

# From the Chairman

*Martin Frost*

The National Archives, which houses our nation's charters of freedom, was the ideal setting for the Endowment's 30th anniversary celebration in November. Speaker John Boehner and Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi reaffirmed their strong support for our work, and a distinguished panel consisting of Senators John McCain (R, AZ) and Robert Menendez (D, NJ), and Representatives Ed Royce (R, CA) and David Price (D, NC) spoke with ABC News' George Stephanopoulos about America's bipartisan commitment to democracy abroad.

It was appropriate that members of both houses of Congress played such a prominent role in the celebration, since their bipartisan backing has been critical to the success of the Endowment since its inception. Indeed, it was my former House colleague from Florida, Dante Fascell, who first proposed the creation of a nongovernmental organization to advance democratic values and institutions around the world.

NED has also been honored to have the support of every administration since President Reagan gave his endorsement to the Endowment idea in a major foreign policy address in June 1982.

Three decades after its establishment in November 1983, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and its four affiliated institutes—the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), the Solidarity Center (ACILS), and the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE)—can look back on a record of extraordinary achievement abroad.

Riding in its early days what the late Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington characterized as the "Third Wave" of democracy around the world, NED and its institutes quickly got to work identifying needs and opportunities, and providing technical and financial support to small 'd' democrats in societies at various stages of democratic development who were in need of assistance and eager to reach out.

In the case of countries in the early stages of democratic

development, the party institutes offered expertise on how to write electoral laws, establish functioning parliaments, develop issue briefs, and train grass roots groups to monitor elections, frequently using the talents of those who had managed their own successful democratic transitions. The Solidarity Center, building upon the American labor movement's longstanding internationalism, developed new ways to empower workers to fight for their rights, including the ability to organize free trade unions. And CIPE provided technical assistance to business partners looking to open markets, fight corruption, improve corporate governance, and convince governments of the need to encourage entrepreneurship.

In addition to the work of its affiliated institutes, NED's programmatic emphasis has been on strengthening grassroots organizations working in such critical fields as human rights, civic education, independent media, rule of law, and the empowerment of women and youth. In all cases, our guiding philosophy is that democracy grows best from bottom up, i.e., from those grass roots activists who understand local conditions and needs, not from master plans created by experts who presume to know what is best.

Today, NED and its institutes are working in over 90 countries around the world to fulfill the vision of its founders that democracy requires steady, sustained, and long-term cultivation and protection.

As we pursue this objective, we are mindful of the fact that democratic advancement does not follow a straight path. As the co-editor of NED's highly



NED Chairman Martin Frost (right) greets the Archivist of the United States, David Ferriero, at NED's 30th anniversary celebration.

acclaimed *Journal of Democracy* Larry Diamond recently noted, democratic breakdowns in the period 1999-2011 affected nearly 20 percent of the world's democracies.

Much of this trend has reflected the challenges of democratic governance that require building strong institutions to overcome the forces of corruption, mismanagement, and special interests while strengthening democratic accountability and the rule of law. But as Diamond also notes, rising levels of income, education, and access to information have tipped the scales in favor of those demanding greater political freedom, more effective delivery of services, and equitable policy implementation.

The participation and leadership of youth is critical to the long-term success and sustainability of democracy. To emphasize the importance of this outsized demographic group, NED launched "30 Under 30," a 30th anniversary campaign highlighting the stories of 30 young activists, who are making important contributions to advance democracy in their respective countries. ([www.ned.org/30years](http://www.ned.org/30years))

Among these young heroes, all NED grantees, are:

- A 27-year old women's rights advocate in Afghanistan who has survived multiple assassination attempts by the Taliban

- A 28-year old Nepali journalist who has creatively used community radio to connect citizens and government officials in what has been a war-torn country
- A 29-year old project director who has helped foster Liberia's democratic transition.

Such inspiring stories have cemented NED's reputation as an effective and innovative organization that has earned the trust of the U.S. Congress, every Administration since its founding, and - most importantly - courageous democrats worldwide, who rightly regard NED support as a sign of solidarity.

In describing NED's mandate on behalf of the American people at our 30th anniversary celebration, Speaker Boehner pointed out, "Our work to help spread freedom and democracy around the world is at the core of who we are and what we believe in." And in saluting NED's milestone, Democratic Leader Pelosi concluded with the hope "that we will continue to honor our responsibility to support freedom around the world."

I am honored to chair an organization which combines the highest values of the American people with a practical vision for the future that will help fellow democrats abroad to secure the rights and liberties we too often take for granted.

# From the President

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*Carl Gershman*

2013 marked thirty years since Congress adopted the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) Act and President Reagan signed it into law. Looking back over these three decades, one can see evidence of both the power of the democratic idea and the many problems that continue to block democracy's progress.

When NED was founded in 1983, the Third Wave of democratization was just beginning to gather force, leading to the greatest expansion of democracy in human history. The number of democracies in the world doubled to some 120 countries by the end of the 1990s, democracy assistance became a major field of international activity, and the continued expansion of democracy was commonly thought to be inevitable.

The democratic optimism of those years has since given way to a much more pessimistic view of the prospect for democracy. The latest Freedom House survey reports that the state of freedom in the world declined in 2013 for the 8th consecutive year. The decline has been most pronounced in Eurasia and the Middle East, but it has affected all regions of the world to one degree or another.

Of the many factors that account for this decline, the most important has been the growing and more sophisticated resistance of authoritarian states to pressures for greater human rights and democratic accountability. It has not been just dictatorships like China and Cuba that have mounted this resistance, but also partially-open, hybrid states like Venezuela and Azerbaijan where regimes use formal democratic procedures to legitimate authoritarian power.

In addition to tightening controls at home, authoritarian regimes are also investing vast resources to project their values internationally, using such soft-power instruments as Russia's RT, China's CCTV, and Iran's Press TV to influence political developments

and shape international attitudes on democracy.

Many other problems have contributed to the new mood of democratic pessimism. The turmoil that has gripped the Middle East since the uprisings in 2011, and especially the failure of the democratic transition in Egypt, have destroyed the early promise of the Arab Spring. Elsewhere, many emerging democracies have failed to address the problem of corruption or to improve the economic well-being of the population, leading many people to question the instrumental value of democracy in addressing urgent social and economic challenges. In addition to these troubles, China's growing economic and military power has altered the balance of forces in the world and strengthened the appeal of authoritarian capitalism as an alternative to liberal democracy, all at a time when the United States and many European countries have entered a period of economic and political malaise.

Despite all these negative developments – and arguably even because of them – it is the resilience of democracy that is especially noteworthy. Democracy may be in the throes of what some have called a recession, but there has been nothing close to the kind of “reverse-wave” rollback of democracy that followed earlier waves of democratic expansion. Indeed, the number of electoral democracies now stands at 122 countries, just one below the high-water mark of 123 reached in 2005 and four more than in 2012. To be sure, in all four of the countries newly ranked as electoral democracies – Honduras, Kenya, Nepal and Pakistan – democracy is deeply troubled.



*NED President Carl Gershman addresses those gathered to celebrate NED's 30 anniversary.*

Yet it is significant that authoritarianism has not been restored in any of them. It now also appears that Tunisia could become the first Arab democracy – a democratic beachhead in the region of the world most resistant to democratic change.

In contrast to the resilience of democracy, authoritarianism – with all its harsh repressiveness – appears distinctly insecure and defensive. When autocrats warn against “colored revolutions,” they show themselves to be fearful of any spark that could ignite popular protests. When they use violence, torture and imprisonment to silence dissent, they reveal their inability to make a credible defense of their policies or actions against their critics. And when they stir up nationalist fears against minorities or foreigners, they show that they have no positive message or practical answers to the problems of society.

What they fear is the rising consciousness of people who are fed up with corruption and more insistent than ever before that government should respect their dignity as human beings. This is why movements of civic renewal have been springing up in one country after another. Examples of such movements are the EuroMaidan in Ukraine, the Campaign for Another Cuba, the Y'en a Marre (Enough is Enough) movement in Senegal, and the New Citizens' Movement in China.

Xu Zhiyong, a leader of the New Citizens' Movement who was recently sentenced to four years in prison, described this spirit of civic renewal in his written closing statement at his trial, which the presiding judge deemed “irrelevant” and stopped him from reading. “What the New Citizens' Movement advocates,” Xu wrote, “is for each and every Chinese national to act and behave as a citizen, to accept our roles as citizens and masters of our country – and not to act as feudal subjects, remain complacent, accept mob rule or a position as an underclass. To take seriously the rights which come with citizenship, those written into the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and China's Constitution: and to treat these sacred rights – to vote, to freedom of speech and religion – as more than an everlasting IOU.”

After three decades of aiding democracy, NED has the ability – as well as the obligation – to provide moral, intellectual, material and organizational support to such movements for civic renewal and to other efforts to build democracy. We understand that these are immensely difficult struggles, and that the process of building free and democratic societies will take many years, even generations. But we feel confident that these efforts will eventually succeed, because they embody the hopes and aspirations of people throughout the globe. It is NED's mission to help them, and we are proud to offer our solidarity.