

Copenhagen Democracy Summit, May 14-15th, 2024

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The Copenhagen Democracy Summit is a yearly event, hosted by the [Alliance of Democracies Foundation](#). The Foundation is a non-profit organization founded in 2017 by Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the former NATO Secretary General and former Prime Minister of Denmark. Their team is based in Brussels, Berlin and Copenhagen and brings expertise from international diplomacy and human rights to election integrity and strategic communications. Through their innovative programming and their flagship event, the Copenhagen Democracy Summit, they aim to become the world's leading "megaphone" for the cause of democracy.

I have attended these meetings, along with other members of our [CWSC Coalition](#), because our view is that democracy has to be a fundamental principle of any world federation. Following the successful [strategy of Jean Monnet](#) and collaborators at the beginning of the European Union, the best strategy for the foundation of a world federation would therefore be to start with a small core group of democracies, such as the 'D10' group advocated by the [Atlantic Council](#), consisting of the present G7 group plus the EU, Australia, and South Korea and possibly India in the Indo-Pacific. Once set up, the community could then be opened for membership to other democracies around the globe. This could provide the first step towards a brighter future, an improved system of democratic global governance capable of dealing effectively with all the world's common problems, starting with climate change.

This year's meeting was the seventh in the series. The meeting took place in bright sunny weather in the Royal Danish Playhouse, Copenhagen. This meeting had a more urgent tone than previous meetings, and had a more restricted but higher status of attendees (by invitation only). We were reminded that in the struggle between democracy and autocracy around the world, democracy has been going backwards for the past eighteen years, according to Freedom House.

Ukraine

The major topic of discussion this year was, naturally enough, the ongoing war in **Ukraine**. There was a very distinguished list of speakers, including in person appearances from Prime Minister Mette Frederikson (the opening address), and Defence Minister Troels Poulson from Denmark; President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, and President of the European Council Charles Michel; and Andrey Yermak from the Office of the President of Ukraine, who attended in person to plead for help in their struggle. Speakers by video link included former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Republican minority Senate leader Mitch McConnell from the US, and businessman Sir Richard Branson from the UK.

All agreed that more weapons and financial aid to Ukraine were most urgently needed to stem recent Russian advances, and help Ukraine to eventual victory in the struggle. [Denmark](#) promised 8 billion Euro over 5 years, plus 19 F-16 fighters in June (which rather puts Australian aid in the shade!). The European Union promised 5 billion Euro, and the US\$61bn, just passed by the US Congress as we have heard in the news recently. **Richard Branson** gave an excellent interview, short and to the point, and he and his business partners have already raised \$1bn for Ukraine!

Andreas Fogh Rasmussen argued that NATO must admit Ukraine as a candidate for membership as soon as possible; and **Ursula von der Leyen** said that the EU must likewise admit Ukraine as a candidate for membership as soon as possible. The trouble would seem to be that both these initiatives are likely to be vetoed by recalcitrant pro-Russian present members, such as Hungary!

China/Taiwan

Another major topic of discussion was the ongoing tension between **China and Taiwan**. Speakers included **Matthew Pottinger** former deputy National Security Adviser under Donald Trump, who also gave an excellent interview, and emphasized that the democratic world needs to do everything possible to deter China from invading Taiwan.

Three members of the [Interparliamentary Alliance on China](#) were also interviewed, including a member of the European parliament, along with Uffe Elbaek a former member of the Danish parliament, and a woman member of Bolivia's parliament. Apparently members of this group are actually in danger of physical attack from agents of the Chinese government!

Speakers by video link included both the former and the newly elected **Presidents of Taiwan**, who emphasized their determination to maintain Taiwan's freedom in the face of Chinese threats, and the need for support from allies in their hour of need.

Democracy activists from authoritarian regimes

We heard some remarkable tales of suffering and courage in a good cause:

Iran: Masih Alinejad was the star of the show for the second year in succession, giving a passionate, fist-pumping speech arguing for women's rights in the Islamic republic of Iran. She pointed to several friends in the audience from both Iran and Afghanistan who had been subjected to imprisonment and rape for their advocacy in this cause. For instance, we learned that women are forbidden to sing in public in Iran, along with having to wear the hijab!

Hong Kong: Carmen Lau, of the Hong Kong Democracy Council, told of looking down the barrel of a gun during student protests in Hong Kong, and pointed to two friends in the audience who had each lost an eye when shot with rubber bullets.

Venezuela: Leonardo Lopez and other activists of his [World Liberty Congress](#) appeared onstage to tell their stories. Apparently there is some hope of seeing Maduro gone if the upcoming elections there are at all free and fair: apparently about 80% of the population would like to see the end of him.

Russia: Leonid Volkov, right-hand man to Alexander Navalny, had survived a recent attack with a hammer. He told us that despite all the repression in Russia, 40,000 people attended Navalny's funeral, and 8 million more watched it online. Navalny's widow Julia is carrying on his work from exile.

Belarus: Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya of the Belorussian Democratic Forces told us that her husband and other imprisoned activists like him are now sealed off from any contact with their families. Russia is apparently infiltrating and gradually taking over control of institutions there, turning it into a province of Russia.

We also heard from a serving politician:

Ghana: The President of Ghana, **Nana Akufo-Adda**, attended in person, and told us that democracy was in good health in Ghana, with the next election coming up in 2024. Apparently four out of 13 countries in West Africa have fallen under military rule recently, because of destabilization by Islamic jihadists who appeared in northern Mali after being chased out of East Africa (Egypt and Sudan?).

Technology

The second day of the Summit was devoted to discussions of the threats of disinformation and deepfakes using AI in our new digital age, and how they might be used in the imminent elections for the European Parliament.

Various young entrepreneurs in the **Democracy Tech Entrepreneur** program were invited to discuss briefly their ideas and enterprises aiming to debunk, and even better **'prebunk'**, disinformation and deepfakes. Three prizes of \$10,000 euros each were awarded.

A group consisting of **Vera Jourova**, Vice-President of the European Commission, **Annette Kroeber-Rial** of Google in Europe, and **Ginny Badanes** from Microsoft, were invited to discuss what was being done regarding these matters at the official level, especially in respect of the upcoming elections in Europe.

Sanna Marin, former Prime Minister of Finland, discussed her experiences in this regard. She has experienced disinformation and deepfakes at a personal level.

Apparently 2 billion people are due to cast their votes in elections this year, and the elections might be in danger of disruption by disinformation emanating from the autocratic governments in Russia and China. We will have to wait and see the outcomes.

Altogether it was a most interesting and informative meeting. The proceedings are available for viewing on Youtube [here](#).