

## [Stop Giving Foreign Aid to Dictators](#)

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John Glaser has an [excellent article](#) in the American Conservative magazine about our government's use of foreign aid to prop up dictators around the world and the dangers that practice poses. It includes a shockingly coherent statement from the otherwise batshit crazy Rep. Louis Gohmert of Texas:

Texas Congressman Louie Gohmert complained on the House floor that foreign aid is inconsistent with American values. America "was all about human rights, human dignity, and human freedom," he said. "And we see that slipping away every time we prop up some brutal dictator."

A momentary lapse of irrationality, perhaps. And there's actually a law against supporting dictators, but it is routinely ignored:

Leahy and others have been citing what is called the Leahy Law, enacted in 1997, which prohibits U.S. assistance to foreign military or security forces credibly accused of human rights violations. However, this legislation applies only to programs funded under the Foreign Operations Act and the Defense Department Appropriations Act; it does not apply to drug enforcement and non-Defense Department counterterrorism assistance. These technicalities and the overriding justification of vital national security interests have allowed the government to consistently circumvent the law's injunctions.

Foreign aid is often used as leverage, if not outright bribes. We give huge amounts of aid to Pakistan, for example, to secure their cooperation against Muslim extremists. But it's also clear that there are elements in the Pakistani government, particularly in their intelligence agency, that support the extremists. But that isn't the only place where such aid puts us at cross purposes:

Justin Logan, Associate Director of Foreign Policy Studies at the Cato Institute, told TAC in an interview that "U.S. policy in the Middle East is caught up in a contradiction." Some elements of U.S. influence have been "trying to promote a wave of democratic revolutions in the region" while others have been trying to keep "the balance of power by giving support to various players."

In mid-April, The New York Times reported that "even as the United States poured billions of dollars into foreign military programs and anti-terrorism campaigns, a small core of government-financed organizations" channeled money to democratic movements within these countries. The Times quotes Stephen McInerney of the Project on Middle East Democracy explaining that "We didn't fund them to start protests, but we did help support their development of skills and networking."

"The money spent on these programs was minute compared with efforts led by the Pentagon," the report said. And the people in the region "are also aware that the same government also trained the state security investigative service, which was responsible for the harassment and jailing of many of us," an Egyptian activist told the Times.

No matter what the short-term justification is for giving aid to dictatorial governments, history shows that it almost always backfires on us. It's time to stop.