

The Demise of Dictators: Achieving Universal Democracy Demands Action

Over the past quarter-century, a tide of democracy has washed across the globe, making democratic forms of government pervasive and shifting the balance of power in the world. In fact, the number of fully free countries has more than doubled during this time: Portugal and Spain. Poland and Hungary. Chile and South Africa. The Philippines and South Korea. All told, a quiet, largely nonviolent, and unpredicted revolution has swept the planet. And it is still gathering steam.

During 2002, 29 countries demonstrated forward progress in freedom, while 11 registered setbacks. Today the majority of the world's Muslims live in electoral democracies; even Iran's people, faced with determined and violent opposition, have repeatedly demonstrated at the ballot box and in the streets the universal desire for popular governance. Taiwan has proven that democracy can take root and thrive in a Chinese culture. Eastern Europe has thrown off half a century's communist conditioning. The Community of Democracies now produces more than 90 percent of the world's gross national product, has the most advanced military forces by far and represents the basic human tenets of self-determination and freedom.

Just 43 dictators remain, oppressing one-third of the planet's population and threatening international peace and prosperity. An arc of tyranny runs unbroken west from North Korea and China, through Central Asia, the Middle East and Angola – with just three outlying dictators in Europe and the Western Hemisphere. The world's most pressing health problems are disproportionately concentrated in these dictatorships; and the highest oppression of women occurs in them. Environmental degradation also has a clear past, present and future link to these tyrants.

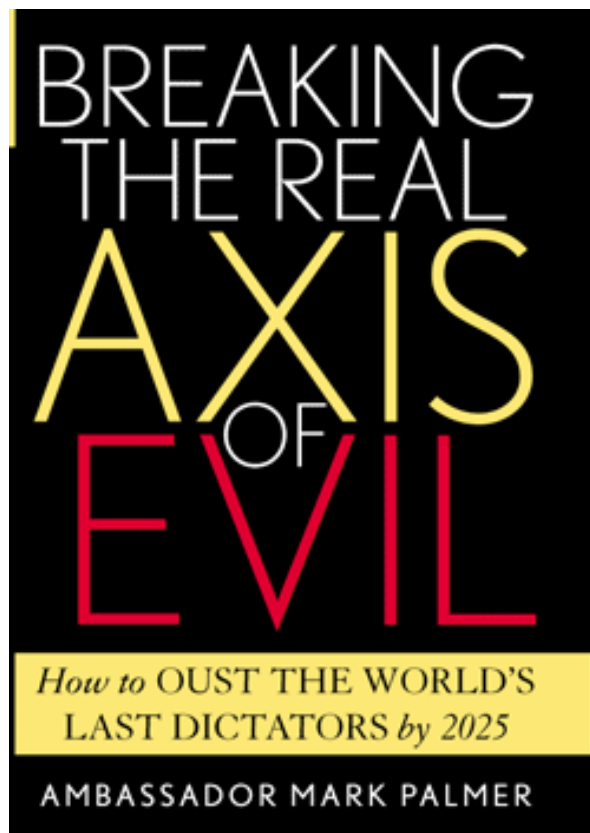
The progress over the last quarter-century supports a goal of ousting the remaining dictators and creating a fully democratic world by 2025. There is no reason the peoples of the dictatorships still standing should not join the majority who now exercise their right to elect their own leaders, read independent newspapers, join independent trade unions, and practice their faiths in peace and tolerance.

What needs to be done?

First, a new mind-set must be developed among people both inside and outside dictatorships to accrete a critical mass of real belief that democracy can and will be achieved. The first strategic objective must be to strengthen this conviction, to take as a simple truth that ordinary people have the power to get rid of their oppressors.

Second, the Community of Democracies must reach out to the democrats inside dictatorships and establish a dialogue, process and deadline with the dictators themselves to achieve full democracy.

Third, democrats must develop the political and economic tools and techniques for the nonviolent removal of their oppressors. The past quarter-century abounds with examples: the Indonesian students who filled the streets against Suharto; the predominantly young people of Poland's Solidarity trade union movement who pushed out Wojciech Jaruzelski; the Hungarian students who got the barbed wire cut along the Austrian border; the young East Germans who ripped down the Berlin Wall. Lessons can be learned.



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Removal of dictators is first and foremost a domestic political matter, undertaken by the people living under tyranny. Over the past 25 years, a change in domestic consciousness, strategic organization and coordinated, mostly nonviolent action has contributed overwhelmingly to repeated successes. What is not always so clear is the critical part played by the international community. Indeed, it is remarkable that the relatively small efforts of outside democrats had such a significant impact. Imagine what outsiders could do with a creative strategy backed by money and determination.

The accompanying action agenda is being recommended for consideration as just such a strategy.

The Community of Democracies must adopt this common goal: All dictators out by 2025. It must then use its majority within the United Nations to have this goal and program adopted as a matter of binding international policy and law.

Ousting dictators must be brought from the fringes to the center of national-security and foreign policy. Progress over the last generation is encouraging. Now it is time to finish the job – to go beyond outrage, say enough is enough, and join together the world's democracies and democrats to oust the last dictators and build universal democracy.

Action Agenda

PROMOTE THE 21ST CENTURY AS ONE WITHOUT DICTATORS

a Increase understanding that dictators could make the 21st century bloodier than they made the 20th century.

a Dramatize the benefits for peace, prosperity and freedom of a world without dictators.

Achieve a conceptual breakthrough with a conviction that all dictators can be ousted within one more generation.

a Educate the world about the huge number of dictators ousted over the last generation and the methods used.

a Re-define national security/power as the spread of democracy and alliances among democracies.

a Set goal of ousting all dictators by 2025.

build a new architecture of international power to achieve this goal.

a Transform the Community of Democracies and NATO into a global democratic alliance, with on-call forces, regional programs and caucuses within existing international organizations.

a Declare dictatorship a crime against humanity and prosecute remaining dictators before international tribunals.

a Organize non-governmental democrats inside dictatorships and recognize them as the legitimate voices of their peoples.

open up, instead of walling off, closed societies.

a Give new policy and budget priority to opening and dictator-ousting programs.

a Re-focus the classic opening programs and create new programs, for example an Independent Television and Radio Fund.

a Encourage private foundations and businesses to adopt a bolder focus on democracy promotion.

institute democracy development plans and programs for each of the remaining dictatorships. these plans should include:

a Completion of the three stages of democratic growth by an agreed-upon date

a Creation of an autonomous International Dictatorship-to-Democracy Center under the Community of Democracies and United Nations sponsorship.

a Recognition of indigenous democrats as central players through roundtables and other devices.

transform embassies into freedom houses and ambassadors into freedom fighters by:

a Visibly supporting the democrats in meetings with them, symbolic events, marches, campaign buttons, electronic billboards.

a Holding regular fireside chats with each subjected people via radio, television, Internet by ambassadors, presidents/prime ministers/parliamentarians.

a Dialoguing with the dictators and regimes about transition and exit.

enhance understanding of the nature and power of nonviolent conflict in ousting dictators.

a Teach the strategy and tactics for a two-stage nonviolent campaign to oust a dictator.

a Emphasize the critical role that outsiders play.

focus attention on each of the last 43 dictators as individuals to prevent their hiding behind a regime, culture or country.

a Do an annual report on each of the 'Least Wanted' and publicize widely, in key languages.

a Develop, and keep updated, a criminal indictment for each dictator.

develop a comprehensive action plan for every one of the regions and countries with dictators, combining all of the recommended elements.

a Recognize that highest priority should be given to the largest remaining hotspots: the Greater Middle East and China.

a Work with varying coalitions of interested democratic nations and democrats.

a Focus sanctions on the dictators, not the populations.

by Ambassador Mark Palmer, Vice Chairman, CECHE

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