participation. IRI/Ka-der activities included website development and training covering a range of topics related to participation in public life, including the role of social stereotypes, men's and women's expectations of politics, and the importance of women's representation in politics.

The Institute also launched a new Capital Internship and Model Parliament program, with the Turkish Democracy Foundation (TDF). This initiative is believed to be the first organized program of internships in key government institutions, including ministries, the parliament, and political parties.

### Middle East

The past two years have been seminal for the Middle East and North Africa and marked the start of a new chapter for IRI's work in the region. In Iraq, events throughout 2003 and 2004 have generated both new opportunity and new challenges on an unprecedented scale for the development of basic human and democratic rights in the Arab world. Coupled with ongoing efforts to support democracy in Afghanistan prior to that country's first scheduled national elections in more than two decades, IRI engagement in these critical U.S. foreign policy priorities continues to expand and intensify as important tests for democracy in both countries approach.

The announcement in December 2002 of the Administration's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) marked a bold step to not only increase support for political development in the Middle East but also to include this support within a comprehensive package of economic and educational aid. Following notable accomplishments in countries like Morocco which held successful parliamentary elections in 2002 and Jordan which created a new ministry for political development in 2003, MEPI enables IRI to approach democracy support across the region in a more strategic and comprehensive fashion. With political reform in the Middle East finally coming center stage, IRI is initiating programs in countries neglected for decades and where support for democratic reform is needed most.

**Afghanistan**—As Afghanistan's national elections approach and it enters perhaps the most important phase in the country's democratic transition, IRI is helping prepare Afghans for this monumental event. IRI is striving to ensure equitable resource distribution and rational development policy through its work with an Afghan umbrella

organization representing more than 300 Afghan civil society groups and hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries throughout the country. IRI's support for this effort is providing voice to the needs of Afghanistan's citizenry on a variety of issues and in the absence of elections to date, the project maintains one of the few formal links between citizenry and the country's fledgling leadership.

IRI's support for Afghanistan's first independent daily newspaper in the post-Taliban period, *Erada*, is additionally providing a key segment of the Afghan citizenry with up-to-date information and objective analysis of political, social and economic developments taking place in the country.

As national elections scheduled to take place in September near and voter education and registration become paramount issues to a successful transition, IRI is conducting a variety of activities to prepare Afghan voters for elections. IRI programs initiated in eight regions of the country are supporting a comprehensive civic and voter education effort that targets local opinion makers for the purpose of encouraging voter participation. Additionally, IRI support to a local partner organization is bringing concepts of citizen responsibility and voter participation to isolated and at-risk populations through mobile civic education units. In combination, IRI efforts in Afghanistan are helping to increase voter knowledge and citizen participation and are laying the foundations for a more democratic future.

**Iraq**— Due to the timeliness and importance of developments in Iraq, I will elaborate in more detail about IRI's work there. IRI established an office in Baghdad in July 2003, and has partnered with NDI and other U.S. groups to deliver a multi-faceted program aimed at actively improving the civic and political rights of ordinary Iraqis. Our activities in the field, performed by an experienced staff of expatriates and dedicated Iraqis (local hires), range from political party training seminars to youth-oriented conferences to public opinion research initiatives--an approach which reflects IRI's philosophy of engaging all aspects of civic society as a collective whole.

IRI helped to organize the Iraqi Foundation for Democracy and Development, headed by Ghassan Attiyah, a respected Iraqi dissident and publisher of the oppositionist periodical *The Iraqi File*, the IFDD is a regionally based non-governmental organization committed to supporting democracy and development in Iraq by fostering dialogue between decision-makers and citizens on important social, economic, and political issues. A primary goal is to bring together people of diverse ethnic, religious, political and tribal backgrounds to build consensus on finding solutions to the issues most important to the Iraqi people and for assisting in promoting freedom and democracy. With the material and advisory assistance provided by IRI's Baghdad staff, the IFDD has convened several conferences and events.

IRI's Iraq program is training a wide range of political, civic, and issue-oriented citizen groups that have emerged during the post-Saddam period. These trainings focus on a variety of topics from platform development to the promotion of candidate leadership skills. In June, IRI's Baghdad team hosted a series of six political party

training conferences whose attendance averaged over 120 people per session. Participants represented the diverse spectrum of political parties, including the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, Da'wa Party and dozens of small to medium sized newly founded parties. Topics ranged from candidate leadership skills to platform development, thus offering emerging Iraqi civic and political organizations a chance to learn a full array of successful campaign techniques. Results were promising—participants expressed great enthusiasm during the proceedings and many actively pursued closer working relationships with the Institute.

In March, IRI brought together representatives from both the Governing Council (GC) and the Iraqi Ministries for the first time since these groups' inceptions to participate in a series of four conferences designed to improve communications strategies. Topics covered included inter-governmental communications, town hall meetings, public outreach, and crisis management. These seminars proved to be highly useful even after the dissolution of the GC, for many of the techniques which formed the basis of the trainings have been enacted by the Interim Government and its related Ministries.

The Institute's Iraq team has recently been approached by USAID to assist in training the staff of the Iraqi Supreme Preparatory Committee, the advisory body which will appoint members to the National Conference of 1000, who will in turn select the 100 members of the Interim National Council. We were honored to be asked to assist the Iraqis in this process and will begin a series of training conferences once plans are finalized.

In order for Iraq to become a truly democratic nation, it must empower all of its citizens to take part in the process of self-governance. To this end, IRI has concentrated a substantial amount of its resources towards promoting civic advocacy among women and youth. Since the beginning of its program, IRI has been heavily involved in the promotion of student elections on academic campuses across the country. With IRI assistance, the universities of Baghdad and Mustansaria have both successfully completed their student electoral cycles. Similar results have been witnessed in the universities of Najaf, Karbala, Diyawania, and Hilla, all of whom will shortly conclude the second wave of their final campaigns. IRI will continue to use the extensive relationships it has built among the student community to provide sound advice, guidance, and training to these enterprising activists in the months to come. In order to encourage the growth of advocacy movements from within Iraq itself, IRI has partnered with a network of approximately 30 women's rights NGOs to facilitate a nationwide anti-violence campaign. Their project has involved door to door canvassing in both rural and urban provinces carried out entirely by Iraqi organizations.

IRI has developed a unique public opinion research capability in Iraq, through the training of more than one hundred Iraqis as professional focus group facilitators. IRI trained surveyors work today for many of the leading Iraqi polling firms, and IRI has turned to them to conduct professional surveys on Iraqi public opinion. Polling data helps IRI to work with political parties on developing their platforms and messages, as well as

helping small parties identify potential coalition partners. Polling information can further help citizen groups to identify concerns and issue awareness among ordinary Iraqis.

As noted in the State Department's report, Iraq has made remarkable progress toward democracy and better human rights performance by public officials since the liberation. Every day since that time, Iraqi's have incrementally taken greater control over their affairs, and political participation has been growing steadily. IRI is firmly committed to helping the Iraqi people succeed, providing them with the skills necessary in order to navigate and adapt new democratic institutions, organizations, processes and electoral events.

**Jordan**—IRI has long recognized that political reform in Jordan is influenced by a variety of factors both inside and outside the Kingdom's borders. In October 2004, King Abdullah's announcement of a public campaign to promote political reform and create a new ministry to guide reform efforts thus marked an encouraging sign of increased commitment on the part of the Jordanian government to democratic reform. IRI efforts over the years in Jordan have focused on women and youth, segments of the population the Institute believes critical to success of reform. With opportunity for additional focus on these groups through support from MEPI, IRI is embarking on a comprehensive program to increase civic and political participation by women and youth and to encourage improved outreach by political parties and elected officials to these key audiences.

IRI programs in the Middle East also have concentrated on helping build a "culture of democracy" by increasing the level and quality of public dialogue and debate. In Jordan, a public opinion poll released by an IRI partner organization within a few weeks of the formation of a new government provides one example of these efforts. By providing high quality public opinion data on expectations of the new government, IRI helped strengthen dialogue about important political reform issues and provided critical information about citizen priorities to decision makers and civil society alike. Continued IRI polling in the coming year on a more regularized basis will help establish a baseline of critical data on public opinion in support of continued democratic reform.

**Morocco**—Municipal elections held in September 2003 marked another step in Morocco's political reform process which began with successful parliamentary elections in 2002. Yet, despite these accomplishments, Morocco continues to face significant economic and social challenges and a public that remains largely apathetic to political reform, especially among marginalized segments of the population such as youth. IRI efforts in Morocco in 2003 and 2004 were aimed at reaching these marginalized audiences and supporting the continuation of democratic reforms initiated by this key U.S. ally.

In response to Morocco lowering its voting age to 18 for municipal elections, IRI coordinated a voter education and get-out-the-vote (GOTV) effort that worked with independent civil society to distribute more than 80,000 leaflets and 20,000 posters.

Daily radio announcements during the election campaign period reinforced the initiative carried out on a nation-wide scale.

After the election, IRI initiated pilot projects with target local councils to help restore citizen confidence in elected institutions and help create mechanisms for improved interaction between elected bodies and communities. The largely impoverished Sidi Moumen district of Casablanca gained notoriety last year as the home of several suicide bombers who killed 45 people in Casablanca in May 2003. IRI's community clean-up project in Sidi Moumen is helping reverse a trend of cynicism and frustration in the area by providing local, working models of democracy in practice and by encouraging the development of public-private partnerships for improved service delivery.

IRI efforts in the Middle East over the past two years have additionally included parliamentary strengthening assistance in **Oman** and ongoing public opinion polling in the **West Bank and Gaza**, which provides the only window into Palestinian sentiment in the absence of elections by the Palestinian Authority. In February 2004, IRI also co-hosted the first of a series of high profile MEPI regional campaign schools for women that took place in Doha, Qatar.

With elections expected to take place in **Qatar** in the coming year, these types of programs enable IRI to provide more comprehensive elections and civil society development assistance. IRI is following events in **Pakistan** closely and is examining the possibility of initiating new activities before the end of the year in that country to strengthen prospects for lasting and sustainable democracy.

### Western Hemisphere

In the past 20 years there were dramatic advances in democracy in the Western Hemisphere. And IRI has been active in many countries, aiding at key moments in democratic transitions from military rule or following civil conflicts. Today, however, throughout the Western Hemisphere, democratic advances are threatened by weak institutions and failing economies. The challenge for IRI is to help political parties in the region to strengthen democratic institutions, reform flawed electoral systems, develop leaders among a new generation coming of age, and address poverty and corruption in party platforms and campaigns at the national and local level.

**Andean Region**—Historically marginalized groups have begun to recognize their ability to influence political outcomes. Increased participation in elections and civil society activities demonstrates that indigenous populations have been energized by the democratic reforms of the past decade. Unfortunately, as happened last October in Bolivia, political empowerment has been channeled in ways not contemplated by constitutions or law. The toppling of a democratically-elected government through the mass mobilization of citizens to the streets has left Bolivia in a state of crisis – and perhaps sent the message to others in the region, particularly in Ecuador and Peru, that legality is secondary to the perceived legitimacy of a government. In response to this

emerging dynamic, IRI is working with civil society groups and political parties in Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador to improve their ability to educate citizens on their rights and responsibilities in a democracy. In Peru, IRI is working directly with the executive branch of government to restructure and improve its ability to communicate with citizens and strengthen a presidency that has weakened to the point of jeopardizing the promising democratic advances that followed the departure of former president Alberto Fujimori.

**Central America**—Central America shows signs of progress and the consolidation of democracy. The subregion that became a battleground during the Cold War is now holding regular elections where former combatants and enemies are now vying for political power at the ballot box. El Salvador's March presidential elections saw nearly 70% voter turnout and an overwhelming victory for the candidate supporting open markets and a constructive relationship with the United States. IRI played a key role in observing these elections at the invitation of the country's electoral authorities. Currently, the Institute is working with political parties, business groups and civil society to promote market-based solutions to poverty. Nicaragua struggles with weak and fractured political parties and government institutions, but continues to promote reform under the leadership of President Enrique Bolanos. IRI is working directly with the democratic forces in Nicaragua to strengthen parties that represent a break from the corruption of the past.

**Venezuela**—Following a lengthy process of petition and signature verification, Venezuela will hold a recall referendum on August 15, 2004 that could lead to new elections or a confirmation of the current presidential term through 2006. Against a particularly challenging political backdrop, IRI is working with a broad cross-section of political parties to promote a peaceful and democratic solution to the impasse that has persisted during the last several years. The constitutional process to provide for a recall and perhaps subsequent elections presents both opportunities and risks. Venezuelans of all political tendencies need to be prepared and educated to participate thoughtfully and peacefully in this process, to guarantee its transparency, and to respect its results. By working with all parties to provide training in platform development, communications, and constituent outreach, IRI is contributing toward these objectives.

**Haiti**—A significant challenge of the international community is insuring that Haiti's recent crisis of government and ensuing transition results in the development of credible democratic political institutions and practices. This is the task of the interim administration headed by President Boniface Alexandre and Prime Minister Gerard Latortue. Time is short --- roughly 18 months to rebuild a broken-down electoral capacity, guarantee a modicum of political security, re-energize legitimate economic activity and related infrastructure, and build hope among Haitian citizens that a government *for* the people is actually within their reach. This is a very tall order but IRI looks forward to playing a constructive role in this process.

IRI's engagement dates back to the 1990 elections and until 1999 sustained an in-country office. Over the past 18 months the Institute's focus has been to encourage Haiti's disjointed political party community toward coalition-building and greater

internal party transparency. This has been supplemented with a particular focus on encouraging women and youth to engage and even challenge Haiti's traditional political party structure. The effort has been backed up by the development of an information-based civic action website. [www.Haitigetinvolved](http://www.Haitigetinvolved). While detractors have attempted to link IRI's work with Haiti's undemocratic elements, the Institute's true course of action will continue to foster the best practices of the democratic process.

**Cuba**—The obvious exception to the progression of democracy in the Americas lies on the island of Cuba, where for over forty years a Communist dictator has presided over the region's only authoritarian police state. As the Bush Administration has recognized in its recent policy initiative toward Cuba, one of the keys to advancing the cause of democracy and human rights in Cuba is to recognize and provide moral support to the courageous peaceful democracy movement within Cuba. These men and women: journalists, librarians, small business operators, and activists, are the conscience of the movement to free Cuba from tyranny. Acknowledgement and solidarity with their cause is an imperative. Latin Americans, Europeans, and all others invested in the concept of freedom and human rights have a moral obligation to support the cause for a free Cuba. IRI continues to build on its work promoting an international solidarity movement to support Cuba's democratic dissidents. Through publications and events, IRI exposes the plight of the jailed dissidents and their family members. Through its Miami based partner, Directorio, IRI is on the forefront of efforts to generate awareness and support for Cuba's homegrown democracy movement.

### Conclusion

This review of various countries where IRI is helping to construct building blocks for democracy reinforces the point that I would like to leave you with, which is that the United States has both an opportunity and a responsibility to be a beacon of hope and promise for those who yearn for freedom; to be a shining city on a hill. U.S. foreign policy can make a difference. In fact, if we fail to come to the aid of democracies both nascent and unborn, we would break faith with our heritage and lose fidelity with the values we cherish.

President George W. Bush said it best last November,

*"The progress of liberty is a powerful trend. Yet, we also know that liberty, if not defended, can be lost. The success of freedom is not determined by some dialectic of history. By definition, the success of freedom rests upon the choices and the courage of free people."*<sup>14</sup>

Free people like us, the people in this room, and those who you were elected to represent. This report should help you to tell them that their government is taking the responsibility of supporting human rights and democracy very seriously.

I think that in this, Ronald Reagan would be proud that we are answering his challenge this way. Early in his presidency, in a speech in May of 1981, he said:

*“History will ask and our answer will determine the fate of freedom for a thousand years. Did a nation born of hope lose hope? Did a people forged by courage find courage wanting? Did a generation steeled by hard war and harsh peace forsake honor at the moment of great climactic struggle for the human spirit?”<sup>15</sup>*

The United States is still answering History’s call with hope, courage, and honor. Those of us who have the honor and privilege of working with IRI are pleased to contribute to this sacred mission, this call to help others to realize freedom, which is the right of all, and not just the lucky few.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Address to the British Parliament, June 8, 1982.

<sup>2</sup> Remarks by President George W. Bush, Istanbul, Turkey, June 29, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Address to the British Parliament, June 8, 1982.

<sup>4</sup> Remarks by President Bush and Prime Minister Martin of Canada in a Press Availability, April 30, 2004. Transcript available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/04/20040430-2.html>

<sup>5</sup> David Rohde, “Fourteen Afghans are Killed for Registering to Vote” *New York Times* June 28, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> See Reuel Marc Gerecht, “Democratic Revolution?” *Wall Street Journal*, June 15, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Remarks by President George W. Bush, Istanbul, Turkey, June 29, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> More information on the poll and its findings is available at [www.iri.org](http://www.iri.org)

<sup>9</sup> Jack Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights: In Theory and Practice* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003) page 191.

<sup>10</sup> See generally, Fareed Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 2003)

<sup>11</sup> Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, *Legitimacy and Force: Political and Moral Dimensions* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1988) page 85.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Juan Forero, “Latin America Graft and Poverty Trying Patience with Democracy” *New York Times*, June 24, 2004.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Address to the National Endowment for Democracy, November 6, 2003. Transcript available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031106-3.html>

<sup>15</sup> Cited in Ronald W. Reagan, *Speaking My Mind: Selected Speeches* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1989) page 423.