

5 BIG IDEAS



Facing the Odds: Democratic Resilience in Action

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“This is no time for hesitation; it is time for resolve.”
— Salomé Zourabichvili, Fifth President of Georgia

In a world where democracies are challenged from within and without, hesitation is a luxury we can no longer afford. From Europe’s political crossroads to the shifting balance of power in the Indo-Pacific, participants in the 29th Forum 2000 Conference emphasized that the democratic community must move from reflection to action.

That spirit was personified by María Corina Machado, the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, who declared that she will travel to Oslo to receive the award only when democracy is re-established in Venezuela. Her words resonated throughout the conference: true commitment to democracy means perseverance, not ceremony. Across the Forum, participants agreed that democracy’s renewal depends on our collective resolve to act.

RECLAIMING THE DEMOCRATIC NARRATIVE

1

“Freedom to choose your attitude and future is intrinsically intertwined with humanity.” — Maksym Butkevych, Ukrainian human rights activist and former prisoner of war in Russia.

Democracy is not just a political system — it is a story we tell about who we are and what we believe in. “On one hand, the desire for freedom and democracy is a universal human condition, but on the other hand democracy is a very fragile and complex system,” noted Mantas Adomėnas, Secretary General of the Community of Democracies.

Yet, as MEP Miriam Lexmann warned, “people in the West are no longer ready to unite for a great cause.” Her words were a reminder that democracies must once again find the language, purpose, and inspiration that make freedom meaningful. That renewal must also extend beyond the West. As Professor Larry Diamond of Stanford University noted, the strength of the global democratic community does not depend on building new alliances, but on ensuring that every nation protects the sovereignty and rights of its own citizens. When each democracy stands firm in defending its people’s freedom, the collective resilience of democracy worldwide grows stronger.





REAFFIRMING TRANSATLANTIC UNITY

“It’s hard to imagine success over time in the absence of transatlantic cooperation.” — Christopher Walker, Vice President, Center for European Policy Analysis and Member of the Program Council of Forum 2000 Foundation.

The war in Ukraine has become the clearest test of transatlantic unity since the end of the Cold War. As the United States redefines its global role and Europe’s cohesion is tested, transatlantic unity remains democracy’s anchor. Participants stressed the need to stand together with Ukraine. “Supporting Ukraine is a way of proving that truth will overcome lies,” said Czech President Petr Pavel. Ukrainian human rights defender Oleksandra Matviichuk reminded participants that defending freedom is not only a matter of geopolitics but of human lives.

This defense, however, faces a pressing challenge. As MEP Reinis Poznaks warned, while democracies debate the risks of escalation, authoritarian regimes are already preparing for it. Ukraine’s defense, therefore, is not only a fight for sovereignty, but a defining measure of transatlantic resolve — of whether the democratic world can remain united when its principles are most severely tested.

2



THE INDO-PACIFIC: FRAGMENTED FRONTIER OF DEMOCRATIC COOPERATION

“India is a country with huge potential but not enough leverage.” — Swasti Rao,
Associate Professor, Jindal Global University

The future of democracy will also be written in the Indo-Pacific. From India’s emerging influence to Japan’s leadership and Taiwan’s resilience, regional democracies are redefining cooperation beyond traditional alliances. Yet the region remains fragmented — connected by shared principles but divided over how to put them into practice. Bridging these gaps between governments, parliaments, and civil societies will determine whether democratic cooperation can keep pace with geopolitical change.

Participants emphasized that “how we deal with China will determine how we deal with Russia,” as noted by Taro Kono, member of the Japanese Parliament and former Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defense of Japan. To meet this test, Indo-Pacific countries must deepen coordination not only among themselves but also with Europe and the United States — strengthening security ties, diversifying supply chains, and ensuring technology and trade remain anchored in democratic values.

Concrete steps such as the EU–Indo-Pacific Strategy already reflect a growing alignment among democracies. Yet the road ahead will be long and complex — as shown by the EU–Mercosur agreement, a major free trade and geopolitical project between the EU and four South American democracies, which took more than two decades to finalize. Still, the goal remains clear: not only to deter aggression, but to build a shared vision for freedom, prosperity, and stability.

3

TECHNOLOGY AT THE CROSSROADS OF FREEDOM

Artificial intelligence, surveillance tools, and algorithmic manipulation are reshaping politics faster than regulation can keep up. “With the export of Chinese technology, the Global South doesn’t stand a chance with China,” warned Niranjana Sahoo, Senior Fellow at Observer Research Foundation and Program Council member of Forum 2000 Foundation.

To counter this, digital technology must be reclaimed for democracy. The core mandate for action is clear: it must be paired with transparency, education, and civic empowerment, fostering a new form of digital citizenship grounded in responsibility and rights. The goal is to ensure that technology serves the citizenry—strengthening accountability and participation—rather than the advancement of authoritarian power.

Discussions throughout the Forum highlighted that the contest over technology is, at its heart, a contest over power and accountability in the digital age. Whether addressing surveillance, disinformation, or the governance of artificial intelligence, participants agreed that protecting freedom will depend on citizens' ability to play an active role in shaping how digital systems affect their rights and daily lives.





CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE COURAGE TO RESIST

Pedro Urruchurtu, Venezuelan activist, reminded participants that “courage is not the absence of fear, but the determination to act without it”.

From Tbilisi to Caracas, civic courage remains the frontline of freedom. Zdeněk Hřib, Deputy Mayor of Prague, expressed solidarity with activists and journalists facing repression, reminding us how fragile democracy can be — and how much bravery it demands to preserve it.

“The truth is our only weapon today,” said Tamar Rukhadze of Batumelebi & Netgazeti two media outlets founded by Mzia Amoglobeli, an imprisoned Georgian journalist, awardee of the 2025 Forum 2000 International Award for Courage and Responsibility.

However, as Marc de Tollenaere from OECD argued, support for these movements cannot depend on funding alone. True solidarity means listening, respecting local agency, and building partnerships rooted in mutual trust — not transactions.





CONCLUSION

The 29th Forum 2000 Conference made one point unmistakably clear: democratic determination is alive — but it must be better directed, coordinated, and led. Whether in defending Ukraine, reimagining alliances, or reclaiming the digital space, the challenge ahead is not to reinvent democracy, but to use its existing strengths more wisely — with greater clarity, cooperation, and urgency.



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