

Universal Values in Engaging with Beijing
Sixth International Conference on Global Support for
Democratization in China and Asia
Hon. David Kilgour, JD.
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It is an honour to join so many delegates from thirty organizations and twenty countries at this important conference.

In Asia today, four key nations today are stable, consolidated democracies: India, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Indonesia, the Philippines, Mongolia and others have taken important steps to build or restore democratic governance. It is self-serving sophistry to claim, as apologists for the regime in Beijing often do, that democracy and universal values do not work well for Asians.

Since the end of the First World War, multiparty democratic governance has been adopted throughout much of the world, albeit with periodic setbacks, as the best means of creating improved citizen lives and political equality. The recent thrust towards democratization across the Arab world shattered many regional stereotypes and reinforced the view that peoples everywhere want to determine who governs them and how. Authoritarianism took major blows from many of 340 million Arabs, much assisted by Internet news, Al-Jazeera, Face Book, and other social media.

Outsiders should not prefer the status quo in the guise of “stability” over political freedom. For the 33 members of the Arab League – all with large Muslim majorities – a major issue in terms of democratic governance is how to interpret the holy Qur’an. When Indonesia, the largest Muslim democracy, held parliamentary elections in 2009, support for extremist parties declined. Most voters seemed concerned about good governance, jobs, and economic growth. Overall, support for fundamentalist parties fell.

Ai Weiwei

At this conference, the world-renowned Beijing democrat Ai Weiwei’s comments ([@aiww](https://twitter.com/aiww)) on governance today in China are especially important:



Chinese... have less confidence in the state than ever before... the regime refuses to engage with its people. In the recently leaked “[Document No. 9](#)”, senior (Party) leaders... clearly (said) that “Western constitutional democracy” and “universal values” were dangers to society. Because the Chinese government refuses to face elections, the public has never had a chance to express its opinion about the leadership. The grounds to have any form of communication, discussion or argument... have never been established. The Communist Party is ethically and philosophically too weak to meet any challenge in public discussion.

Over the coming years, the Communist government will finally... realize that it can only continue to govern if supported by the constitution and true rule of law... (If) it continues to reject any public role in its decision making and hopes to distract Chinese with spectacles like the Bo (Xilai) case, the regime will only hasten its own end...

Bruce Jacobs

Bruce Jacobs, a professor of Asian languages and studies at Monash University in Australia, recently voiced at a regional security conference some realities about Beijing today. He also noted deeply troubling similarities between it and the regimes in the Germany and Japan in the 1930s and 1940s:

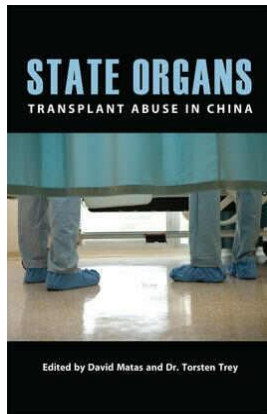
- *...China’s leaders use nationalism because they believe it gives them domestic legitimacy when they have none in terms of fair and free elections. All three were or are strong dictatorships in which even non-violent protest brings imprisonment.*
- *Racism is or was at the heart of all three. China’s party-state today makes frequent appeals to Taiwanese as having “the same flesh and blood,” and “shared blood vessels.” So-called “ethnic minorities”, such as Tibetans and Uighurs, face constant political, economic and social discrimination across China.*
- *All three established vast prison camps to house political prisoners and others who the state has deemed to be threatening.*
- *The Chinese party-state has become territorially expansionist and perceives “appeasement” as weakness. In response to appeasement, all three regimes push or pushed their claims with even more firmness and inflexibility.*

Targeted Communities

It is no mystery why China`s democrats/human rights advocates, Falun Gong, Christians, Tibetans, Uyghurs, Mongolians and some of approximately 50 other cultural/ religious communities are persecuted by the party-state.

Might I here ask you to join many of us around the world in pressuring Beijing to end the pillaging of Falun Gong vital organs for commercial trafficking purposes. Following extensive research, David Matas and I concluded that organs from thousands of Falun Gong prisoners of conscience are being trafficked to both Chinese nationals and foreign

'organ tourists'. For more information, see the independent report done by Matas and myself accessible in 18 languages from www.david-kilgour.com.



In *State Organs*, 2012, writer/researcher Ethan Gutmann estimates that 65,000 Falun Gong were killed for their organs during the years 2000-2008 alone. A police signature alone remains sufficient across China to commit anyone to a forced labour camp for up to three years. In 2007, a U.S. government report estimated that at least half of the inmates in 340 such camps were Falun Gong. Leninist governance and 'anything is permitted' economics encourage organ trafficking to continue across China.

Xi Government

Many Chinese citizens and all of us here today hoped that the new government that took over this year under President Xi Jinping would support reformed governance. A few days ago, an influential Party journal (Qiushi, which ironically means "seeking truth") denounced calls for political reform, claiming such pressure was aimed at getting rid of the Party and its leaders.

Qiushi denounced what it called the "Western brand of democracy", claiming:
In reality, competitive elections mean playing by the rules of Western democracy, and exported to non-western countries, often result in social divisions, ethnic antagonism, political strife and endless political instability. This... should be called the 'democracy trap'.

It went on that Western values would foster political unrest, greater corruption and ethnic strife in China. "They say that only if China accepts these so-called 'universal values' can it have a future," Qiushi said. "This strong secular universalism has always been the way of Western foreign expansion, and provides the ideological basis to conquer the world."

The attack on universal values, the rule of law and democracy comes during a sustained party-state campaign against political dissent. Journalists, lawyers and rights activists have been detained or arrested in recent months in a widening crackdown on dissent. Authorities have also begun a campaign against "rumor-spreading" on the Twitter-like Sina Weibo microblog service, long known as a platform for criticism of the authorities.

Multiparty Democracy

In multiparty democracies, citizens voluntarily give governments the power to rule, but remain engaged and well-informed about the political process to ensure best practices of good governance. The goal is to provide all residents with improved lives and for social, regional, national and international harmony to prevail.

Independent media in democracies have a vital role in informing citizens accurately. On Tibet, for example, the Dalai Lama told a large audience in Canada about a year ago that the Chinese and Tibetan peoples were brothers and sisters, but that Party media manipulated opinion seeking to divide the two. Sure enough, I recently heard a highly-intelligent Chinese citizen defend one-party authoritarianism in her country on the basis that it is necessary to prevent the Dalai Lama from obtaining independence for Tibet by force. When I told her that His Holiness has always opposed violence and seeks only limited autonomy for Tibetans within China, she was astonished.

Some democratic governments overlook their own principles as they pursue economic interests or seek what they believe will be security. Abusive and totalitarian regimes are tolerated, even praised. How many times have those fighting for the rule of law and basic freedoms been abandoned by democratic governments elsewhere because it might cost something to help?

Supporting democracy struggles can interfere with trade, investment and perceived security imperatives. The world admires Nelson Mandela of South Africa; Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma; and Gao Zhisheng, Liu Xiaobo, Dr. Wang Bingzhang, Li Befeng, and so many other democrats languishing in prisons across China and elsewhere – yet most of us rarely pay a price as nations or individuals to assist their efforts meaningfully.

How many know, for example, as the Indian economist Amartya Sen has pointed out, that famines rarely occur in functioning democracies because leaders must be responsive to citizen demands?

Non-government organizations can provide useful items to civil society in countries yet to achieve full democracy. One is the Diplomat's Handbook for Democracy Development (www.diplomatshandbook.org/). As observed in Egypt, it is vital that citizens in new democracies understand its principles.

Democracies must stand always against oppression, terror, corruption and segregation – and thrive on diversity, differences and respect for all persons and cultural/religious communities. They support what Aung San Suu Kyi said about universal concepts. She spoke about Burma, but her words are equally applicable everywhere, “It is a puzzlement to the Burmese how concepts which recognize the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of human beings, which accept that all (persons) are endowed with reason and conscience and which recommend a spirit of brotherhood, can be inimical to indigenous values.”

Engaging Beijing

The international community should remain fully engaged with Beijing despite the difficulties created by its governance model and the recent denunciations in Document 9 and Qiushi. The Chinese people should know that others stand with them, not with their government, just as we did in central Europe during the cold war, and with South Africans, particularly during the late '80s and in the lead-up to the election of Nelson Mandela.

Governments, investors and business at home and abroad might examine why they are supporting the violation of so many universal values in order to increase trade and

investment with China. For years this has resulted mostly in jobs being outsourced to China and continuous increases in our bi-lateral trade deficits. Are the rest of us so focused on access to inexpensive consumer goods that we ignore the human, social and natural environment costs paid by many Chinese nationals to produce them?

Democracies exist today in all regions of the world. Multiparty democracy is the best guarantor of the citizen respect people everywhere want. The universal desire for representative government, guaranteed human dignity, and the rule of law continues to have momentum. It is now supported by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), which serves in 166 countries. In 2011, the UNDP helped over 130 countries and devoted US\$1.5 billion in resources to democratic governance.

As so many have already said at this conference, the Chinese people want the same things as the rest of us: respect, education, safety and security, good jobs, the rule of law, democratic and accountable governance and a sustainable natural environment. If the party-state ends systematic and gross violations of human rights at home and abroad and begins to treat its trade partners in a transparent and equitable way, the new century can bring harmony and coherence for China and the world.

The first step is to urge the Party to redirect its thinking to improving the well-being of the Chinese people generally rather than primarily that of party members.

Thank you.