We have scholars who work on particular regions like the former Soviet Union or Latin America or Africa. We have scholars who work on themes like political development or poverty or global health. Individually of course I've been trying to study and understand the reasons for democratic emergence, authoritarian breakdown, democratic success, and very importantly democratic failure around the world.

First of all, that there has emerged, in the last few decades in particular, a universal aspiration for democracy, human rights, and good governance. This is no longer culturally bound and we have abundant public opinion survey evidence to demonstrate that. Secondly, partly because of the spread of these values and ideas, even among very poor people -- for example in Africa -- and partly because of economic development which accelerates these values, we've seen the spread of democracy around the world. Third, that there are things that developed democracies can do, not least the United States, to help build civil societies and encourage or pressure governments to honor democratic principles. And fourth, as I've said democracy is a very fragile institutional arrangement. It can decay even rapidly as a result of bad governance.

About a third of all the democracies that have existed in the last 40 years have broken down. And why the fragility? Because democracy requires not just political parties and legislatures and formal institutional arrangements. It is unique among political systems in requiring voluntary commitment on the part of the people that's not coerced. You know people have to give their loyalty to the political system and believe that it's legitimate. And if the politicians don't play by the rules of the game or if they are seen to be serving their own interests, their own corrupt interests, their own enrichment, their own aggrandizement of personal and party power rather than at least some advancement of the public good, people lose faith in democracy or conflict spirals out of control and then you get a loss of democracy by one means or another.

The most important question now, I think, is how do you stabilize and preserve or consolidate these new democracies that have come into being? If you start with the premise that corruption is toxic to democracy, and that corruption is kind of the leading indicator of bad governance because what comes with corruption? It's, you know, lack of commitment to the rules of the game. It's a cavalier and abusive attitude towards people. It is incompetence or lack of professionalism in the execution of public policy. Its waste and abuse; it's not just theft of public money. So if you want to preserve democracy, fight corruption. Build a rule of law, generate independent institutions to monitor and control corruption, allow freedom of the press to true freedom of the press, and train journalists so that you can do serious investigative reporting and uncover corruption.

There's a new phenomenon in the campaign against corruption globally that has been enabled by the mobile phone, the Internet, the digital era and that is the phenomena of crowd sourcing against corruption. Enabling lots of different people, even anonymously, to report when a bribe has been demanded of them or a corrupt act is being imposed upon them. And then if a neutral organization --- like a civil society organization, like Janaagraha in India -- can gather up, aggregate, and see the patterning in the citizen reports of corruption, they can go to the Customs Bureau or the Tax Authority and say, "You know, sir, when we look at the pattern of reports on corruption by ordinary citizens, your department ranks very, very highly. This is something you should worry about." And of course if you make that public, you can embarrass the leader of that department and generate even a public outcry that could lead to the dismissal of officials who are either responsible for this or at least tolerating this. So if you involve the public, the mass media, the state, specialized agencies of corruption control, and the legal realm, then you've
got a kind of full court press against corruption.

Look at the democracies that have emerged, say, in the last 30 years that are not in difficulty; where no one is doubting that they will persist. In Latin America you would certainly nominate...you’d first nominate Chile and Uruguay. In Asia you’d look at South Korea and Taiwan. In Eastern Europe, well much of Central and Eastern Europe including Poland, the Czech Republic, all of the Baltic States and so on. In Africa you’d point in recent years to South Africa and Ghana. So what do they have in common? The most striking thing is that first of all, they are reasonably liberal democracies. There’s a strong rule of law; a good protection for civil liberties. People feel that democracy is more than just elections; that they have freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom to organize, freedom to criticize, freedom to mobilize, to improve the society or advocate for their causes, and that government is not just a conspiracy to loot the national treasury. That is the formula for a successful political system, a successful economy, and a coherent and stable society.

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