

The Door

by Dorin Tudoran




It is no easy task to choose the theme of a magazine's first edition. However, the most challenging issue won our interest with almost no competition. The post-9/11 era provided the world with a two-fold challenge. First, the clash within the Islamic world between the radical fundamentalists and "the new reformers of Islam" is rightly characterized by the French author and founder of *Le Nouvel Observateur* Jean Daniel as "a gigantic speed competition." The winner could make all the difference for the future of mankind.

Second, Western countries' answer to this clash proved they were not prepared. More than anything, democracy means moderation. To quote Daniel again: "In the world ignited by unrest, crusades and fanaticism, the success of moderation and reason is not guaranteed." To make things worse, pessimism surrounding the Middle East's capacity for democracy has been around for a long time. While somewhat discredited today, this thinking still proves very much alive.



Philosophically speaking, we are back to Max Weber's "polytheism of values." Any "clash of civilizations," any religious war, means, as Olivier Tinland states, "the impossibility to define, in a rational way, a place of understanding that permits harmonizing the axiological preferences of individuals or human groups." Practically speaking, the question that remains unanswered is how to convince others to adhere to "ultimate values that structure the life of a community."

Different cultures, different mentalities, but the same incapacity to always deal peacefully with differences. We are often lost in a huge labyrinth whose walls of misconceptions and intolerance become stronger and stronger. But, the poet is right: "There is a crack in everything./That's how the light gets in." Mutual goodwill can spot these cracks, work into them and one day a door could open. Trustworthy hosts and equally trustworthy guests can and must make the difference.

Opening the door to mutual trust involves caution. It is a continuous, even tenuous, process, not a spectacular, one-time event. It should not matter how slowly we find the answers to our fundamental fears for any answer is better than any Armageddon-like scenario. 

Dorin Tudoran

CALLING ALL READERS...

democracy at large is a new magazine produced by IFES designed for professionals interested in democracy development worldwide. The magazine aims to inform the debate about democracy aid and foster dialogue between practitioners, scholars and grassroots stakeholders. In this way, we will bring the expertise of theorists and practitioners—Think Tanks and Do Tanks—together for the benefit of both groups as well as that of the public. *Elections Today*, our magazine for election administrators around the world, will continue as a stand-alone supplement publication of *democracy at large*.

We uphold democracy as the preferred form of government. However, we recognize that its precise form will continue to evolve according to time, place and culture. The diversity of the magazine's independent Advisory Editorial Board illustrates this belief. To make democracy work, though, a normative consensus is necessary, or to paraphrase one of *democracy at large's* contributors: When it comes to democracy, no "exceptionalism" should be acceptable.

In this spirit, we invite you, the reader, to use this space to let us know what you think. What is working? What old thinking should be retired and what new ideas just might make things better? Did a Fieldwork author's experience run contrary to yours? Does a Thinking Out Loud writer's analysis ignore a crucial factor? Enter this important dialogue by sending your thoughts and critiques via "Letters to the Editor" to editor@democracyatlarge.org (or by post to Editor-in-Chief, *democracy at large*, 1101 15th St., NW, Third Floor, Washington, D.C. 20005). Letters should run approximately 300 words, and only those writers whose letters are printed will be contacted by magazine staff.

THE EDITORS

Resources for the Professional

JOB LISTINGS

- ▶ **Dev-Zone**
www.dev-zone.org/jobs
- ▶ **Foreign Policy Association, Job Board**
www.fpa.org
- ▶ **International Career Employment Weekly**
www.internationaljobs.org/hotpta.html
- ▶ **DevNet Jobs**
www.devnetjobs.org
- ▶ **Action Without Borders**
www.idealists.org

DEMOCRACY & CULTURE



The Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., continues its exhibit on "Vote: The Machinery of Democracy" through January 30, 2005, at the National Museum of American History. Admission is free.

www.americanhistory.si.edu/vote

UPCOMING EVENTS

GUNS & GOVERNANCE: WARLORDS IN AFGHANISTAN'S FUTURE

Wednesday, November 10, 2004, 12:00–2:00 p.m. Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars.

Olivier Roy, Research Director, French National Center for Scientific Research.

Barnett Rubin, Director of Studies/Senior Fellow, Center on International Cooperation, New York University.

Radek Sikorski, Resident Fellow and Executive Director of the New Atlantic Initiative, American Enterprise Institute.

Moderator: **Ambassador Peter Tomsen**, former United States Special Envoy on Afghanistan.

HOW THE EUROPEAN UNION SHOWS THAT DEMOCRACY DOESN'T WORK (AND NOT JUST IN EUROPE)

Thursday, November 18, 2004, 12:00–1:30 p.m. Intercultural Center 450, Georgetown University.

Craig Parsons, Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of Oregon. Part of the "Quality of Democracy" Series sponsored by Georgetown's Center for Democracy and the Third Sector

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN YEMEN

Monday, November 15, 2004, 12:00–1:00 p.m. Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars.

Heba El-Shazli, Regional Program Director, The

Middle East, The Solidarity Center, AFL-CIO. **Robin Madrid**, Resident Director, National Democratic Institute–Yemen.

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION WEEK 2004

November 15–19, 2004
U.S. Dept. of State / U.S. Dept. of Education
www.exchanges.state.gov/iew
International Education Week is an opportunity to celebrate the benefits of international education and exchange worldwide.

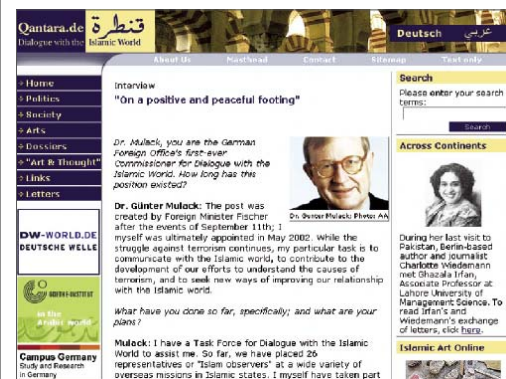
DONOR SPOTLIGHT

TASK FORCE FOR DIALOGUE WITH THE ISLAMIC WORLD

- ▶ **ORIGIN:** Created by the German Foreign Ministry in 2002.
- ▶ **PRIMARY GOAL:** To better understand the causes of terrorism and to identify ways to improve relations with the Islamic world, the Task Force seeks to increase communication with the Islamic world.
- ▶ **PROJECTS FUNDED:** Any initiative that strengthens civil society in Islamic countries through cultural or educational efforts.
- ▶ **CHALLENGES FACED:** The Task Force aims to use society's associational life and cultural activities to forge ties with Muslim countries. However, many civil society foundations in the Middle East are not allowed to take money from foreign donors.
- ▶ **FUNDING:** 5.1 million Euros in 2003 (25% of the aid is bilateral and 20% goes to education) from the German Foreign Ministry.

FURTHER RESOURCES

The German Foreign Office
www.auswaertiges-amt.de



Interview with **Günter Mulack**, Commissioner for Dialogue with the Islamic World
www.qantara.de

In Brief ▶ باختصار ▶ 新闻集锦 ▶ En Bref ▶ Панорама

CHINA

Hu Jintao replaced Jiang Zemin as President of the Chinese Communist Party on September 19, 2004, acquiring full command of state, party and military powers. Hu affirmed his allegiance to the single-party system, stating that it was capable of fighting corruption and the abuse of power through better policing itself. He did, however, signal his intent to continue experimenting with modest political change. Indicating that he may tie party promotions to the public opinion of grassroots leaders, Hu stated that Chinese citizens should be "masters of their own house."

KENYA

With President Mwai Kibaki's 2002 election on a platform of constitutional overhaul, Kenyan civil society, which has long backed reform, finally began to see progress. The process was not smooth, but in March 2004, the review commission approved a draft constitution that some Kenyans lauded for its emphasis on the people's authority and for its protection of minority rights. However, the draft constitution divides power between the president and a newly created prime minister position, and this has led to a deadlock between President Kibaki and the commission, still unresolved as of September. While the government and civil society have proposed various solutions, the process may have to await the outcome of the next national elections, in 2007, before moving forward.

PERU

Elected on an anticorruption platform, President Alejandro Toledo organized the Ad Hoc Prosecutors unit to uncover governmental corruption. Currently pursuing over 150 cases, the unit recently began to investigate allegations against the current administration. In September, Toledo announced that the unit will operate until December 31, leaving its future uncertain. Al-

legations against Toledo have arisen as he faces the lowest approval rating in Latin America and as some Peruvians, fed up with corruption and government inaction, have turned to violence. Given the UNDP's April report of widespread political dissatisfaction among Latin Americans, some observers worry that the Andean region could become unstable in the near future.

RUSSIA

Citing the September terrorist attacks in Russia, President Vladimir Putin proposed legislation to replace the direct popular election of regional governors with local approval of candidates selected by the president and to standardize the election of local legislators via proportional representation of parties. Attributing the government's failure to protect citizens to the lack of unified state powers, Putin stated that his plan will strengthen the country in the war on terror. The projected legislation has been criticized by previous Russian leaders Boris Yeltsin and Mikhail Gorbachev and by U.S. and U.N. officials, who suggest it could push Russia off the path to democracy.

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia announced it will hold municipal elections, for the first time in over 40 years, in three stages from February to April 2005. The government's decision to do so resulted in part from U.S. and international pressure to democratize Saudi politics and provide citizens a nonviolent means to voice political opinions. Following the announcement, officials launched a TV media campaign about the electoral process. Citing inadequate personnel, Saudi officials stated that women would not be permitted to participate in the elections either as candidates or as voters. Earlier, in an attempt to encourage the inclusion of women, several women had declared themselves as candidates.



(clockwise from top left): Protesters call for Fujimori's return to Peru to face corruption charges; Uzbek president Islam Karimov will likely be re-elected; Kenyans celebrate after signing a draft constitution in March; Taiwan's president Chen Shui-bian.

TAIWAN

Before his re-election in March 2004, President Chen Shui-bian announced plans to present constitutional reforms to the National Assembly by December 10, 2006, International Human Rights Day. If approved, they would be enacted by 2008. Chen has proposed a range of reforms that would modify the electoral system, could shift the political system from a parliamentary to a presidential one, and could move Taiwan towards independence. As China views Taiwan as part of its sovereign territory, it has warned that war is possible if the island goes forward with proposed reforms. Chen has denied that these reforms will impact the issue of sovereignty.

UZBEKISTAN

Three months before the parliamentary elections of late December, Uzbek authorities have begun to target independent media groups and NGOs promoting democracy. The government recently suspended Internews, an international media training organization, due to alleged technical violations of

the law. The organization had recently released a report documenting government abuses of the freedom of the press. Media rights groups have declared that the government has also openly refused to register some NGOs and has warned foreign NGOs about their activities.

ZIMBABWE

President Robert Mugabe has announced the Non-Governmental Organizations Draft Bill for discussion in the October 2004 meeting of Parliament, where Mugabe's ZANU-PF party holds a majority. If approved, this new law would require all NGOs to register with a government authority, the Non-Governmental Organizations Council, which has the power to investigate their activities and funding. According to the government, the proposed law is designed to protect the public by ensuring that NGOs are managed and use their funds properly. However, some fear that this bill will empower the government to deny accreditation to organizations that might question its record.