

**Testimony of
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“Combating Authoritarianism: U.S. Tools and Responses”
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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.”