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AGE OF ANXIETY:
DEMOCRACY in an
RUSSIAN INTRUSION,
CHINESE CONFRONTATION,
POPULIST DISRUPTION

The 36th annual FRANK CHURCH CONFERENCE
Monday, October 14, 2019
Boise State University
School of Public Service
DEMOCRACY in an AGE OF ANXIETY: RUSSIAN INTRUSION, CHINESE CONFRONTATION, POPULIST DISRUPTION

Liberal democracies continue to be buffeted by a range of challenges. Populism and the shattering of democratic traditions are roiling countries around the world. From Italy, Hungary, and Poland, to the Philippines, United Kingdom, and the United States, autocratic-leaning leaders are challenging decades of political consensus, fomenting nationalist agendas, and raising grave questions about the ability of democracies to withstand illiberal forces. Meanwhile, Russia shows no signs of stepping back from aggressive influence operations meant to sow polarization and reinforce Vladimir Putin’s kleptocratic rule. As the U.S. approaches national elections in 2020, the specter of malign Russian influence is very real. Finally, under Xi Jinping’s autocratic leadership, China has emerged as a strategic challenger to the United States and liberal democracies. China’s influence is growing as it spearheads massive infrastructural and technological investments in every region worldwide. Such challenges to democracies do not bring easy answers. They indicate the seriousness of the moment and the importance of better understanding these political dynamics in order to devise solutions to overcome them.

KEY QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED:
• What is fueling populism’s global surge? Is it here to stay?
• Are democracies better prepared to withstand Russian efforts to undermine elections and sow polarization?
• Which aspects of China’s rise most challenge democracies? Is confrontation inevitable?
• How are social media, disinformation, and other technologies disrupting politics and pressuring democracies?
• What strategies are needed to bring about democratic renewal?

AGENDA, MONDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2019

8:30 a.m. WELCOME AND INTroductions

SIMPLot BALLROOM

Garry V. Wenske, Executive Director, the Frank Church Institute
Dr. Marlene Tromp, President, Boise State University
The Hon. David Bieter, Mayor, City of Boise

9 a.m. FRAMING THE AGE OF DEMOCRATIC ANXIETY

FRANK CHURCH VIDEO — MEET THE PRESS INTERVIEW WITH SENATOR FRANK CHURCH, August 17, 1975

Video and Photo Courtesy Boise State University Library Frank Church Collection

Steven Feldstein, Frank and Bethine Church Chair of Public Affairs, Boise State University; Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor

9:15 a.m. PANEL DISCUSSION

DEMOCRACY AND THE CHINA QUESTION

MODERATOR: Dr. Nisha Bellinger, Assistant Professor of Political Science, School of Public Service, Boise State University
Irene Poetranto, Senior Researcher, The Citizen Lab, Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, University of Toronto
David Ashmore, Senior Director of Litigation and IP Transactions, Micron Technology, Inc.
Steven Feldstein, Frank and Bethine Church Chair of Public Affairs, Boise State University

10:45 a.m. PANEL DISCUSSION

THREATS FROM RUSSIA, CHALLENGES FROM POPULISM

MODERATOR: Dr. Gregory Raymond, Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Boise State University
Rob Berschinski, Senior Vice President for Policy, Human Rights First
James Kirchick, Visiting Fellow, Brookings Institution

12 p.m. BREAK

12:30 p.m. LUNCHeON

JORDAN BALLROOM

1:00 p.m. LUNCHeON ADDRESS

“DEFENDING DEMOCRACY: A VIEW FROM WASHINGTON”

INTRODUCTION: Steven Feldstein, Frank and Bethine Church Chair
Rob Berschinski, Senior Vice President for Policy, Human Rights First

2:00 p.m. BREAK

2:15 p.m. BREAKOUT SESSIONS

REPORTING IN THE ERA OF FAKE NEWS
James Kirchick, Visiting Fellow, Brookings Institution
Betsy Russell, Boise Bureau Chief, Idaho Press

WHoSe DATA IS IT ANYWAY?
Irene Poetranto, Senior Researcher, University of Toronto
Erika Cobb, Chief Information Officer, City of Boise

CAN DEMOCRACY EXIST IN A POST-PRIVACY WORLD?
Dr. Isaac Castellano, Global Studies Director, Boise State University
Chase Johnson, Research Associate, Frank Church Institute

3:30 p.m. Adjournment

5:00– 6:45 p.m. Reception for Ambassador Michael McFaul
ALUMNI AND FRIENDS CENTER LIVING ROOM

7:00– 8:30 p.m. Keynote Address: Former U.S. Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul
JORDAN BALLROOM
“FROM COLD WAR TO HOT PEACE: AN AMERICAN AMBASSADOR IN PUTIN’S RUSSIA”

INTRODUCTION: Steven Feldstein, Frank and Bethine Church Chair

“I know the capacity that is there to make tyranny total in America, and we must see to it that this agency and all agencies that possess this technology [to spy], operate within the law and under proper supervision so that we never cross over that abyss. That is the abyss from which there is no return.”

Senator Frank Church,
Meet the Press Interview with Senator Frank Church, August 17, 1975