

# The ‘Summit for Democracy’ Promotion of Regime Change Originated in the State Department’s Policy Planning Office

by Harley Schlanger

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I’m going to be discussing the so-called Summit for Democracy, which has nothing to do with democracy. It is nothing but an Anglo-American slogan to promote and justify the virtue of the unipolar order. The idea behind it is the claim of organizing a coalition of so-called “democratic” nations to oppose “authoritarian” states, ostensibly through support of the “rule of law,” the “rules-based order,” including a “defense of freedom of speech and press, free trade and free enterprise,” and so on.

Let me begin with a couple of examples of why this is nothing but hypocrisy.

Take freedom of the press, for example. On March 31, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken commented on the Russian arrest of a *Wall Street Journal* reporter for espionage. So far, there has been no report of the evidence behind the arrest. Blinken has no report on the evidence the Russians have, but he called the arrest an absolute disgrace, adding that this is why there is a need for the Summit for Democracy, to defend such freedoms. One might ask him,



DoS/Chuck Kennedy

Antony Blinken, U.S. Secretary of State.

Are you really worried about freedom of the press, and free speech, Mr. Blinken? If so, what about the U.S. prosecution and persecution of Julian Assange? What about the reports that show U.S. government agencies were involved in leaking the phony Russiagate attacks on both Trump and Putin to the press for a number of years? What about the Twitter files which show that U.S. government agencies were involved in censoring or organizing Twitter to censor individuals?

One could ask Mr. Blinken about his repeated citing of violations of the “rule of law” to protest Russia’s behavior. As to the rule of law, real international law has been replaced by something called the “responsibility to protect,” associated with former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair in his declaring the end of the Westphalian order. But rule of law? What about the bombing of Yugoslavia? Was that based on the rule of law? What about the invasion of Iraq, which was based on lies about Iraq’s possession of weapons of mass destruction? Lies that they knew were lies; lies repeated by former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who lied when he said Secretary of State Colin Powell was convinced of the evidence [he presented to the UN]. In fact, Powell later admitted that he knew it was false.

What about the bombing and re-



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Former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair

gime-change in Libya? What about the regime-change operations in Syria, in which the U.S. was involved in defending, arming and organizing al-Qaeda, through the CIA? We're still in Syria illegally, controlling a large section of that country where there's a lot of oil in the ground. What about the regime-change in Ukraine? Is that the rule of law?

Then, we have the matter of why this summit is needed, so that there can be "a building of trust." What about the lies from the U.S. in particular, but the West in general, to the Russians at the end of the Cold War, of no eastward expansion of NATO? What about the lies about holding to the Minsk Accord? As for cooperation and development and trust and anti-corruption, what about the \$9 billion stolen from Afghanistan and deposited in U.S. banks? Or the \$300 billion stolen from Russia? How about the imposition of sanctions which violate the sovereignty of nations and kill? You look at these things, and you must ask, "Who are these people who are talking about the great democratic West standing up for people's freedom worldwide?"

### Origins of the Summit of Democracy

I'm now going to give you a background of where this Summit for Democracy comes from—S4D, as they call it—as they're attempting to establish new rules for intervention by an imperial force backed by NATO and the U.S. military, and the power of the City of London and Wall Street financially. Which, by the way, is a power which they are losing.

The story goes back to February 22, 1946, when George Kennan drafted what was called the Long Telegram from the U.S. embassy in Moscow to Washington. He was asked what the U.S. could make of the Soviet actions after the war, the refusal to join the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which they did refuse to do, although they did join the United Nations. What Kennan wrote was that you can't trust the Russians. He advocated what was called the "containment doctrine," that is, that there had to be a Western agreement to contain the danger of an expansion of

communism through the military of the Soviet Union.

Two weeks later, on March 5, 1946, was the famous Winston Churchill speech. UK Prime Minister Churchill was invited by President Harry Truman to speak at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri. In that speech, Churchill spoke of an "Iron Curtain" dividing Europe. "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent." Churchill coined another phrase in that speech, the idea of the "special relationship" between Britain and the U.S., an Anglo-American alliance nec-



U.S. Army Reserve/DeAndre Pierce

*Since 2013, U.S. soldiers have been illegally in Syria, deployed under a unipolar notion of the "rule of law." The U.S. military now occupies Syria's oil fields and loots the oil. Nov. 11, 2019.*

essary to "defend freedom" internationally.

Shortly after this, in 1947, U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall, at the urging of President Truman, moved to create an agency in the State Department for advanced planning. This became known as the Policy Planning Office of the U.S. State Department. It's been described as the principal strategic arm of the State Department. The man tasked with founding it and running it was George Kennan, the author of the containment doctrine.<sup>1</sup>

1. Though Kennan was the first to author a plan of containment, he vehemently opposed the eastward expansion of NATO. In May 1998, he said in an interview with the *New York Times*: "I think it is the beginning

Kennan's first assignment was to design what became known as the Marshall Plan, which was introduced in 1948. Kennan was one of the major creators of this. What most people know of the Marshall Plan is that it was an act of beneficence by the United States to aid in rebuilding Germany after the war. Well, that is partly true, as there were funds allocated to that, and funds that went to some element of rebuilding.

What worked in Germany was not just making some funding available, but the policy of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer in creating the *Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau*, (Credit Institute for Reconstruction) using that agency to use those funds as a seed crystal for investments in infrastructure and industry. But actually, the idea of the Marshall Plan was to rebuild Europe, remove trade barriers, etc., to prevent the spread of communism—that is, to contain Russia. The total funding was \$13.3 billion, which in today's terms might be about \$160-170 billion. But the largest recipient was not Germany. The largest recipient of the funds was the United Kingdom; 26% of the Marshall Plan funding went to Britain, 18% to France. Germany got 11%.

The Policy Planning Office became a permanent office in the State Department. After George Kennan, the next director was a well-known Atlanticist, Paul Nitze, a financier who was for many years with the investment banking firm Dillon Reed. Other directors have included: Dennis Ross, known for his involvement in West Asia; Paul Wolfowitz, sidekick of Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney in drafting the unipolar order



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*George F. Kennan proposed the containment of the Soviet Union. Then, as the first Director of the State Department's Policy Planning Office in 1947, he designed the Marshall Plan.*

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of a new cold war. I think the Russians will gradually react quite adversely and it will affect their policies. I think it is a tragic mistake. There was no reason for this whatsoever....

“It shows so little understanding of Russian history and Soviet history. Of course there is going to be a bad reaction from Russia, and then [the NATO expanders] will say that we always told you that is how the Russians are—but this is just wrong.”

idea; Richard Haass, who became President of the Council on Foreign Relations; and Jake Sullivan, the current National Security Advisor to President Joe Biden. Another prominent figure associated with this office for years was Zbigniew Brzezinski.

### **The Policy Planning Office and the German Marshall Fund**

It was in the Policy Planning Office in 2008, that the idea was introduced of consolidating a “democratic alliance,” what became later known as the D-10 project—changed to the Democratic 10 when it moved from State to the Anglo-American think-tank, the Atlantic Council, in 2014. But let me just point

out that in addition to the operation of the Atlantic Council, the German Marshall Fund, which was set up in 1972 to focus on “democratizing civil society in Europe” became a partner in the D-10 project.

The German Marshall Fund ran programs “promoting civil engagement in democracy,” including the Balkan Trust for Democracy—think about what happened in Yugoslavia in the late 1990s; The Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation; and the Fund for Belarus Democracy. These were agencies designed to recruit activists and fund so-called democratic resistance to the existing so-called authoritarian states. Chancellor Willy Brandt (1969-1974) was one of the movers of the German Marshall Fund. One of its early grants went to create the Peterson Institute for International Economics, a leading neo-liberal think tank to this day.

The German Marshall Fund also worked very closely with the Chicago Council of World Affairs. They did surveys called the Trans-Atlantic Trends. They set up a Trans-Atlantic Fellowship program, and a Trans-Atlantic Academy to train people to act in civil society in countries that were not part of the “West,” mainly in Eastern Europe. Why is this important? In April 1999, the Blair Doctrine was announced at the

Chicago Council of World Affairs. Tony Blair opened his speech by talking about the situation in Kosovo and the need for Western intervention, which later became a NATO bombing operation supposedly to protect the people of Kosovo. Blair spoke of the “responsibility to protect,” which then became the code word for military intervention. Blair specifically addressed overturning the principle of Westphalia, which included non-intervention in the internal affairs of other nations.

From this background, let’s look at where the Summit for Democracy comes from.

I mentioned that in 2008 the idea was kicked around within the State Department Policy Committee. Then, people from that agency, along with the German Marshall Fund, went to the Atlantic Council and set up what they called the Democracy-10 or the D-10 Committee. The roster of countries that are the Democratic 10 reads like the Global NATO membership role today. It includes Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, South Korea, and of course the U.S. and the UK; and they threw in the European Union as well.

### ‘A Playbook for Countering the Authoritarian Threat’

These nations were chosen, according to Atlantic Council documents, because these are the nations that possess the diplomatic, economic, and military resources to act on a global scale. The D-10 itself was founded as a project within the Atlantic Council in 2014, shortly after the Maidan coup in Ukraine. Their first session was in July 2014, at which they talked about the mission of protecting democracy from authoritarians. This was further defined in March 2017, where they had a summit titled, “Strategy of Containment.” So it’s a play on the word “containment” from Kennan. But they defined this as an initiative “to counter Russia’s challenge to the rules-based democratic order.”

The first Summit for Democracy in 2021 was derided as an “inconsequential talk-shop of sloganeering” and self-congratulations for the freedom of their countries. To make the second conference in March 2023 more effective, the Atlantic Council prepared a [special report](#) to shape the deliberation. It is titled, “Fostering a Fourth Democratic Wave; A Playbook for Countering the Authoritarian Threat.” Three people were largely responsible for drafting it. All three—Hardy Merriman, Patrick Quirk, and Ash Jaim—came from the State De-

partment Policy Planning staff; they later worked with the German Marshall Fund and then migrated to the Atlantic Council.

The report opens by saying, “A powerful autocratic wave is sweeping the globe,” which contrasts with Biden’s description of the S4D as “turning the democratic tide in favor of democracy.” But what the report says is that they have to contend with—

autocrats [who] clamp down on their civil societies, coordinate strategies, propagate authoritarian governance abroad, and engage in increasingly sharp attacks against democracies.

The report outlines measures they’re introducing, including:

Strengthening democratic resilience; exerting top-down and bottom-up pressure on autocratic regimes, and fostering coordination by a range of actors.

How are they going to do this?

1. “Develop new approaches and tools to support civil resistance efforts”—similar to Victoria Nuland handing out cookies at Maidan Square after handing out \$5 billion to fund the coup in Ukraine in 2014.

2. “Advancing a new international norm,” which they call “the right to assist pro-democracy movements.” So, it goes beyond “responsibility to protect” to the “right to assist”; in other words, to do everything necessary to conduct regime-change.

3. “To develop strategic and tactical options to constrain authoritarian regimes and drive up the cost of their repression.” Well that obviously includes punitive sanctions, war, assassination, and so on.

Now, this “playbook,” as it’s called, was a major topic of discussion at the Summit for Democracy. As you can see, as I said at the beginning, it is meant to devise a strategy for conducting regime-change against governments which refuse to submit to the version of the rules-based order that is cooked up by the Anglo-Americans.

### That’s What It’s All About

Blinken has toured the world talking up the rules-based order. This has nothing to do with international law. The U.S. and its NATO allies have engaged in

actions such as overthrowing governments, imposing sanctions, and stealing funds otherwise necessary to keep populations alive, using this “Playbook.” This is not about “democracy,” nor international law; it’s about the imposition of an arbitrary set of rules enforced ultimately by control of credit from institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and private banks, and secondly through use of NATO and the U.S. military. That’s what the rules-based order is, and that’s what the Summit for Democracy was all about.

That’s why it’s absolutely essential that the story of what’s behind this gets out; that people learn about this Policy Planning staff that originated in the State Department, and how this fits in with the history of the Cold War order from 1945 and the death of Franklin Roosevelt until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. Then, the new post-Cold War order that includes this constant intervention in the internal affairs of other na-

tions; which is a violation not just of the Westphalian principle, but of the UN Charter.

That’s just a brief summary of why this Summit for Democracy is a complete fraud.

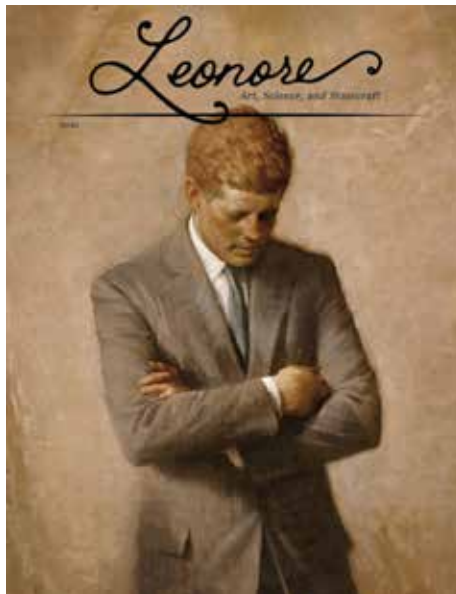
Let me just finish by saying, around the world, most governments in the Global South—which Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov is now referring to as the Global Majority—most people in those governments recognize this as a farce. They’re laughing at the pretensions of people like Blinken and Biden, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, and the other Western leaders who come before them talking about how important it is that we teach the whole world about “our democratic ways.” Scoffing at the so-called global coalition that Biden is betting everything on now, as being able to win the war in Ukraine against Russia, which is not going to happen; and secondly, preparing for a second-front war against China—that’s what the Summit for Democracy is all about.

## The Schiller Institute

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The 88-page issue, contains eleven articles, including the first English translation of one of the last letters by the 15th century scientific and political genius, Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, which has been called his “religious last will,” and an original translation of Friedrich Schiller’s “On the Sublime,” described as “perhaps his most refined discussion of the process of the development of the soul.”



**Preview** the issue [here](#) and see the full table of contents.

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