



NDI Reports

NO. 3, 2001

A Democratic Alternative

This opinion article, written by NDI President Kenneth Wollack and Middle East Regional Director Les Campbell, urges international solidarity to confront the immediate threat of terrorism and, at the same time, to support those democratic forces worldwide that serve as a “third way” between authoritarian regimes and religious fundamentalists. While governmental leaders in certain nondemocratic countries will naturally be a part of a broader coalition to root out terrorism, the price for cooperation should not exclude support for democratizers. In the long run, democracy provides the best deterrent to political extremism, and the best guarantor for peace and prosperity.

In his address to Congress in the aftermath of September 11, President Bush spoke these words: “Every nation in every region now has a decision to make. Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists.” His warning registered everywhere, precisely because it was universally understood that terrorism is a threat to civilization and those who sustain the threat will suffer the consequences.

Most governments understand that terrorism threatens them as much as it does the United States. Indeed, many leaders have joined the coalition organized by the U.S. because terrorism threatens their own survival in power. Our allies in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt have faced political extremism and appreciate what the Talibanization of their societies would mean.

9.11

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF NDI

The National Democratic Institute extends its heartfelt sympathies to the families and friends of the victims of the tragic events of September 11. Our thoughts have also been with the brave rescuers and relief workers for their heroism and sacrifices. This tragedy is a vivid reminder of the vulnerability inherent in a free society. The international community must act forcefully to overcome the threat of terrorism and, at the same time, recognize that democracies provide a long-term deterrent to political extremism and conflict. We join with democrats around the world in working for democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Madeleine K. Albright

Democratic activists . . . are trying to take away the lifeblood of extremism by providing political space for debate and peaceful dissent.

However, while government leaders in these countries must be part of a broader coalition to root out Osama bin Laden and the al Qaeda network, the price for cooperation should not include our open-ended sanction for their governing style. These allies are part of the solution, yes, but also part of the problem.

Extremists like the al Qaeda network live in a symbiotic relationship with nondemocratic regimes. Autocracy, corruption, and the lack of accountability feed powerlessness, poverty, and despair. Authoritarianism bars change within the system, except as dictated from the

top; among its subjects, it produces easy rationales for extra-legal methods. Radical groups exploit the discontent created by such an environment, in which the only outlet for political expression becomes the mosque. Attracted by simple answers and the perverse romanticism of groups like al Qaeda, some disaffected people come to relish their role as “fighters” against what they perceive as corruption and repression.

During the 1980s, an important lesson was learned about political transformations in countries like the Philippines and Chile—that political forces on the far left and far right enjoy a mutually reinforcing relationship, drawing strength from each other and, in the process, marginalizing the democratic center. Prospects for peace and stability only emerged once democratic political parties and civic groups were able to offer a viable alternative to the two extremes—a “third way.” These democratic forces benefited from the

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solidarity and support they received from the international community and, in the U.S., Republican Administrations and Democratic-led Congresses joined together to champion their cause.

Advocates for democracy in nations like Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Egypt are also trying to create such a “third way” between authoritarianism and Islamic extremism. The basic truth of this war is that these democracy-builders also are our allies against political extremism, as much as the strongmen whose cooperation we need presently. Their voices are important in challenging the misconception that democracy and Islam are incompatible. They are a force that can build a genuine constituency for peace, development and prosperity.

In Pakistan, the Human Rights Commission has been organizing community groups to address problems of freedom of the press and to encourage women to participate in political life. In Uzbekistan, the Human Rights Society is supporting the legal right of political movements to register with the state as official entities. In Kazakhstan, a coalition of nongovernmental organizations has lobbied the Parliament to overturn legislation that would eliminate the last remnants of independent media. In Egypt, a number of civil society groups led by respected academic Saad Eddin Ibrahim monitored parliamentary elections and reported on abuses. Harassment or jail has often been their reward, but in all cases, these democratic activists are not trying to overthrow governments—they are trying to take away the lifeblood of extremism by providing political space for debate and peaceful dissent. Democratic activists in the region now fear that they might be caught in a kind of “squeeze play” between governments that are using the call to action against terrorism to root out even benign forms of political participation, and religious fundamentalists who have always

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regarded democratic reform as a threat to their vision of an Islamic state.

As new and important partnerships are formed with Uzbekistan, Pakistan and others, our agenda can include help for the war effort, as well as support for freedom of speech and expression, for fair elections, for representative political

institutions, and for a voice for citizens in the decisions that affect their lives. The price of coalition need not exclude, even unintentionally, support for democratizers.

With the international community operating on a grand scale with history and civilization in the balance, it also needs to look beyond the immediate battle. Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda must and will be defeated. A new crop of bloody-minded nihilism will sprout again, however, unless the breeding ground of political extremism is uprooted. Homegrown democracy is the plowshare, and it can work in Central Asia and the Middle East. Even as our new allies help us, we must also help them ask themselves: Which side of history are you on?

NICARAGUA

Peaceful Elections, Yet Significant Challenges Ahead

On November 4, more than 90 percent of the Nicaraguan electorate turned out in large numbers to elect a new president and congress, as well as representatives to the Central American Parliament. The polling process was marked by a peaceful atmosphere, cooperation among political party representatives inside the polling stations, and an impressive mobilization of civic and party pollwatchers.

Even though electoral authorities experienced difficulties tabulating official election results, the two main political parties and the civic group *Ética y Transparencia* (ET) conducted “quick counts” based on random samples of polling stations that resulted in an early concession by former president and *Sandinista* leader Daniel Ortega to Liberal Party candidate Enrique



The leaders of Nicaragua's major political parties, along with the Director of NDI's Nicaragua program, at a press conference to announce the so-called “gentleman's agreement” under which they agreed not to raise unwarranted challenges to election results.



A peaceful and cooperative atmosphere prevailed in polling stations on election day.

Bolaños, a businessman who was well known for his outspoken opposition to *Sandinista* rule in the 1980's. ET's "quick count", confirmed later by official results, gave Bolaños a 13 percentage point victory, with approximately 1.4 percent of the vote going to the Conservative Party candidate. Final results for the Congressional seats are still being tallied.

The elections took place against a backdrop of rising political tension and public disillusionment with the state of politics in Nicaragua. Many citizens perceived the political system as being dominated by the collusion of the two largest political parties—the Liberals and the *Sandinistas*—to exclude other political voices. In addition, governmental corruption diminished public confidence. This troubling environment, the anticipation of a very close electoral contest, and distrust among the political contestants led many Nicaraguans to express anxiety about the election process, raising the spectre of politically motivated violence.

After opening an office in Managua in August, NDI began to address specific electoral problems identified by the Nicaraguans. There were concerns about the capacity of political parties to prop-

erly train and deploy enough pollwatchers (*fiscales*) to ensure the presence of more than one party at every voting site. Others were concerned that aggressive behavior by certain *fiscales* would intimidate voters, and that the filing of politically motivated challenges (*impugnaciones*) would disrupt the counting of results and delay the release of election returns.

NDI assisted national and regional political parties by preparing nearly 450 "master" party trainers in Nicaragua's 17 departments, including the remote Atlantic Coast. These trainings focused on such issues as election day procedures, the legal role of party pollwatchers, codes of conduct, and the importance of filing only legitimate challenges. These master trainers in turn trained thousands of *fiscales* to monitor polling stations. On election day pollwatchers from more than one party were present at nearly 100 percent of the voting sites. NDI also assisted approximately 750 *fiscales* to monitor the collection and analysis of results at the municipal and departmental level data centers, key stages in the tabulation process. These *fiscales* were provided with specially developed user-friendly training and reference manuals in both Spanish and Miskito, a coastal language.

In addition, the Institute helped to convene the three political parties at a press conference three days before the election, at which they issued a joint declaration pledging not to lodge *impugnaciones* unless there was a clear legal basis for the challenge.

NDI also supported the independent observation efforts of *Etica y Transparencia* and local civic monitoring groups. It organized visits of international experts to assist ET in developing communication strategies and election day response plans, and to support ET's "quick count" and observation efforts. On election day, ET fielded more than 5,000 volunteer observers and provided a precise and reliable projection of election results that helped reassure Nicaraguans that their votes were being fairly counted. ET's "quick count" played a decisive role in helping the political actors know and recognize the electoral outcome, even in the face of an official vote tabulation process that was slowed by a myriad of technical problems. The appearance together of Enrique Bolaños and Daniel Ortega on election day sent a signal of increased confidence in the election process that hopefully will carry over into the new government.

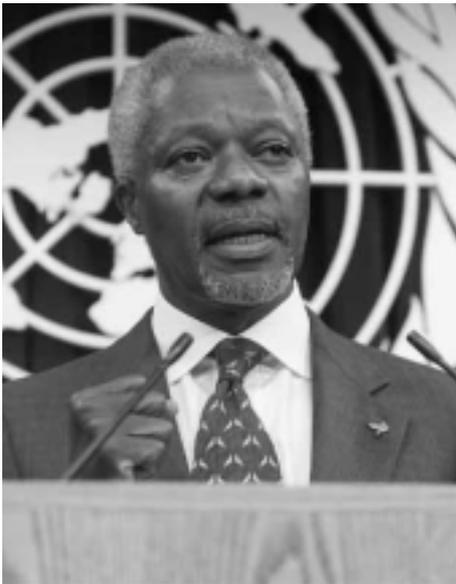
NDI has worked to support democratic institutions in Nicaragua since the mid-1980s. It collaborated with the National Assembly and a respected think-tank, the Center for Strategic Studies of Nicaragua, to help develop civilian expertise in national security issues and to establish civilian control of the Nicaraguan military.

NDI actively supported the creation of ET, Nicaragua's first nonpartisan national election observer effort. With training from NDI, the organization recruited and deployed more than 4,200 volunteers who monitored nearly 90 percent of Nicaragua's 9,005 polling sites during the 1996 national elections. ET quickly emerged as the most broad-based civic group in the country's history, becoming a symbol of pluralism and national reconciliation.

Kofi Annan and Linda and Peter Biehl Honored with 2001 NDI Democracy Award

The NDI Board of Directors announced at its September 19 meeting that NDI would honor United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and Peter and Linda Biehl of the Amy Biehl Foundation in South Africa, with its 2001 W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award.

The 14th Annual Awards will be presented at a dinner in Washington, D.C. on November 28, two weeks before Annan and the United Nations are presented with the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway.



Kofi Annan

In announcing the award to Annan, NDI cited his global leadership in advancing peace, democratic governance, the rule of law and human rights. With this award, NDI recognizes the importance of efforts to promote democratic institutions and values as both ends in themselves, and as a means to dealing with the breeding grounds of political extremism, conflict, disease and environmental degradation.

“Like no other United Nations leader before him, Secretary-General Annan has committed the world body to universal values of democracy and human rights,” said NDI Chairman and former U.S. Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, who also served as U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. “He has consistently and forcefully spoken out in support of political systems that give citizens a genuine stake in their society and has dedicated U.N. resources to this goal.”

Kofi Annan, a Ghanaian national, was appointed Secretary-General of the United Nations in 1997. He is the first Secretary-General to come from within the organization, having served in the areas of refugee assistance, budget, personnel and peacekeeping. He was reappointed to his second term of office by an unprecedented unanimous vote of the General Assembly. His wife, Nane Annan, a Swedish artist and lawyer, will accompany him to the Award Dinner. She is the niece of Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, who helped thousands of Hungarian Jews escape from the Nazis during World War II.

Peter and Linda Biehl are honored for their efforts on behalf of their daughter, Amy, a former NDI staff member who was killed in South Africa in 1993 while working for reconciliation there. The Biehls have advanced their daughter’s legacy through the Amy Biehl Foundation, which provides educational opportunity, health training and entrepreneurial and leadership skills to residents in townships throughout South Africa.



Linda and Peter Biehl

“The programs of the Amy Biehl Foundation embody Amy’s own commitment to a democratic, multi-racial society,” said Albright. “Through the Foundation, the Biehls have resolved to build a constructive legacy from personal despair, and to remember Amy through human service.”

Established to honor the late diplomat and politician Averell Harriman, NDI’s Award recognizes individuals who exemplify the Institute’s commitment to democracy and human rights. Past recipients of the Award have included the eight political party leaders who negotiated the Northern Ireland peace agreement, President Eduard Shevardnadze of Georgia, Burmese democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi, Czech Republic President Vaclav Havel, South African President Thabo Mbeki, former Argentine president Raul Alfonsin, Chile’s 1988 Free Election Movement, former U.S. presidents Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter, former U.S. vice-president Walter Mondale, Senator Edward Kennedy, former senator George Mitchell, the late Lane Kirkland, president of the AFL-CIO, and then-U.S. Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright.

Belarus—What Next?

MINSK... Belarus held the second presidential election in its history on September 9. Independent since 1991, this former Soviet republic, a place of undulating hills and fertile farmland, sits astride key trade routes between Russia and the young democracies of Central Europe and the Baltic States. Its people, while culturally close to Russia, also have strong linguistic and historical ties to their neighbors in Poland, Ukraine, and Lithuania. A prosperous and democratic Belarus would contribute significantly to political stability and economic development at home and throughout the region.

Regrettably, Belarus does not play this role today. Its moribund economy and climate of political repression owe much to the authoritarian behavior of its president, Aleksandr Lukashenko. Elected in 1994, Mr. Lukashenko quickly ended his country's brief experiment with democracy. Two years later, he engineered a sham referendum that vastly increased his authority and extended his term by two years. That referendum, and a subsequent bogus election to a rubber-stamp parliament, have not been recognized by the United States and its European allies.

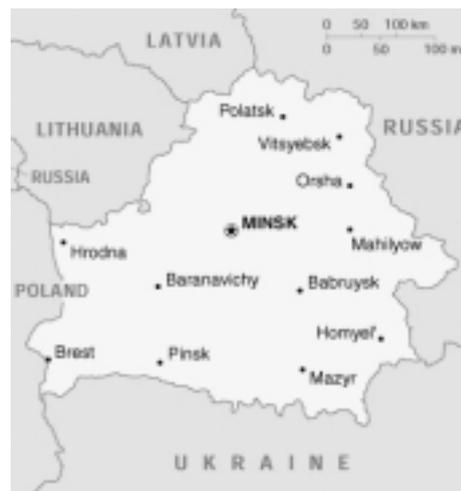
As a result, Belarus remains isolated, a pariah in the heart of Europe. Its government is essentially a one-man dictatorship, with the opposition muzzled, the parliament toothless, the media heavily state-controlled, and the judiciary answerable only to the president. Reports have surfaced in recent months implicating the regime in the murders of several political opponents in 1999.

Predictably, Mr. Lukashenko's government has declared him the victor by a wide margin over his principal opponent, Vladimir Goncharik, a trade union leader who was the consensus candidate of a broad spectrum of opposition political parties.

The election results need to be viewed with considerable skepticism.

This result needs to be viewed with considerable skepticism. In the run-up to the vote, the state-controlled media repeatedly attacked Mr. Goncharik while singing the praises of the incumbent. The opposition campaign was subjected to constant administrative and legal harassment that severely limited its ability to communicate with the electorate.

The same treatment was meted out to civic groups, whose offices were raided, equipment seized, and leaders detained. Local and regional election commissions, which oversee the voting process, were staffed almost exclusively with Lukashenko loyalists. Just a day before the vote, some of the commissioners found cause to exclude thousands of duly registered election observers. And Belarus' election law, described by international experts as "the worst in Europe," leaves significant room for ballot-box



The international community should continue to support democratic forces in Belarus and make electoral and constitutional liberalization a basic feature of its policy.

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To prepare political party activists for the September elections, NDI held trainings on such techniques as door-to-door canvassing.

BELARUS

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stuffing and manipulation of the vote count. In short, this was an election designed to fail, and therefore one in which the will of the Belarusian people could not be ascertained.

And yet, there is a silver lining in this dark political cloud. Although Mr. Lukashenko remains in power and is unlikely to change his stripes, both his opponents and independent activists have emerged with new credibility and promise. Their courageous participation in the election did not legitimize a fatally flawed process. Rather, against tremendous odds, Mr. Goncharik's campaign united a disparate array of political parties from across the political spectrum. The regime's many opponents have discovered that they have much more in common with each other than anyone believed.

Many ordinary Belarusians have begun to assert their rights. A large coalition of citizens' organizations mobilized thousands of people to monitor voting all over the country. Their observations significantly enriched the international community's understanding and opinion of the election process. More important, the domestic observation project gave thousands of Belarusians their first opportunity to participate meaningfully in the political life of their country.

These are gains that need to be built upon if Belarus is to rejoin the community of democracies. Much depends on the initiative of the Belarusians themselves. The democratic opposition needs to begin planning now for future elections.

But outside assistance also remains essential. The international community should continue to support democratic forces in Belarus and make electoral and constitutional liberalization a basic feature of its policy. We need to be especially watchful in the months ahead, in the event that, as many of his opponents fear, Mr. Lukashenko seeks to exact retribution

against those who have dented his aura of invincibility. Russia, too, needs to play its part. Its attitude toward Mr. Lukashenko is a test of Russia's resolve. The growth and enduring strength of democracy in the former Communist states suggests that Belarus' days as Europe's last dictatorship are probably numbered. But the country's troubles also remind us that, 10 years after the fall of the Soviet Union, democracy remains fragile and reversible.

This report was written by NDI Senior Program Officer Andreas Katsouris who travelled to Minsk to observe the September 9 presidential election in Belarus.

In the months leading up to the election, NDI trained thousands of democratic

Many ordinary Belarusians have begun to assert their rights.

political party activists in regions throughout the country. In cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), NDI helped build a broad network of civic groups to monitor the electoral process. Under difficult conditions, this Independent Observation Network trained and deployed nearly 10,000 Belarusian pollwatchers nationwide.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

“Democracy at the Click of a Mouse”

The Internet and related technologies are having a profound effect on social, economic and political institutions and processes worldwide, with significant consequences for democracies and democratic development.

Examples abound of uses of the Internet in the democratic context. It has been used as a means to organize against authoritarian regimes and to promote advocacy, government transparency and accountability in existing or emerging democracies. Citizens, politicians, civil servants, political parties, civic groups, corporations, and institutions of all types are using Internet technologies to communicate and to provide and access information. Strengthening the use of these technologies enhances the democratic process and promotes more effective governance.

However, access to the Internet is limited to a small segment of the world's population, and there is a significant “divide”



The Chair of the South African National Council of Provinces at the launch of "NCOP Online!" The site facilitates communication between the South African provincial legislature, the national government and the public.

between those who are connected and those who are not. Lack of access to technologies even as simple as radio, telephone and television have frustrated development efforts for decades. At first glance, it would therefore seem that this challenge must be addressed before fully exploiting the potential of the Internet. However, rather than take on the

daunting task of connecting everyone to the Internet, experience suggests that pragmatic strategies for using the Internet and related technologies are critical in beginning to narrow the “digital divide” and actually helping people cross from one side to the other.

Many organizations are not “connected” because either they do not have the financial resources required or they lack the technical and managerial competence to adequately plan for and procure the necessary equipment, services and systems, such as websites, databases and communication networks. In addition, important institutions of democracy often lack experience in applying technology to their activities such as advocacy, outreach and management. These are areas where NDI provides assistance from its program staff and volunteers around the world who have established relationships with potential information technology (IT) users and understand their needs.

NDI’s approach to democracy programming using Internet and related technologies is built on a sustainable strategy that drives planning, assessment, implementation and program evaluation. This ensures that the IT work continues to support the democratic process beyond the life of the program. The greatest challenge to such programming is not usually technical, but organizational—training managers to manage and budget for systems, training staff to maintain them and training target audiences to use them. In other words, at the same time as Internet or other systems are being developed, a parallel process of building capacity to maintain the system should also be implemented. Partners should be encouraged to form the necessary relationships within their country to meet their ongoing equipment and services needs. This approach may not always be the cheapest in terms of initial investment, since it often requires a longer-term engagement to help the partner address staffing and budgeting requirements. However, this approach does add value to the program long after the initial elements have been completed.



The Political Party Network site links party activists across Latin America and provides access to hundreds of political party-related documents.

Since 1996, NDI has helped implement more than 20 IT-related programs in response to the needs of its partners. Most of these projects use the Internet in a legislative context—what could be called “eGovernance.” NDI has also developed Internet programs that provide information and services to democrats.

NCOP ONLINE!—SOUTH AFRICA
Launched in November 1999, this popular site is an online legislative tracking system that facilitates interaction between the South African provincial legislatures and the national government. The site allows provincial governments to respond in real time to national legislation, as required by South Africa’s new constitution. It also encourages public participation by soliciting submissions online, and allows members of the public to sign up for an e-mail service that delivers breaking news about legislation, committee and other parliament information. The Johannesburg *Star* called NCOP Online! “democracy at the click of a mouse.”
<http://www.parliament.gov.za/ncop>

PARLIAMENT OF NAMIBIA
A parliamentary service aimed at empowering elected officials, the public, and administrative staff in Parliament and in regional councils, this site, launched in May 2001, includes a discussion forum to facilitate public input and dialogue around policy issues, and an Intranet for members for secure legislative collaboration.
<http://www.parliament.gov.na>

NDI SERBIA
This website provides training materials and links to political news websites in Serbian for political activists throughout the country. The site also hosts e-mail list servers for activists that proved useful in building democratic cohesion during the 2000 elections.
<http://www.ndisrbija.org>

SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM
The Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum, a cooperative body comprised of 10 SADC parliaments, launched its website in March 2001. The site hosts information for MPs and the public in the region



Namibia’s parliament launches its new research service, which facilitates drafting of legislation and communication between members, their staff and the public.

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related to election observation missions and other Forum activities, as well as an interactive website for SADC parliamentarians, researchers and the public.
<http://www.sadcpf.org>

LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN POLITICAL PARTY NETWORK (PPN)

The website of the Latin America and the Caribbean Political Party Network provides access to NDI's collection of international training materials and other party documents. It contains information about more than 600 political party-related documents in NDI's library, and Internet links to parties throughout the hemisphere. The bilingual site, launched in December 1999, also links interested young political leaders to information about NDI's regional Political Leadership Program.
<http://www.ndi.org/partidos>



PARTNERSHIP FOR DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE & SECURITY (PDGS)

A NDI-sponsored website in English, Spanish and French that provides information for members of an international network of democrats working on security sector reform issues and civil-military relations. The site includes a wide-ranging database of relevant documents, as well as a section of current news updates and analysis, where visitors can read about the latest developments and trends in democratic governance and security around the world.
<http://www.pdgs.org/>

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