

Elliott Abrams on the institutionalization of human rights and democracy in U.S. foreign policy

The answer isn't just to liberate prisoners; it's to establish a system where there are no political prisoners. I think you saw that in the administrations that came after because you now have a human rights bureau starting with the end of the Carter administration when that bureau was created separately, now called Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. You saw it over here when there was created the directorate in the National Security Council of Democracy and Human Rights, which I believe was in the Clinton administration. Now in the Bush administration we've created the job I've got, which is Deputy National Security Advisor for Global Democracy Strategy. So it gets more and more institutionalized and I think...I know the president is very keen on making sure that no subsequent president can change that. You want it to be such a key part of American foreign policy, like NATO, it cannot be changed just because one president is a little bit less enthusiastic than another. So I am actually quite optimistic about this; I think it is a critical part of American foreign policy now for a quarter century and will stay that way.