

**COMBATTING AUTHORITARIANISM:  
U.S. TOOLS AND RESPONSES**

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**HEARING**

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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## **COMBATTING AUTHORITARIANISM: U.S. TOOLS AND RESPONSES**

**TUESDAY, MARCH 15, 2022**

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:03 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Robert Menendez presiding.

Present: Senators Menendez [presiding], Cardin, Coons, Murphy, Kaine, Merkley, Booker, Van Hollen, Risch, Johnson, Romney, and Young.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY**

The CHAIRMAN. The hearing will come to order, "Combating Authoritarianism: The U.S. Tools and Responses."

When I returned to chair this committee, I believed it was critical that our first hearing explore the state of democracy around the world amid a resurgence of authoritarianism to remind ourselves that the U.S. support of human rights, good governance, and individual rights are not simply lofty policy goals in and of themselves.

One year later, Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine is showing the world exactly what is at stake. At this moment, a democracy forged from the hard-fought tenacity of the Ukrainian people is fighting for its very existence while a ruthless dictator is shelling civilians, blowing up schools and hospitals, and threatening regional stability.

To authoritarians like Putin, liberal democracy is not just a nice concept. It is a formidable, dangerous ideology that threatens their power and wealth, and they will deploy whatever means necessary to protect that power, from propaganda, corruption and, tragically, ruthless violence.

In response to this threat, however, we are witnessing a democratic reawakening. Democracies across the globe have rallied to deliver a swift, unified response to Putin and his enablers and have offered support to Ukrainians fighting for their freedom.

We must capitalize on this resurgence of democratic fervor to successfully combat the growing threat of authoritarianism and the United States must lead the way.

Over the past two decades, a new type of 21st century authoritarian support system has arisen. Rather than working in despotic isolation, authoritarian leaders operate through networks of new

kleptocratic financial mechanisms, disinformation professionals, and an array of security services to protect one another from democratic pressures and to secure their repressive rule.

Autocrats from Venezuela to Cuba, Belarus, and Burma are sustained through support from China and Russia.

Today, I look forward to hearing about the Administration's efforts to counter authoritarianism and bolster democracies. I believe that if we are to be successful in this fight we must redouble our efforts.

Specifically, we must aggressively lead with our values and actions and not just in words. We must support and protect human rights defenders, democracy activists, and civil society organizations who are on the frontlines of this global struggle.

In the coming weeks, I will be introducing the Global Voices of Freedom Act, which will strengthen protections for democracy and human rights defenders across the world. We must combat the complex web of kleptocracy sustaining autocrats from around the world. We must cut off their lifeblood and impair their ability to buffer one another from sanctions.

We must combat digital authoritarianism, including disinformation, propaganda, and censorship used to subvert democratic principles and advance autocrats' interests.

We must counter the dangerous narratives which authoritarians spread to manipulate, to distract, and to cause people to question whether democracy has anything to offer the modern world.

We must also bolster fledgling democracies from Niger to Tunisia, including through economic support, and counter the rise of illiberal forces, from El Salvador to Turkey.

For too long authoritarianism has lured national leaders with the promise of easy pathways to wealth and power. In response, we must strengthen our solidarity with nations striving to pursue security and prosperity for their people through just and democratic means.

Our efforts must be well funded, and I am glad that we have the distinguished chairman of the Appropriations, State Authorization, and Subcommittee on Foreign Ops. Our efforts have to be well funded.

How many more titles do you have? Did I add extra to it or—

Senator COONS. I greatly appreciate the description of myself as distinguished, but what I deliver is the goals of our committee—

The CHAIRMAN. It will—you will be even very distinguished when it is well funded.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. What the United States has invested in democracy assistance pales in comparison to the billions that autocrats pour into protecting one another's wealth and power.

The Administration's Summit for Democracy last year represented a significant opportunity to galvanize our allies in these efforts, but if the goals of the Summit are not translated into concrete and well-funded actions the democracy movement will be worse off, left only with empty promises.

We must also get our own house in order, as demonstrated when rioters stormed the Capitol on January 6 to overturn the results of the presidential election.

We must fill critical roles at home including the Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, the Ambassador for War Crimes, and ambassadorships around the world. My colleagues' obstruction of these nominees impedes our ability to stand up to autocrats and support our allies and, at the same time, the Administration must nominate an Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy.

In recent weeks, we have witnessed what authoritarians are willing to do to protect their power and wealth and to eliminate democracy. Today, it is Russia and Ukraine. Tomorrow it will be other nations.

We have watched as Ukrainians have taken up arms and risked their lives in defense of freedom and democracy. What are we, in turn, as democracies and the United States willing to do?

That is a question I hope we begin to answer today, and with that, let me turn to the distinguished ranking member for his comments.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES E. RISCH,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM IDAHO**

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Every American can turn on the TV and see that authoritarianism is on the rise. From Putin's personal war—very personal war—against Ukraine to China's genocide of the Uighurs and technology-fueled repression, autocrats are busy quashing political dissent and actively working to undermine our open democratic society.

While Russia and China are the most egregious models of authoritarianism, Iran, Venezuela, North Korea, and Zimbabwe also demonstrate the global nature of this rise. Clearly, the United States and our allies need to step up our game against these regimes.

The Biden administration has made supporting democracy a focal point of its foreign policy, and last December, the President hosted the Summit for Democracy with much fanfare. Unfortunately, there were few, if any, results there from the Summit.

Ukraine was a participant in the Summit and is now fighting for its sovereignty against an authoritarian Russian regime. Ukrainian lives will not be saved by the declarations or pledges from a summit.

Instead, the Ukrainians need air defense systems, including surface-to-air missiles, fighter planes, anti-tank missiles, ammunition, small arms, and bulletproof vests. The United States once called itself the arsenal of democracy. We can become so again.

Ukraine is fighting for its freedom, but also for ours. We must continue to give it the tools now to combat Putin's authoritarianism. Russia's repression goes beyond its current war and uses disinformation and cyber warfare to stir discontent abroad, including in Georgia, Moldova, the Baltics, and the Balkans.

We have also allowed the ill-gotten financial gains of Putin's cronies to find a home in the West, including in the United States. I am glad to see the Administration has stood up a task force to re-

move the Kremlin's influences from our systems and their holdings, but it is long overdue.

We have been far too permissive for too long, and the results of that complacency are seen in Ukraine.

Turning to China, the Chinese Communist Party has a long history of malign influence that takes a variety of forms. Its coordination with Russia on the misinformation about the war in Ukraine is only the latest example.

The CCP is justifying Russia's horrific and unjustified invasion by spreading disinformation about U.S.-supported biological research labs in Ukraine. This is similar to the false narratives China used to cover up the origins of COVID-19 and delay the global pandemic response.

In other instances, the CCP is using transnational repression to target dissidents and even U.S. citizens outside of China, bullying media outlets overseas that publish negative coverage of China, and silencing debate in U.S. universities.

Funding from China into universities is another major problem. From 2019 to 2021 alone, U.S. universities received \$545 million in gifts and contracts from China—\$545 million. In one example, Chinese company Alibaba contracted with a U.S. university to develop facial surveillance technology.

In Europe, multiple universities have ties with Chinese universities that directly support the People's Liberation Army. These partnerships support bad actors that do not share the interests of democratic nations.

It is a simple question. Why are we funding Chinese authoritarianism? As autocrats get more creative in pushing their agenda, the United States and its allies need to increase their efforts to block and tackle disinformation and authoritarian narratives before they take root.

The U.S. should continue its support for democracies around the globe through our foreign assistance programs. We need to better coordinate within our agencies to focus on programs that are most effective at pushing back against the lies and propaganda of our adversaries.

We should also work with our allies and partners to promote democratic institutions, good governance, and understanding of the playbooks of authoritarian governments.

On universities, for example, the U.S. and our partners should improve scrutiny of foreign donations and contracts. We must continue to counter authoritarian tactics through a free media and civil society.

I look forward to hearing more today about our current U.S. Government efforts to combat authoritarianism and how we can improve upon those efforts immediately.

We must not let the authoritarians win. As we see in Ukraine today, no one wants to live in a world controlled by Putin or Xi.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Risch.

All right. So we will start with our witnesses. Let me introduce them.

It is my privilege to welcome Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights Uzra Zeya.



In her role, Under Secretary Zeya leads the department efforts to prevent and counter threats to civilian security, works to advance the security of the American people by assisting countries around the world to build more democratic, secure, stable, and just societies.

Under Secretary Zeya also serves concurrently as the U.S. Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, and she is a veteran diplomat, having served our country in the Foreign Service over 27 years in Syria, Egypt, Oman, Jamaica, and France, and we welcome you.

We are also joined virtually by another formidable diplomat, Acting Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Ms. Jennifer Hall Godfrey.

In her role, Ms. Godfrey leads department efforts to expand and strengthen the relationships between the people of the United States and our foreign counterparts.

She works to advance our national interests by seeking to engage, inform, and understand the perspectives of foreign audiences. Ms. Godfrey is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service and has served our country with distinction in Jordan, Turkmenistan, Libya, Austria, and Saudi Arabia. So welcome to you both.

Thank you for being here. Your full statements will be included in the record. I would ask you to try to summarize them in about 5 minutes or so so we can have a conversation with you.

Madam Secretary, we start with you.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE UZRA ZEYA, UNDER SECRETARY FOR CIVILIAN SECURITY, DEMOCRACY, AND HUMAN RIGHTS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC**

Ms. ZEYA. Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

With Russia's premeditated, unprovoked, and unjustified war of choice against Ukraine, generating Europe's worst humanitarian crisis since World War II, never in my lifetime has the contest between democracy and autocracy been more important, and we will prevail, thanks to the strong bipartisan support of Congress.

Across the globe, authoritarianism threatens democratic governments and societies. According to Freedom House, almost 40 percent of the global population live in countries categorized as not free. This is a defining challenge of our time and this Administration is responding with decisive and collective action.

Today, I would like to highlight three core lines of effort: one, shoring up our alliances and partnerships to advance a common vision and unified front in the face of authoritarianism; two, broadening the chorus of those active in defending democracy, countering corruption, and advancing human rights globally beyond our traditional transatlantic partners; and three, modernizing our foreign policy and assistance toolkit to push back on authoritarians while supporting civil society actors and institutions often under siege.

There is no greater proof of the need for bold action to combat authoritarianism than Putin's brutal effort to occupy Ukraine and destroy its democracy, but Putin grossly underestimated the will of the Ukrainian people and the international community.

The United States and the rest of the responsible world are uniting to stand with Ukraine and surge assistance across all sectors.

Together with allies, we are exposing the Kremlin's disinformation and lies while imposing massive costs through powerful sanctions and export controls that have cratered Russia's economy and left it more politically isolated than ever before.

We will use every tool available to hold the Government of Russia, its enablers in Belarus, and the Russian oligarchs who have profited from this corrupt violent regime to account.

We are also clear eyed and resolute about other threats to democracy. A more assertive People's Republic of China is attempting to redefine global norms to privilege authoritarianism and avert international scrutiny.

The PRC has good reason to fear the latter, as it continues to commit genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang, strangle democracy and press freedom in Hong Kong, and suppress Tibetan Buddhists and other religious minorities from practicing their faith.

PRC authorities externalize their system further through acts of transnational repression, including on our own shores.

To counter these efforts, the United States is forging a common approach with like-minded partners, enhancing their resilience to coercion, promoting accountability for the PRC's abuses, and pushing back against the use of forced labor and misuse of advanced and emerging technologies for repression.

Congress has provided us with important tools to promote accountability for the PRC's human rights abuses, including the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act and the Uighur Forced Labor Prevention Act.

Over the course of this hearing, I hope to discuss other grave examples of authoritarian leaders challenging international norms, suppressing the rights of their citizens, and supporting one another, from Iran, Belarus, Syria, the DPRK, and Burma to Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua, but hope is not lost.

One more way we are countering authoritarians worldwide is through the President's Summit for Democracy. Last December, more than half of U.N. member states came together to make commitments to strengthen our own democracies and reject authoritarianism.

We are already seeing these governments translate words into action, demonstrated by the 93 out of 100 Summit participants who supported the historic March 2 U.N. General Assembly Resolution to condemn Russia's Ukraine invasion.

Through the Summit, we have rolled out a suite of new tools to combat authoritarianism and bolster democracy, including efforts to stem authoritarians' misuse of technology, accelerate solutions to combat corruption worldwide, expand access to local independent media and reduce the impact of disinformation, and bolster democratic reformers and support more inclusive, resilient, and equitable societies.

In short, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, we are responding with allies and partners to the immediacy of Russia's autocratic attack on democracy as well as the PRC's long-term challenge to

democratic norms, while reinvesting with our partners and more resilient democracies that deliver security, prosperity, and freedom.

In the words of our President, in the battle between democracy and autocracy, democracies are rising to the moment and the world is, clearly, choosing the side of peace and security.

Thank you, and I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Zeya follows:]

#### **Prepared Statement of Ms. Uzra Zeya**

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, distinguished Members of the Committee; thank you for the opportunity to testify today. With Russia's premeditated, unprovoked, and unjustified war of choice against Ukraine generating Europe's worst humanitarian crisis since World War II, never in my lifetime has the contest between democracy and autocracy been more important. And we will prevail, thanks to the strong bipartisan support of Congress.

Across the globe, authoritarianism—enabled by economic freefall, inequality, alienation and most recently pandemics—threatens democratic governments and societies. According to Freedom House, almost 40 percent of the global population live in countries categorized as “not free.” This is a defining challenge of our time, and this Administration is responding with decisive and collective action. While such action can take many forms, today I would like to highlight three core lines of effort: 1) shoring up our alliances and partnerships to advance a common vision and unified front in the face of authoritarianism; 2) broadening the chorus of those active in defending democracy, countering corruption, and advancing human rights globally, beyond our traditional Transatlantic partners; and 3) modernizing our foreign policy and foreign assistance toolkit to push back on authoritarians, while supporting civil society actors and institutions vital to resilient, democratic societies and increasingly under siege.

There is no greater proof of the need for bold action to combat authoritarianism than Putin's brutal effort to occupy Ukraine and destroy its democracy. But Putin grossly underestimated the will of the Ukrainian people and the international community. The United States and the rest of the responsible world are uniting to stand with Ukraine and surge assistance across all sectors. Together with allies, we are exposing the Kremlin's disinformation and lies, while imposing massive costs through powerful sanctions and export controls that have cratered Russia's economy and left it more politically isolated than ever before. In the 47-member UN Human Rights Council (HRC), only Eritrea joined Russia in voting against a new Commission of Inquiry that will document the massive, ongoing violations of human rights in Ukraine. Building on this milestone, we will use every tool available to hold the Government of Russia, its enablers in Belarus, and the Russian oligarchs who have profited from this corrupt, violent regime, to account.

We are also clear-eyed and resolute about other threats to democracy. A more assertive People's Republic of China (PRC) Government is attempting to redefine global norms to privilege authoritarianism and avert international scrutiny. The PRC has good reason to fear the latter, as it continues to commit genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang, strangle democracy and press freedom in Hong Kong, and suppress Tibetan Buddhists and other religious minorities from practicing their faith. PRC authorities externalize their system further through acts of transnational repression, including on our own shores.

To counter these efforts, the United States is forging a common approach with like-minded partners, enhancing their resilience to coercion, promoting accountability for the PRC's abuses, and pushing back against its use of forced labor and misuse of advanced and emerging technologies for repression. Congress has provided us important tools to promote accountability for the PRC's human rights abuses, including the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (GLOMAG) and the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, which we are urging other like-minded governments to emulate. Adoption of GLOMAG-like legislation by the European Union, the UK, and Australia are encouraging steps.

Over the course of this hearing, I hope to discuss other grave examples of authoritarian leaders challenging international norms, suppressing the rights of their citizens, and supporting one another, from Iran, Belarus, Syria, the DPRK, and Burma to Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua. All too often, we see autocratic regimes propped up with support from Russia, the PRC, or Iran, among others, and it is the domestic activists, civil society, journalists, and others who pay the highest price.

But hope is not lost. One more way we are countering authoritarians worldwide is through the President's Summit for Democracy. Last December, more than half of UN Member States came together to make commitments to strengthen our democracies and reject authoritarianism. We are already seeing these governments translate these words into action, demonstrated by the 93 out of 100 Summit participants who supported the historic March 2 UNGA resolution to condemn Russia's Ukraine invasion. On the affirmative side, through the Summit, we have rolled out a suite of new tools to combat authoritarianism and bolster democracy, including:

- Working with allies to develop a new voluntary code of conduct on export controls to help stem authoritarians' misuse of technology.
- Accelerating solutions to combat corruption worldwide, including through the creation of a U.S. Anticorruption Solutions through Evolving Technology (ASET) Project innovation lab; and increasing our investments in the Global Anti-Corruption Consortium (GACC) to expose ill-gotten gains.
- Working with Congress to provide up to \$30 million to the International Fund for Public Interest Media (IFPIM) and launching a Media Viability Accelerator to expand access to high-quality local independent media and reduce the impact of disinformation.
- Laying the groundwork to provide career professionals in closed political spaces the skills and resources to navigate democratic openings when they occur through the Bridging Understanding, Integrity, and Legitimacy for Democracy (BUILD) Initiative.
- Bolstering democratic reformers and building more inclusive, resilient, and equitable democratic societies through the Advancing Women's and Girls' Civic and Political Leadership Initiative and the Global LGBTQI+ Inclusive Democracy and Empowerment (GLIDE) Fund.

In short, Mr. Chairman, we are responding with allies and partners to the immediacy of Russia's autocratic attack on democracy, as well as the PRC's long-term challenge to democratic norms, while re-investing with our partners in more resilient democracies that deliver security, prosperity, and freedom for our own citizens and for the world. In the words of our President, "[i]n the battle between democracy and autocracy, democracies are rising to the moment, and the world is clearly choosing the side of peace and security."

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.  
Secretary Godfrey.

**STATEMENT OF JENNIFER HALL GODFREY, SENIOR BUREAU OFFICIAL FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC**

Ms. GODFREY. Thank you, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and members of the committee for inviting me to speak with you today about how we confront the challenges posed by authoritarian regimes, a very timely conversation.

Authoritarianism poses a clear threat to the global interests of the United States, democracies, and open societies.

A key weapon in the arsenal of repressive governments is their willingness to lie to public audiences, limit freedom of expression and independent media in their own nations, and exploit freedom of expression and independent media in open societies.

These dynamics are not new, but modern communications greatly exacerbate the impact of their deceptive public engagement.

Competition for the attention of foreign audiences is intense, and earning attention, trust, and favorable opinion requires intentional, principled, and consistent engagement.

To this end, the Department of State maintains a full spectrum approach to both counter the influence of authoritarian regimes and, equally as important, to demonstrate in word and in deed the value of democratic governance.

The department's 4,000 public diplomacy—

[Technical issue.]

[The prepared statement of Ms. Godfrey follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Ms. Jennifer Godfrey**

Thank you, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and Members of the Committee for inviting me to speak with you today about how we confront the challenges posed by authoritarian regimes.

Authoritarianism poses a clear threat to the global interests of the United States, democracies, and open societies. A key weapon in the authoritarian arsenal is their willingness to lie to public audiences, limit freedom of expression and independent media in their own nations, and exploit freedom of expression and independent media in open societies. These dynamics are not new, but modern communications greatly exacerbate the impact of their deceptive public engagement.

Competition for the attention of foreign audiences is intense, and earning attention, trust, and favorable opinion requires intentional, principled, and consistent engagement. To this end, the Department, working with interagency partners, maintains a full-spectrum approach to both counter the influence of authoritarian regimes, and—equally as important—to demonstrate in word and in deed the value of democratic governance, government transparency, and the rules-based international order. The Department's 4,000 Public Diplomacy professionals at 185 U.S. embassies and consulates worldwide engage publics through social media, traditional media, and in-person interactions.

The Department's Global Engagement Center works to counter the foreign disinformation and propaganda of the governments of Russia, China, Iran, and others, who leverage information manipulation to negatively impact U.S. national security or that of our allies and partners. As one aspect of this mission, the GEC exposes Kremlin-funded media disinformation campaigns. Recent GEC reporting, for example, has informed efforts by major social media companies to address false content, ensure platform accounts are appropriately identified, and suspend accounts that violate their terms of service. The GEC also actively exposes information authoritarian regimes seek to hide. The GEC's support for the development of the largest online repository of open-source data on the PRC's atrocities in the Xinjiang region of China has provided people around the world access to the truth.

It is not enough to expose foreign disinformation and propaganda. We must also engage global publics with honest and credible information about U.S. values, priorities, and policy objectives and the strengths of alternatives to authoritarian governance. The Bureau of Global Public Affairs executes global communications campaigns with messages tailored to audiences overseas. The Bureau employs data analytics to monitor evolving narratives, understand shifting perceptions, and inform content deployed through traditional media and our 1,200 social media accounts.

Because we understand it is not enough for the United States to state the truth or call out disinformation and propaganda in messaging, we also cultivate networks of like-minded individuals who champion the same ideas we do and are trusted voices within their communities. We seek partners who share a mutual interest in promoting human rights and democratic principles.

Through exchange programs led by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, we build lasting relationships. Over 1.7 million people globally have participated in U.S. Government exchanges, and approximately one in three current world government leaders are alumni of those programs. Alumni from all over the world also account for thousands of leaders in business, civil society, and academia, and work every day with Americans in the public and private sector.

While bringing aspiring foreign leaders to the United States is one of the best ways to give them first-hand exposure to the democratic principles we support, we also understand the value of engaging people in their local communities and through digital networks. In addition to the many Americans we send abroad on our exchanges, our 600 American Spaces provide programming to promote understanding of American and democratic values. Our digital networks allow us to regularly engage almost a million partners in discussions about U.S. policy priorities. These are citizens and leaders who question authoritarian regimes and their assault on democracy. They do so not because we told them to, but because they believe in what they are doing, and know they are part of a global community that supports them. We do not anticipate or require they will always share our point of view, agree with us on policy or practice, or convey government talking points.

Our efforts stand in stark contrast to the manipulation and censorship of authoritarian regimes, who build networks of proxies who disguise their funding and direction, serve as mouthpieces for government talking points, or worse—actively lie and

conceal to sow confusion and contempt and improve their own global standing albeit with false information and propaganda.

The relationships Public Diplomacy professionals build through engagement with foreign citizens require us to model the integrity and principles we advocate. The relationships require trust and credibility, characteristics authoritarian regimes lack. Earning trust and credibility is neither easy nor to be taken for granted. The Department's Public Diplomacy efforts are critical to combatting authoritarianism. We must show up for this fight and hold firm.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. All right. I guess we have lost Ms. Godfrey and so we will go to questions and then we will see if we can reconvene her at some point. We will start a series of 5-minute rounds.

Secretary Zeya, last Congress I released a report about new digital authoritarianism. For both of our witnesses—I am not sure that we can get Ms. Godfrey on.

As autocrats deploy new digital tools to spread disinformation, unlawfully surveil civil society, and repress dissenting voices, how is the Administration building a consistent and strategic approach for combating digital authoritarianism and ensuring that new technologies work for democracy, and how has the State Department engaged and mobilized the private sector in this work?

Ms. ZEYA. Thank you, Senator, for raising a critically important question and for the report that you referenced.

Certainly, as both you and the ranking member have mentioned, digital authoritarianism represents one of the most concerning aspects of 21st century authoritarianism and it is a core element of the Administration's approach to countering authoritarianism and strengthening democracies throughout the world.

I would describe this as an offense and defense effort where the offense piece is focused on our international efforts to combat and counter disinformation, which, I think, have seen some remarkable success in recent weeks thwarting at every turn egregious Russian, Chinese, and other nations' effort to distort what is actually happening on the ground in Ukraine and, really, shift narratives and, essentially, neutralize longstanding Russian disinformation efforts.

We are also countered on the resilience piece in terms of strengthening democracies' and including emerging democracies' ability to counter and resist disinformation.

This was one of the core lines of effort in the Summit for Democracy under a line of effort we call Technology for Democracy where we will be working with allies and partners to strengthen digital literacy, to open resource streams for free and independent media, which is a critical aspect of countering the distortions of authoritarians' disinformation with truth and accountability towards authoritarian governments.

The CHAIRMAN. I think in the case of—the most recent case, the Administration deserves a lot of credit for declassifying intelligence and getting ahead of the curve and, basically, creating a clear narrative as to what Russia is up to and I think that has worked well.

In the broader context outside of the conflict in Ukraine and Russia, I am not sure that we are doing so well on the question of digital authoritarianism as it relates to meeting that challenge globally, and I think that countries like China, Russia, and others are ahead of the curve on this.

We would very much like to hear from the Department how we achieve success more globally. I understand what is happening in Ukraine has been a success, but more globally, I would like to follow up with you in that regard.

2021 was the deadliest year on record for human rights defenders, which—with at least 358 killed, thousands attacked and thousands more unjustly imprisoned. The U.S. Government has a long bipartisan history of supporting human rights defenders, but our efforts remain, largely, ad hoc.

Under Secretary Zeya, how is the Administration working to create a cohesive and coordinated strategy to provide support to human rights defenders?

Ms. ZEYA. Thank you. I think you have raised a critically important, Senator, and this is the reality of human rights defenders increasingly under siege and paying with their lives for their vitally important work.

This also is a core aspect of the Presidential Initiative for Democracy emerging from the Summit for Democracy where we are working to build up stronger allied and partner efforts to support democratic reformers worldwide.

Here, I have to absolutely credit congressional support for the resourcing of direct emergency financial assistance to human rights defenders, which has been led by our State Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

I just want to point out that since 2007 these global programs have supported over 4,000 human rights defenders and organizations in over 105 countries and allowed them to continue to do their work under very difficult circumstances.

The CHAIRMAN. Finally, access to accurate, factual, and timely information is, in my view, a fundamental human right. Yet, authoritarian and repressive governments all over the world now possess the tools and technology needed to limit citizens' access to information.

Senator Blackburn and I have recently unveiled our Internet Freedom in Operations Act, which authorizes over \$125 million in funding for various internet freedom programs as well as the internet censorship circumvention technologies.

What are some of the most frequent methods that these regimes use to control access to information and independent media outlets, and what initiatives and tools does the State Department have to circumvent this sort of government censorship of independent media?

Ms. ZEYA. Sir, I would like to give my colleague, Senior Acting Under Secretary Hall Godfrey the chance to weigh in here, but I will elaborate on similar key—

The CHAIRMAN. I understand that she is now on the phone and can give her testimony through the phone. So you want to have her answer that question?

Ms. ZEYA. I would like to give her the chance to weigh in. I would just point out that some of the key methods that we are seeing authoritarians use include through misinformation and disinformation, the use of bots and other state-sponsored efforts, as you and the ranking member mentioned, to, basically, inject lies

into public discourse, whether it is accusing the United States falsely of having chem bio facilities in Ukraine or—

The CHAIRMAN. I know what they do. What I want to know is what we are doing in response.

Ms. ZEYA. Oh, in the counter effort. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes.

Ms. ZEYA. I would put that in the context of our efforts to support the expansion and resources of free and independent media and its own ability to defend itself under successive efforts to defame and even through legal action cut off their efforts, but I would like to give Acting Under Secretary Hall Godfrey the opportunity to weigh in.

The CHAIRMAN. All right. Because of the nature of what is happening here—Secretary Godfrey, did you hear that question?

Ms. GODFREY. Yes, sir. I would start off by saying that the key tactics that authoritarian regimes use to limit access to information are the same tactics they have been using for a long time now, which is censorship and limiting freedom of expression and independent media in their own nations.

Those challenges are, certainly, exacerbated by modern communications technologies. Fundamentally, we are still talking about governments who lie and work to keep other people from telling the truth.

They do so by kicking out independent media, as we have seen Russia do with international media. They do so by telling their own journalists and citizens what they may and may not say.

Just last week, the Government of Russia made clear that speakers in Russia cannot refer to the invasion of Ukraine as an invasion or as a war, and then they, certainly, continued the pursuit of their own lies, such as Russia blaming the United States or NATO or Western nations for their own invasion of Ukraine.

Those tactics are not new. What is, of course, different today is the scale and reach of digital communications, and we see autocracies both exploiting those digital communications, but also seeking to control them in their own countries.

Right now, Russians and Ukrainians can still access the internet, independent media. They can speak freely, and that is a good thing.

I am very concerned—the State Department and the U.S. Government is very concerned—about actions the Russian governments and other autocracies will take to limit freedom of speech and freedom of media through controlling the physical means of internet and data connectivity.

Right now, we still see Russians and Ukrainians in particular, with access to independent voices.

The CHAIRMAN. All right. I am going to turn to Senator Risch. My goal is to hear not what our adversaries are doing. I understand what they are doing.

My goal is to understand what we are doing in response to that. I will come back to you at the end of other members' questions.

Senator Risch.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Probably the most effective pushback I have seen in a long time was on TV last night when I turned on the news, saw the employee



of the Russian TV station jump up with a sign and tell the Russian people that what they were hearing was lies and that the whole thing was misrepresented to the Russian people.

She was escorted off, and her attorney, this morning, said she could not find her. So I suspect she is probably headed for Siberia or something like that.

There were millions and millions of people in Russia that saw that, and I suspect it is—a lot of discussion this morning around the country.

I want to talk about—I would like to hear what work you are doing regarding the countries that will be next. I think most of us believe that if Putin gets away with this, Moldova will, certainly, be next and be quite easy.

After that, of course, will come Georgia, which probably would be a little bit tougher. Then after that, he has long lusted after the Baltic states, and after that, Poland and Czech Republic, and then he is on his way to putting the USSR back together again.

What is being done to fend off the Russian aggression in these particular embattled countries? I would like to hear some specifics, if I can.

Ms. ZEYA. Thank you, Ranking Member. I think you raised a critically important question to which we are very well attuned that, certainly, Russia's—the threat that Russia represents is not solely with respect to Ukraine and we are absolutely shoring up our support in collaboration with allies and partners, including all the frontline states that you mentioned.

I would note that the Baltic States, Moldova, and Georgia were all part of our Summit for Democracy effort. All of these countries are also part of the substantial U.S. humanitarian assistance that Congress has enabled so rapidly as we contend with what I described earlier as the worst humanitarian crisis in Europe since World War II.

I think, in critical—in concrete terms, a case such as Lithuania—we have seen Lithuania, basically, embattled from all sides from taking a principled stand with respect to opening a liaison office with Taiwan and also, certainly, taking a very resolute stand against Putin's aggression.

We have offered substantial support to Lithuania to stand up to Chinese economic coercion in the form of Export-Import Bank support, other supply chain-enabled assistance, and Moldova would be another case where we are offering considerable democracy assistance support.

I would be happy to provide you later with some specific numbers where we have the positive development of the elections last year and a reformist government that, I think, is very well aligned with the goals of the Summit, countering authoritarianism, elevating the fight against corruption and advancing human rights internally and internationally.

Senator RISCH. Yes. I am sure glad to hear that—the efforts you are making with Lithuania. They really have been brave standing up to China and Russia, and, of course, they are right on the front line in Russia.

Nobody knows the Russians better than they do, and I think we all need to help them move forward, if we can. Moldova is going

to be a heavy lift. They are a very small country, and it is going to be very difficult for them to defend if and when Putin decides to go there.

I have just got a short period of time left. I, and other my colleagues, including the chairman, have been very concerned with the activities of China in the—on the colleges and universities, and you heard the number I talked about—half a billion dollars going in.

These monies are not put there out of the generosity of their heart, by any stretch. Do you have any initiatives pushing back on that on college campuses?

Ms. ZEYA. Ranking Member, I am going to ask Acting Under Secretary Hall Godfrey to respond here, given her responsibilities on the U.S. education side.

Ms. GODFREY. Thank you very much for the question about Chinese influence in American colleges and universities—PRC influence, I should say.

In 2020, sir, I think, as you know, with congressional support the Department of State began an earnest effort to ensure that American colleges and universities had a good understanding and visibility into the activities of the PRC on their campus and that their hosting of Chinese nationals in American universities was consistent with exchange program directives and policies.

The Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs began a considerable effort to ensure that updated guidance made it to colleges and universities who are sponsoring Confucius Institutes, the institutes that the Chinese educational—higher educational system uses to support Chinese scholars around the world—in 2020 when that initiative began, 55 American universities were hosting Confucius Institutes.

Over the course of the past 2 years as American universities have sought to better understand the impact and activities of staff of Confucius Institutes on their campuses, today, only nine American colleges and universities continue to support Confucius Institutes.

I should say we do continue to wholeheartedly welcome legitimate exchange in scholarship, including by citizens of China. We do very much want to make sure that the PRC—the Chinese Government—is not exploiting our open educational system to more malevolent ends.

Senator RISCH. I appreciate that on the Confucius Institutes. Those numbers coming down are a good sign that there is some recognition going on. I am still very concerned about the flow of money with either grants or contracts with universities.

My time is up. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. GODFREY. Thank you. If I can add, sir, I do think the new requirements in place for American universities to make sure that they are declaring publicly what their foreign sources of funding for have had an impact as well.

Senator RISCH. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Let me just announce that because we had to take our WebEx system down several members had booked in via WebEx, and if they come physically to the hearing

I will recognize them in that order, but right now, it is Senator Coons.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, for this timely and important hearing, and, Under Secretaries, great to be with you again.

Later today President Biden will sign into law the Omnibus. As was referenced in the introduction, I have the unique challenge of leading, along with my ranking member, Senator Graham, the State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee, and we got the lowest allocation of any Appropriations Subcommittee.

We were the victim of a last-minute bait and switch where nearly \$2 billion got stripped from my subcommittee. Yet, we are in the moment when pushing back on authoritarianism, strengthening the tools of democracy, and responding to a whole series of global crises is exactly what we should prioritize investing in. Let me try and look forward and be positive, if I can.

There were some pieces of the Omnibus that, I think, matter directly to this conversation, one of them the nearly \$300 million Countering Russian Information Fund, \$860 million for the U.S. Agency for Global Media.

The dialogue you were just having with the chairman and the ranking member about Russian disinformation and its influence in Eastern Europe and our ability to effectively push back on that in the middle of this brutal and tragic war in Ukraine, there are resources now, moving forward.

In total, about \$2.6 billion is being dedicated to democracy programs and about \$300 million to the National Endowment for Democracy.

Following the virtual Democracy Summit, I worked with Senator Graham to introduce the Democracy in the 21st Century Act, which would increase global democracy assistance to \$3 billion, modernize the tools that we have available to defend democracy with an emphasis on emerging technologies, combatting kleptocracy, and election integrity, and establish funds with flexible resources for confronting emerging challenges to democracy across the State Department, USAID, and the National Endowment for Democracy.

Have you had a chance to review this bill? Do you think this committee taking up and passing and then Congress passing this bill before the next Democracy Summit would be useful and do you have any specific feedback for me on how we could make this an effective moment for both implementing this legislation and then fully funding our work to defend democracy in the world?

Ms. ZEYA. Thank you so much, Senator, for your commitment to resourcing our efforts to counter authoritarianism and, particularly, for putting forward this bill.

I am well aware of it and I want to share with you that we share many of the bill's sentiments, and I think the prioritizations that you have put forward in the bill are well in line with President Biden's initiative for democratic renewal, which prioritized five lines of effort, including supporting free and independent media, elevating the fight against corruption, supporting election integrity against malign foreign influence, supporting democratic reformers, as well as what we call technology for democracy solutions.

We look forward to working with you to ensure the bill can provide flexibility for the Secretary and deconflict any potential overlap in programs, and we really look forward to consulting with you and your team on specific provisions, and thank you for your commitment in putting it forward.

Senator COONS. Given the experience of the last month where, frankly, I think President Biden and his national security team did a masterful job of pushing Putin off his game by proactively releasing the products of intelligence so that it was clear to our European partners and allies that we were well aware of Putin's next move and then he did things that confirmed, tragically, our predictions.

Given the flood of Russian disinformation, obviously, both within Russia and into the region, how would you reshape some of these priorities in the context of the developments of the last few weeks?

Ms. ZEYA. Senator, I think the developments of the last 3 weeks, in particular, only underscore the need for us to invest more in our efforts to combat disinformation and support free and independent media, and this is why the President's fiscal year 2022 request to Congress for media freedom represented a 40 percent increase from the previous fiscal—from fiscal year 2020.

This will help us bolster the capacity of legitimate media outlets to provide trusted news, to operate as sustainable businesses, and leverage digital platforms to enhance audience.

It will also support media literacy, teaching audiences around the world to better discern the real from the fake, and strengthen the legal and regulatory environment for press freedom so that sector can fulfill its watchdog function and counter so much of the noxious and destabilizing disinformation that we have seen issued from Russia, the PRC, and others.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Madam Under Secretary. Senators Shaheen and Durbin and I were, literally, in Lithuania as the war began. The day before we were in Poland.

In both cases, we had the chance to visit in Poland, in particular, with a cable channel that is under a lot of pressure in terms of maintaining a free and open media.

You requested a 40 percent increase. That is not what we were able to deliver here and I, frankly, think we need the bipartisan focus of this committee on making sure that we are actually delivering the resources to defend democracy at this critical moment.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Merkley.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you so much for being with us today, and I want to turn to this issue of transnational repression—autocratic repression—and I am thinking very much about the huge number of tactics that we are seeing—assassinations, assaults, detentions, renditions, disappearances, surveillance, online surveillance, online stalking, and threats to family members back home, and about the variety of real-life examples that keep coming up, some of them happening abroad, some of them happening here in the United States.

For example, a Chechen exile who was assassinated in Vienna who was very much a critic of Ramzan Kadyrov or however it is

pronounced, or a Uighur activist who neighbors observed men photographing his home, rummaging through his mail.

Then an individual approached him speaking to him in Mandarin at a protest at the Chinese Embassy and said, “If you get poisoned, do you know how to treat yourself? You know the Chinese Government is very powerful. You could die in a car accident or you could get poisoned.”

Intimidation of all forms, and this is just expanding with the kind of modern technology allows countries to keep track of dissidents abroad and to coordinate activities against them.

How are we acting and responding to protect, in free countries, individuals from the assault from autocratic regimes?

Ms. ZEYA. Thank you so much, Senator, for raising this escalating concern—transnational repression—which we are elevating in the President’s overall approach in countering authoritarianism.

Just last week I had the privilege to host with my counterpart from DHS a closed roundtable with individuals impacted by transnational repression from all over the world and they described the very—absolutely disturbing practices that you just elaborated.

We are on the case and we are working with our allies and partners to build international opposition to transnational repression, to deter and promote accountability for those who are perpetrating it, and we are offering increased support to protect human rights activists, journalists, political dissidents, defectors, and others, and encouraging like-minded governments to do the same.

This is also part of our engagement with the private sector to try to identify and implement specific measures that will protect vulnerable individuals and communities, particularly online, and also support reforms that strengthen safeguards against the misuse of Interpol systems, in particular, which we have seen one tactic of the transnational repressors’ playbook.

Senator MERKLEY. I so much applaud the set of goals you just laid out. Apart from the—strengthening the protections for the misuse of Interpol, their goals—and they are not actually specific strategies—can you elaborate at all on specific ideas and strategies that we are promoting in terms of changes in regulations, changes in enforcement, our strategies of targeting and arrest of individuals engaged? What are—or is it just that difficult to get from the very important goals to the actual strategies on the street?

Ms. ZEYA. Thank you, sir. I mean, I would describe our strategy in three parts.

One is strengthening our whole-of-government efforts. So this is not simply the job for the Department of State, but we are very closely looped up with Department of Justice, DHS, as well as Treasury and Commerce, who all have a role to play in a more effective and strategic U.S. response.

We are also working to impose costs for the practice of transnational repression. One specific example with that—of that would be the creation last year of the global Khashoggi ban visa restriction policy, which promotes specific accountability for authoritarian regimes engaged in transnational repression.

Then the other piece, I would say, is the global networking piece to ensure that other governments are aware and attuned to this increasing threats and that they do not allow their own territory to

be misused for the practice of transnational repression against diaspora or exiled citizens.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much. I will just close with saying I think this is such an important area in this global competition between freedom-loving nations and autocracies that I am very concerned about the trends.

Freedom House reports that in the last 16 consecutive years we have seen a decline in global freedom and that now only 20 percent of the world lives in a free country, and those autocratic regimes they are going after dissent across the planet, including right inside our own borders, and we have to find every possible measure to address it.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me thank our witnesses. I want to follow up on Senator Merkley's point because it is alarming.

It is not just a 1-year trend. It has been a multi-year trend in the decline of countries that are free. Freedom House has said now we are—I think we are in our 16th consecutive year of declining democracies.

We need to look at why that is happening, and there is no simple answer to it and we need a comprehensive strategy, including how we invest our international assistance budgets to support democratic institutions around the world.

I want to talk about what we have seen in Ukraine and Mr. Putin—Mr. Putin's ability to wage war not only against Ukraine, but he has waged war against democratic institutions around the globe, including here in the United States.

So how does he do it? He has an asymmetric arsenal that allows him to do things that are horrible, including supporting coups, including misinformation, including use of his military, weaponizing energy, et cetera.

His ability to do that is because of the corrupt finances, the corrupt systems in which he has the ability to use the fruits of his corruption in order to advance those causes not only against his immediate neighbors, but, really, around the world.

So we have two pieces of legislation and I want to get your comment on that. One is the Magnitsky sanctions that we have talked about frequently. It has gotten an awful lot of attention around the world today, and I think it is beyond any question about its effectiveness as we see Russian oligarchs trying to find a place to hide their assets that cannot be seized or places that they can visit. The visa bans and banking bans have really had a major impact on the ability to develop the kleptocracies around the world.

We started that here in the United States Congress with the Magnitsky sanctions. Now it has grown through Europe and other countries—Canada. We have executive orders, but we have—the Magnitsky Global sanctions expire this year.

My question to you, how important is it for Congress to make it clear that the Magnitsky sanctions are here to stay and to reauthorize and expand that law?

Then, secondly, that bill, by the way, has passed this committee and it has been—it has passed—the Senate has acted on it a couple times. It just has not gotten to the finish line.

The third is the Global—Combatting Global Corruption Act. These are both bipartisan acts. This was with Senator Young. The other bill I did was with Senator Wicker.

Which is to have a global index on how well countries are fighting corruption so that we recognize the vulnerability of a country. If it is not fighting corruption it is very much part of the challenge we have in declining democracies.

My question to you is how important is it for the U.S. leadership in both of these areas to make it clear that we will take action against those that are supporting these corrupt regimes and, secondly, we will have objective international standards on judging how well countries are fighting corruption that will influence our bilateral relations with those countries?

Ms. ZEYA. Thank you so much, Senator, and I just want to underscore that I believe the Global Magnitsky Act has been an essential tool in our work with international partners to deny corrupt actors, and you mentioned the Russian regime is a just absolutely critical example of that, using their ill-gotten gains.

It is a vital accountability tool for us that we will continue to use to impose costs on kleptocrats and their authoritarian enablers.

As far as the—your Global Corruption Act, I just want to say the Department is deeply committed to the bill's anti-corruption goals and I think you have seen that from this Administration with our elevation of anti-corruption as a national security priority with the National Security Memorandum from June last year and the strategy that we released last December in tandem with the Summit for Democracy.

As your bill prescribes, we will not hesitate to call upon governments to implement their anti-corruption commitments publicly and privately. We are going to continue to use visa restrictions and GLOMAG to apply pressure, and I think we look forward to discussing with you and your team some of the specific measures of the bill with respect to the tiering element and how we can best strengthen our efforts to push other countries to follow the U.S. example in creating more effective responses to kleptocratic corruption and holding others accountable.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator COONS [presiding]. Thank you, Senator Cardin.

Senator Van Hollen.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to both of our witnesses.

I want to pursue the line of questioning about digital autocracies. We have seen in Putin's Russia him bringing down an Iron Curtain to keep out truth and information. In China, we see a Great Wall to keep out information and truthful information.

We witnessed yesterday, many of us, a very brave Russian journalist who told the truth. She was an editor for TV1, a state-controlled TV station, who put up a poster saying, "Do not believe the propaganda. They are lying to you." That is the kind of bravery we are witnessing for people who are trying to bring the truth.

My question is, today, in terms of our own efforts—and I think this is probably a question for Ms. Godfrey to start with—what technologies are we using to try to both breach the Iron Curtain when it comes to information and the Great Wall when it comes to information?

We had Radio Free Europe. We still do. Russians tried to—continue to block that. We have a lot of new technologies. What are we doing right now to try to bring the Russian people the truth? Because the information I have seen to date indicates that a majority of Russians believe Putin's lies.

Ms. GODFREY. Thank you, sir. Thank you for the question and for—both for calling out the bravery of Russian voices who are standing up and speaking out, potentially, at great personal cost to themselves, as well as for acknowledging the very real challenges that autocratic governments like Russia and China are imposing to keep their own citizens from accessing information and from knowing the truth.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I guess my question is what are we doing to counter it. I just have limited time.

Ms. GODFREY. Thank you.

So we are continuing to do extensive media outreach, in particular, in Russia today. That includes to Russian language media like Dozhd and Meduza as well as to U.S. Government-supported Russian language media like RFE/RL and Voice of America.

While the Russian Government has tried to shut down these outlets and kick them out, Russians seeking access to them online has increased.

Just this morning, USAGM confirmed to me that their reach in Russia has doubled since the Russian Government shut down access to RFE and VOA online.

So while the Russian Government is trying, they are not yet succeeding in keeping Russian citizens from accessing independent media and we must continue to support independent media and make sure we are speaking up through that media.

We are also engaging on new digital platforms in Russia. We have Telegram and VKontakte, which have not yet been shut down by the Russian Government. These are indigenous Russian language platforms that we are engaging on.

We continue to engage through Twitter, Facebook, all of the other platforms that we used in Russia that, again, even though the Russian Government has tried to shut down those platforms, we still see Russian citizens accessing them and we will continue to use all of those means to continue to communicate with Russians.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you.

No, I think we need to continue to push the technological edge. I mean, this is the information equivalent of an arms race and Russia will continue to put up blockades and we need to use all the latest technology to try to make sure that we get information to the Russian people.

The ranking member brought up in his opening statement the misinformation that both Russia and China are spreading with respect to biological laboratories in Ukraine and that started, in some ways, at a hearing in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee



when Under Secretary Nuland answered a question accurately about the fact that we have been working with Ukrainians to make sure that these biological weapons labs are used for civilian purposes and not for military purposes—not for biological weapon purposes.

As it turns out, a lot of the material that both Russia and China have used to make that propaganda claim originated, actually, on some right wing—very alt-right U.S. medium, and there was a memo that was surfaced by David Corn. The Kremlin sent a memo to the Russian media saying it is, “essential to feature Tucker Carlson,” who has been spreading this misinformation on his own show.

Could you, Ms. Godfrey, respond a little bit to how Russians use that misinformation here in the United States to try to buttress their claims that their propaganda is accurate?

I do find it extraordinary that in a moment that a Russian journalist is getting locked up for speaking the truth we have a Kremlin memo urging their state-controlled TV to push statements from U.S. commentators.

Could you just talk to that issue?

Ms. GODFREY. The information environment is not easily divided up into foreign speakers and domestic speakers. There is a great deal of overlap in that environment.

It should be surprising to no one that governments like Russia and China will take remarks from anyone, whether it is Under Secretary Nuland or you or Tucker Carlson and seek to manipulate and exploit those remarks to their own ends, right. This is a tactic that purveyors of disinformation use routinely and regularly.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Ms. Godfrey, I know my time is up. There is a distinction. It is harder to—it is harder for them to use accurate statements for propaganda, although they will try.

In the case of Mr. Carlson, he actually provided the Russian talking point for them.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator COONS. If there is no other member seeking, I would just like to thank our first witness and thank you for your testimony, and invite our second panel of Anne Applebaum and Dr. Daniel Twining to come forward to offer their testimony.

Thank you, Madam Under Secretary.

Senator COONS. In the interest of time, I am going to proceed with introductions as our witnesses for the second panel are getting seated.

I would like to welcome Anne Applebaum, an accomplished journalist, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, author, political analyst, current Senior Fellow at the SNF Agora Institute Johns Hopkins, and staff writer for The Atlantic magazine.

Her recent writing and research focus on the rise of global authoritarianism and the threats facing open society and liberal democratic ideals.

Throughout her illustrious career, Ms. Applebaum has written extensively on issues of nationalism, corruption, xenophobia, disinformation, politics and history of Central Europe, and Russia’s actions on the world stage over the past three decades.

Her writing is timely, incisive, and a significant contribution to our deliberations at this critical moment in modern history.

Welcome, Ms. Applebaum. It is a pleasure to have you here with us today.

I would like to also introduce Dr. Daniel Twining. Dr. Twining is the president of the International Republican Institute where he leads the institute's efforts to advance democracy and freedom around the world.

Dr. Twining served as counsel to the President, director of the Asia Program at the German Marshall Fund, as a member of the Secretary of State's policy planning staff, and as the foreign policy adviser to my friend and former colleague, the late U.S. Senator John McCain.

He has also been an associate at the National Intelligence Council, taught at Georgetown University, and served as a military instructor with the Naval Postgraduate School.

Welcome, Dr. Twining. We are also very encouraged to have your timely and important testimony today.

Ms. Applebaum.

**STATEMENT OF ANNE APPLEBAUM, ATLANTIC MAGAZINE  
STAFF WRITER, SENIOR FELLOW AT THE SNF AGORA INSTITUTE,  
JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON, DC**

Ms. APPLEBAUM. Thank you very much and good morning, Mr. Acting Chairman and Ranking Member Risch, members of the committee. Thank you so much for inviting me here today.

I am going to begin where Chairman Menendez left off. He spoke of how, in the 21st century, the old idea of an autocrat being a single person operating by himself is no longer true.

Nowadays, autocracies are run not just by one bad guy, but by networks composed of kleptocratic financial structures, security services, and professional propagandists.

The members of these networks are connected not only within a given country, but among many countries. The corrupt state-controlled companies in Russia do business with the corrupt state-controlled companies in Venezuela and Iran.

China sells surveillance technology all over the world, to Zimbabwe, to others. Oligarchs from multiple countries use the same accountants and lawyers to hide their money in Europe and here in the United States.

Propagandists, whether from communist or nationalist or theocratic autocracies, pound home the same messages about the chaos of democracy and the evil of America. Their goal is to confuse audiences at home and abroad in order to make all of us believe that change is impossible.

In my roles as a journalist in Poland, as a historian of Soviet communism, and as a member of the board of the National Endowment for Democracy, I have been writing about our responses to this new challenge for the past decade, and they are inadequate.

Western sanctions alone have no impact on autocrats, who know they can continue to trade with one another. Accusations from human rights organizations mean nothing to dictators, who are protected by surveillance technology and vast personal wealth.

Russia invaded Ukraine, in part, because the Russian president believed he would pay no price. After all, Russian invasions of Georgia, Ukraine, and Syria, Russian assassinations carried out in

Britain and Germany, Russian disinformation and political funding campaigns designed to impact democratic elections in America, France, and Germany, among many other places, none of this received a strong response either from us or from our democratic allies.

Going forward, we need a completely new strategy towards Russia, towards China, and the rest of the autocratic world. Instead of always reacting to the latest outrage, we need to change the rules of the game altogether.

Instead of imposing sanctions after the fact, punishing oligarchs who are already rich, we must alter our own financial system so that kleptocratic elites cannot use our company laws and our property markets to hide their stolen wealth and so that they cannot use that wealth to influence our own political system.

Instead of merely responding to the virulent propaganda that comes out of Moscow or Beijing or Caracas, we should help deliver better information on a much broader scale to those countries in the languages that people speak.

Instead of assuming we are protected by old norms on inviolability of borders, we need strategies of deterrence that take into account the real possibility that autocracies will use military force.

In my written testimony, I suggest some specific steps. The elimination of secrecy in company ownership and real estate transactions, a more coherent organization of public diplomacy pulling together our excellent, but underfunded foreign language broadcasters, the media monitoring and research now done by the intelligence community, the Global Engagement Center at the State Department, and the tools of cultural diplomacy.

All of these things should be connected to one another. They should know what one another is doing and they should work together.

With thousands of talented Russians fleeing Moscow, this is also the time to think big. Why not create a Russian language television station that can compete with Putin's propaganda? Why not do the same in Mandarin or in other languages?

We also need to put democracy back at the heart of our foreign policy thinking and we can start by imagining a different future for Ukraine.

If Ukraine emerges from this war with its democracy and sovereignty intact, that victory would provide a transformational boost in confidence not only to democratic activists in Belarus and Russia, but also to those in Hong Kong and Caracas.

By contrast, a defeat would be a terrible blow to all of them. The stakes of this war are already much higher than most in Washington have acknowledged, affecting NATO's credibility, the cohesion of the democratic camp, even Americans' own sense of their place in the world.

It is not enough to avoid the worst outcomes. We need to think about achieving real victories in Ukraine and in the other struggles to come.

Many thanks to the committee, once again, for this invitation and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Applebaum follows:]

### Prepared Statement of Ms. Anne Applebaum

Good morning Chairman Menendez, Senator Risch, Members of the Committee: All of us have in our minds a cartoon image of what an autocratic state looks like. There is a bad man at the top. He controls the police. The police threaten the people with violence. There are evil collaborators, and maybe some brave dissidents.

But in the 21st century, that cartoon bears little resemblance to reality. Nowadays, autocracies are run not by one bad guy, but by networks composed of kleptocratic financial structures, security services (military, police, paramilitary groups, surveillance personnel) and professional propagandists. The members of these networks are connected not only within a given country, but among many countries. The corrupt, state-controlled companies in one dictatorship do business with their counterparts in another, with the profits going to the leader and his inner circle. Oligarchs from multiple countries use the same accountants and lawyers to hide their money in Europe and America. The police forces in one country can arm, equip, and train the police forces in another; China notoriously sells surveillance technology all around the world. Propagandists share resources and tactics—the Russian troll farms that promote Putin’s propaganda can also be used to promote the propaganda of Belarus or Venezuela. They also pound home the same messages about the weakness of democracy and the evil of America. Chinese sources are right now echoing fake Russian stories about non-existent Ukrainian chemical weapons. Their goal is to launch false narratives and confuse audiences in the United States and other free societies. They do so in order to make us believe that there is nothing we can do in response.

This is not to say that there is a conspiracy, some super-secret room where bad guys meet, as in a James Bond movie. The new autocratic alliance doesn’t have a structure, let alone an ideology. Among modern autocrats are people who call themselves communists, nationalists, and theocrats. Washington likes to talk about China and Chinese influence because that’s easy, but what really links the leaders of these countries is a common desire to preserve their personal power. Unlike military or political alliances from other times and places, the members of this group don’t operate like a bloc, but rather like a loose agglomeration of companies—call it Autocracy, Inc. Their links are cemented not by ideals but by deals—deals designed to replace Western sanctions or take the edge off Western economic boycotts, or to make them personally rich—which is why they can operate across geographical and historical lines.

They protect one another and look after one another. In theory, for example, Venezuela is an international pariah. Since 2019, U.S. citizens and U.S. companies have been forbidden to do any business there; Canada, the European Union, and many of Venezuela’s South American neighbors continue to increase sanctions on the country. And yet Venezuela receives loans as well as oil investment from Moscow and Beijing. Turkey facilitates the illicit Venezuelan gold trade. Cuba has long provided = advisers and security technology to Venezuela’s rulers. The international narcotics trade keeps individual members of the regime well-supplied with designer shoes and handbags. Leopoldo López, a onetime star of the opposition now living in exile in Spain, observes that although Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro’s opponents have received some foreign assistance, it’s a drop in the bucket, “nothing comparable with what Maduro has received.”

In the face of this new challenge, Western and American responses have been profoundly inadequate. Expressions of “deep concern” mean nothing to dictators who feel secure thanks to their high levels of surveillance and their personal wealth. Western sanctions alone have no impact on autocrats who know they can continue to trade with one another. As the war in Ukraine illustrates, our failure to use military deterrence had consequences. Russia did not believe that we would arm Ukraine because we had not done so in the past.

For all of these reasons, we need a completely new strategy toward Russia, China and the rest of the autocratic world, one in which we don’t merely react to the latest outrage, but change the rules of engagement altogether. We cannot merely slap sanctions on foreign oligarchs following some violation of international law, or our own laws: We must alter our financial system so that we stop kleptocratic elites from abusing it in the first place. We cannot just respond with furious fact-checking and denials when autocrats produce blatant propaganda: We must help provide accurate and timely information where there is none, and deliver it in the languages people speak. We cannot rely on old ideas about the liberal world order or the inviolability of borders, or even international institutions and treaties to protect our friends and allies: We need a military strategy, based in deterrence, that takes into account the real possibility that autocracies will use military force.

The war in Ukraine has been launched because we did not do any of these things in the past. As he was preparing for this conflict, the Russian president calculated that the cost of international criticism, sanctions and military resistance would be very low. He would survive them. Past Russian invasions of Ukraine and Georgia; Russian assassinations carried out in Britain and Germany; Russian disinformation campaigns during democratic elections in America, France, Germany and elsewhere; Russian support for extremist or anti-democratic politicians; none of this received any real response from us or from the democratic alliances that we lead. Vladimir Putin assumed, based on his own experience, that we would not react this time either. China, Belarus and other Russian allies assumed the same.

Going forward, we cannot let this happen again. In my written testimony I will suggest some broad areas where we need to completely reimagine our policy. I will leave the necessary changes in military and intelligence strategy, especially the question of deterrence, to others who have more expertise in this area, and will focus on kleptocracy and disinformation. But I hope this hearing sparks a broader conversation. We need far more creative thinking about how we cannot just survive the war in Ukraine, but win the war in Ukraine—and how we can prevent similar wars from taking place in the future.

#### PUT AN END TO TRANSNATIONAL KLEPTOCRACY

Currently a Russian, Angolan or Chinese oligarch can own a house in London, an estate on the Mediterranean, a company in Delaware and a trust in South Dakota without ever having to reveal to his own tax authorities or ours that these properties are his. A whole host of American and European intermediaries makes these kinds of transactions possible: lawyers, bankers, accountants, real estate agents, PR companies. Their work is legal. We have made it so. We can just as easily make it illegal. All of it. We don't need to tolerate a little bit of corruption, we can simply end the whole system, altogether.

Although this testimony is being presented to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which does not traditionally have oversight over the regulation of international finance, it is time to recognize the problem of international kleptocracy as a matter not just for the Treasury, but for those who make American foreign policy. After all, many modern autocrats hold on to power not just with violence, but by stealing from their own countries, laundering the money abroad, and then using their fortunes to maintain power at home and buy influence abroad. The Russian oligarchs in the news at the moment are not just wealthy men with yachts, they have been acting for many years as agents of the Russian state, representing the interests of the Russian leadership in myriad commercial and political transactions.

We have the power to destroy this business model. We could require all real estate transactions, everywhere in the United States, to be totally transparent. We could require all companies, trusts and investment funds to be registered in the name of their real owners. We could ban Americans from keeping their money in tax havens, and we could ban American lawyers and accountants from engaging with tax havens. We could force art dealers and auction houses to carry out money-laundering checks, and close loopholes that allow anonymity in the private-equity and hedge-fund industries. We could launch a diplomatic crusade to persuade other democracies to do the same. Simply ending these practices would make life much more uncomfortable for the world's kleptocrats. It might have the benefit of making our own country more law-abiding, and freer of autocratic influence, as well.

In addition to changing the law, we also need to jail those who break it. We need to step up our enforcement of the existing money-laundering laws. It is not enough to sanction Russian oligarchs now, when it is too late, or to investigate their enablers, when it is too late for that, too. We need to prevent new kleptocratic elites from forming in the future. It must become not only socially toxic but also a criminal liability for anyone to handle stolen money, and not only in America.

Now is the time to deepen the international conversation with our allies all over the world, to assess what they are doing, whether they are succeeding, and which steps we all need to take to ensure we are not building the autocracies of the future. Now is the time to reveal what we know about hidden money and who really controls it. The Biden administration has created a precedent, revealing intelligence leading up to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Why not build on that precedent, and reveal what intelligence we have on Putin's money, Maduro's money, Xi Jinping's money or Alexander Lukashenko's money?

Just as we once built an international anti-communist alliance, so we can build an international anti-corruption alliance, organized around the idea of transparency, accountability, and fairness. Those are the values that we should promote, not only at home but around the world. They are consistent with our democratic constitu-

tions and with the rule of law that underlies all of our societies. Once again: Our failure to abide by those values in the past is one of the sources of today's crisis.

DON'T FIGHT THE INFORMATION WAR, UNDERMINE IT

Modern autocrats take information and ideas seriously. They understand the importance not only of controlling opinion inside their own countries, but also of influencing debates around the world. They spend accordingly: on television channels, local and national newspapers, bot networks. They buy officials and businessmen in democratic countries in order to have local spokesmen and advocates. China's United Front program also targets students, younger journalists and politicians, seeking to influence their thinking from an early age.

For three decades, since the end of the Cold War, we have been pretending that we don't have to do any of this, because good information will somehow win the battle in the "market of ideas." But there isn't a market of ideas, or not a free market. Instead, some ideas have been turbocharged by disinformation campaigns, by heavy spending, and by the social media algorithms that promote emotional and divisive content because that's what keeps people online. Since we first encountered Russian disinformation inside our own society, we've also imagined that our existing forms of communication could beat it without any special effort. But a decade's worth of studying Russian propaganda has taught me that fact-checking and swift reactions are useful but insufficient.

We have a living example of how this works, right in front of us. We can watch the Ukrainians get their viewpoint across, by telling a moving, true story, by speaking in language used by ordinary people and by showing us the war as they see it. In doing so, they are reaching Americans, Europeans and many others. But at the same time, the false Russian narrative is the only one reaching Russians at home. It is also reaching many people in the broader, Russian-speaking world, as well as in India and the Middle East. The same is true of Chinese propaganda, which might not work here but has a strong impact in the developing world, where China presents its political system as a model for others to follow. Right now, for example, Chinese private technology groups, including Tencent, Sina Weibo and ByteDance, are promoting content backing Putin's war and suppressing posts that are sympathetic to Ukraine.

In this new atmosphere, we need to rethink how we communicate. Much as we assembled the Department of Homeland Security out of disparate agencies after 9/11, we now need a much more carefully targeted effort that would pull together some of the departments in the U.S. Government that think about communication, not to do propaganda but to reach more people around the world with better information and to stop autocracies from distorting that knowledge. The building blocks already exist, even if they are not currently coordinated. U.S.-funded international broadcasting, including Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Voice of America and the rest of the services now housed at the U.S. Agency for Global Media; the Global Engagement Center, currently in the State Department; the Open Source Center, a large media monitoring and translation service currently squirreled away in the intelligence community where its work is hard to access; research into foreign audiences and internet tactics; public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy.

The teams who work on these things should be jointly thinking about the best way to communicate democratic values in undemocratic places, jointly sharing experiences, jointly informing and engaging other parts of the U.S. Government. In any given country there are different kinds of audiences and there may be different tools and tactics needed to reach them. Parts of the U.S. Government may have thought about this problem, but others have not. The dysfunction and scandal that have dogged international broadcasting, with Michael Pack's disastrous tenure at USAGM only the latest example, needs to end. Congressional leadership is needed to put these services on a different and better footing.

Some of what we should do is simply provide more and better information to people who want it. RFE/RL's online performance increased by 99 percent during the first 2 weeks of the war in Ukraine. Viewership of YouTube videos of RFE/RL programming tripled. This proves the value of communicating with Russian speakers all over Eurasia—Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Baltic States, even Germany, home to some 3 million native Russian-speakers. But small increases in funding for this vital population are insufficient.

We need to provide real, long-lasting competition for the Russian state-run cable and satellite television that most of the people in these regions watch. Hundreds of talented Russian journalists and media professionals have just fled Moscow: Why not start a Russian television channel, perhaps jointly funded by Europe and America, to employ them and give them a way to work? At the same time, we should

increase funding for existing Russian independent media outlets, most now expelled from the country, and provide support for the many grassroots efforts to run social media campaigns inside and outside the country.

But although Russia is of special interest at the moment, we also need to consider, as Congress is already doing, an expansion of funding for Radio Free Asia, which has received only a third of the funding of RFE/RL, despite its potential to reach a large audience inside China and the Chinese diaspora around the world. Although relatively small, RFA was the first news organization to uncover mass detentions in Xinjiang; RFA also provided the first documentation of China's cover-up of the first coronavirus fatalities in Wuhan. We need RFA to be able to counter Chinese propaganda, to put China's Belt and Road projects in Southeast Asia into context for audiences in Cambodia, Laos, Burma, and Vietnam, to enhance its digital global initiative to engage younger, Mandarin-speaking audiences wary of Beijing's dominant media narratives. We also need to scale up the work of the Open Technology Fund, which supports internet freedom technologies at every stage of development. OTF makes it possible for millions to access independent journalism in closed media environments.

In all of the foreign languages that we work, we need to shift from an era of "bullhorn digital broadcasting" to a new era of "digital samizdat," mobilizing informed citizens and teaching them to distribute information. These tactics may not get to everyone, but they can be targeted at younger audiences, diasporas and elites who have influence within their countries.

In this new era, funding for education and culture need some rethinking too. Shouldn't there be a Russian-language university, in Vilnius or Warsaw, to house all of the intellectuals and thinkers who have just left Moscow? Don't we need to spend more on education in Hindi and Persian? Existing programs should be recast and redesigned for a different era, one in which so much more can be known about the world, but in which so much money is being spent by the autocracies to distort that knowledge. The goal should be to ensure that there is a different idea of "Russianness" available to the Russian diaspora, aside from the one provided by Putin, and that alternative outlets are available for people in other autocratic societies as well.

#### PUT DEMOCRACY BACK AT THE CENTER OF FOREIGN POLICY

It is no accident that Americans are united in their support for Ukraine. A large, bipartisan majority, for example, back the U.S. decision to boycott Russian oil, even if it led to higher prices. This is because Americans identify with people who are clearly fighting for their freedom, their independence and their democracy. It is a central part of how we define ourselves, and who we are.

I recognize that it is naïve to assume we can have the same policy towards every dictator, that we cannot give the same support to every democracy movement; I understand that there are tradeoffs to make in diplomacy as in everything else. This is not the Cold War, there is no Warsaw Pact, and not every judgement about every autocracy is black and white. But our preference for democracy and our willingness to defend key democracies should never be in doubt. The fact is that Russians clearly doubted whether we and our allies were even willing to help Ukraine fight back. We failed, in advance, to telegraph the fact that we would. We cannot let that happen again.

In addition to being a historian and journalist, I am also on the board of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the independent organization that Congress has generously funded for years. I want to express here my thanks for that support, as well as my hope that it will continue. NED is ahead of the curve in its thinking about these issues, has supported networks of journalists to help in international investigations of kleptocracy as well as independent journalism of all kinds, on top of its support for democracy activism all over the world. Funding NED is necessary but not sufficient, however. U.S. foreign policy is in fact made by dozens of different actors, all across the government and American society. Congressional leadership can help focus all of them not just on the defense of existing institutions, but on the creative thinking we now lack.

To put it bluntly, we need to be able to imagine a different kind of future, one in which our nation and its ideas are not in retreat, but in the ascendance. We need to approach displaced diasporas all over the world as an opportunity, not a burden: How can we prepare them to take back the countries that they have lost, in Syria, Afghanistan or Russia? We need to break the links between autocracies, to forge new and better links between democracies, to reinvent existing international institutions that are no longer fit for purpose. It is alarming, even astonishing, that the United Nations has played no role in preventing or mitigating the war in Ukraine

because Russia, as a Security Council member, has so successfully blocked it from doing so. In fact, Russia and China have been seeking for years to undermine the UN and all of the other international organizations that conventional wisdom said would promote human rights and prevent exactly the kind of unprovoked war that we are seeing unfold today. It may be time to create some alternatives, to think about how the democratic world can organize alternatives, in the event that the UN is no longer interested in pursuing peaceful development.

Finally, it's extremely important that we imagine a different future for Ukraine. A victory in this conflict, whatever that means—a Russian retreat, or a negotiated settlement following Russia's failure to conquer the country—would provide an enormous, transformational boost in confidence to the entire democratic world, including to the democratic activists in Belarus and Ukraine who oppose the war, even to democratic activists in places as far away as Hong Kong, Burma, or Venezuela.

A defeat—defined as the end of Ukrainian sovereignty—would be a terrible blow to all of them. The consequences are much higher than most in Congress and the Administration seem to have yet acknowledged. Ukraine is not in NATO, but it is a de facto member of the European world, and the democratic world. Ukrainian failure will have an impact on NATO's credibility and on the democratic world's cohesion, whether we like it or not.

We need to think about victory, and how to achieve it, not only in this conflict but in the others to come, over the next years and decades.

Thank you very much for your attention.

The CHAIRMAN [presiding]. Mr. Twining.

**STATEMENT OF DANIEL TWINING, PRESIDENT,  
INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE, WASHINGTON, DC**

Dr. TWINING. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Risch, members of this distinguished committee, it is really a pleasure to be back in the Senate to testify before you on countering authoritarianism, a topic at the heart of our work at IRI to advance democracy worldwide.

Foreign authoritarians and the Chinese Communist Party and the Kremlin want to make the world safe for autocracy. Their tools include economic leverage, influence operations, digital disinformation, and the export of repressive technologies.

IRI's programming equips countries to push back. We equip democrats around the world with knowledge and tools to expose and counter foreign malign influence, bolstering democracies against the corrosive effects of this rising tide.

The Chinese Communist Party is engaging the rest of the world with the same philosophy it uses to govern its own country.

It claims to be promoting respect for every country's individual political path, but it seeks to create a world molded in its authoritarian image. Harsh coercion is only half the story of how the Party keeps control at home.

The offer the Party makes to its elites is actually two-sided—oppose us and we will crush you, but support us and we can help make you rich. The CCP has now taken this approach global.

When offering other countries gold does not work, the CCP offers the sword. Political leaders who stand up to Chinese bullying and aggression find their countries on the receiving end of economic coercion with China using its economic might to impose political compliance.

The Party tries to aggressively shape discourse about China including here at home. We see cornerstones of American life like the NBA, Hollywood, and Wall Street go out of their way to placate the CCP's warped notions of political correctness, including on the atrocities in Xinjiang.



China's coercive efforts to influence other countries also target the Chinese diaspora, attempting to turn them into tools of Beijing's design.

The democratic world has an advantage. No country wants to import China's political Leninist model, and democracies, historically, have been far more resilient than autocracies. We have found that civil society and democratic activism remain the most effective tools to identify and push back against CCP influence.

A free and competitive media landscape is a crucial way democracies can inoculate themselves against Chinese malign influence in the information space.

Independent media and investigative journalists are some of the best checks against state-curated propaganda as well as useful assets in exposing foreign authoritarian corruption.

Political parties play a central role in combatting Chinese political interference. Political parties in countries like Australia and Lithuania have formed cross-partisan coalitions to push back against PRC economic coercion.

Parties shown to be in the pocket of a foreign authoritarian power will not succeed in open democratic competition anywhere. The U.S. really must do more to help friendly democracies protect themselves from malign Chinese influence.

A few ideas include supporting collective economic defense, number one. NATO stands as a bulwark against Russian aggression in the military domain, but there is no institution that provides collective economic security to countries coerced by China for standing up for democratic values. Protecting the free world requires a credible deterrent to Chinese economic aggression.

Two, providing technical support to countries negotiating Belt and Road deals. Some countries have signed bad deals with China because they lacked technical expertise to negotiate good ones. The U.S. and our allies can fill this gap, helping nations secure high-quality deals that are transparent, citizen-centric, and noncorrupt.

Three, supporting independent journalism. China cultivates journalists around the world to advance pro-CCP narratives, effectively removing independent voices from the conversation on China.

The U.S. should support independent media to investigate and expose corruption, counter state-sponsored propaganda, bolster the integrity of the information space, and build media literacy to mitigate the impact of authoritarian disinformation.

Four, investing in responsive governance. Supporting democracy around the world creates a comparative forward policy advantage for America.

In an era of ideologically-driven great power competition, supporting the aspiration to freedom abroad is not only the right thing to do, it produces tangible national security benefits, including preventing friendly countries from succumbing to state capture by foreign authoritarians.

Polls show Americans support this kind of values-based leadership and believe we should stand with democracies against authoritarian assault. The U.S. should allocate more resources to steal the foundations of global democracy against authoritarian powers' insidious attacks.

Just to wrap up, over the past few years the work of IRI, the National Democratic Institute, the National Endowment for Democracy, and others—through that work, we have developed networks, tools, and resources to bolster democratic resilience to authoritarian overtures.

Democracy requires active defense. Political accountability, transparency, innovation, and resilience remain the most effective antidotes to authoritarian aggression and when democracies stand together authoritarians take note.

It is essential to invest in democracy assistance, to help champions of government of the people, by the people, and for the people build institutions strong enough to stand against authoritarian subversion.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Twining follows:]

### **Prepared Statement of Dr. Daniel Twining**

#### INTRODUCTION

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, distinguished Members of the Committee, it is my pleasure to testify before you to today on countering authoritarianism, a topic at the heart of the International Republican Institute's work to advance democracy worldwide.

More than ever, foreign authoritarian actors like the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Putin's regime in Russia are taking an increasingly aggressive approach to exerting influence in democracies around the world. Using economic leverage, influence operations, digital disinformation, and the export of repressive technologies, China and Russia are propping up other repressive states and placing pressure on democratic actors. But these tools are often poorly understood, as are the ways by which democratic governments and civil societies can work together to fight back.

IRI's Countering Foreign Authoritarian Influence (CFAI) programming equips democracies to do just that. Through cutting-edge research, global convening, and equipping civil society, the media, government officials, political parties, and the private sector with the knowledge and tools to expose and counter foreign authoritarian influence, IRI and its partners are bolstering democracies against the corrosive effects of this rising authoritarian tide.

Today I will explore how the People's Republic of China (PRC) interferes in democratic countries, underscoring the strengths of the PRC's approach as well as weaknesses to leverage. I will highlight key sources of democratic resilience IRI has observed that offer lessons and opportunities for future efforts to counter authoritarian aggression.

#### WHY AND HOW THE CCP INTERFERES IN DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES

The question of why we are seeing the PRC attempts to malignly influence democratic countries is impossible to understand without understanding the Chinese Communist Party's goals. Since the PRC's founding, all of its top leaders have spoken of the "great renewal of the Chinese race." CCP political slogans come and go, but this one remains, precisely because it encapsulates both of the CCP's strongest political rallying tools: potent ethno-nationalism, and a promise to return China to the center of world events.

Under CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping, the great renewal of the Chinese race has been given practical form in what Xi calls the "community of common destiny." As explained by former NSC Director for China Liza Tobin, the realization of the community of common destiny would entail a world where "the international community would regard Beijing's authoritarian governance model as a superior alternative to Western electoral democracy, and the world would credit the Communist Party of China for developing a new path to peace, prosperity, and modernity that other countries can follow."

To lead the world, one must engage with the world. And the CCP is engaging with the rest of the world with the same philosophies it uses to govern its own country. The community of common destiny is notable mainly for what it does not envision: robust limits on state power over citizens, vibrant press freedom, or the supervision of government officials through competitive elections. The CCP claims to be pro-

moting respect for every country's individual political path, but it is unabashedly seeking to create a world molded in its authoritarian image.

The CCP is also seeking leadership over other countries through many of the same tools it uses domestically. Understanding these tools is key to discerning how the U.S. and its partners should respond.

IRI's research on PRC interference globally demonstrates unequivocally that China's economic strength is at the center of the CCP's attempts to bend other countries to its will. This should not come as a surprise, since it is of a piece with how it maintains control domestically. Many think harsh coercion is the only way the Party keeps control at home. But that is only half the story. The offer the Party makes to its elites at home is actually two-sided: openly oppose us, and yes, we will crush you. But support us, and we can help make you rich.

The CCP has now taken this approach global. Its infrastructure deals are frequently padded with extra costs, to better pad the pockets of local elites, and to the detriment of ordinary people. Apart from potentially turning other governments into client states, this willingness to dispense largesse without upfront strings attached is exacerbating pre-existing issues with corruption and governance in the process. For example, a major railroad-construction project in Kenya was won by PRC contractors in a closed tender at prices per mile far above international standards, for reasons that remain poorly explained. The railroad has failed to turn its projected profits. Indeed, it has failed to turn any profit, and the Kenyan Government recently raised taxes on essential commodities like cooking gas and internet data, in part to cope with the county's unwieldy external debt burden.<sup>1</sup>

An unfinished Chinese-built highway in North Macedonia has now become one of the most expensive in the world per mile and has saddled the country with debts that may take generations to pay down.<sup>2</sup> In 2017, the PRC offered to extend a lifeline to the floundering government of a former Malaysian prime minister by spying on Wall Street Journal reporters who were reporting on the Malaysian Government's corruption. In return, the PRC demanded in writing that Malaysia sign onto enormous infrastructure deals financed at "above-market" lending rates.

Just like at home, when offering other countries gold does not work, the CCP offers the sword. Political leaders around the world who have taken steps to stand up to PRC bullying and aggression have found themselves on the receiving end of economic coercion designed to turn their business communities against them. Beijing cut off some of Australia's most important exports after Canberra passed a series of laws designed to limit foreign interference in its elections. And even as we speak, the CCP is punishing the freedom-loving people of Lithuania for standing with Taiwan by pressuring German and French multinationals to drop Lithuanian suppliers. These are but two from a long list of similar efforts by Beijing to use China's economic might to impose political compliance on smaller democracies.

Secondly, our research shows that the PRC tries to aggressively shape discourse about China in every country it influences. Just as inside China, this is often as much about shaping what people don't say, as much as what they do say. Examples of CCP-induced self-censorship in open societies are undoubtedly well known to this committee. In recent years we have seen cornerstones of American life like the NBA, Hollywood, and Wall Street go out of their way to placate the PRC's warped notions of political correctness.

But I must single out the example of Xinjiang for special discussion. The ongoing suffering of the Uyghur people of Xinjiang—and the feebleness of the international community's response to what independent tribunals have determined is an ongoing genocide—show that in at least one important way, China has already succeeded in building a new world, even if many people in Washington and other world capitals do not yet realize it.

Previous instances of genocide in Darfur and Myanmar saw the pillars of our collective international conscience mobilizing to demand a halt. Heads of state declared that such unconscionable crimes must cease. UN general secretaries stepped in to personally mediate between conflict-ridden parties. Celebrities like George Clooney and Angelina Jolie went out of their way to make sure the calls for an end to killing carried well beyond the halls of power, helping to mobilize publics around the world.

The silence around Xinjiang, in contrast, remains deafening. While democratic legislatures like the U.S. Congress have sounded the alarm, precious few heads of state have directly addressed the genocide, for fear of endangering ties with China. Some people within the UN, like the Human Rights Council's special rapporteurs for freedom of religion and slavery, have done their jobs by shining a light on the horrific abuses Uyghurs have suffered. But UN General Secretary Antonio Guterres has gone out of his way to avoid the issue, while a report on Xinjiang supposedly completed by the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights remains unpublished for unexplained reasons.<sup>3</sup> And apart from a declaration by director Judd

Apatow that “China has bought our silence” on Xinjiang,<sup>4</sup> A-list celebrities have had almost nothing to say about the largest mass internment of an ethnic group since the Holocaust.

China’s coercive efforts to influence other countries also target the Chinese diaspora, attempting to turn them into tools for Beijing’s whims. This is undoubtedly the most corrosive way the CCP interferes in other countries. Research by IRI and many others has shown that Chinese diaspora communities around the world are already seen with undeserved, racially-focused suspicion by people who—falsely—believe them to be unthinking vessels for Beijing’s will. As a result, attacks on Chinese communities around the world are tragically commonplace.

Last November, for example, following dissatisfaction with the Solomon Islands’ switch of recognition from Taiwan to the PRC, rioters burned down large parts of the Chinatown in the capital city of Honiara, leaving several dead and hundreds homeless.<sup>5</sup> Needless to say, the ordinary Chinese people deprived of life and property had very little to do with the grey men in Beijing who engineered the switch in recognition. Despite this and many other such events, Beijing is unapologetic in its efforts to claim the diaspora for its own. It has shown no regard—or even awareness—for how it is stoking preexisting racism and placing Chinese communities the world over at risk.

#### THE CCP’S STRENGTHS

We have to take seriously these and other forms of the CCP’s interference in democracies, because they are abetted by genuine domestic strengths. China ruled by the CCP is not the USSR of yesteryear. Its challenge to the international order is arguably more potent, and we must understand its strengths, so that we understand that attempts to push back on PRC interference will be neither quick nor easy.

First and most importantly, the Party remains a capable manager of its own enormous economy. This is despite growing economic headwinds and pressure from U.S. sanctions. It employs some of the world’s best-trained economic technocrats, and takes some, if not all, of their advice.<sup>6</sup> This means that over the short- to medium-term, China is likely to remain a market Western businesses want to be in, and Western countries want to trade with.

Second, the Party’s command over the economy gives it enormous ability to shape the incentives of foreign interlocutors. China is the world’s biggest trading nation and has the world’s largest retail market. The Party guards access to this market zealously. The Party arguably has more economic resources at its direct command than the U.S. Government. At the end of 2020, for example, the 92 state-owned enterprises directly managed by the PRC central government had assets worth \$14.8 trillion, or about 64 percent of U.S. GDP.<sup>7</sup>

Another unfortunate but potent factor to consider is that the CCP is unrepentantly corrupt, and corruption remains, in many cases, an extremely effective way of making inroads with political elites around the world.<sup>8</sup> As I illustrated before, much of China’s corrosive effect on other countries stems from the fact that its companies don’t have to worry about being accountable to the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act while trying to win foreign project tenders.

And finally, I must mention that despite China’s growing global footprint, we have found in our IRI research and trainings around the world that levels of knowledge about China remain relatively low. Many people—including political and business elites who engage with China—still don’t know what they’re dealing with, and do not grasp the danger.

#### THE CCP’S WEAKNESSES

While the Party’s rule of China gives it certain advantages in projecting authoritarianism abroad, there are also significant weaknesses that should give us real optimism about democracies’ resilience in the face of CCP interference.

First, it is not clear that the Party under Xi Jinping has the diplomatic agility to carry its techno-authoritarian control beyond China’s borders. Since Xi took command in 2012, his hard turn into retrograde, inward-looking politics has been reflected in a willingness to alienate other countries for domestic political benefit. Xi’s harsh, coercive brand of “wolf-warrior” diplomacy has repeatedly proven itself to be a strategic own-goal. Under Xi, China’s external overreach has almost single-handedly summoned into being geopolitical balancing coalitions that a canner strategist would have avoided.

We should also be optimistic because of our own relative strengths. Like Isaiah Berlin’s proverbial hedgehog, the Party understands one big thing very well: that money matters, and that controlling and using money is crucial to winning consent

for China's rise. But for that one strength, it is weak in many places where the U.S. and our democratic partners excel.

Firstly and most importantly, the Party has difficulty winning other countries' trust and building genuine partnerships, to say nothing of deep alliances. Secondly, despite ongoing efforts to attract global talent, Chinese society is fundamentally unequipped to effectively integrate people of different races and nationalities in the way the U.S. can. Per capita, China has fewer residents born in other countries than any nation in the world, making it the opposite of a global cosmopolitan center to which the world's best and brightest flock. Finally, in our work we have found that, the more other democracies come to understand the true nature of the Chinese Communist Party, the less they like it. Stifling, self-centered, surveillance authoritarianism is, it turns out, not very attractive to anyone.

#### SOURCES OF DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE

The lack of appeal of the CCP's political model is just one of the reasons for hope. Another is the fundamental resilience of democracies around the world. Despite advances made by the PRC and other authoritarian actors in recent years, our work has thrown light on deep reserves of this resilience, even in nations most deeply impacted by CCP political interference.

We have found that civil society and democratic activism remain the most effective tools democracies have to identify and push back against PRC influence. IRI partners around the world, from Panama to Kenya, have led groundbreaking campaigns to expose the corrosive impact of PRC influence on local democratic institutions. The opacity of Chinese development bank loan contracts has been met, in many places, with society-wide mobilization demanding government transparency and accountability. In many instances, the illiberal nature of PRC engagement with countries in the 'global South' has given rise to a new generation of bottom-up movements seeking to realize the inclusive, equitable, and transparent governance their elites have promised.

A free and competitive media landscape is also a crucial way democracies can inoculate themselves against malign PRC influence on their information space. Independent media and investigative journalists are some of the best checks against state-curated propaganda. We have seen, in countries like Kenya, Malaysia, and Ecuador, that journalists can prompt demands for reform in their nations' relationship with China through investigations that bring opaque deals to light and unearth the negative impact of Chinese investment on local communities.

Lastly, I would like to discuss the central role that political parties can play in combatting PRC political interference. Despite the CCP's aggressive attempts to co-opt other political parties through its International Liaison Department, democratic political parties in many corners of the world are proving their resilience. Political parties in countries such as Australia and Lithuania have formed bipartisan and multi-partisan coalitions in the face of PRC economic coercion. Lithuania's ruling party coalition has pushed to take a more critical stance against the authoritarian actions of the PRC, leading to significant policy shifts that favor democratic outcomes. To scale and spur this type of action with parties around the globe, it will be imperative to share both Australia's and Lithuania's story with broader audiences, as we do at IRI in our global political-party programming to counter Chinese malign influence.

#### CHINA AND RUSSIA IN THE CONTEXT OF UKRAINE

One final subject deserves attention given the events of recent days: the growing authoritarian nexus between China and Russia. Alongside China, other authoritarian actors, including Russia, are trying to further their political interests by weakening democratic institutions. Of particular concern is strengthening cooperation between Russia and China, which are both pursuing strategies to create a world safe for their authoritarian aggression—whether against Ukraine or Taiwan.

Historically, collaboration between Beijing and Moscow was inhibited by their competing goals: the PRC aims to bolster its international reputation, while Russia seeks to undermine trust in Western institutions. However, where their mutual interests converge, we now see increasing alignment, particularly in their information operations. Russia and China have coordinated their propaganda narratives on the development of COVID-19 vaccines, U.S. and European sanctions regimes, and allegations of Western interference in opposition movements, including pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong and Russia.

The ongoing war in Ukraine highlights the extent to which China will align itself with Russian interests—Beijing refused to call Russia's attack on Ukraine an invasion and opposes the economic measures that have been taken against Russia. For-

Foreign Minister Wang Yi has emphasized that China-Russia relations remain “iron-clad,” and China is actively amplifying Russian disinformation claiming the U.S. is developing biological weapons in Ukraine.<sup>9</sup> Although their methods differ, both Putin and Xi have clearly stated their ambition to dismantle the free and open international order led by the United States and replace it with one centered on authoritarianism and spheres of influence.

#### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The United States has many strengths in this competition. Aside from comprehensively bolstering our own competitiveness, there is much we can do to support democracies standing against PRC interference globally. Some specific ways we could do so:

- *Support collective economic defense:* NATO is currently proving its worth as a bulwark against Russian aggression. But there is no institution to provide collective economic security to countries being coerced by the PRC simply for standing up for democratic values. Bills such as the Countering China Economic Coercion Act are a good start, but the U.S. and our partners need to do more. We should immediately begin undertaking serious efforts to construct a credible deterrent to PRC economic aggression.
- *Provide technical support to countries negotiating BRI deals:* Some countries have signed bad deals with China because they lacked technical expertise to negotiate good ones. The U.S. and our allies can fill this gap, and we should find ways to do so—if only because infrastructure shortfalls around the world provide leaders with compelling rationales to continue to turn to the PRC for lending. If they do so, their publics and political opposition should know that technical support is available to make sure the deals are good ones, so that they can demand to know why leaders failed to take advantage of such a facility.
- *Support independent journalism globally:* Chinese propaganda outlets like CGTN have seen success in places like Africa because they have the money to offer higher salaries to credible journalists and recognized early on the importance of cultivating local talent to advance pro-PRC narratives, effectively removing independent voices from the conversation on China. The CCP has gone as far as outright attempts to buy public broadcasters in many African countries, in addition to its efforts to coopt local media and spread pro-PRC disinformation and propaganda. The U.S. and our allies have prioritized support for independent journalism for many years, but our efforts do not currently match the scale of the challenge. The U.S. must invest additional resources in democracy, rights, and governance programming to support independent media to investigate and expose authoritarian aggression; counter state-sponsored propaganda and disinformation; bolster the integrity of the information space; and build media literacy to mitigate the impact of disinformation on popular perceptions of actors like the PRC and the Kremlin.
- *Support democracy and responsive governance:* Supporting democracy around the world creates a comparative foreign policy advantage for the United States. U.S. support for democratic principles through institutions like IRI, the National Democratic Institute, and the National Endowment for Democracy has had measurable impact on democratic development and resilience around the world. In an era of ideologically driven great-power competition, supporting the aspiration to freedom abroad is not only the right thing to—it produces tangible national security benefits for the United States, including preventing friendly countries from succumbing to state capture by foreign authoritarian adversaries. Polling by the Bush Institute, the Penn-Biden Center, and the Reagan Institute shows that Americans support such values-based leadership and believe the United States should stand with democracies against authoritarian assault. Building on the Democracy Summit and working with the Department of States and United States Agency for International Development, the U.S. can and must allocate the resources to steel the foundations of global democracy against authoritarian powers’ insidious attacks.

#### CONCLUSION

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, distinguished Members of the Committee: thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony today. Over the past few years, through the work of IRI, the National Endowment for Democracy, and others, we have developed the networks, tools, and resources to bolster democratic resilience to authoritarian overtures. As the convergent disinformation campaign waged by Russia and China over Russia’s invasion of Ukraine reverberates from Italy to

Indonesia, we are reminded that democracy requires active defense in the face of unprecedented challenges. Democratic accountability, transparency, innovation, and resilience remain the most effective antidotes to authoritarian aggression. And when democracies stand together in a show of democratic unity, backed by the tools of political and economic statecraft, authoritarians take note. So do our partners. It is—and it will remain—essential that we continue to invest in democracy assistance to help champions of government of the people, by the people, and for the people the world over to build institutions strong enough to stand against a rising tide of authoritarian subversion. Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

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#### Notes

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<sup>2</sup> Higgins, Andrews. “A Pricey Drive Down Montenegro’s Highway ‘From Nowhere to Nowhere.’” *The New York Times*, 14 August 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/14/world/europe/montenegro-highway-china.html>.

<sup>3</sup> “Open Letter to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: OHCHR Report on Grave Human Rights Violations in Xinjiang Can Wait No Longer.” *Human Rights Watch*, 8 March 2022. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/08/open-letter-un-high-commissioner-human-rights-ohchr-report-grave-human-rights#>.

<sup>4</sup> Evans, Zachary. “China Has Bought Our Silence:’ Director Judd Apatow Criticizes Film Industry for Ignoring Uyghur ‘Genocide.’” *National Review*, 16 September 2020. <https://www.nationalreview.com/news/china-has-bought-our-silence-director-judd-apatow-criticizes-film-industry-for-ignoring-uyghur-genocide/>.

<sup>5</sup> Zhuang, Yan. “3 Bodies Found Amid Violence in Solomon Island.” *The New York Times*, 26 November 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/27/world/asia/solomon-islands-protests-bodies.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Li, Cheng. “China’s Economic Decisionmakers.” *Brookings*, March–April 2008. [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/03\\_china\\_li.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/03_china_li.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> “Comprehensive Report of the State Council on the Management of State-Owned Assets in 2020.” *The National People’s Congress of the People’s Republic of China*, 21 October 2021. <http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/c30834/202110/c63f586559e84bc0ae85fa752d358f0c.shtml>.

<sup>8</sup> Jirous, Filip. “China in the Balkans: Neutral Business Partner or a Foreign Power?” *European Western Balkans*, 28 June 2019. <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2019/06/28/china-in-the-balkans-neutral-business-partner-or-a-foreign-power/>; Martin, Wes. “Corruption is China’s Friend in its Quest to Dominate Africa.” *The National Interest*, 13 September 2018. <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/corruption-chinas-friend-its-quest-dominate-africa-31242>; “United Nations with Chinese Characteristics: Elite Capture and Discourse Management on a Global Scale.” *Sinopsis*, 20 July 2019, <https://sinopsis.cz/en/united-nations-with-chinese-characteristics-elite-capture-and-discourse-management-on-a-global-scale/>

<sup>9</sup> Kim, Patricia M. “China’s Choices and the Fate of the Post-Post-Cold War Era.” *Brookings*, The Brookings Institution, 8 Mar. 2022, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2022/03/08/chinas-choices-and-the-fate-of-the-post-post-cold-war-era/>.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you both for your testimony. We will start a series of questions of 5-minute rounds.

Dr. Applebaum, your testimony is exactly in line with my sentiments and thinking, what I was trying to get our previous witnesses to engage in—what are we doing—and there are some parts of your testimony that, I think, deserve to be highlighted and I want to engage with you on it.

You say that we have to change the rules of engagement altogether, that we must alter our financial system so that we stop kleptocratic elites from abusing it in the first place, that we must provide accurate and timely information where there is none and deliver it in the languages people speak, and we need a military strategy based in deterrence that takes into account the real possibility the autocracies will use military force.

You go on to say when we talk about transnational kleptocracy that “a whole host of American and European intermediaries make these kind of transactions possible—lawyers, bankers, accountants, real estate agencies, PR companies” and you say their work is legal.

“We have made it so. We can just as easily make it illegal. We do not need to tolerate a little bit of corruption when we can simply end the whole system altogether.”

Finally, you say “Just as we once built an international anti-communist alliance, so can we build an international anti-corruption alliance organized around the idea of transparency, accountability, and fairness,” and “We need to provide real long-lasting competition for Russian state-run cable and satellite television that most of the people in these regions ultimately follow.”

That is what I was trying to drive with our previous panel. Could you elaborate on some of those things? How would we go about, in your mind, doing that?

Ms. APPLEBAUM. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, for those comments.

Let me say two things. One is that, in this new atmosphere we need to rethink how we communicate.

This is a real emergency, and much as we assembled the Department of Homeland Security out of disparate agencies after 9/11, I think we now need a much more carefully targeted effort that will pull together some of the disparate parts of the U.S. Government that think about public diplomacy, but do not necessarily act together.

We have the very talented, but underfunded Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, and the others. They are now at this U.S. Agency for Global Media. We have the Global Engagement Center currently at the State Department, the Open Source Center, which is a large media monitoring and translation service, which is now in the intelligence community where its work is hard to access. It would help a lot to put these together.

I do not mean a major departmental reorganization, but if they are thinking together, if they are acting together, if they—using the same research, I think they will be more effective.

One of the things that we have learned about disinformation in the last several years is that fact checking and counter disinformation are never as good as offering an alternate narrative—a better story.

Reaching Russians with a Russian-language television station run by Russians—among them the hundreds if not thousands of Russians who have just escaped Moscow would be a good start.

The second part of the answer requires an understanding that kleptocracy is not something that happens on Caribbean islands, far away. It happens here in American states, in South Dakota, in Delaware. Changing our own rules will help push back against it. For example, there is no reason why Americans need to own companies anonymously or own property anonymously or why anybody else should be able to do that in America either.

I know these are not normally questions for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, but international financial markets are now part of foreign policy in a way that they did not used to be.

I hope that we will consider making changes at home and getting our allies to do the same. It is much better not just to sanction people, but to prevent them from getting wealthy illegally in the first place.

The CHAIRMAN. Finally, both to you and Mr. Twining, it seems to me that we dramatically underfund these initiatives when, in fact, they would be as powerful and, in some cases, I believe, more powerful than what we do in the Department of Defense, because



if we succeed at this then we are less likely to find ourselves in the need of conflict.

Is that a fair statement and if not, why not?

Dr. TWINING. Mr. Chairman, could I just point out that the Chinese and the Russians both spend an inordinate amount of money to subvert and weaken and attack democracy all over the world, that it is central to their grand strategy as authoritarian great powers.

So we should take the fact that they care about this dead seriously in our own country. I would not suggest taking it out of the defense budget, but I would suggest, for instance, that the reason that Ukrainians are fighting so valiantly is because they have a real democracy to defend, that they are fighting for their freedom.

They are not fighting for a leader, and that investing in democratic resilience is a sure source of security. It also helps produce great allies for the United States.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes. I was not suggesting taking it out of the Defense Department. What I was saying is that it is as powerful as some of what we do in the Defense Department and, in my mind, more preventative that we do not end up sending America's sons and daughters abroad.

Senator Risch.

Senator RISCH. Thank you very much.

Ms. Applebaum, I think that those remarks you made and reminding us all that autocracy is not one person, that it is a person sitting on top of a pyramid of people who are just as bad as the autocrat themselves and, in some respects, even worse, and I think that is appropriate that we think about it like that, and I think it is appropriate that we act towards that, the whole system and not just one individual. So I appreciate that.

I was—really enjoyed hearing your comments about thinking bigger when it comes to promoting democracy. Here is the problem I have with it, and maybe you can give us some suggestions how we get past this.

I want to talk about Voice of America. Voice of America puts out some good stuff. I have done some stuff for them, and I imagine everybody on this committee has probably done some things for them.

Some of the other stuff I have heard them put out is just stunningly an attack on America itself, and I have heard programs where they use some of the difficulties we have—and we have difficulties in America, whether you are talking about race relations, whether you are talking about income equity and those kinds of things that people do not like—but I have heard some of those things Voice of America puts out, and I have complained about it and I am told to mind my own business, that they have editorial freedom and they can put out whatever they want to put out, which, I guess, is true.

My gosh, the stuff I heard, I would not want—I was dismayed that U.S. taxpayer money was using this to put—if I were somebody sitting somewhere and listening to this say, boy, that is an awful place, this America place. We have, certainly, got things better here under an autocracy than they have under a democracy.

So what are your thoughts on that? I mean, I really like the idea about having TV in addition to radio. We have all been around the world and turned on the TV and when you turn on—in any major African city you turn on the TV and you will find a Chinese program that is done in Chinese and with translations for the people to watch.

I am intrigued by that. Because of our freedoms and because of the disdain some Americans have for their own country because of some detail that they do not particularly like, how do you get around that? Have you had some thoughts on that?

Ms. APPLEBAUM. Thank you so much for that question, Senator. I think we could ask it about almost any journalism—who controls it, how it should be, how it should be shaped.

I do think that the one difference between an American funding program for journalism and, say, a Russian state funding program is precisely the fact that it is not controlled by this body or any other.

It is precisely because it is not controlled directly by the U.S. Government that it has some credibility, even though you might not like everything that it says or I might not like everything that it says.

Its credibility comes from the sense of independence it has, and the more independence that it is given the better an advertisement for our political system and for our media it will be.

That does not mean that every journalist is perfect and every report is ideal. I think the aim with U.S. broadcasting should always be to show at least a range of ideas.

Senator RISCH. Yes. I think that is a legitimate argument, and you make that well.

I am telling you, the stuff I heard was just poisonous. I mean, it was not—it was stuff that I was embarrassed and ashamed that we were using taxpayers' money to tell the rest of the world about what an awful place America was.

I appreciate that independence—editorial independence is important. Boy, I will tell you, we were sure going in the wrong direction, and I think we are doing more damage than we were good by putting that out.

Anyway, I think that is a problem, but I agree with you. I mean, our adversaries are spending a tremendous amount of money on these, as we all see when we turn on the TV, whether you are in Europe or in Africa or anywhere else.

Thanks for those thoughts.

Mr. Twining, do you have any thoughts in that regard?

Dr. TWINING. Sir, just that our way of life is very attractive and compelling, and I think we have spent a few years convincing ourselves that it is not. It is very compelling to people all over the world.

The leaders of Russia and China have put their people in big propaganda bubbles and they want to convince them that somehow we are decadent, we are internally divided, America is violent—all of these caricatures.

So anything we can do to help just tell the truth about the great country that we live in. We should not forget that people around

the world, including across Russia and China, actually would love to live in the United States if they could.

So information should be working for us, not for our competitors, and I really appreciate the focus of this hearing because we have a lot of work to do to get the real story in, not just about ourselves, but including about the corruption and just extraordinary totalitarian abuses that are happening in Russia and China.

Senator RISC. That is a good thought, and I think if you could get enough of that in people's hands, they would have a clear understanding of what a wonderful country this is.

I was in China right after China opened up, and there were actually a group of people watching a U.S. TV station off a satellite, and I said to the guide—I said, what is going on here, and he said, oh, they love American TV, blah, blah, blah.

I said, I cannot help, but think that somebody over there is going to have a problem with this because they were watching American TV with advertising. They were advertising Cadillacs and Coca Cola and new homes and everything else.

I said, what do people think about that? He says, oh, the government tells them that is all—that is all American propaganda. That is not really the way it is over here.

I suspect the more of that that got out, probably the better off we would be.

My time is up. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator KAINE.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the witnesses.

Ms. Applebaum, I want to start with your testimony. You talked about a couple of things we should do and one of the things you talked about was public diplomacy, education, cultural—having that be strong.

Since I am not shy about criticizing Republican colleagues for slowing down the confirmation of Biden nominees, here is one where I got to ask the Biden administration what is up.

The Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs—I do not believe the Administration has sent us a nominee. This is a position that is a top 10 position at the State Department. It has been a position since 1999 and, yet, in the entire history of this position it has only had a confirmed Under Secretary about 35 percent of the time.

It was about 37 percent of the time during President Bush's 8 years. It was vacant 37 percent of the time during the Bush administration. It was vacant 20 percent of the time during the Obama administration. It was vacant 90 percent of the time during the Trump administration.

This is a top 10 position in the State Department, and if we are going to try to compete in this information and public diplomacy we have got to have people in place.

What kind of a message does it send when the U.S. has a position like this and just decides, both either an Administration or Congress, not to bother to confirm anyone?

Ms. APPLEBAUM. Senator, thank you so much for that question. I was reading some of that research myself a couple of days ago.

I think the truth is that we have underestimated the role and the need for public diplomacy and I think it is a bipartisan problem. It has somehow been a less prestigious part of our foreign policy, and this is why I am suggesting pulling together some of the public diplomacy functions that exist, actually, spread across the U.S. Government.

You would be best positioned to decide whether these functions should be their own agency or part of some other department. What matters is that we focus them, bring them together, have them jointly discuss what are the values that we are trying to get across, how are we going to do it, what do we understand about foreign audiences, have we really looked at who is on the Russian internet, have we thought about how to reach the people who use it.

Of course, we can reach Russian liberals, and we might not be able to reach Russian Putinists, but there are a lot of people in the middle and there might be ways of reaching them that we have not thought about yet.

Doing some of that research, having some of that knowledge, and then having it spread through different parts of the government, with different people working on this problem from different angles, I think, could be incredibly valuable.

Senator KAINE. Dr. Twining, I want to direct a different question to you. You could say something about this in answering if you want.

I really appreciate your answer, Ms. Applebaum, and I would just encourage the Administration. We are 14 months into the Administration. Send us a good nominee for this position. The acting is doing a good job. I do not have a dog in the hunt in terms of who should be the nominee. Why have it be a position that is downgraded by not sending us someone to confirm?

The Summit for Democracy that happened in December, I want to ask each of you, and maybe beginning with Dr. Twining, about the prospects for this.

I think it was sort of—because it was virtual, it probably was not all it could be. It was a first step. I will say the Administration did zero outreach to the senators.

I surveyed my Senate colleagues to see if anybody reaching out and saying, hey, Senators, what should we emphasize? What priorities should we put? The answer that I got back, at least from my Democratic colleagues, was no.

I do think there is an opportunity to involve the Article 1 branch in matters like this and give it a higher level of importance.

What might you hope—since there is going to be, hopefully, an in-person summit at the end of this calendar year, what might you each hope we could accomplish through that venue?

Dr. TWINING. Thanks, Senator, and thanks for your leadership on the NED Board. We really appreciate it.

My brief answer would be we need to focus on what unites us, not what divides us, as free and open societies. The Biden administration asked countries to each make a set of domestic commitments on democratic reform and renewal. That is all well and good.

At the end of the day, we just have a lot more in common with free and open societies and we should understand that our adversaries are out there.

They are not internally in our own societies, that we live in a free and open order that is upheld by the United States and our democratic friends and allies and that this is a group of countries that has the most stake in defending and supporting that order.

That includes taking on these very difficult issues we have been discussing around digital authoritarianism, around all sorts of difficulties for democracy.

Fundamentally, the authoritarians have had momentum for the past decade or so, and it is bizarre because there has never been higher levels of political participation.

There is this enormous bottom-up energy in the world. Before COVID in 2019 there were more street protests than any time since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

There is this enormous energy that is welling up, yet there is this top-down clamp down, and we need to join, essentially, the street and those small democratic actors creating that democratic momentum.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Romney.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would just like to note that I deeply respect both of the panelists today. I had the occasion to work with Daniel Twining at IRI and have watched him over the years, an extraordinary leader of that organization and an extraordinary mind.

Anne Applebaum, I have enjoyed reading her books and her articles at Atlantic. Her book “Twilight of Democracy” is one which has, obviously, captivated many of us that follow the great battle that is going on between authoritarianism and freedom.

I would note, Senator Kaine, as you know, I spent most of my career in the private sector, and I look at how the Federal Government is organized and managed and I see nothing like it in any corporation anywhere in the world.

Any entity that was trying to accomplish a significant purpose would be organized very differently than our government. We have agency after agency, department after department. Who is the chief operating officer? Who are the group vice presidents?

We are not organized to take on something as important as communicating who we are and communicating the power of freedom, and we have, as Ms. Applebaum has pointed out, people throughout government doing a little bit of communication, but we have not put that together.

Even the Russians have a department of propaganda, as I understand it. Why we do not have a single entity responsible for communicating our message throughout the world I do not quite know.

Ms. Applebaum, you have spoken about the need to get public information to the people in Russia, for instance. Is there a way of doing that? Maybe you do not know the answer to that.

I wonder even today how much are they hearing about what is really happening in Ukraine? The idea that we still have something called Voice of America and Radio Free Europe I sort of—I scratch my head.

Does anyone listen to the radio anymore? I mean, do we not communicate in the methods that the Russians, for instance, are using and more effectively and what are they hearing?

Ms. APPLEBAUM. Senator Romney, thank you so much for those comments and for that question. I am not going to pretend that Russians are still getting the same amount of information that they got even 3 weeks ago.

The Russian internet is being shut down. Facebook and Twitter are both gone. Instagram is gone. The digital space inside Russia is closing.

I think that this means that we need to shift from an era of bull-horn digital broadcasting, where we just put stuff out, to a new era of digital samizdat.

That means mobilizing informed citizens, contacting people either in the diaspora or inside the country who we know are able to pass messages on, or who are influencers or who can pass on information, and target them.

We need more careful targeting of who our information goes to and, as I said in one of my previous answers, put much more careful thought into who are the audiences, what are the audiences hearing, what media are they actually getting, and how can we get our point of view into it.

I do not think that we know the answer right now because I do not think we have thought that way in a long time. I do think the answers are knowable and it could be done.

Senator ROMNEY. Daniel, do you have a sense of what Russians are hearing today? You have colleagues that are working in Russia. Are they giving you a sense of what the Russian people are hearing?

I saw a brave employee or broadcaster who actually jumped into a live broadcast with a sign saying, there is a war we are committing in Ukraine—we need to protest, but this is, obviously, the exception. How much is getting through?

Dr. TWINING. Thanks, Senator. Thanks for all your support for IRI and the cause.

Not enough is getting through. Most Russians, it sounds like anecdotally, support Putin's war because they believe Kremlin propaganda that Ukraine conducted aggression against Russia and NATO conducted aggression against Russia.

We have a fundamental problem. Russians also do not see—the Kremlin has been very sharp in censoring images of the battlefield, of wounded Russian—captured Russian soldiers, that sort of thing.

In addition to telling America's story in a country like Russia, really, we should be doing a better job of getting information into Russia showing what Russians are doing to their Slavic brothers in Ukraine, using Chechen—terrorists is probably the best word to call that—literally, recruiting foreign fighters from Syria and countries in the Middle East to go and kill Ukrainians. Russians do not know that these things are going on.

We just have so much work to do, and I think if Russians understood the truth they would see very clearly that this war is a big mistake.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you both.

One last question. We have talked about the authoritarianism. We have talked about the need for a more comprehensive and cohesive strategy.

We also see countries, democracies, being harmed from corrosive forces within, unscrupulous leaders who use the democratic process to rise to power and then seek to, basically, subvert it, at the end of the day, in order to stay in power and I think of places like Brazil and Hungary as examples of that.

What can we do or should we do as it relates to working against the hollowing out of democracies?

Ms. APPLEBAUM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is an excellent question.

In fact, most democracies nowadays fail not because of a coup d'état or some young colonel who breaks into the presidential palace, but precisely because somebody who has won power by democratic means then seeks to undermine the institutions.

I think the United States can make a big difference in fighting this phenomenon which, as you say, is now visible all over the world, firstly, by talking about it and speaking about it and making it a central part of our diplomacy. Also, if we can, by living it ourselves, making sure that we talk about our own democratic institutions and making sure that they are strong.

People do watch what we do. The United States is an example around the world. Making it clear to our foreign partners that we care about this, that it matters to us, that we have—we are not just interested in trade, we are not just interested in questions of hard power, but that these aspects of life also make a difference to us and then become part of our diplomacy.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Twining.

Dr. TWINING. It is a great question, Chairman.

Part of—

The CHAIRMAN. We only ask great questions here.

[Laughter.]

Dr. TWINING. I mean, part of, I think, the critique is that with respect to some of our allies that you mentioned is that the degradation of democracy in those countries has become a vector for malign foreign authoritarian influence.

In other words, the degradation of democracy in allied countries actually undermines the core security component of our alliances with those countries.

We need to, as Anne suggests, make democracy more central to our approach to alliances, but we also really have to invest in countervailing institutions.

Most what we have seen over the past decade play out in many countries, including allied countries, is leaders take over in free and fair elections and then systematically dismantle countervailing institutions: parliaments that could check and balance their power, free and open media, independent courts, civil society.

So investing in those countervailing institutions. I mean, frankly, I am not saying this because we are sitting in the U.S. Senate.

I do not think there is a whole lot more effective in checking executive power than a very strong parliament that can conduct effective oversight. We do a lot of that work around the world.

Young people—particularly, young people—are often disenchanted with, “democracy” not because they want an authoritarian solution, but because they see elections produce leaders who then do this systematic hollowing out and then engage in corruption, use public funds for their private ends, et cetera.

Some of these activities, frankly, have given democracy a bad name, but we look at Afrobarometer polling, for instance, in Africa—and I will close with this.

There is stronger support among people in Africa for democracy and open government than ever. It is just that they are not getting supplied with that open and effective government. The demand is stronger than ever and we should meet it.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you both for some incisive testimony. This is one of my passions and I intend to use your testimony as a foundation for a legislative initiative in this regard, and we look forward to being able to call upon both of you in the future if you are so willing.

With the thanks of the committee for your participation, the record will remain open until the close of business tomorrow. This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:49 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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#### ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF MS. UZRA ZEYA TO QUESTIONS  
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT MENEDEZ

*Question.* Authoritarian regimes are responsible for countless refugee and forced migration crises across the globe, including Ukraine. President Lukashenko of Belarus sought to weaponize the misery of tens of thousands of migrants along its border with Poland. Millions of Venezuelans suffering under the Maduro regime have fled, and thousands of Nicaraguans have been forcibly displaced since demonstrations were brutally suppressed. Under Secretary Zeya, rather than attempting to deter refugees and migrants with harsh border infrastructures and asylum systems, how should democratic host countries create refugee and asylum policies that reflect their shared interest in the struggle for freedom?

*Answer.* The Biden-Harris administration is committed to working with host governments and other partners to support solutions for those forcibly displaced from their homes. In the Western Hemisphere, the Collaborative Migration Management Strategy (CMMS) emphasizes the importance of working closely with international organizations that provide support for refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and returned migrants, providing assistance to address the humanitarian needs of these populations, expanding access to protection, increasing opportunities for refugees to integrate in the region, increasing shelters and other safe space networks, meeting needs for water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), and expanding U.S. resettlement of refugees from the region.

Around the world, we encourage governments to adhere to international protection obligations for the more than 84 million forcibly displaced persons across the globe, including those affected by conflicts and crises generated by authoritarian regimes in Europe, the Americas, and beyond. Through humanitarian assistance and diplomacy, the Department is working with host countries to support their capacity to protect and assist refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs, and stateless persons, and advocate for their access to identity documentation, legal employment, and inclusion in national health and education services, easing pressure on local host communities and enhancing self-reliance opportunities for those forcibly displaced. Such efforts include the push for regional progress on regularization for Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Ecuador and Peru, as well as strong support for Colombia’s 10-year temporary protected status for Venezuelans, a model for the region and beyond. This also includes the humanitarian assistance we are providing in response to the historic humanitarian crisis for those fleeing the conflict in Ukraine. We also con-



tinue to actively engage multilaterally and through regional fora to promote safe, orderly, and humane international migration policies.

*Question.* As the world's largest democracy, India has a special role and responsibility in exemplifying good governance and upholding democratic principles. But India's recent track record—both at home and abroad—has been mixed. The current government is clamping down on domestic press and media freedoms, discriminating against religious minorities, and suppressing opposition voices. Internationally, India has yet to take a clear stand against Russia's unprovoked and illegal invasion of Ukraine, a fellow democracy. Under Secretary Zeya, what is the Department doing to ensure India remains committed to its constitutional principles of secularism and equality?

*Answer.* The Department is committed to supporting democratic principles in our engagements with India, including an open, inclusive, empowered, and fully functioning civil society and respect for human rights, including the freedoms of religion or belief, expression, peaceful assembly, and association.

The United States and India share many of the same characteristics that demonstrate the strength of our democracies. We appreciated Prime Minister Modi's participation in the Summit for Democracy and hope to coordinate with India on meaningful progress during the "Year of Action" ahead of the next Summit.

As fellow democracies, it is important for the United States and India to speak frankly about the importance of upholding democratic principles. The Department at the most senior levels has engaged and will continue to engage senior Indian officials on human rights concerns, such as protection of freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief. In addition, the Department will continue to regularly consult Indian and international civil society organizations to learn from their expertise and concerns related to these issues. We look to further deepen these engagements once a U.S. Ambassador to India is confirmed.

*Question.* And how is the Department communicating to our friends in New Delhi that becoming a closer ally of the United States requires addressing our concerns over democratic backsliding rather than simply ignoring them?

*Answer.* The U.S.-India Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership is multifaceted and multidimensional; our shared democratic principles must underscore this partnership. Senior Department officials, including me, regularly engage senior Indian officials on human rights concerns, such as protection of freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief. In addition, the Department will continue to regularly consult Indian and international civil society organizations to learn from their expertise related to these issues and to hear their concerns.

*Question.* In Latin America and the Caribbean, Chinese and Russian technologies are enabling the region's dictators to increasingly control internet access, traffic in misinformation and disinformation, and monitor citizens. In Venezuela, the regime uses the information collected from its national identity system, which uses Chinese technology, to inform decisions on censorship, internet shutdowns, and arrests. Cuba's internet infrastructure was also built with equipment acquired from Chinese companies. Following the July 2021 protests in Cuba, the regime shut down the internet in an attempt to disrupt the unprecedented countrywide protests. In El Salvador, President Bukele uses disinformation to paper over his dismantling of democratic governance. Under Secretary Zeya, how can we use new technologies to counteract rising authoritarianism in Latin America?

*Answer.* The PRC and Russia have spent years working to undermine the U.S. vision of an Internet that is open, interoperable, secure, and reliable, as well as governed through a multistakeholder approach. While doing so, they have provided support to authoritarian regimes in Latin America to facilitate their repressive practices. Stemming the misuse of technologies by governments, including in Latin America, is a priority for the Department.

Making digital technologies work for, not against, democracies and combating digital authoritarianism is a key priority for the Biden administration. For example, one U.S. Government commitment during the Summit for Democracy was launching the International Grand Challenges on Democracy-Affirming Technologies to galvanize innovation in technologies that support democratic values asymmetrically, such as privacy-enhancing technologies and tools to combat government-imposed Internet shutdowns with peer-to-peer technology. The Department also launched the U.S. Anticorruption Solutions through Emerging Technology (ASET) program to accelerate technological solutions to counter corruption worldwide. Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence are also critical tools to promote human rights—for example, by combatting human trafficking; analyzing data to flag patterns of discrimi-

nation or abuse; and helping human rights defenders comb through photos, videos, or text to hold governments accountable.

For over a decade, the Department has funded programs to advance Internet freedom globally, especially in Internet-repressive environments. These include the development, deployment, and localization of anti-censorship circumvention and secure communications tools and technologies, as well as digital security capacity building and emergency response to support members of civil society, independent media, and human rights defenders to securely and reliably access the global Internet in contexts where governments restrict human rights online.

*Question.* The atrocities perpetrated against the Uyghur population by the Chinese Government in Xinjiang are well documented. Especially troubling is the support of this ongoing genocide through genetic surveillance by the Chinese Government and Chinese companies. Under Secretary Zeya, what is the State Department doing to address this threat and what additional resources or tools does the Department need in this area?

*Answer.* The United States is deeply concerned by the People's Republic of China's use of technology to surveil, control, and repress predominantly Muslim Uyghurs and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups, as well as, but not limited to, those who are activists, at home and abroad.

We are strengthening our whole-of-government effort to respond. We continue to work closely with the Commerce Department to add entities to their Entity List, when appropriate, if an entity is connected to human rights abuses. We continue to promote accountability for those involved in such conduct using available visa restriction and sanctions authorities, in coordination with allies and partners. The Department is encouraging businesses and individuals exporting technology, products, and services with surveillance capabilities, including those pertaining to genetic collection and analysis, to undertake due diligence, in line with guidance we have publicly issued, to prevent the misuse of their technology, products, and services to commit human rights abuses. We are also working with our allies and partners to develop common principles on the responsible use of surveillance technologies globally and a code of conduct for ensuring human rights concerns factor into export licensing decisions on such technologies.

*Question.* Under Secretary Zeya, what approach should the United States take when dealing with entrenched authoritarian leaders like Mr. Kagame and Mr. Museveni who do not respect democratic norms? Doesn't our continued support for Kagame and Museveni in particular undermine our efforts to promote democracy, human rights, and good governance in Africa and around the world?

*Answer.* The Department counters authoritarianism through bilateral and multilateral engagement, foreign assistance, and restrictive measures such as sanctions and visa restrictions, among others. In Rwanda and Uganda, the Department has utilized a variety of tools to promote accountability for human rights abuses and violations and to support democracy, including by denying officials who have committed such abuses or undermined democratic processes entry to the United States and designating individuals responsible for serious human rights abuses and corruption under the Global Magnitsky sanctions program. Our support for the people of Rwanda and Uganda, whether it is through democratic institution-building, public health partnerships, or economic growth programming, does not equate to U.S. Government support or approval of undemocratic policies and actions taken by the governments of Rwanda and Uganda.

We continue to engage officials in both countries at all levels of government on the need to expand space for civil society and political pluralism, promote respect for human rights, and allow free and fair elections. For example, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lisa Peterson traveled to Uganda in March 2022 to emphasize the Department's concern with Uganda's faltering democratic trajectory, including our serious concerns about continuing reports of torture, enforced disappearances, and other human rights violations.

*Question.* In the last 18 months there were 6 coups in Africa, prompting alarm among policy makers, and for good reason. At the same time, there are countries that are quietly moving in the right direction and merit additional support and assistance. Under Secretary Zeya, what does the U.S. provide to countries as a democracy dividend when they do show progress or begin transitions? What are we doing to support newly-elected governments in Niger, Mauritania, and Zambia, for example, where there was no guarantee that the last elections in these countries would result in the incumbent stepping down?

*Answer.* The Biden-Harris administration is focused both on preventing further backsliding in countries at greatest risk of coups and expanding our support to those

African nations that are demonstrating their commitment to democracy. The Summit for Democracy, which included participation of 16 African countries (including Niger and Zambia), provides a new platform for the United States to showcase partners' democratic progress.

In Niger, an increase in high-level visits further showcases our diplomatic support for its historic democratic transition. In Mauritania, we actively engage the Mauritanian Government on economic and security issues of mutual interest while pressing the government to act on human rights abuses in the country. As a sign of our deepening partnership with the Government of Mauritania, Mauritania hosted 2020 Flintlock, U.S. AFRICOM's largest annual special operations exercise. In Zambia we are supporting President Hakainde Hichilema's ambitious efforts to restructure Zambia's debt and protect independent voices in the media and opposition.

*Question.* Under Secretary Zeya, how can the U.S. help protect and strengthen the ability of Tunisian civil society to advocate for the promotion of democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms within Tunisia?

Answer. I traveled to Tunisia this month to underscore the importance of strengthening democracy in Tunisia and implementing an inclusive political and economic reform process, in coordination with civil society, political parties, and unions. Over the course of my visit, I met with representatives of Tunisia's vibrant civil society, including human rights defenders, anti-corruption activists, and journalists. In our public messaging and private diplomacy, we consistently emphasize that an independent and strong civil society is integral to an effective democracy, helping promote accountability, human rights, and fundamental freedoms, and the Government of Tunisia should view civil society as an essential partner in reform. We are coordinating with other like-minded democracies to support Tunisian civil society and reiterate the need for the Government of Tunisia to respect human rights, including freedom of expression and association. U.S. assistance aims to strengthen democratic institutions by helping civil society advocate for government transparency and accountability. U.S. support to civil society has been and will continue to be a critical component of our assistance to Tunisia.

*Question.* Under Secretary Zeya, how can U.S. actions and messaging, in coordination with our allies and partners, help to keep the space open within Tunisia for freedom of assembly and public debate?

Answer. To date, the United States has coordinated effectively with allies and partners, in particular members of the Group of Seven (G7), to work to keep space open in Tunisia for public debate, freedom of assembly, and peaceful protests. Since July 25, 2021, when President Saied invoked article 80 of the constitution to dismiss the government and freeze parliament, the United States and its G7 partners have, among other diplomatic engagements, issued four public statements calling for the restoration of democracy and supporting the Tunisian people's aspirations for a more responsive government that protects human rights. In coordination with our allies, we will continue to emphasize to the Tunisian Government that freedom of expression and assembly are critical to a strong democracy, and that civil society is an essential partner in reform.

*Question.* Under Secretary Zeya, what steps must the Tunisian Government take to ensure a fair and inclusive process for these elections? How will you work with NEA and MCC to make clear to the Tunisians that these steps must be met in order to proceed with the compact ratification process?

Answer. During my recent trip to Tunisia, I consistently underscored to the government the importance of strengthening democracy and implementing an inclusive political reform process, in coordination with political parties, unions, and civil society. We continue to emphasize that the government must protect human rights, including freedom of expression, throughout the reform process and elections. A commitment to democratic governance is an eligibility requirement for Millennium Challenge Corporation compact countries. MCC has paused signature of the proposed \$498.7 million MCC compact with Tunisia until significant progress is made toward democratic governance. Compact signature is distinct from compact ratification; it is only upon ratification, which must be completed by an elected Tunisian parliament, that the vast majority of compact funds would be released.

RESPONSES OF MS. JENNIFER GODFREY TO QUESTIONS  
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Question.* Ms. Hall-Godfrey, can you explain how the State Department uses the GEC to counter malign actions of authoritarian regimes within the global information space? To the extent that you can discuss the details, what sort of programs is the GEC currently conducting in foreign countries? How do these programs work with host governments, civil society and other groups to build a country's ability to fight disinformation?

*Answer.* The GEC works to counter foreign disinformation and propaganda through a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach. The GEC sponsors programs globally to counter disinformation and propaganda by building resilience, promoting free media, and exposing malign actors. As examples, the GEC worked with European partners on its Media Literacy Accelerator program and the Resiliency Support Project to train members of the community to actively counter Russian disinformation and propaganda, including on such activities as helping governments prevent and address disinformation during national elections. The GEC focuses on building coalitions of like-minded partners from government and civil society to protect our shared values, including in international bodies such as the G7. The GEC continues to expand its network of international partnerships to deter and counter Russia's and China's malign influence operations, propaganda, and disinformation. Our programmatic work identifies and exposes foreign-origin malign influence tactics and techniques, and punctures false narratives with credible third-party research. The GEC posts Counter-Disinformation Dispatches on the Department of State's website that educate the public on disinformation and how to counter it. We also support third-party efforts to expose and counter propaganda and disinformation in information environments abroad. GEC's work with its partner on the Xinjiang Data Project created the largest-ever open-source data on the cultural destruction and internment of Uyghurs to deflate Beijing's efforts to cover up these atrocities.

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RESPONSES OF MS. UZRA ZEYA AND MS. JENNIFER GODFREY TO QUESTIONS  
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Question.* Ms. Hall-Godfrey, I know that the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) also supports internet and media freedom programs and activities. Where does GEC's mandate end, and DRL's begin? What is the nature and extent of GEC's coordination with other U.S. Government agencies and bureaus?

*Answer.* As the U.S. Government works to support a trustworthy information environment, counter the disinformation and other activities of those who seek to undermine that environment, and advance our priorities through principled engagement with foreign publics, the GEC and other Department bureaus and offices coordinate daily to complement each other's work.

The GEC's programs and lines of effort support its congressional mandate to counter foreign state and non-state propaganda and disinformation. Many GEC programs, alongside the overall public diplomacy toolkit, reinforce core values that DRL's programs promote and build capacity on, while leveraging the GEC's expertise and focus on countering disinformation: how to recognize it, and how to build resilience to it. The GEC works closely with DRL daily to coordinate, identify gaps, and avoid duplication in our programs and activities.

The GEC coordinates within the Department of State through regular synchronization meetings with regional bureaus and ongoing collaboration with DRL and many other bureaus. The GEC coordinates across the interagency through frequent interactions with other Departments and Agencies such as DHS—including the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency—Justice, Defense, FBI, and the intelligence community. In addition, liaison officers from and to the GEC ensure a constant two-way exchange of information between the GEC and the interagency community.

*Question. China and Russia:* China has sought to bolster its image abroad and suppress overseas criticism while leveraging its economic power as a coercive tool. Russia has actively stoked political divisions within target countries and attempted to influence political outcomes, including by engaging in cyber-based election interference efforts in 38 elections and referendums in 26 states over the past decade.

How is the Administration coordinating across agencies—including State, Treasury, and USAID—to counter these threats?

Answer. The Administration is working on a whole-of-government basis—together with an integrated public-private coalition—to ensure the security of America’s elections. This Administration has imposed serious sanctions on Russia for prior attempts at election interference, and has been clear that there will be serious consequences should Russia or its proxies attempt to interfere in our electoral processes again. The Department will continue to emphasize that Russia will meet swift costs for attempts to interfere in democratic processes.

The Department of State uses diplomatic engagement and cyber capacity building programs to strengthen our international partnerships, promote rights-respecting cybersecurity best practices, and defend the stability of cyberspace. The United States has specifically targeted outreach and support to partner countries with upcoming elections where the risk of cyber-based election interference is high. Similarly, the GEC has worked with partner countries to prevent and address disinformation during national elections.

The Department of State is coordinating across the U.S. Government to deploy instruments and coordinate actions to mitigate the impact of PRC economic coercion on targeted countries. In Lithuania, for example, which is subject to PRC coercion efforts, Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment Fernandez and his team are working with agencies across the U.S. Government on this effort, including with the U.S. Export-Import Bank, to secure the signing of a memorandum of understanding that provides up to \$600 million in export credits; U.S. Department of Agriculture, to help address Lithuania’s request for import licenses of Lithuanian poultry and dairy; the Federal Aviation Administration, to facilitate Lithuania’s request for direct cargo flights to the United States; the Department of Commerce, to facilitate reverse trade mission and supply chain diversification; and Department of Defense, to address Lithuania’s request to establish a Reciprocal Defense Procurement Agreement. The State Department is also coordinating across the interagency to exchange information and coordinate potential actions to address likely future cases of PRC economic coercion against other partners.

*Question. Latin America & Digital Authoritarianism:* In Latin America and the Caribbean, Chinese and Russian technologies are enabling the region’s dictators to increasingly control internet access, traffic in misinformation and disinformation, and monitor citizens. In Venezuela, the regime uses the information collected from its national identity system, which uses Chinese technology, to inform decisions on censorship, internet shutdowns, and arrests. Cuba’s internet infrastructure was also built with equipment acquired from Chinese companies. Following the July 2021 protests in Cuba, the regime shut down the internet in an attempt to disrupt the unprecedented countrywide protests. In El Salvador, President Bukele uses disinformation to paper over his dismantling of democratic governance.

Ms. Hall-Godfrey, how can we bolster our engagement with the private sector to counteract misinformation and disinformation in Spanish, the internet’s third language?

Answer. The GEC monitors disinformation in Spanish from China, Russia, and other global threat actors. Our posts in the region and the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) also monitor misinformation and disinformation in Spanish. As resources permit, the GEC assists posts and WHA with monitoring and analysis of disinformation.

The GEC engages social media companies to share analyses in those cases when the GEC assesses that disinformation from a global threat actor is occurring on their platforms. Posts and WHA also engage traditional and local digital media platforms. Department efforts to identify and expose Spanish language disinformation by RT and Sputnik, for example, have contributed to decisions by private sector media operators to curtail their relationships with Kremlin sources of disinformation.

Additional resources would allow the GEC and WHA to increase monitoring and analysis of Spanish language disinformation, especially by sources of disinformation outside of the GEC’s core monitoring of disinformation from China, Russia, Iran, and violent extremists. Expanded monitoring and analysis would in turn position the GEC and WHA to be able to more frequently and identify and expose such disinformation, and engage the private sector and others on the scale and sources of disinformation in Spanish.

*Question. Xinjiang & Surveillance:* The atrocities perpetrated against the Uyghur population by the Chinese Government in Xinjiang are well documented. Especially troubling is the support of this ongoing genocide through genetic surveillance by the Chinese Government and Chinese companies.

Ms. Hall-Godfrey, how is the Department raising public awareness of these threats, including those posed by BGI and two of its subsidiaries that were recently placed on the Entity List for their role in Xinjiang?

Answer. The Department shares this concern and condemns the genocide, crimes against humanity, and other human rights abuses occurring in Xinjiang. We raise public awareness regarding these atrocities and the PRC's mass surveillance through several means. For example, the Bureau of Global Public Affairs ran a messaging sprint that used traditional and digital media to counter Beijing's undermining of the rules-based international order. The campaign rallied international support for collective action to respond to the PRC's widespread violation of international law, including condemnations for its genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang. During the sprint, the volume of international press articles discussing forced labor in Xinjiang increased by 57 percent compared to the preceding 14-week period, but PRC messengers' share of voice in forced labor coverage dropped from 38 percent to 22 percent.

We also draw international attention to these issues in multilateral forums such as the UN Human Rights Council and UN General Assembly Third Committee, including in joint statements with international partners condemning the PRC's abuses. We also have raised awareness of the PRC's abuses in the business community through a public Business Advisory and engagements with the private sector, including to highlight the risks associated with assisting or investing in the development of genetic and other surveillance tools for the PRC Government in Xinjiang.

The Global Engagement Center has collaborated with the Australian Strategic Policy Institute on the Xinjiang Data Project, a website repository of the largest-ever open-source data on the cultural destruction and internment of Uyghurs which uses empirical and satellite data, survivor interviews, and PRC Government documents. These public reports and online tools raise awareness among global decision makers and the public. Among other impacts, the website was cited in a European Parliament resolution on Xinjiang and in a draft customs amendment before the Australian Parliament.

By facilitating public engagement with academic and research communities, we have increased awareness of the means through which PRC-backed entities gain access to technology and data, which are used to further the PRC's strategic goals. We link interagency experts with key policy makers to share practical solutions regarding managing the potential for surveillance, manipulation, extortion, and the impact these practices have on strategic sectors. In many cases, we also educate public audiences about PRC atrocity crimes and human rights abuses in Xinjiang, often by bringing in Chinese speakers and other third-party speakers who speak with the most credibility on this topic.

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RESPONSES OF MS. UZRA ZEYA TO QUESTIONS  
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Question.* Please compare and contrast State Department's versus USAID's democracy assistance efforts. What is the extent of coordination of these efforts?

Answer. Most of USAID's democracy assistance efforts focus on longer-term, field-managed programs working through deep networks and systems that prioritize capacity development for local actors and contribute to sustainable development, including through democracy, human rights, and governance integration in other sectoral programs. USAID's DRG Center also has over \$40 million in annual funding available to respond to urgent emerging and unanticipated issues.

The State Department's democracy programs are aligned to support specific foreign policy goals. As the lead for democracy and human rights programming in the Department, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) uses centrally managed funds to retain the flexibility needed to respond quickly to emerging opportunities and challenges. Over 85 percent of DRL's programs operate in restrictive or conflict-ridden environments.

The Department coordinates with USAID on democracy programming in Washington and in the field. For example, in the budget planning process, DRL and USAID conduct briefings together to help set priorities for the coming year. At a programmatic level, DRL seeks USAID clearance of solicitations and invites USAID to participate in proposal panels. When DRL conducts in-country program monitoring, DRL consults with USAID Missions whenever appropriate. DRL and USAID also coordinate on country-specific democracy assistance efforts and on shared thematic concerns, such as combatting corruption, Internet freedom, and global labor programming.

*Question.* What steps have been taken to improve this coordination as well as coordination with other foreign donors?

*Answer.* The Department and USAID have been in touch at various levels to improve coordination between our agencies. For example, we are conducting regular, high-level and working-level engagement to coordinate programmatic approaches, align deliverables, and sustain programming for the U.S. Summit for Democracy's Presidential Initiative for Democratic Renewal (PIDR), in order to support the objectives of the Summit most effectively.

The Department and USAID are also continually looking for ways to enhance coordination with other donors. USAID and the Department have increased outreach to foreign donors, especially in relation to country commitments that were made at the Summit for Democracy and to support the PIDR deliverables. For example, DRL is working through U.S. embassies to increase the contributions of foreign counterparts to the multi-donor Global Anti-Corruption Consortium, as well as other DRL public-private partnerships such as Lifeline and the Global Equality Fund. USAID has provided start-up funding to the International Fund for Public Interest Media as a means to garner greater global donor assistance for media financial sustainability and is collaborating with a range of donors on initiatives such as Powered by the People seed funding and the Election Integrity Fund.

*Question.* How has the U.S. Government engaged to ensure that the UN High Commissioner Bachelet releases her overdue report on human rights abuses in Xinjiang?

*Answer.* We continue to press the High Commissioner both publicly and privately to release her report on the dire human rights situation in Xinjiang. For example, Secretary Blinken urged the High Commissioner to release the report without delay during his March 1 address to the UN Human Rights Council.

*Question.* If UN High Commissioner Bachelet does not release her overdue report on human rights abuses in Xinjiang soon, how do you plan to put pressure on her to release it?

*Answer.* The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has a mandate to respond to serious violations of human rights, including what the United States has determined constitute genocide and crimes against humanity occurring in Xinjiang. High Commissioner Bachelet has a responsibility to fulfill her mandate and release the overdue report without further delay. If she does not release it soon, we will increase our calls, both public and private, for her to do so, in coordination with our allies and partners. We will continue raising this issue so long as the report is not released.

*Question.* China has become much bolder in using its foreign embassies and media to silence critics of the Party and promote its own agenda. What can we do to better combat Chinese transnational aggression, and protect those targeted by Chinese Government bullying tactics?

*Answer.* The United States rejects efforts by People's Republic of China (PRC) officials to harass, intimidate, surveil, abduct, or forcibly return individuals abroad, including those who have sought safety outside of the PRC as well as U.S. citizens who speak out on behalf of these populations. We seek to address this challenge in a range of ways. For example, the Department of State has imposed visa restrictions on current and former Chinese Communist Party and PRC officials who are believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, policies or actions aimed at repressing religious and spiritual practitioners, members of ethnic and religious minority groups, dissidents, human rights defenders, journalists, labor organizers, civil society organizers, and peaceful protesters both inside and outside China. The Department of Justice has also charged individuals with crimes related to efforts by the PRC Government to stalk, harass, and spy on PRC nationals residing in the United States. Additionally, we press third countries to uphold their international obligations, respect the principle of non-refoulement, and not forcibly return, under pressure from the PRC Government, individuals who have fled due to fear of persecution or torture.

*Question.* How can we ensure our universities are not vulnerable to Chinese malign political influence?

*Answer.* The open and collaborative ecosystem in U.S. universities is one of our greatest advantages, attracting the world's best minds and driving U.S. innovation. The American people deserve a clear understanding of the organizations and entities Beijing uses to attempt to influence U.S. society—including on U.S. university campuses. Since 2020, the Department has provided more regular, updated guidance to colleges and universities sponsoring Confucius Institutes which continue to

have visa regulatory concerns and lack of transparency regarding the activities of their teachers and staff. Over the past 2 years, the number of U.S. universities and colleges which support Confucius Institutes has declined from 55 to 9.

The Department of State supports the Biden-Harris administration's efforts to ensure the PRC cannot exploit our university ecosystem to support the People's Liberation Army military modernization and the use of PRC surveillance technology in human rights abuses. As a component of its Military-Civil Fusion strategy, the PRC has instructed PRC universities to establish partnerships with leading foreign universities and research labs to gain access to innovation and to collaborate on research with dual-use, civilian and military applications. The PRC tries to exploit these and other relationships to acquire innovative technologies through licit and illicit means. When the PRC diverts these technologies to military programs, U.S. national security is put in jeopardy, as are the norms that underpin open innovation and collaboration.

*Question.* We understand that the Administration seeks to lift sanctions on the Supreme Leader's office and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a part of JCPOA re-entry. What impact will the lifting of sanctions have on the human rights abuses of the Iranian regime inside of its own borders?

*Answer.* The Administration is committed to promoting respect for human rights in Iran and will continue to call out and stand up to human rights abuses and violations in Iran, whenever they occur. We will continue to consider all appropriate tools to promote accountability for individuals and organizations responsible for human rights abuses. The Department will maintain and, as appropriate, impose new sanctions on those in Iran perpetrating human rights abuses. We will continue to work with our allies, including in international fora, to promote accountability for these Iranian abuses, and we will absolutely continue to work to hold all violators accountable.

*Question.* What impact will the lifting of sanction have on Iran's neighbors?

*Answer.* Negotiations over a mutual return to full implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) are ongoing.

A mutual return to full implementation of the JCPOA is the best available option to constrain Iran's nuclear program and provide a platform to address Iran's other destabilizing conduct. The maximum pressure campaign had virtually no impact on Iran's destabilizing behavior in the region. Instead, it only got worse.

The U.S. Government maintains a range of tools to combat support for terrorism, including terrorist financing, and we will continue to use these to counter Iran's support for terrorism and other destabilizing activities regardless of the outcome in Vienna.

Finally, our means of countering malign Iranian behavior are not limited to sanctions. Working with our allies and partners in the region to counter and disrupt Iranian threats, as well as using tools such as interdictions and export controls, has been effective in countering this behavior, and we will continue to expand our efforts in these areas.

*Question.* Reflective of the pervasive influence of Tehran and its "axis of resistance," the Houthis are known to wield their power through violent tactics, using fear, repression, and intimidation to suppress dissent. Numerous human rights groups, including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and others have documented the Houthis' gradual expansion of autocratic state structures. How do you plan to address the Houthis' systematic and widespread human rights abuses which pose a very real threat to regional stability?

*Answer.* The best way to help ensure that the rights of all Yemenis are respected is through a comprehensive and inclusive peace settlement that includes the meaningful participation of women, civil society, and members of marginalized groups and that addresses their calls for justice, accountability, and redress for human rights abuses and violations. The U.S. Government continues to demand that all parties to the conflict, particularly the Houthis, end human rights abuses, including those involving the recruitment and use of child soldiers; killings; abductions, including on the basis of religion; gender-based violence; torture and other abuses; and interference with the exercise of freedom of expression, including for members of the press. We are committed to supporting all appropriate measures to address these challenges. We have supported language condemning the unlawful use of child soldiers and other abuses in several recent UN Security Council statements on Yemen. We have also listed Yemen under the Child Soldiers Prevention Act and regularly cite Houthi human rights abuses in public messaging to increase pressure on them to stop these activities.



*Question.* How can the U.S. work to prevent any expansion of Houthi influence inside Yemen itself?

*Answer.* The best way to ensure an end to any Houthi military expansion is through a durable peace settlement for Yemen in which the Yemeni people decide their own future. Similarly, the best way to ensure that the rights of all Yemenis are respected is to seek a comprehensive and inclusive peace agreement that includes the meaningful participation of women, civil society, and members of marginalized groups and that incorporates their calls for justice, accountability, and redress for human rights abuses and violations. The United States is leading international efforts in support of the UN to demonstrate to the Houthis that the only sustainable path forward is through dialogue. We will not hesitate to use the tools at our disposal, including sanctions, to pressure the Houthis to cease their military offensives and engage sincerely with the UN Special Envoy for Yemen to resolve the conflict.

*Question.* How does the U.S. intend to draw attention to the Houthis' ongoing human rights abuses?

*Answer.* The Department supports ongoing efforts to document evidence of abuses committed by the Houthis and by all parties to the conflict, and publicly emphasizes to our partners the importance of using such documentation in current and future legal, reconciliation, and transitional justice processes. The Department has highlighted the Houthis' abuses in the annual Human Rights Report for Yemen. The worsening harassment of independent journalists and human rights advocates by the Houthis throughout the country poses a significant obstacle to sustaining reporting and attention on ongoing abuses and to a durable peace. The Department remains committed to supporting Yemeni journalists and advocating for their protection, and we consistently raise human rights violations and abuses in Yemen in public messaging and multilateral fora.

*Question.* Despite the Taliban's efforts to portray a more liberal face, its actions suggest we are headed toward a style of rule similar to that which dominated the 1990s, when women were banished from public life, media was strictly controlled, and all forms of entertainment banned. Since taking power, they've violently assaulting peaceful protestors, arbitrarily detained journalists, and imposed restrictions on the rights of Afghan women. Given the Taliban's proven record of serious human rights abuses, how can the United States hold the Taliban accountable for their actions? Do you intend to hold the Taliban accountable?

*Answer.* In every engagement with the Taliban, we raise the criticality of respecting human rights and of holding perpetrators of abuses accountable. We advocated strongly for both the renewal of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan with a strong human rights mandate, and the appointment of a UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan.

We continue to explore all available diplomatic options, including levying sanctions and working with likeminded international partners, including Muslim-majority countries in the region, to hold the Taliban accountable for human rights abuses. In order for the Taliban to obtain international legitimacy, they need to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms for all Afghans, including for women, children, journalists, human rights defenders, members of minority groups, persons with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQI+ community.

*Question.* How does the U.S. plan to ensure no funds directly benefit the Taliban or the Haqqani network, given their ongoing role in the commission of human rights abuses?

*Answer.* Since August 2021, the United States has provided more than \$516 million in humanitarian assistance to independent international humanitarian organizations. These funds support vulnerable Afghans inside Afghanistan, as well as those who have fled to neighboring countries. We are looking at other ways, including in conjunction with the UN and local Afghan non-governmental organizations, that we might be able to provide support to the people of Afghanistan—importantly, in a way that does not directly benefit the Taliban.

For all U.S. assistance, we require our partners to mitigate against diversion, fraud, waste, and abuse, including such incidents involving the Taliban and Haqqani Network. The State Department and USAID and our implementers have experience using similar mechanisms, such as in Syria. In addition, both agencies have years of experience in successfully managing projects remotely or through third-party monitors inside and outside of Afghanistan.

*Question.* What type of relationship do you envision the United States having with the Taliban if they continue to perpetrate widespread human rights violations? What would this mean for the future of U.S. assistance to Afghanistan?

*Answer.* The United States and the international community need the Taliban to answer several important questions and take corresponding action to earn legitimacy and credibility. Secretary Blinken has been extremely clear that the Taliban must take action to establish inclusive governance and respect the human rights of all Afghans, including for women, children, journalists, human rights defenders, members of minority groups, persons with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQI+ community. All U.S. assistance is specifically targeted directly to the Afghan people, not to the Taliban.

*Question.* Given the Taliban's lack of adherence to fundamental human rights, like the freedom of religion, what dangers remain for religious minorities, including Christians, Hazara Shia Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs?

*Answer.* We continue to be deeply concerned about religious freedom and the situation of religious minorities in Afghanistan. The Taliban takeover in August 2021 has driven Christians, particularly converts, into deeper hiding, according to multiple NGOs. Amnesty International reported that Taliban fighters killed 13 Shia Hazaras in Daykundi Province on August 31 while Human Rights Watch reported that the Taliban expelled Shia Hazara members from their homes in several provinces in October, in part to redistribute land to Taliban supporters. Civil society reports continued Taliban persecution of Ahmaddiya Muslims.

In November and December, high-level Taliban representatives held meetings with leaders of Shia, Sikh, and Hindu communities and laid out rules for the behavior of women, forbade the playing of music, and presented restrictions on businesses owned by minority religious group members.

Sikhs, Hindus, Christians, and other non-Sunni Muslim minority groups have also continued to report that some Sunni Muslims verbally harassed them, and that public sentiment remained hostile towards converts and to Christian proselytization.

*Question.* Do you feel that the United States turned its back on Afghan women and children? Did our withdrawal create an environment that will set women back even farther?

*Answer.* The United States has made it clear that the Taliban should respect and uphold the rights of women and children in every aspect of Afghan society including in schools, workplaces, and the home. The Department is collaborating with civil society organizations to coordinate standing, consultative bodies for Afghan women, girls, and minorities. These mechanisms will be available for any U.S. Government official so the diverse voices of Afghan women can be heard and considered in U.S. policymaking. We are also working with international likeminded partners to align on clear, measurable standards that the Taliban can be held to.

*Question.* How do you plan to continue to promote women and girls rights in Afghanistan without a U.S. diplomatic presence on the ground?

*Answer.* The United States is working with our international allies to press for respect of the rights of Afghan women and girls, including the right to education, work, safety, and freedom of movement, including as part of the humanitarian response. We have been clear to the Taliban that to earn legitimacy and credibility from the Afghan people and the international community, they will need to consistently respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Afghans. For women to have a role in the future of Afghanistan, we must create space for Afghan women themselves to meaningfully participate. We will continue advocating for their inclusion in dialogues and political processes outside and inside Afghanistan, and consulting with them to inform our own policy positions.

*Question.* On March 5, 2022, President Biden sent to Venezuela a senior U.S. delegation to discuss "energy security" with Nicolas Maduro, whom the U.S. Justice Department has indicted on criminal drug charges. The delegation did not meet with democratically-elected Interim President Juan Guaido. Would you agree that such initiatives undermine U.S. and international efforts to combat authoritarianism in Venezuela and Latin America?

*Answer.* U.S. officials' visit to Venezuela focused on securing the release of U.S. wrongful detainees and urging the Maduro regime to return to the negotiating table in Mexico with the democratic opposition's Unitary Platform to restore democracy in Venezuela. The visit reinforced U.S. support for interim President Juan Guaidó's call for a negotiated solution through the Mexico process.

We welcome the return of two wrongfully detained U.S. citizens from Venezuela. Their release would not have been possible without months of groundwork by the State Department, especially Special Presidential Envoy Carstens.

We also noted Maduro's statement that he is willing to return to negotiations with the opposition's Unitary Platform, which represents a positive step. We continue to believe Venezuelan-led, comprehensive negotiations represent the best mechanism available to restore Venezuelan democracy and the rule of law. We support the Unitary Platform's goal of immediately resuming negotiations with the Maduro regime to restore free and fair elections, democratic institutions, the rule of law, and a respect for human rights in Venezuela.

The United States, along with our partners and allies, will continue to press for the fundamental changes needed to enable a peaceful return to democracy, including the immediate release of all those unjustly detained for political reasons, the independence of political parties, freedom of expression (including for members of the press), and an end to human rights abuses.

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RESPONSES OF MS. JENNIFER GODFREY TO QUESTIONS  
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Question.* The GEC is one of the U.S. Government's best tools in identifying and addressing disinformation campaigns by our adversaries. This is especially timely and important with the on-going Russian war on Ukraine. What is the GEC seeing right now in regards to Ukraine disinformation?

*Answer.* The Kremlin is carrying out an extensive and purposeful global disinformation campaign against Ukraine to erode support among NATO allies, attempt to justify Russia's unprovoked invasion, and break Ukrainian resolve. Every part of Russia's disinformation ecosystem—including official statements, state media, and proxy websites—spread and amplify these messages. Kremlin disinformation attempts to justify Russia's invasion of Ukraine as necessary to free Ukraine from "Nazism" and a corrupt government in Kyiv. Moscow also claims to be protecting ethnic Russians in the Donbas from genocide. Increasingly, Kremlin disinformation purveyors have sought to spread and amplify narratives about Ukraine or the United States using or developing chemical or biological weapons in connection with U.S. Biological Threat Reduction Program laboratories in Ukraine, which is especially concerning given the Kremlin's penchant for blaming its own atrocities on Ukraine's military forces.

*Question.* The GEC is one of the U.S. Government's best tools in identifying and addressing disinformation campaigns by our adversaries. This is especially timely and important with the on-going Russian war on Ukraine. Where is Russia directing disinformation on Ukraine?

*Answer.* Russia's disinformation and propaganda ecosystem has mobilized to justify the Kremlin's unprovoked war to the Russian population and international audiences. Russia continues to target European and Western Hemisphere foreign audiences with disinformation attempting to paint Ukraine, NATO, and the United States as the aggressors in this war. Russian disinformation is targeted at audiences in the Latin America to garner strategic support in a region closely affiliated with the United States. Non-democratic actors in the region, such as the Cuban Government and the Maduro regime, parrot and promote Russian disinformation narratives through both state-run media outlets and social media. Most government leaders and citizens in the Western Hemisphere support Ukraine and condemn Russia's invasion. Pro-Kremlin disinformation is, however, circulating on social media, particularly on Telegram and RT's Spanish-language accounts, and Russian embassies in the region have pushed out a steady stream of disinformation via op-eds, social media, and public engagements.

In the Middle East/North Africa region, we see Russia shifting tactics as a result of the removal of RT and Sputnik's channels targeting Arabic-speaking audiences. Russia is using its diplomatic missions' social media platforms across the Middle East/North Africa region to amplify Kremlin talking points and deflect and obfuscate its atrocities in Ukraine.

Across Africa, Russian embassies are similarly using a network of new Telegram accounts to share sometimes graphic content that claims to tell "the other side of the story." This content includes falsified documents purportedly from Ukraine's national guard and supposed examples of Western media censorship.

*Question.* The GEC is one of the U.S. Government's best tools in identifying and addressing disinformation campaigns by our adversaries. This is especially timely

and important with the on-going Russian war on Ukraine. Are other countries parroting and amplifying Russian disinformation on Ukraine?

Answer. Likely due to effective pre-bunking (debunking the lie before it appears) by U.S. officials, independent media, and civil society actors, Russia's attempts to create a pretext or false flag to justify its further invasion of Ukraine have achieved little success. Globally, most governments have refrained from parroting Russian disinformation on Ukraine. However, the PRC and Iran use official platforms and networks to amplify Russian disinformation, including claims the United States develops biological weapons in labs in Ukraine. PRC and Iranian messaging on Ukraine has decreased in the last week, but still resonates with audiences such as the Lebanese Hezbollah.

In Latin America, Russia uses Venezuela as a regional disinformation launchpad on Twitter by deploying Spanish language messages through Venezuelan troll farms to countries throughout the region. Latin American governments aligned with Russia, including the Maduro regime and the Cuban and Nicaraguan governments, pushed the narrative blaming the invasion on NATO and false stories about U.S. bioweapons in Ukraine. Government-linked actors in El Salvador and Bolivia amplified disinformation painting Russia as the victim. However, pro-Russian disinformation efforts in Latin America have not significantly shifted popular opinion, as populations across the region generally sympathize with Ukraine and see Russia as the aggressor.

In the Middle East, the Syrian regime, Iran, and Hizballah-linked media outlets amplify Russian narratives accusing the United States of: 1) funding Ukraine's alleged bio-weapons program; 2) relocating ISIS fighters from Syria to Ukraine; and 3) depicting Ukraine as the aggressor and justifying Russia's so-called "special military operation."

*Question.* China spends billions on its public diplomacy, pushing false narratives that advance the Chinese Communist Party's interests. What is the GEC doing to identify and push back against Chinese disinformation?

Answer. The GEC collaborates across the Department, interagency, and with foreign partners to actively address PRC disinformation and propaganda by prioritizing acute risks, maximizing limited resources, and avoiding duplication. The GEC conducts and shares research on PRC tactics, identifies counter-disinformation technologies, leads efforts to expand multilateral action to deter PRC information manipulation, and executes evidence-based and data-driven programming to expose and counter such activities. The GEC's programs, developed with regional bureaus and U.S. embassies, seek to puncture PRC propaganda narratives through high-quality open-source research; to build resilience among foreign civil society and media; and to limit the space where PRC information manipulation can thrive.

The GEC leads the Xinjiang Data Project, which is countering Beijing's efforts to cover up its atrocities against the Uyghurs; the Mekong Dam Monitor, which empowered local influencers from downriver communities to push back against PRC's exploitation of the Mekong River flow; and two other programs with partners to map out the PRC's malign activities. The GEC and a partner developed the China Defense Universities Tracker to help universities and researchers understand institutions in China and manage the risks of engaging with PRC universities or avoid harmful collaborations. The GEC worked with another partner on the Mapping China's Tech Giants public database. This program mapped the global footprint of Chinese companies across the Internet, telecommunications, biotech sectors, artificial intelligence, and surveillance technology sectors. This website is a tool for the public to better understand the enormous scale, complexity and increasing global reach of some of China's tech giants.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the GEC supported an 8-week-long virtual seminar on PRC sharp power in Africa by China subject matter experts to local African civil society leaders. The Hoover Institution published several participants' capstones on PRC problematic behavior in their home countries, while Hoover also published project key findings and recommended mitigation measures in English and French for African governments and civil society.

*Question.* China spends billions on its public diplomacy, pushing false narratives that advance the Chinese Communist Party's interests. Does the GEC have enough financial support to robustly combat Chinese (and Russian) disinformation across the globe?

Answer. The scale of Beijing's and Moscow's investments in their respective foreign propaganda and disinformation apparatuses requires a holistic, whole-of-government response from the United States. The PRC spends at least five times more than the United States on its public diplomacy and influence activities. The Krem-

lin's budget for its disinformation ecosystem is difficult to decipher but the reported total amount allocated for state media is 211 billion rubles (approximately \$2.8 billion). This does not include funds spent on proxy websites or other vectors of disinformation. Additional funding would enable the GEC to better understand the PRC disinformation ecosystem, expand its counter-disinformation lines of effort, and execute tailored programs and grants to support communities overseas to identify, counter, and address PRC disinformation. Additional funding would also allow other elements of the Department's Public Diplomacy family to better compete with the influence efforts of our rivals. Identifying the resources to meet the global challenges posed by our long-term strategic rivals, the PRC and Russia, will be critical into the future.

*Question.* GEC's funding has drastically increased since FY2016 from \$6 million to \$60 million. How has this surge in resources translated to greater effectiveness in U.S. Government efforts to combat foreign disinformation and propaganda?

*Answer.* In 2016, the GEC had the singular mission to support government-wide counterterrorism communications. In FY2017, responding to security risks of foreign propaganda and disinformation, Congress expanded the GEC's mission and funding to include coordinating U.S. Government-wide efforts in countering foreign state and non-state propaganda and disinformation.

While the GEC maintained its counterterrorism threat team, the funding increase allowed the GEC to establish additional teams focused on specific threat-actors, an Analytics and Research team, and subsequently the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Unit and a Technology Engagement Team. These functional teams brought new expertise and focus to the GEC, creating robust new lines of effort countering disinformation and propaganda, while our Monitoring and Evaluation Unit has gradually expanded from evaluating federal assistance awards to include strategic M&E across the organization. The new threat-focused teams also inform strategy and programming and, as a result, the GEC's programming is more data-driven and includes whole-of-society efforts. Moreover, by leveraging and extending foreign partnerships and programming interventions that build resilience to disinformation and propaganda, GEC has created greater and more sustainable impact.

For example, the *GEC's Pillars of Russia's Disinformation and Propaganda* special report provided the first public, comprehensive view of how the Russian disinformation and propaganda ecosystem operates, helping shape the global narrative about Russian disinformation. The GEC plans to use the Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations funds to: 1) identify and expose global Russian disinformation and propaganda narratives, practices, and proxy outlets; 2) identify and expose Russian-linked narratives amplified by the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Iran, which are taking advantage of the Ukraine crises to advance their own agendas through disinformation; 3) leverage the GEC's capability to expand testing and support long-term use of technology-based tools to counter disinformation, including artificial intelligence; and 4) allocate resources, including staffing and translations, for these initiatives. These efforts would not be possible without the additional funding provided by Congress.

The GEC recognized that the challenges of disinformation require a holistic approach that leverages the resources of the entire U.S. Government to increase effectiveness and has accordingly stood up interagency coordination functions. This interagency coordination has been crucial to the success of countering Russian disinformation about Ukraine, for example. Similarly, the GEC has dramatically expanded coordination with foreign government partners, to deter and counter Russia's and China's malign influence operations as advanced through their propaganda and disinformation.

*Question.* Some, including members of this Committee, have argued for a substantially increased budget for the GEC. What more could the GEC do with a large increase in funding?

*Answer.* We are grateful for the substantial funding Congress has provided to the Department for foreign counter-disinformation and counter-propaganda efforts, including resources granted in the Ukraine Supplemental, as well as Congress' ongoing bipartisan support for the GEC. Our most urgent ask is for Congress to remove GEC's sunset clause, which currently requires GEC to close its doors in 2024 and inhibits budgeting, hiring, and other operational priorities.

With this clause removed and increased resources, the GEC would be more fully capable of realizing its broad mandate. Specifically, a significant increase in resources would allow the GEC to: 1) bolster global capabilities, including expanding counter-disinformation efforts beyond Russia, China and Iran to incorporate more routine monitoring and analysis of disinformation by other actors; 2) broaden

counter-disinformation technology assessment capabilities, including artificial intelligence-based technology; and 3) strengthen coordination capabilities within the growing counter-disinformation community in the U.S. interagency, the inter-governmental community, and private sector tech companies and international partners.

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RESPONSES OF MS. ANNE APPLEBAUM TO QUESTIONS  
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Question.* Because of its invasion of Ukraine, the world is united against Russian aggression, how do we use this moment to unite the world against Russian authoritarianism?

*Answer.* We should broaden and deepen what we are doing already, coordinating the response in the military sphere, in energy policy, and in sanctions. Now is the time to start planning to deter Russia in Poland and the Baltic states; to move rapidly away from Russian oil and gas, and perhaps oil and gas altogether; to build an anti-corruption alliance that stretches around the world. Anti-communism once united us with our allies, perhaps now we should be linked by anti-kleptocracy. This moment is really ripe for some radical policy changes and we should take advantage of it.

*Question.* On March 5, a delegation of senior Biden administration officials, including Ambassador Jimmy Story met with Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela to discuss “energy security.” The delegation did not meet with democratically-elected Interim President Juan Guaido, whom the United States as the legitimate President of Venezuela. Please explain efforts such as the March 5 meeting with Maduro have on U.S. and international efforts to combat authoritarianism in Venezuela and Latin America.

*Answer.* Many thanks. Of course, any effort this Administration makes that loosens the ties between Russia and Venezuela is useful. However, I don’t think this is a good moment to be trying to negotiate over the heads of the democratic opposition in that country. There is no oil production deal that we can come up with in the short term that will make a difference to U.S. gas prices, and the discussion itself undermines years of effort made to promote democracy in Venezuela.

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RESPONSES OF DR. DANIEL TWINING TO QUESTIONS  
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Question.* How has Chinese transnational aggression, including promoting disinformation and targeting dissidents abroad, become more pronounced in the past few years?

*Answer.* Since IRI initiated its Countering Foreign Authoritarian Influence (<https://www.iri.org/what-we-do/countering-foreign-authoritarian-influence/>) work, China’s influence campaigns have become sharper and less restrained. The CCP has used initial entry points garnered from foreign direct investment and high-dollar-value infrastructure loans to extend its reach into critical elements of countries’ political, economic and information infrastructure. The CCP is also taking more direct action to shape political processes to ensure outcomes more favorable to China’s growing global interests, whether timing infrastructure investments to coincide with presidential elections to boost the chances of pro-China candidates, as it did in the August 2021 elections in Zambia, or engaging in actual campaigning for a preferred political candidate, as was reported during the June 2020 elections in Kiribati.

The introduction of tools such as the National Security Law in Hong Kong empowers Beijing to threaten its critics anywhere in the world. Earlier this week, we learned that the Hong Kong Government’s security bureau accused the advocacy organization Hong Kong Watch and its founder Benedict Rogers of “engaging in activities seriously interfering in the affairs of the HKSAR and jeopardizing national security of the People’s Republic of China.” Rogers was threatened with life imprisonment and was ordered to shut down the NGO and take down its website. Cases such as this highlight the scope of PRC efforts to eliminate dissent and the tools it uses to do so.

*Question.* What tools are the most effective to combatting Chinese authoritarianism?

*Answer.* Across different political contexts, IRI has found (<https://www.iri.org/resources/china-expands-global-authoritarian-influence-efforts-some-fragile-democracies-show-resilience-against-ccp-aggression/>) investigative journalism and civil soci-

ety activism to be the most effective means of identifying, exposing, and combatting PRC authoritarian aggression. Investigative journalism has consistently proven to be the most effective tool in bringing to light inappropriate PRC influence around the world. From Australia to Kenya to Ecuador, journalists—often working at personal risk—have consistently changed the conversation around China in their home countries through brave, dogged reporting. Just as important, we have seen that reporting lead to *political* change, incentivizing governments to be more cautious and, sometimes, more transparent about their dealings with the CCP.

Where journalism provides information, civil society provides action. Particularly across the global South, we have seen that robust civil society movements have proven key to slowing or stopping PRC-backed infrastructure projects that could increase corruption, damage local communities, and drive countries further into debt.

Organizations such as IRI and the rest of the National Endowment for Democracy family play a significant role in helping to raise awareness about the PRC's malign influence ([https://www.iri.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/chinese\\_malign\\_influence\\_report.pdf](https://www.iri.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/chinese_malign_influence_report.pdf)). Often, we are able to serve a convening role that local actors cannot, either because of lack of resources, political sensitivities, or because other coordinating mechanisms just do not exist. We have found that, often as not, simply getting the right people together in a room to discuss the problem and build connections, as well as understanding what proven tools they can deploy to fight back, is a critical first step in helping to change the conversation around China in a given country.

*Question.* How would you assess the threat of Chinese malign influence in U.S. universities?

*Answer.* This important question is not one that IRI has direct programmatic engagement on, but we see parallels around the world. Open university systems that provide space for collaboration and innovation are susceptible to malign influence, but overzealous efforts to address what is a genuine problem risk stifling the very ability to collaborate and innovate that sets our universities apart from the rest of the world. We see the threat of PRC malign influence in U.S. universities as twofold: PRC funding of universities and related co-optation of academics, and the role of some Chinese students in the U.S. The latter usually fall into two camps: (1) strong nationalists who are willing to speak out and attempt to shape the discourse within universities on China-related issues to promote pro-CCP narratives; (2) those with more nuanced ideas who are afraid to give their point of view. Even in the U.S., Chinese students fear reprisals against family members back home, against themselves when they return, or even while they remain resident in the United States.

To address the issue of PRC funding, American universities quite simply need to do better at policing themselves when it comes to how they interact with their PRC counterparts. Universities should fully disclose their funding sources—if they have nothing to hide, transparency should be a strength, not a constraint. I would recommend the following steps to help address this:

- Continue, and institutionalize, the outreach to universities on China by scientific agencies such as the National Institutes of Health or the Department of Energy begun under the previous administration. Often educational outreach by agencies who work on science and have preexisting relationships with universities and researchers is more effective than a blunter approach by agencies such as the FBI.
- Amend the Higher Education Act to require disclosure of the identity of non-American donors. At the moment, the act requires only disclosure of the country of donors' country of origin. Americans should know if universities accept large donations from individuals with questionable ties to repressive regimes like China, Russia, or Saudi Arabia.
- Close Confucius Institutes. This is a trend already; though they bring universities funding, it is not worth the potential and actual loss of academic freedom that too often comes with it.

To address Chinese student attempts to dominate China-related discourse, universities should:

- Make clear that any student who attempts to coerce another, whether in the U.S. or back in China, will be expelled from that university. Such bullying must be policed.
- Work to integrate Chinese (and all foreign) students better. Chinese students often live in a bubble—their friends are often other Chinese students and they

get their news from Chinese news apps—which means that they are often in a Chinese nationalistic bubble.

*Question.* What can we do in international organizations such as the United Nations to combat authoritarianism and Chinese influence?

*Answer.* Many of these organizations are highly flawed, but robust engagement is often better than walking away from them. The UN—and particularly its human rights bodies—have come in for much justified criticism in the United States and elsewhere. However, the partner governments and civil society organizations we work with around the world value the United Nations and will continue to engage through it even if the United States does not. China is hell-bent on bending for like the UN to its will, and we do ourselves, our partners, or the cause of freedom any favors by absenting ourselves from them in ways that allow CCP authoritarian values to predominate.

In addition, as I mentioned in my testimony, the organizations we use to govern international trade such as the WTO are not configured to handle the PRC's use of economic coercion to bully democracies. The U.S. and its partners need to start discussing seriously how to address this, be it through informal or formal forms of free-world economic cooperation, so that China cannot divide and conquer us through our business communities. Reforming the WTO or joining yet another regional trade deal will not cut it. Those are not solutions. Neither will do anything to deter China's coercive use of its economic heft. Free markets should work for free people rather than empowering authoritarian adversaries, and most-favored-nation trade status should actually reflect nations Americans most favor.

*Question.* How can we work more closely with Taiwan to expose and counter Chinese disinformation?

*Answer.* Taiwan is well-positioned to serve as an example and partner to other countries struggling with this problem. But Taipei sometimes struggles with capacity issues, as well as a foreign policy that can be too narrowly focused on Washington and Taiwan's remaining diplomatic partners, leaving it poorly positioned to offer the benefits of its experience to other countries in need. The Tsai Government has made a great deal of progress in transitioning Taiwan to a “post-ROC” diplomatic mindset, but much work remains to be done. The U.S. can assist, and help leverage Taiwan's experience in combatting PRC disinformation (<https://www.iri.org/resources/detecting-digital-fingerprints-tracing-chinese-disinformation-in-taiwan/>), by:

- Working through the Global Cooperation and Training Framework, a pre-existing platform for cooperation between the U.S., Taiwan, and Japan already approved and funded by Congress. The GCTF already addresses disinformation. Last year, for example, it convened a forum with officials and experts from 20 countries on the issue. Congress should consult closely with AIT as to whether current funding levels are appropriate to meet Congressionally mandated goals and revise the relevant appropriation statutes to explicitly call for combined efforts to tackle malign disinformation from authoritarian actors.
- Continue to encourage Taiwan's transition to a diplomacy that looks beyond the U.S. and those countries that recognize it, toward partners in Europe, South-east Asia, and Africa. Taiwan has lessons—and resources—to share that will be well received around the world, if only it can make the needed connections.
- Continue to encourage Taiwan to decentralize its efforts to combat PRC disinformation (and other forms of malign PRC influence) to NGOs and other non-government actors, and work through Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ensure those non-governmental actors are strongly networked with their counterparts overseas.

*Question.* On March 5, a delegation of senior Biden administration officials, including Ambassador Jimmy Story, met with Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela to discuss “energy security.” The delegation did not meet with democratically elected Interim President Juan Guaido, whom the United States views as the legitimate President of Venezuela. Please explain efforts such as the March 5 meeting with Maduro have on U.S. and international efforts to combat authoritarianism in Venezuela and Latin America.

*Answer.* Authoritarian regimes have gained ground in Latin America these past two decades. Among them is the Maduro regime, which continues to tighten its grip on power through illegitimate means. For the past 3 years, democratic movements in Venezuela have pushed for a democratic transition, helping the country take steps towards a free and fair electoral process to solve the country's political crisis. In an unexpected turn, a broad democratic force participated in the November 21,



2021 regional election, which did not meet international electoral integrity standards. While it was risky to participate in such an unfair and unequal process, democratic forces regained significant political space at the local level.

Despite these advances, the Maduro regime will likely take measures to restrict the influence and governance capacity of these democratically elected officials. Maduro has repeatedly proven to be an unreliable negotiator. While he occasionally shows signs of openness to dialogue, he falls short of coming through with meaningful commitments to create democratic space in his country.

U.S. and international efforts to combat authoritarianism in Venezuela can and should continue to support an inclusive political process in-country that paves the way for a peaceful democratic transition. This inclusive process will build resiliency and prevent additional backsliding in the country and the region at large. However, both internal and external factors hinder this process in Venezuela. For instance, as a cornerstone of its strategy, the Maduro regime has deployed information operations through propaganda to influence the emotions, motives, objective reasoning and ultimately the behavior of organizations, groups of people, and individuals. This fills the information space in-country with state-curated narratives that distort information and divide democratic forces. Moving forward, support in Venezuela must focus on promoting freedom of expression and strengthening the capacity of governmental and non-governmental democratic forces, such as independent media and civil society, to track, expose, and counter authoritarian influence. This will enable democratic forces to control the narrative and push back on authoritarian expansions both in Venezuela and broadly within Latin America.

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RESPONSES OF MS. UZRA ZEYA TO QUESTIONS  
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

*Question.* What steps is the Biden administration taking to restrict access to technologies used for surveillance of repressed minorities and at-risk groups in authoritarian regimes such as China, Venezuela, and Iran?

*Answer.* The United States is deeply concerned by the misuse of cutting-edge technology and other measures to surveil, control, and repress certain populations, including members of ethnic and religious minority groups, human rights defenders, dissidents, and other independent voices. This problem is most severe in the People's Republic of China, where authorities deploy these technologies in Xinjiang, Tibet, and beyond, but as you note, is also present in other authoritarian countries.

We are taking steps to address this. We continue to work closely with the Commerce Department to put entities that enable human rights abuses on its Entity List, when appropriate. Throughout the Summit for Democracy's Year of Action, we will lead efforts to convene likeminded partners to develop a voluntary code of conduct to guide the application of human rights criteria for export controls. In addition, we are working with our allies and partners to develop common principles on the responsible use of surveillance technologies. In October 2020, the Department of State released human rights due diligence guidance and best practices to assist U.S. businesses seeking to prevent their products or services with surveillance capabilities from being misused by government end-users to commit human rights abuses. We continue to engage with businesses on best practices and the challenges they may face in implementing the guidance.

*Question.* What emerging technologies and tools can be better leveraged to counter authoritarianism by promoting transparency and supporting human rights and democracy defenders?

*Answer.* Making digital technologies work for, not against, democracies and combating digital authoritarianism is a key priority for the Biden administration. For example, the White House announced at the Summit for Democracy, the International Grand Challenges on Democracy-Affirming Technologies to galvanize innovation in technologies that support democratic values, such as privacy-enhancing technologies and tools to combat government-imposed Internet shutdowns with peer-to-peer technology. The Department also launched the U.S. Anticorruption Solutions through Emerging Technology (ASET) program to accelerate technological solutions to counter corruption worldwide.

Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence can also promote human rights—for example, by empowering persons with disabilities; combatting human trafficking; analyzing data to flag patterns of discrimination or abuse; and helping human rights defenders comb through vast troves of photos, videos, or text to hold governments accountable. In addition, rising global cryptocurrency adoption may provide funding avenues for activists whose authoritarian governments seek to sur-

veil and control financial transactions, though it also presents many challenges. More broadly, blockchain-based technologies can allow users to exchange information and value with others without an intermediary. Such capabilities may prove challenging for authoritarian regimes to monitor and control.

*Question.* How can digital assets and cryptocurrencies be utilized and promoted as tools for human rights defenders and democracy advocates in authoritarian regimes?

*Answer.* The United States is committed to the responsible development and design of digital assets and the technology that underpins new forms of payments and capital flows in the international financial system. The Administration's Executive Order on "Ensuring Responsible Development of Digital Assets" demonstrates our determination to lead and shape financial innovation to promote prosperity, prevent abuse, and advance democratic values without restricting Americans' ability to hold and exchange digital assets.

The decentralized and censorship-resistant nature of cryptocurrencies can help human rights defenders and democracy activists who otherwise cannot transfer funds due to restrictions on their bank accounts engage in financial transactions, such as in Nigeria, Belarus, and Russia. Cryptocurrency can also be stored without a financial institution, which can assist individuals to safeguard their wealth while fleeing oppressive regimes.

We continue to assess how the State Department should approach the use of anonymous or decentralized peer-to-peer transfer of wealth while combating the illicit use of these digital assets by bad actors such as terrorists, human and drug traffickers, and ransomware actors. All efforts in this area must work to advance and respect human rights, strengthen the rule of law, combat money laundering and financing of terrorism, and counter weapons proliferation financing.

*Question.* What are the potential risks for human rights and digital freedom of the adoption of China's digital currency, the eCNY, within China? What are the potential risks if the eCNY is adopted in countries other than China?

*Answer.* The Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) has a poor record of responsible behavior in cyberspace and has misused technology to surveil for the purposes of repression. This raises serious concerns about the widespread adoption of platforms and standards related to technology developed by the PRC in general, including the e-CNY. Given the PRC's disregard for privacy and human rights, we have concerns that the e-CNY could pose heightened privacy and consumer protection risks and enhance the PRC's surveillance and social control capabilities, as well as extend that globally. We urge individuals, businesses, and global financial institutions to assess the risks cautiously and fully, including to human rights, of using the e-CNY.

The PRC's crackdowns on private cryptocurrency transactions are taking place in concert with the rollout of the e-CNY and will prevent their citizens from using financial systems outside government control. In contrast with the PRC's misuse of technology, the Secretary has stated that our task is to put forth and carry out a compelling vision for how to use technology in a way that serves our people, protects our interests, and upholds our democratic values. The Administration's Executive Order on "Ensuring Responsible Development of Digital Assets" will drive government agencies to better understand private digital assets so reasonable guardrails can be implemented, and commits that any development of a central bank digital currency, if judged to be in the interest of the United States, will be done in line with democratic values.

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RESPONSES OF MS. JENNIFER GODFREY TO QUESTIONS  
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

*Question.* How have perceptions of the Government of China changed within countries in Asia and Africa in the aftermath of the global COVID pandemic?

*Answer.* We provide a strong contrast to the People's Republic of China (PRC) messaging by continually sharing U.S. values and U.S. global health leadership through public diplomacy messaging and programs, including through a dedicated strategic messaging campaign focused on U.S. Government vaccine donations to date. Message testing by the Bureau of Global Public Affairs (GPA) in countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia found that the majority of respondents did not trust COVID-19 social media messaging by the PRC or PRC-backed accounts. GPA research has also identified higher positive perceptions of the U.S. response to the

COVID-19 pandemic compared to the PRC in countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.

*Question.* How is the Department leveraging America’s global response to the COVID pandemic to highlight the power of transparency, free enterprise, and private sector innovation in contrast to authoritarian command and control?

*Answer.* Transparency and equitable distribution of vaccines are at the heart of our COVID-19 global response. The United States has donated more than 498 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to more than 110 countries and economies worldwide—with no political strings attached. We make these donations public on our website at [www.state.gov/covid-19-recovery/vaccine-deliveries/](http://www.state.gov/covid-19-recovery/vaccine-deliveries/) and amplify them publicly through the Department’s public engagement events, media engagement, and social media properties, including U.S. embassies’ and consulates’ accounts. Research by the Bureau of Global Public Affairs demonstrated that international publics trust local voices and counsel from experts such as doctors and pharmacists, which informs our global messaging to ensure that we are leveraging local voices as we highlight the efforts of the United States to end the pandemic.

We have invested and supported the expansion of regional COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing in Africa and Asia. For instance, on March 7, Moderna Therapeutics and the Government of Kenya, in collaboration with the U.S. Government, announced a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that will bring production and manufacturing of Moderna mRNA vaccines to Africa, for Africa. The MOU marks the first time that mRNA COVID-19 vaccine drug substance will be produced on the continent at this scale. The brand-new facility in Kenya will produce safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines and will create a lasting capability to produce vaccines against both longstanding health threats (malaria, yellow fever) and emerging health threats in the future.

We also continue to work extensively with governments and international organizations, vaccine and medical goods producers, NGOs, the broader private sector, and others to deliver vaccines, get shots in arms, increase testing and treatment, support and protect healthcare workers and the public, and more. The Department has also provided more than 100 small grants of up to \$10,000 to our State Department exchange program alumni to implement innovative COVID-19 response projects in local communities around the world. For example, a State Department grant helped a citizen of Malawi build an app to respond to the rapid spread of misinformation and disinformation across social media. Called COVID-19 NEBA, or “Hey Neighbor,” the app is offered in three languages—Chichewa, Tumbuka, and English—and increases access to fact-based information from trusted sources including U.S. Centers for Disease Control, the World Health Organization, and Malawi’s Ministry of Health. The app has helped more than 648,000 citizens of Malawi access accurate COVID-19 information. In Thailand, State Department exchange alumni used a small grant to support Chiang Dao residents in the Chiang Mai Province. Alumni joined community organizations to create visual and audio media in seven languages on COVID-19 prevention best practices, collaborated with public health officials to conduct COVID-19 prevention workshops for village health volunteers, and provided effective communication tools and techniques to village leaders to help residents stay updated on COVID-19 – reaching more than 70,000 people.

We are working at every level, with partners from all sectors, to lead a coordinated, international response to this pandemic to save lives around the world and to bolster resilient, diverse, adaptable, and secure public health supply chains.

*Question.* How does the Department evaluate or quantify the effectiveness of the Global Engagement Center in countering disinformation campaigns from Russia, China, Iran, and others?

*Answer.* In addition to tracking specific impacts of Global Engagement Center’s (GEC) work on policy outcomes and narratives globally, the GEC’s Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Unit works with each of the GEC’s threat-focused teams to develop metrics of success. The GEC’s M&E Unit utilizes evidence-based and social science approaches, such as testing hypotheses to refine program design, to determine each program’s effectiveness. For example, the GEC led an interagency and multinational campaign to delegitimize former ISIS leader Al Mawla. After the success of the first phase of the campaign, the GEC coordinated with partners to refine and conduct a second phase with more materials and a tailored media plan. As a result of the campaign’s success, ISIS followers are so disillusioned with their leadership that Google analytic indices now show that “al-Mawla” related searches have shifted from references of “The Destroyer” to “The Canary Caliph” and “The Betrayer.” The GEC also evaluates its programs, using its in-house evaluation capa-

bilities and external third-party evaluators, to inform future planning and design and to refine methodologies and indicators of effectiveness.

Additionally, consistent with the Evidence Act of 2018, the GEC is working with the Department's Bureau of Budget and Planning (BP) and the Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance (F) on their "Learning Agenda" —a 4-year strategic process to use evidence-based data to inform foreign policy decisions across a select group of questions. The GEC leads on the portion of the Agenda focused on strategic implementation of counter-disinformation and propaganda efforts throughout the Department.

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RESPONSES OF MS. UZRA ZEYA TO QUESTIONS  
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TED CRUZ

*Question.* To what extent has DRL previously issued notices for projects aimed at documenting human rights violations occurring in Israel? Please explicitly cite and convey any notices you believe are precedents for or similar to SFOP0008613 in that context.

*Answer.* In 2019, DRL solicited in SFOP0006474, through an open competition, proposals for programs supporting civil society organizations to reduce barriers to full inclusion of members of marginalized groups in Israel in political and economic processes. DRL funds a wide range of programs aimed at promoting civil society engagement at the local level as well as on issues related to human rights violations by security forces around the world. We have not issued any solicitations for these specific activities with respect to Israel or the West Bank/Gaza previously.

*Question.* What "legal or security sector violations and housing, land, and property rights" violations that have occurred or are occurring in Israel that you believe are relevant to projects described by SFOP0008613?

*Answer.* This solicitation allows local civil society organizations to design and submit proposals based on their assessment of local conditions and which they deem relevant to the context in which they would work.

*Question.* What sorts of products or deliverables you envision receiving from projects described by SFOP0008613?

*Answer.* Local civil society organizations who apply under this solicitation will propose potential products or deliverables based on their assessment of local conditions.

*Question.* What proposals have already been submitted for projects described by SFOP0008613?

*Answer.* The number and organizational specifics of proposals are not known as the Notice of Funding Opportunity has not closed yet. Additionally, Department grants policy directs the process remain confidential until a Federal Assistance Award has been granted.