

**THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY
AROUND THE WORLD**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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MARCH 10, 2021
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CONTENTS

| | Page |
|--|------|
| Menendez, Hon. Bob, U.S. Senator From New Jersey | 1 |
| Prepared Statement | 3 |
| Risch, Hon. James, U.S. Senator From Idaho | 5 |
| Prepared Statement | 7 |
| Albright, Hon. Madeleine, Former Secretary of State, Washington, DC | 8 |
| Prepared Statement | 10 |
| Dobriansky, Ambassador Paula J., Former Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs, Washington, DC | 12 |
| Prepared Statement | 14 |
| Ajak, Peter Biar, Ph.D., Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellow, National Endowment for Democracy, Washington, DC | 33 |
| Prepared Statement | 35 |
| Pwint Thon, Wai Hnin, Campaigns Officer, Burma Campaign, UK | 39 |
| Prepared Statement | 40 |
| Law, Nathan, Pro-Democracy Activist and Former Hong Kong Legislative Council Member | 44 |
| Prepared Statement | 46 |

THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY AROUND THE WORLD

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10, 2021

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:03 a.m., in room SD-106, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Bob Menendez, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Menendez [presiding], Cardin, Coons, Kaine, Markey, Booker, Schatz, Van Hollen, Risch, Johnson, Romney, Portman, Paul, Young, Rounds, and Hagerty.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BOB MENENDEZ, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY

The CHAIRMAN. Good morning, everyone. This hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

Thanks, everyone, for coming, and especially to our witnesses who we will hear from shortly.

For the purposes of this specific hearing, we are going to pursue—as we get our technology under control in terms of understanding when people sign in, we are going to do it by seniority, but we will ultimately try to work towards whoever appears at the time of the gavel, but we are not there yet. So with my apologies for those who made it early, hopefully you will still be in the rotation and others will not jump in front of you. But for today, as we figure out how, when we have a hybrid, how we can make sure that we understand where the seniority is—I mean, where the in-time appearance is, we are going to do this for today's purposes by seniority.

Given the state of the world and our own country, I felt it was paramount to use my first policy hearing as chairman this Congress to examine democracy as a fundamental American value and how it drives our foreign policy. In every region of the world today, authoritarian governments are seizing more and more power, dismantling core democratic institutions, and closing in on civil society and freedom of expression. Many emerging democracies are plagued by scandal, corruption, and citizen disaffection. From Turkey and Hungary, to Venezuela, to the Philippines, autocrats are systematically dismantling constitutional checks on their power. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has helped accelerate some of their actions by providing an excuse to consolidate power and quash free press.

Of course we cannot seriously talk about democratic decline around the world without confronting the stress tests on our own democracy. The assault on the U.S. Capitol on January 6th was the culmination of coordinated misinformation fueled by a systemic undermining from the very highest office in the land of the foundational elements of our democracy, including the right to vote, a free press, and our institutions themselves, tragically, the same pattern we are seeing in democratic free-falling countries.

But I would offer that our strength as Americans is our commitment to strive for that more perfect union. We take seriously our responsibility to continually ensure that our citizens are equipped with the knowledge of their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society so that they can hold their leaders accountable. We ensure people have the right to vote and that our judiciary remains independent, and a course correction when we must. History has proven that democracies are more peaceful when their people are more prosperous and more secure, and it is in our national interest to champion these values.

So with that in mind, as leaders around the world that publicly and privately question whether the United States can still talk about democratic promotion, I say we must. It is simply in our interest. And I remind those who I have talked to around the world who have challenged that proposition that the reality is that our institutions withstood the challenges that were presented to it, from its judiciary, to the Congress, to a free press and its vibrancy. All of these elements may have been tested, but they withstood the test.

Our driving question of today's hearing is why the United States must support democracy around the world as a fundamental American value and the most effective tools we have to support democratic resilience and expansion. Last year, I published a report documenting the steep cost that the Trump presidency exacted on U.S. foreign policy and national security. Interviews with current and former U.S. officials, foreign officials, national security experts, all affirmed that President Trump's actions made it harder to effectively champion human rights and promote democracy abroad, and we largely ceded the moral ground on the global stage at a time when we needed it most to counter the authoritarian forces of Russia and China.

Today, Beijing and Moscow are driving global authoritarian expansion to increasingly-sophisticated digital authoritarian surveillance and control tools and simple old-fashioned arrest of peaceful protesters in the shutting down of independent media. The United States must counter their malign efforts with a worldwide campaign to promote democratic values. We must also lead a serious attack on the lifeblood of these autocrats, the kleptocratic ways in which they loot public coffers to sustain themselves and erode freedom globally. We must maintain consistent and continuous pressure on authoritarian governments to stop them from abusing the rights of their citizens and exporting disinformation and other tools of repression abroad.

Tragically, we can look around the world and see countries that may have once had so much promise overtaken by military or self-interested autocrats. The recent coup in Burma represents a direct

and pressing challenge to our aim of restoring values to the center of our foreign policy. Across the Middle East, we must not be silent in the face of human rights violations for fear of offending a security partner. Our partnerships are not blank checks. We are seeing the Egyptian Government not only targeting democracy and human rights activists in Egypt, but also targeting the family members of U.S. citizens who criticize their policies. In Saudi Arabia, I will continue to press for accountability for the murder of Jamal Khashoggi.

In Ethiopia, the path to credible elections in June has closed considerably. The ongoing conflict in Tigray with credible reports of mass atrocities and violence in other regions means millions of Ethiopian voters will be disenfranchised, absent dramatic change. And to the East in Sudan, the civil—the civilian-led transitional Government is facing serious economic and political headwinds.

Let me end closer to our own borders. As we prepare to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Inter-American Democratic Charter in September, we have seen in the region a series of deeply flawed or fraudulent elections. Entrenched authoritarians have clung to power in Havana, Caracas, and Managua. After 6 days—excuse me, I wish it was 6 days—six decades, Cuba remains firmly in the grasp of a dictatorship, and nowhere in our hemisphere has democratic deterioration produced greater human suffering than in Venezuela. Maduro’s brutal criminal regime has unleashed a humanitarian crisis and has perpetrated crimes against humanity in order to silence dissent.

We have an opportunity now to reassert the U.S. role in championing democracy and human rights around the globe. We do this because it is right and because it is in our interests. Our investments in democracy are our best hope for bolstering the stability and prosperity of our neighbors in far-off countries alike, and for keeping our sons and daughters out of war. To continue to champion democracy and human rights in foreign policy, we need to have a fuller sense of the challenges we face and how the United States can best rise to face them, and shortly we will turn to our witnesses to get their perspectives.

With that, I would like to turn to the distinguished ranking member for his comments.

[The prepared statement of Chairman Menendez follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MENENDEZ

INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

Thank you everyone for coming today and thank you especially to our witnesses. For my first hearing as Chairman this Congress, I feel it’s critical that we examine democracy as a fundamental American value, and how it drives our foreign policy. In every region of the world today authoritarian governments are seizing more and more power, dismantling core democratic institutions, and closing in on civil society and freedom of expression. Emerging democracies are plagued by scandal, corruption, and citizen disaffection. From Turkey and Hungary to Venezuela to the Philippines, autocrats are systematically dismantling constitutional checks on their power. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has helped accelerate some of their actions.

Of course, we cannot talk about democratic decline around the world without confronting the stress tests on our democracy. The assault on the U.S. Capitol on January 6 was the culmination of coordinated misinformation . . . fueled by a systematic undermining—from the very highest office in this land—of the very foundational

elements of democracy in this country including the right to vote, a free press, and our institutions themselves.

Our responsibility is to continually ensure that our citizens are equipped with the knowledge of their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society so that they can their leaders accountable. And course correct when we must. History has proven that democracies around the world are still more peaceful, their populations more prosperous and more secure, and it is in our interest to still champion our values.

So the focus of today's hearing is why the United States must support democracy around the world as a fundamental American value and the most effective tools we have to support democratic resilience and expansion.

Last year, I published a report documenting the steep costs the Trump presidency exacted on U.S. foreign policy and national security. Interviews with current and former U.S. officials, foreign officials, and national security experts affirmed that President Trump's actions made it harder to effectively champion human rights and promote democracy abroad. In doing so, we largely ceded the moral high ground at a time on the global when we needed it most to counter the authoritarian forces of Russia and China.

Today, Beijing and Moscow are driving global authoritarian expansion in an attempt to make the world a safer place for their repressive forms of government ... through increasingly sophisticated digital authoritarian surveillance and control tools and simple old fashioned arresting of peaceful protestors and shutting down independent media. The United States must counter their malign efforts with a worldwide campaign to promote democratic values. We must also lead a serious attack on the lifeblood of these autocrats—the kleptocratic ways in which they loot public coffers to sustain themselves and erode freedom globally. We also must maintain consistent and continuous pressure on authoritarian governments.

AROUND THE WORLD

Tragically, we can look around the world and see countries that may have once had so much promise ... overtaken by military or self-interested autocrats. Unfortunately, this list is not exhaustive.

The coup in Burma represents a direct and pressing challenge to our aim of restoring values to the center of our foreign policy.

Our failure to ensure real accountability and costs for the bad behavior of Burma's military over the past decade in part got us here including removing sanctions and failing to call out a genocide in Rakhine State. But it is not too late to impose accountability.

Across the Middle East, we must not be silent in the face of human rights violations for fear of offending a security partner. Our partnerships are not blank checks. In Egypt, we are seeing the Government not only targeting democracy and human rights activists in Egypt, but also targeting the family members of U.S. citizens who criticize their policies. And I will continue to press for accountability for the murder of Jamal Khashoggi.

In Ethiopia, the path to credible elections in June has closed considerably. The ongoing conflict in Tigray, with credible reports of mass atrocities, and violence in other regions mean millions of Ethiopian voters will be disenfranchised, absent dramatic change. And, to the east, in Sudan, the civilian-led transitional Government is facing serious economic and political headwinds. Recent elections in Uganda and Tanzania were marred by repression and fraud.

VENEZUELA/WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Let me end closer to our own borders ... As we prepare to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Inter-American Democratic Charter in September, we have seen in the region a series of deeply flawed or fraudulent elections.

Entrenched authoritarians have clung to power in Havana, Caracas, and Managua. After six decades, Cuba remains firmly in the grasp of a dictatorship.

And nowhere in our hemisphere has democratic deterioration produced greater human suffering than in Venezuela. Maduro's brutal criminal regime has unleashed a humanitarian crisis and has perpetrated crimes against humanity in order to silence dissent.

CLOSING

We are at a pivotal moment ... we have an opportunity to reassert the U.S. role in championing democracy and human rights around the globe. We do this because it is right, and we do it because it is in our interest. Our investments into democracy are our best hope for bolstering the stability and prosperity of our neighbors and far off countries alike, and keeping our sons and daughters out of war. To con-

tinue to champion democracy and human rights in foreign policy, we need to have a fuller sense of the challenges we face and of how the United States can best rise to face them. For that, we shall turn to our witnesses.

INTRODUCTION OF WITNESSES

Albright

It is my honor to welcome Secretary Madeleine Albright. Secretary Albright served as our first female Secretary of State, working as the nation's top diplomat from 1997 to 2001. Prior to that, she served as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. Born in Prague, Secretary Albright and her family fled the Nazis and eventually settled in the United States. We are fortunate to be hearing from Secretary Albright, given her decades of public service at the highest levels of our Government and her deep personal experience with the democratic struggle. Welcome, Madame Secretary.

Dobriansky

We are also joined by another formidable diplomat, Ambassador Paula Dobriansky. Ambassador Dobriansky served as Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs from 2001 to 2009 and as the President's Envoy to Northern Ireland in 2007. Welcome, Ambassador.

Ajak

I would like to welcome Dr. Peter Biar Ajak. Dr. Ajak is a civil society leader, political dissident, and scholar from South Sudan. He is the founder of the Juba-based Center for Strategic Analyses and Research, and chair of the South Sudan Young Leaders Forum. An outspoken advocate for free and fair elections, Dr. Ajak was convicted of disturbing the peace and jailed for 18 months in South Sudan's notorious Blue House prison. Facing death threats upon his release, he was forced to seek safe haven in the United States, where he continues to advocate for democracy back home. Welcome, Dr. Ajak.

Law

I would next like to introduce Mr. Nathan Law. He is a co-founder of the Network of Young Democratic Asians, aiming at promoting exchanges among social activists in Japan, Taiwan, Burma, Thailand, and other East Asian countries. At 23, Mr. Law was elected to Hong Kong's Legislative Council in 2017 and became the youngest Legislative Councilor in history. Yet his election was overturned in July 2017 following Beijing's constitutional reinterpretation. After the imposition of the Hong Kong National Security Law in mid-2020, Nathan fled Hong Kong, but he continues to be a strong advocate for democracy there. Welcome, Mr. Law.

Pwint Thon

Finally, welcome to Ms. Wai Hnin Pwint Thon (WAY-NIN PINT THAWN). She is a Burmese human rights defender working with the non-governmental organizations Burma Campaign UK and Advance Myanmar. Wai Hnin (WAY NIN)'s advocacy is inspired by her father, who is one of the country's leading Muslim human rights activists. He has been detained by the Burmese military since the military coup on February 1st. Welcome, Ms. Pwint Thon.

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

Senator RISCH. Well, thank you very much. I concur that it is appropriate that the first policy hearing we have in this Congress is on the state of democracy around the world because, after all, when it comes to foreign relations or the success and operation of a country, democracy is foundational to that, and the United States remains the gold standard for democracy. Yes, we do wind up having disagreements and a little pushing and shoving as to how we execute democracy, but we have in place an independent judiciary that resolves those disputes, and we then accept those and move on and execute the democracy that the founding fathers gave us.

And while we have been rightly focused on combating the coronavirus pandemic, another worldwide threat is taking shape, and that is a decline in democracies and democratic principles,

many of which that you have referred to, Mr. Chairman, in your opening remarks, and I concur in those. Before COVID-19 broke out in Wuhan, China, democratic backsliding had already become a serious global concern. The ongoing pandemic has given opportunistic leaders another excuse to grab power and suppress their own citizens' fundamental freedoms and human rights.

It is happening even in countries who had once struggled to actually reach a level of democracy, and I do not think we have to look very far. Right in our own neighborhood, Venezuela went from a country that was, as much as anything, a democracy into what it is today, which is anything but. And one of the disheartening things is how quickly something like that can happen in very short order with just one or two leaders who are not committed to the rule of law and democracy.

Rather than keep its promise, the Chinese Communist Party is doing everything it can to erase Hong Kong's autonomy. One of the largest threats to rights and freedoms is Beijing's so-called National Security Law, which has been used to arrest and instill fear among teachers, journalists, and activists in Hong Kong. While COVID-19 infected the world, the restrictions used to fight the virus are also used to fight democracy, including by limiting protests, delaying elections, and implementing a press of state-sponsored censorship. Just this week, 47 Hong Kong democracy activists were charged under the new National Security Law.

In Africa, countries, like The Gambia, Sudan, and Ethiopia, have seen important moments of democratic progress in recent years. However, the pandemic and the political, economic, and security realities have put these democratic transitions under tremendous strain and jeopardize their progress. At the same time, we have seen countries, like Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, further backslide in the face of increasingly authoritarian and corrupt behavior by their leaders. Despite these challenges, democracy remains in high demand amongst most Africans.

After enjoying some democratic progress since 2011, Burma's recent military coup has set the country back, dramatically back. Courageous citizens protesting this authoritarian regime have been met with violence, leading to scores of death and injuries of innocent protesters. Hundreds have been arrested, including the father of one of our witnesses today. The military, in an effort to quash all dissent and momentum for protests, also weaponized access to the internet to avoid and block communication between those who want to communicate in protest fashion. While news of democratic backsliding around the globe can be disheartening, it is a reminder that we must fight for and defend democracy and democratic values. The United States needs to continue to lead the world in supporting democracy and rule of law.

The United States has robust programs to promote democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights across the globe. We support civil societies, organizations, and election preparation, and improving media literacy, and increasing women's participation in the political process. This work continues despite significant obstacles. Authoritarian governments in places, such as Russia and China, continue to enforce draconian anti-NGO laws, which limit our ability to support civil society. Even as we remain focused on

our domestic response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we must not turn a blind eye to democratic backsliding across the globe.

I look forward to hearing from the witnesses today on how the United States can continue to lead on promoting democracy and supporting civil society actors around the world. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Senator Risch follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR RISCH

Thank you very much. I concur that it is appropriate that the first policy hearing we have this Congress is on the state of democracy around the world. Because after all, when it comes to foreign relations or the success and operation of a country, democracy is foundational to that.

The United States remains the gold standard for democracy. Yes, we do wind up having disagreements and a little pushing and shoving as to how we execute democracy. But we have in place an independent judiciary to resolve those disputes. We then accept those and move on and execute the democracy that the founding fathers gave us.

While we have been rightly focused on combatting the Coronavirus pandemic, another worldwide threat is taking shape: that is the decline of democracies and democratic principles, many of which you have referred to, Mr. Chairman, in your opening remarks. I concur on those.

Before COVID-19 broke out in Wuhan, China, democratic backsliding had already become a serious global concern. The ongoing pandemic has given opportunistic leaders another excuse to grab power and suppress their own citizens' fundamental freedoms and human rights. It's happening even in countries who had once struggled to actually reach a level of democracy.

I don't think we have to look very far. Right in our own neighborhood, Venezuela went from a country that was as much as anything a democracy into what it is today which is anything but. One of the disheartening things is how quickly something like that can happen in very short order, with just one or two leaders who are not committed to rule of law and democracy.

Rather than keep its promise, the Chinese Communist Party is doing everything it can to erase Hong Kong's autonomy. One of the largest threats to rights and freedoms is Beijing's so-called "national security law," which has been used to arrest and instill fear among teachers, journalists, and activists in Hong Kong.

While COVID-19 infected the world, the restrictions used to fight the virus were also used to fight democracy, including by limiting protests, delaying elections, and implementing oppressive state-sponsored censorship. Just this week, 47 Hong Kong democracy activists were charged under the new national security law.

In Africa, countries like The Gambia, Sudan, and Ethiopia have seen important moments of democratic progress in recent years. However, the pandemic and the political, economic, and security realities have put these democratic transitions under tremendous strain and jeopardized their progress.

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The United States has robust programs to promote democracy, the rule of a law, and respect for human rights across the globe. We support civil society organizations in election preparation, in improving media literacy, and in increasing women's participation in the political process. This work continues despite significant obstacles. Authoritarian governments in places such as Russia and China continue to enforce draconian anti-NGO laws, which limit our ability to support civil society.

Even as we remain focused on our domestic response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we must not turn a blind eye to democratic back-sliding across the globe. I look forward to hearing from the witnesses today on how the United States can continue to lead on promoting democracy and supporting civil society actors around the world.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Let us turn to our first panel. It is my honor to welcome Secretary Madeleine Albright virtually. Secretary Albright served as our first female Secretary of State, working as the Nation's top diplomat from 1997 to 2001. Prior to that, she served as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. Born in Prague, Secretary Albright and her family fled the Nazis and eventually settled in the United States. She is one of the most significant voices in the promotion of democracy in our country. We are fortunate to be hearing from Secretary Albright given her decades of public service at the highest levels of our Government and her deep personal experience with the democratic struggle as well.

We are also joined by another formidable diplomat, Ambassador Paula Dobriansky. Ambassador Dobriansky served as undersecretary of state for global affairs from 2001 to 2009 and as the President's envoy to Northern Ireland in 2007. Welcome, Ambassador.

With that, we will turn to Secretary Albright first, and then we will go to Ambassador Dobriansky.

**STATEMENT OF HON. MADELEINE ALBRIGHT, FORMER
SECRETARY OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC**

Secretary ALBRIGHT. Chair Menendez and Ranking Member Risch, thank you so much, and members of the committee. I am really delighted that you asked me to share my thoughts on the state of democracy, and I so applaud the fact that you are making this your first hearing. As you mentioned, Chairman Menendez, it is a topic that I approach through the prism of my own experience, having come to this country in 1948 after my family fled both communism and fascism in Europe. And I have always been a grateful American, and I was taught by my father to appreciate both the fragility of democracy and its resilience.

In the past quarter century, I have testified before this committee on many occasions, and I have not always agreed with every senator on every topic, but I do not ever recall having had a quarrel about the importance of democracy. So today, in the interest of time, I will devote my remarks less to the widely-reported symptoms of freedoms' decline than to the question of what we can and should do about it. And so to that end, I will stress three points.

First, the United States must lead. Many countries can and do help, but no other nation has both the historic identification with liberty and the geographic reach to inspire and strengthen democratic institutions in every region. If America is not out front, others will take our place, either despots, who rule with an iron fist, or extremists, who acknowledge no rules at all, and this would leave the world with a choice between repression and chaos, and we owe our children a better alternative than that.

My second point follows directly from the first: America must set the right example. People across the globe will not follow us if they do not believe us, and they will not believe us if we fail to match our words with actions. I will not dwell on the events of January 6th, but you can be sure that our rivals will not soon let the world

forget the spectacle of American democracy under siege from within. And just recently in Burma, the military launched a coup because its leaders refused to accept the results of a democratic election. Sound familiar?

The truth is that we have to be able to understand what is going on in every single way, and the truth is that the autocrats in many countries have echoed the words of our past President when attacking their legitimate opposition, their courts, the independent press, and natural—national legislatures. Meanwhile, here at home, efforts are under way in many States to chip away at the right to vote, the very cornerstone of freedom. And to be clear, just as it is fraudulent for people to vote illegally, so it is fraudulent to deny citizens the best possible chance to cast their ballots within the law. And when it comes to holding fair elections, there is no comparison: denial of the franchise, not deception at the polls, is by far the bigger problem.

And I do think, as I make my third point, is that building and sustaining democracy should be a first principle, not an afterthought, in U.S. foreign and national security policy, and the reason should be clear to all of us. And let us look around the world, and some of—both of you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, have looked at some of this. From South Asia to Central Europe, and from the Middle East to parts of Africa and Latin America, democracy is steadily losing ground. Not since the Cold War have we seen a broader or more ominous threat to human freedom. So what should we do, fall apart and retreat or come together in defense of our core beliefs?

When I was Secretary of State, I helped launch what we called the Community of Democracies, an effort that continued under the leadership of Ambassador Dobriansky in the Bush administration, and I am delighted to be able to testify along with her. We were committed to the idea that democratic governments should assist each other in creating jobs, improving services, and countering threats. The time is right to revive that sense of solidarity. For America, that means helping to strengthen liberty's cause through the employment of every available foreign policy tool, including aid, trade, sanctions, bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, and partnerships with advocacy groups and the private sector. We must also apply the lessons we have already learned about the need for patience, inclusivity, a holistic approach to how we go forward. And I think that that is a very important aspect in terms of looking at what lessons we have learned and that they have to be tailored to the individual circumstances of the countries involved.

The bipartisan National Endowment for Democracy and its four core institutes—NDI, IRI, CIPE, and the Solidarity Center—are rich sources of wisdom on all of these points, and it has been my honor to be associated with these institutions since they were founded by President Reagan, and to have served as chairman of NDI since 2001. And I know they stand ready to work with this committee as it reviews and strengthens democracy programs.

Now, some will tell you that a democracy-centered foreign policy reflects a kind of starry-eyed idealism, and that the only way to protect our interests is through hard-headed realism. And is there some truth in that? Yes, I will not deny it. But in the vast majority

of cases, support for democracy serves both our interests and our ideals. History has shown us that free countries make better neighbors, more reliable friends, and the only allies we can count on consistently. And that is why backing democratic values must be the centerpiece of any strategy to create a more secure, stable, healthy, and prosperous global environment, a kind of setting in which Americans can thrive.

A little more than a century ago, a U.S. President asked our armed forces to cross the ocean to make the world safe for democracy. Today, we must support democracy to make the world safe, and we should do so with confidence. Despite recent setbacks, we know that democracy is resilient, and so, too, is the United States. Our economy is one of the strongest and most innovative in the world because we have a system of government that supports the rule of law and protects the rights of individuals. We know as well that, even now, no words speak more powerfully to the aspirations of all people than that singular pledge of liberty and justice for all.

As President Biden wrote in the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance issued last week, and I quote, “We must prove that our model is not a relic of history. It is the single-best way to realize the promise of the future.” And, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, there is much more I could say, but time is precious, and so I really look forward to any of the questions you might have. Thank you so much for asking me to participate in this important hearing.

[The prepared statement of Secretary Albright follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SECRETARY ALBRIGHT

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and members of the committee.

Thank you for inviting me to share my thoughts on the state of democracy around the world. It is a topic I approach through the prism of my own experience, having come to this country in 1948 after my family fled both communism and fascism in Europe. I am a grateful American, and I was taught by my father to appreciate both the fragility of democracy and its resilience.

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If America is not out front, others will take our place: either despots who rule with an iron fist or extremists who acknowledge no rules at all.

This would leave the world with a choice between repression and chaos; we owe our children a better alternative than that.

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People across the globe won’t follow us if they don’t believe us, and they won’t believe us if we fail to match our words with actions.

I won’t dwell on the events of January 6, but you can be sure that our rivals will not soon let the world forget the spectacle of American democracy under siege from within.

Just recently in Myanmar, the military launched a coup because its leaders refused to accept the results of a democratic election. Sound familiar?

The truth is that autocrats in many countries have echoed the words of our past President when attacking their legitimate opposition, their courts, the independent press, and national legislatures.

Meanwhile, here at home, efforts are underway in many states to chip away at the right to vote, the very cornerstone of freedom.

To be clear, just as it is fraudulent for people to vote illegally, so it is fraudulent to deny citizens the best possible chance to cast their ballots within the law.

When it comes to holding fair elections, there is no comparison: denial of the franchise, not deception at the polls, is by far the bigger problem.

My third point is that building and sustaining democracy should be a first principle, not an afterthought, in U.S. foreign and national security policy. The reason should be clear to all of us.

Look around the world from South Asia to Central Europe and from the Middle East to parts of Africa and Latin America; democracy is steadily losing ground.

Not since the Cold War have we seen a broader or more ominous threat to human freedom.

What should we do?—fall apart and retreat, or come together in defense of our core beliefs?

When I was Secretary of State, I helped launch what we called the community of democracies, an effort that continued under the leadership of Ambassador Dobriansky in the Bush administration.

We were committed to the idea that democratic governments should assist each other in creating jobs, improving services, and countering threats. The time is right to revive that sense of solidarity.

For America that means helping to strengthen liberty's cause through the employment of every available foreign policy tool, including aid, trade, sanctions, bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, and partnerships with advocacy groups and the private sector.

We must also apply the lessons we have already learned about the need for patience, inclusivity, a holistic approach, and remedies tailored to the individual circumstances of the countries involved.

The bipartisan National Endowment for Democracy and its four core institutes—NDI, IRI, CIPE and the Solidarity Center—are rich sources of wisdom on all of these points.

It has been my honor to be associated with these institutions since they were founded by President Reagan, and to have served as Chairman of NDI since 2001. I know they stand ready to work with this committee as it reviews and strengthens democracy programs.

Now, some will tell you that a democracy-centered foreign policy reflects a kind of starry-eyed idealism and that the only way to protect our interests is through hardheaded realism.

Is there some truth in that? Yes, I won't deny it.

But in the vast majority of cases, support for democracy serves both our interests and our ideals.

History has shown us that free countries make better neighbors, more reliable friends, and the only allies we can consistently count on.

That is why backing for democratic values must be the centerpiece of any strategy to create a more secure, stable, healthy and prosperous global environment—the kind of setting in which Americans can thrive.

A little more than a century ago, a U.S. President asked our armed forces to cross the ocean to make the world safe for democracy. Today, we must support democracy to make the world safe.

And we should do so with confidence.

Despite recent setbacks, we know that democracy is resilient and that so too is the United States. Our economy is one of the strongest and most innovative in the world because we have a system of government that supports the rule of law and protect the rights of individuals.

We know as well that, even now, no words speak more powerfully to the aspirations of all people than that singular pledge of “liberty and justice for all.”

As President Biden wrote in the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance issued last week, “we must prove that our model isn't a relic of history; it's the single best way to realize the promise of the future.”

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, there is much more I could say, but your time is precious and so I will stop now and look forward to any questions you might have.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Madam Secretary. We look forward to that opportunity to ask questions. Ambassador Dobriansky.

**STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR PAULA J. DOBRIANSKY,
FORMER UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR GLOBAL AF-
FAIRS, WASHINGTON, DC**

Ambassador DOBRIANSKY. Thank you, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and other distinguished members of this committee. Good morning, and thank you also for inviting me to appear before you today to discuss a topic of great importance to the United States and to our allies. This hearing is timely and welcome, and I am also very delighted to share this panel with Secretary Albright. I will submit my full testimony, but I am going to try to abbreviate it to stay within the time frame.

Great power and competition defines the current international environment and shapes the prospects for democracy development. China and Russia are seeking to diminish American power and influence, fragment our alliances, and undermine other national security interests of the United States. We can expect strategic competition with Beijing and Moscow to continue and even intensify. How to deal with these threats should be a central focus of U.S. foreign policy going forward. Defending democracy and universal freedoms must be a key element of U.S. strategy.

Speaking at the Munich Security Conference in 2007, Russian President Vladimir Putin warned of a new era of confrontation with the West, asserting Russia's prerogative to carry out an independent foreign policy. He asserted that Western values are not Russian values. And despite over two decades of efforts to incentivize China to be a responsible stakeholder, its leaders continue to pursue aggressive regional and global behavior, to violate international trade norms and standards, and to commit egregious human rights abuses against its own people, including Tibetans and Uyghurs. As I speak today, Beijing is also tearing up the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration and stripping away Hong Kong's democracy.

China and Russia have become increasingly aligned, even though they have not established a formal alliance. As Steve Hadley and I wrote in the Atlantic Council's Insights Memo, Russian and Chinese leaders share an authoritarian, ideological orientation, and perceive American power and democratic values as a threat. They are working together more closely to undermine American influence and discredit our political economic and social system. In Latin America, Africa, Europe, and the Middle East, China and Russia have used proxies, economic instruments, disinformation campaigns, election interference, corrupt relationships, energy resources, and soft power to subvert both fragile and well-established democratic governments, and, thus, to foment instability. They have engaged Iran, Venezuela, and Cuba in these anti-American efforts.

Venezuela is a flashpoint for Chinese and Russian investment and malign influence. Both nations have invested billions into Venezuela, taking advantage of its economic and political weakness, its vast petroleum resources, and their close relationships with a corrupt Maduro regime. Russian arms manufacturers sold \$4 billion worth of weapons to Venezuela over the last 10 years, and China has invested some \$67 billion in Venezuela since 2007. These in-

struments have propped up an illegitimate government and have undermined prospects for democracy, but it does not stop there.

Russian disinformation and election interference campaigns have targeted Columbia. In late 2019, Colombian Vice President Marta Lucia Ramirez accused Russia and its allies in Venezuela of fomenting protests through social media campaigns. A few months later, New York Times journalist, Lara Jakes, reported on a State Department assessment that described Russian-linked social media accounts as conducting an influence campaign. That campaign has been under way not only in Colombia, but elsewhere in South America. By undermining democracies in the region, Russia and China seek to create instability in our backyard.

Russia and China have expanded investments in Africa as well. In 2003, annual Chinese direct investment in Africa was just \$75 million, but by 2009, it reached \$2.7 billion. Through its One Belt One Road Initiative, China is offering fragile democracies in Africa new rail lines, highways, and other infrastructure projects. African nations are finding that these projects have left them with massive debt and a lack of control. Russia is also increasing its investments in Africa, too, especially its military presence. It is striving to create a Red Sea Naval Logistics Facility in Sudan.

Russia and China are waging a fierce battle against democracy through disinformation campaigns, cyber intrusions, investments, and attacks on Western values. China's substantial economic, financial, and technological leverage also constrains how countries can respond to this, whether in Europe, the Middle East, or elsewhere. So defining democracy and promoting democracy and human rights—defending and promoting democracy and human rights abroad is not only a moral imperative, but also a sound strategic approach.

Let me just briefly respond to what are the most effective means of achieving this core objective: a strong military and economic foundation at home; working closely with our allies and other nations to advance a coherent, compelling moral narrative about democracy and Western values; overcoming others' complacency to secure the support in challenging the falsehoods put forth by Moscow and Beijing; providing fragile democracies with humanitarian assistance through USAID as well as democracy support through such institutions as the NED family, the Development Finance Corporation, and EXIM Bank; imposing targeted sanctions against specific activities, such as Russia's energy investments in Venezuela; sanctioning government officials or others responsible for corruption and human rights violations through the Global Magnitsky Act of 2016. I have strongly advocated for the use of Global Magnitsky against Cuban officials and their accomplices who have committed gross violations of human rights, including modern-day slavery by trafficking of doctors, work to destabilize democracies in the Western Hemisphere, and collaboration with China, Iran, and Russia. And significantly, in January of this year, Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets designated the Cuban Ministry of Interior and the first Cuban official, the minister of interior, Lazaro Alberto Alvarez Casas, for serious human rights abuses against Jose Daniel Ferrer, who is held in a Ministry of Interior-controlled prison.

So, in conclusion, let me say Ronald Reagan advanced a foreign policy predicated on U.S. global leadership, military strength, and moral clarity. We bolstered our ties to democratic allies, challenged regimes hostile to our interests and values, and promoted political and economic freedom abroad. This strategic approach advanced both U.S. interests and global freedom. It was successful then and can be successful today. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Dobriansky follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR DOBRIANSKY

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and other distinguished members of this Committee, good morning and thank you for inviting me to appear before you today to discuss a topic of great importance to the United States and to our allies. This hearing is timely and welcome.

Great power competition defines the current international environment and shapes the prospects for democracy development. China and Russia are seeking to diminish American power and influence, fragment our alliances, and undermine other U.S. national security interests. We can expect strategic competition with Beijing and Moscow to continue and even intensify. How to deal with these threats should be a central focus of U.S. foreign policy going forward. Defending democracy and universal freedoms must be a key element of U.S. strategy.

Speaking at the Munich Security Conference in 2007, Russian President Vladimir Putin warned of a new era of confrontation with the West, asserting Russia's prerogative to "carry out an independent foreign policy." He asserted that Western values are not Russian values. And despite over two decades of efforts to incentivize China to be a "responsible stakeholder," its leaders continue to pursue aggressive regional and global behavior, to violate international trade norms and standards, and to commit egregious human rights abuses against its own people, including Tibetans and Uighurs. As I speak today, Beijing is tearing up the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration and stripping away Hong Kong's democracy.

China and Russia have also become increasingly aligned, even though they have not established a formal alliance. As Steve Hadley and I wrote in an Atlantic Council Insights Memo, "Russian and Chinese leaders share an authoritarian ideological orientation and perceive American power and democratic values as a threat." They are working together more closely to undermine American influence and discredit our political, economic and social system.

In Latin America, Africa, Europe and the Middle East, China and Russia have used proxies, economic instruments, disinformation campaigns, election interference, corrupt relationships, energy resources, and soft power to subvert both fragile and well-established democratic governments and thus to foment instability. They have engaged Iran, Venezuela and Cuba in these anti-American efforts.

Venezuela is a flashpoint for Chinese and Russian investment and malign influence. Both nations have invested billions into Venezuela taking advantage of its economic and political weakness, its vast petroleum resources, and their close relationships with the corrupt Maduro regime. Russia's state oil firm, Rosneft, imported 503,000 barrels per day of oil in 2019, 62 percent of Venezuela's total oil exports that year. Russian arms manufacturers sold \$4 billion worth of weapons to Venezuela over the last 10 years. And China has invested \$67 billion in Venezuela since 2007. These investments have propped up an illegitimate government and have undermined prospects for democracy. Iran and Venezuela have cooperated to bypass damaging U.S. sanctions on both their countries. Iran has also sent ships to Venezuela loaded with gasoline and petroleum refining equipment, technical experts and supplies.

But it doesn't stop there. Russian disinformation and election interference campaigns have targeted Colombia. In late 2019, Colombian Vice President Marta Lucia Ramirez accused Russia and its allies in Venezuela of fomenting protests through social media campaigns. A few months later, New York Times journalist Lara Jakes reported on a State Department assessment that described Russian-linked social media accounts as conducting "an influence campaign." The campaign had been underway not only in Colombia, but elsewhere in South America, including Chile, Bolivia and Ecuador. By undermining democracies in the region, Russia and China seek to create instability in our backyard.

Russia and China have expanded investments in Africa as well. In 2003, annual Chinese foreign direct investment in Africa was just \$75 million. By 2019, it reached \$2.7 billion. Through its One Belt One Road Initiative, China is offering fragile de-

mocracies in Africa new rail lines, highways, and other infrastructure projects. African nations are finding that these projects have left them with massive debt and a lack of control. Russia is increasing its investments in Africa too, especially its military presence, by sending mercenaries to Mozambique, Libya, and the Central African Republic. Moscow is striving to create a Red Sea naval logistics facility in Sudan too.

China and Russia are waging a fierce battle against democracy through disinformation campaigns, cyber intrusions, investment, and attacks on Western values. China's substantial economic, financial and technological leverage constrains how many countries can respond to this, in Europe, the Middle East, and elsewhere.

Defending and promoting democracy and human rights abroad is not only a moral imperative but also a sound strategic approach. What are the most effective means of achieving this core objective? There are several:

- a strong military and economic foundation at home,
- working closely with our allies and other nations to advance a coherent, compelling moral narrative about democracy and Western values,
- overcoming others' complacency to secure their support in challenging the falsehoods put forth by Moscow and Beijing,
- countering influence operations in social media and exposing them for what they are,
- providing fragile democracies with humanitarian assistance through USAID as well as democracy support through institutions such as NED, IRI, NDI, the Development Finance Corporation, and Eximbank,
- imposing targeted sanctions against specific activities (such as Russia's energy investments in Venezuela), and
- sanctioning government officials or others responsible for corruption and human rights violations through the Global Magnitsky Act of 2016, including asset freezes, travel bans and exclusion from financial services.

I have strongly advocated for the use of Global Magnitsky against Cuban officials and their accomplices, who have committed gross violations of human rights, including modern day slavery by trafficking of doctors, worked to destabilize democracies in the Western Hemisphere and collaborated with China, Iran, and Russia. Significantly, in January 2021, Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets designated the Cuban Ministry of Interior and the first Cuban official, the Minister of Interior, Lazaro Alberto Alvarez Casas, for serious human rights abuses against Jose Daniel Ferrer held in a Ministry of Interior-controlled prison.

Ronald Reagan advanced a foreign policy predicated on U.S. global leadership, military strength and moral clarity. We bolstered our ties to democratic allies, challenged regimes hostile to our interests and values, and promoted political and economic freedom abroad. This strategic approach advanced both U.S. interests and global freedom. It was successful then and can be successful today.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you very much to both of you for your testimony. Let me start a series of 5-minute rounds here for this first panel.

Secretary Albright, China is one of our biggest challenges in the context of democracy and human rights. What do you think are some of the most effective ways for the United States to push back on China's efforts to erase the tenets, principles, and international organizations that have enabled so much human progress?

Secretary ALBRIGHT. Mr. Chairman, I do think that there is no question that China is our biggest problem and that they are out there hustling in every single way. And I have made very clear that with the Belt and Road policies that they are undertaking, the Chinese must be getting very fat because the belt keeps getting larger and larger, and some of it does have to do with the fact that we have been absent and they are filling a vacuum. And so we need to make clear that we need to be back, and really do need to make clear in so many ways that we are a leader in restoring and building democracy in other countries.

I do think that we have to speak out very clearly about what the problems are with the Chinese behavior and that it is a complex relationship. One has to say that they are an adversary, there is no question, militarily in terms of the kinds of things that they are doing in the South and East China Sea and threatening Taiwan. They are a competitor in so many different ways in undermining various rules of technology and stealing international—intellectual property, and they are competing with us in so many ways, but there are issues on which we have to cooperate. And I was very interested in reading this morning that there already is a way for there to be cooperation on dealing through the G20 with Secretary Yellen and a Chinese representative from the Central Bank on some of the economic aspects of climate change.

So it is a complex relationship, but the most important thing we have to do is tell the truth and speak out when what they have done in Hong Kong is unacceptable. I was there when we did the turnover, and the bottom line is this is not the way that it was supposed to work out, and we have to push back on that. And I do think that some of our measures have to do with imposing a series of sanctions on those who are responsible, and we also have made—have to make absolutely clear that we will not waver on our relationship with Taiwan.

I was very interested that President Biden in his Interim National Security Guidance made very clear that we would continue to work with Taiwan and to be able to push back on whatever threat there is to them, but it is the most complicated relationship we have with China. We have to pay very close attention. We have to use the tools we have, which are the military, the diplomatic, and the economic through sanctions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Last week, Freedom House published their annual Freedom in the World report. They called it “Democracy under Siege.” It highlights that 2020 was the 15th consecutive year of decline in global freedom and the corrosive efforts of China and Russia to curtail freedom. Other disturbing trends include the rise of digital authoritarianism, the exploitation of COVID-19 by liberal leaders to close space for civil society journalists and human rights defenders. So what would you both say is the main drivers for this decline, and is there a difference between the threats to establish democracies compared to threats to developing or fragile democracies? We will start with you, Ambassador Dobriansky.

Ambassador DOBRIANSKY. Thank you for the question. I would start with a number of factors that have, I think, contributed. As my opening remarks indicated, I think the activism of both China and Russia both have worked extremely hard to undermine Western values and they have stated it very openly and very directly, and this is not new. That is why I cited, starting with Putin’s remarks in the Munich Security Conference of 2007 and moving forward. Both have tried to justify the kind of violations of human rights and the kind of suppression that exists both in Russia and China and deflect what is happening there elsewhere.

Secondly, it is very much geared against the United States, seeking to diminish our power, no less, and our influence, no less the very values that we stand for, and also our alliances and fragment our alliances. I would start with that. And then secondly, I think

we have been complacent. I think over the last decades and in these 15 years, when you look at it, there has been a kind of complacency where we have almost taken for granted that we are strong, that our values have permeated and have been taken on across the globe. And I think it is a wake-up call that we have to work harder at this.

And then I would also add that in the mix, that you do have a number of rogue regimes that have also added on to Russia and China and the greater closeness of their relationship, which has really come about more in recent years, militarily, economically, and politically, and that, too, with the assistance of Iran, Cuba, among others, Venezuela, Nicaragua, that also has furthered that case. Finally, because you mentioned the digital piece, I think that we are also seeing the advent of technologies and the degree to which technologies have also the—changed the way in which we need to advocate for democracy, that there are new instruments that are, in fact, being used and which we have to be more vigilant, aggressive, and actually redesign our advocacy for democracy and our defense of democracy, and I think that is an area where we have come up short. We have been under attack, and we need to be out in front.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Senator Risch.

Senator RISCH. Thank you. Secretary Albright, let me start with you on a question I would have about this subject generally, and that is your proposition about the Community of Democracies. You know, it amazes me that there are countries who claim to be democracies that have things in place that are—that are not democratic at all. They think holding an election is all you need to do to claim yourself a democracy where we know that a democracy—the basis of a democracy is that power is in the hands of the people and not in the hands of a regime that can hang on through military might or what have you. And how do you—how do you handle that? How do you underscore the fact that simply because you have an election does not mean you are a democracy?

I think probably the best example of that, and there are a number of countries around the world that do this, but Iran has an election, and so why are they not a democracy? Well, they are not a democracy because a committee gets together and decides who can run and who cannot run, and that way the—those that are in charge, a regime, holds power by holding an election and then claiming it is a democracy. How do you push back on that? What are your thoughts on that? What are the arguments on that?

Secretary ALBRIGHT. Well, thank you very much for asking that. And let me say when we started the Community of Democracies, one of the whole problems—excuse me—was whom do you invite.

Senator RISCH. Right.

Secretary ALBRIGHT. You know, exactly as you say, not only some that were doing the opposite kind of things than democracies, but those that had very fragile democracies that were not really working. And so that has been the problem with the Community of Democracies. And as people think about how to have a democracy summit, one has to kind of think about who do—whom do you invite and who are the—which are the countries that need to be supported with nascent democracies and those that need help when

they are fragile democracies. There are a number of different ways of dividing all that up.

I do think the question of elections is always interesting because the thing that I have always said is elections are necessary, but not sufficient. Obviously they are a beginning, but there is a requirement for a set of institutional structures that go with them that establish a rule of law that is absolutely essential that is able to deal with some of the problems of corruption in various democracies, that is also able to deal with how people behave with each other, the establishment of a civil society that really operates and how democracy has to deliver. I think that is one of the problems. There are always these discussions about how and whether economic and—economic policy is also part of a democracy building policy, and I have said yes because people want to vote and eat. And, therefore, there has to be a way that some of the economic divisions that have been created are not exacerbated by those who make them worse, but in some ways, there is a way of dealing with what used to be called the social contract, and that people are, in fact, treated fairly, that the state has a responsibility towards them, and that they have a responsibility towards the state.

But it is a very difficult issue, and I am very glad that you all are considering this, is how do you decide what is a democracy, and the truth is that a democracy is always a journey. That is part of it, and we can never think that it is done, and there is—we have just shown the problems that we as the world's oldest democracy have had. We see the problems in India, which is the world's largest democracy, and that there has to be some way to determine which—what are the tools that we use, along with our partners, in trying to strengthen new democracies, how we deal with fragile democracies, and how we do not let them be taken advantage of.

But as has been mentioned—Ambassador Dobriansky did—the issues of technology, which are under—technology is really an incredible gift, but it also has become a tool for those who want to undermine democracy. So you have set out a very large goal for all of us—Congress, and the executive branch, and those of us that are out of government—in terms of the various parts that we can work on with the National Endowment of Democracy, our various partners in that, in order to push back against those who think they have a democracy when they have an election, or when they decide not to live up to their constitutions by saying, yes, we will just extend the terms that we have, which are part of the questions that are going on in Africa at this particular time.

Senator RISCH. Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, I wonder, this is the foundational question really of what we are talking about here. I wonder if you would give Ambassador Dobriansky an opportunity to respond to that. I know my time is up, but—

The CHAIRMAN. Please go ahead.

Senator RISCH. Thank you.

Ambassador DOBRIANSKY. And I will try to give a very brief answer. Secretary Albright is correct in saying that in thinking about the Community of Democracies, it is a challenge. It is a challenge in determining who is at the table. And my answer to you would be that it was not perfect, and we erred on the side, quite frankly, of looking at those democracies that were solid, those democracies

that were fragile, and by putting them at the table, it would actually be in our interest and may be in their interest in doing so, and then excluding those that we felt absolutely should not be at the table. And, quite frankly, I will say to you that one of the toughest decisions was actually dealing with who is represented from the Middle East.

And I remember quite well because, when I was under secretary and we held the first Community of Democracies meeting. By the way, it happened to be in South Korea. But in a later meeting, I remember that we had a lot of challenges because of also evolution of democracy. As the Secretary said, democracy is—and the evolution of democracy is not linear, and you are going to experience challenges. So even though you have a certain group at the table, then it may not be the same group as you go on.

But I would end on this note. There was another component to this that I think was also important which we advocated for very strongly, that you not only have country representation, but you also have the representation of the NGOs.

Senator RISCH. Right.

Ambassador DOBRIANSKY. And, bluntly speaking, some of the countries were very resistant to that being the case, but we persevered and we ensured that NGOs were also at the table so there was a transparent, open discussion.

Senator RISCH. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Senator Cardin, I understand, is with us virtually.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and let me thank both of our witnesses. There is no question that democracy is a journey, and there is no question that globally we are seeing a significant decline in democracies and the—how democratic—our so-called democratic states are. So it is clearly a critically-important point for the United States' future and security to strengthen and preserve democracies starting at home, but globally. So as we look at how we go about doing it, I could not agree more with our witnesses that the U.S. must be in the leadership, and we must devote the resources. That means we have to devote the resources in our missions and diplomacy, our foreign assistance, all of the above. And I want to just point to one area of grave concern, and, that is, we have seen not only a decline of democracy globally, but we have seen a rise of corruption globally. And every country has corruption, but in autocratic states, generally the corrupt system finances the autocratic policies, and the violations of human rights, and the ability to maintain power in the country.

So let us talk about what we could do to strengthen our anti-corruption efforts. First, let me talk a little bit about foreign aid, and let us talk about this because we have used foreign assistance to try to strengthen good governance in countries, and yet we have had limited success. I point to Central America, which is a country that has had significant problems of corruption, or Ukraine. Is there a better way that we can use our foreign aid? Should it be larger? Should it be more focused in order to deal with the institutions that are important to preserve democracy and to fight corruption? Both of you have mentioned the use of sanctions, something that I strongly support. Sanctions worked. Look at all the fuss over

Dan Gertler's attempt to get an exception from the sanctions and how significant it was that President Biden reversed that particular decision, or look at the topic in the first summit meeting between President Putin and President Trump. The Magnitsky sanctions clearly were brought up. They are working, and I—we strongly support that, and Senator Wicker and I have introduced legislation to reauthorize and make permanent the Global Magnitsky statute here in the United States. So we can clearly use sanctions more effectively.

But I just really want to mention one other tool that Senator Young and I are working on, and that is to use the model of Trafficking in Persons where we have transparency in what every country is doing to fight modern-day slavery, to use a similar method to evaluate how well countries are doing in fighting corruption, and then using that as our guide for our bilateral relations.

So I just would like to give both of our witnesses an opportunity, if they could, to respond. How important is it for us to fight corruption, and how effective have we been in our efforts to rid the financial support of autocratic governments through use of a corrupt system?

Secretary ALBRIGHT. Senator, if I might, I think that it is—corruption is the cancer of democracy, and I think it is something that has to be worked on very actively. I think your last point about using some of the legal methods that we have is very important and to look at other models. I think that there are several things that can be done better, but this is always disputable whether some of our assistance needs to be conditioned on a series of things that have to happen specifically, and whether there really is a way to measure whether those conditions are being met.

And one of the whole aspects of what the—France's NDI works on a lot is to establish institutions with the importance of the rule of law and make sure that it is really carried out, but that needs really help in terms of—I hate to say this—but the threats of the sanctions. Sanctions are a way, I think, to individualize more what—the various steps that have to be taken, and to really make clear that those are kind of targeted sanctions on those that are the villains in this literally, and then also help the legal government to deal with them itself through their legal systems. But I do think that we are not going to be able to find ourselves into a positive place in supporting democracy everywhere if we do not recognize that corruption is the cancer that we are dealing with that has to be eliminated through the steps that I have outlined and Paula has also.

Ambassador DOBRIANSKY. Thank you. Senator Cardin, corruption certainly does tear at the very fiber of democracy. It is the cancer, as Secretary Albright said. The three propositions you put forward I agree with. First, I do think that foreign aid should be allocated towards this purpose in strengthening rule of law and judicial processes in order to ensure that corruption is stemmed. Also, you mentioned the Trafficking in Persons model. I happened, as you may recall, to have been the undersecretary of state when the first Trafficking in Persons Office actually was established at the State Department. I know that model well, and I think you are right in putting that forward as food for thought here. It has been a very effec-

tive one in dealing with trafficked victims and stemming the tide there, although it is still a human rights abuse in many countries.

And then I want to go to sanctions. I believe firmly in the effective deployment of sanctions, and particularly targeted sanctions. And I do not know if you heard, but in my opening remarks, I particularly focused on Global Magnitsky, how effective it has been, and I was delighted to see that Global Magnitsky was deployed for the first time ever, in fact, against Cuba and identifying the Cuban minister of interior, and for the kind of human rights abuses that he has presided over, particularly with regard to Jose Daniel Ferrer. But also I have advocated for putting corruption into Global Magnitsky because it is not just about human rights abuses. It is also about corruption, and what we have seen certainly with the trafficked Cuban doctors, which relates to human rights abuses and outright corruption. So I think, Senator, what you have said is exactly right, and that is what we should be doing.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator CARDIN. Let me just thank both the witnesses.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator CARDIN. I did hear your opening statement. I have been listening to it, but let me just point out that the U.S. Global Magnitsky law does apply to corruption. Unfortunately, the European version is not as strong and it is something we should be working on. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Senator Romney.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to both of the witnesses on this panel. Most instructive. We have seen the retreat of freedom in numerous countries around the world, and you have both described the malevolent effort on the part of Russia and China in pushing their agenda. Why are we failing? Why are we less successful? We are the largest economy in the world. We spend massive amounts on our military, on our soft power, and yet we are—we are seeing the retreat of that which is essential to our freedom and to our prosperity and to the well-being of people throughout the world. If you had to help us understand what we are not doing right and what we need to do differently, what might that be? And let me start with Secretary Albright and then Ambassador Dobriansky.

Secretary ALBRIGHT. Thank you very much, Senator Romney. I think that it is a basic question as to why we are failing. I do think that in some ways, we were taking too much for granted at the end of the Cold War when all of a sudden there was this great spurt of democracy and countries wanted to figure out how to have democratic governments. They did not have the infrastructure for it. And it is interesting because President Reagan, when he spoke in Parliament, he said that the problem was that we were not very good at defining “democracy” versus “communism,” and I think that is true. That is why we—he established the National Endowment and the various institutes under it, and we were doing very well, frankly, immediately after the Cold War.

And I think—and I keep asking myself the question of then what happened. And I think that we took for granted in many ways that countries would automatically understand that there were still malevolent forces within the countries that were going to undermine

it, and that the various economic divisions were then—they are set out for demagogic leaders to exacerbate. I also think that we have been somewhat naive about the methods that the Russians specifically—we are dealing with a former KGB officer. Putin knows how to use a variety of tactics to undermine other countries and is using the new technology in ways that we have not developed a good enough defense system.

And so I do think that one of the things that is going to have to happen, and from my sense, is that as I read some of the Biden material, they are aware of the kind of undermining that is being done through cyber and misinformation in the way that technology is being used, and the Chinese and the others are doing it. And so I think that having this kind of a hearing and having really the sense that we have, one, not paid enough attention, we have been AWOL, two, that, in fact, we have not used our “public diplomacy tools” well enough in order to counter a lot of what is going on, and really then have more defensive ways of dealing with the cyberattacks and things that have been going on, and understanding that there are an awful lot of holes in the way that we are responding to this new threat.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you, Madam Secretary.

Ambassador DOBRIANSKY. Senator, thank you for the question. I would use the term which I used before in response to the Chairman’s first question, which is “complacency.” I believe that we have been very complacent about what we are about, and when I look at the past and certainly post-cold War to the present time, we have not been engaged in advocating, strongly advocating for our values and what we are about. So complacency, I think, has been problematic, but combined with the fact that we have not adjusted to the new kind of ideological warfare.

I remember that you years back had identified Russia as our geopolitical foe, and absolutely we have to adapt to the kinds of instruments that are being used to undermine not just our values, but values in human freedoms at large. There is this kind of effort that is taking place, as my statement just started off with, the great power competition, which is geared specifically to undermining not just U.S. power and to fragment our alliances, but, in fact, to stem the tide of democracy development. So complacency has to be addressed, an awareness of the kinds of new instruments that we should be using to advance democracy.

And I would also add in this a moral narrative, and the moral narrative is truly important, and not just us. It has to be with our allies, our partners, those who subscribe to democratic values, to understand that there is this kind of ideological challenge and battle of ideas. And finally, I would just say, which I think is the essence of this hearing, which I welcome very much today, and that is that democracy needs to be a core element of U.S. foreign policy, and integrated at the front end, as has been said many times here this morning, not at the back end.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Senator Coons.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, I think it is a great signal that we are doing this hearing on democracy early in this Congress, and that

the message that you have sent with your opening statements with your engagement is of coming together around this important and urgent work of defending democracy. We have got two great witnesses on our first panel to hear the questions that have been asked about Venezuela, about Cuba, about Sudan, about Ethiopia, about countries around the world where democracy is on its back foot. And where authoritarian forces, like the regimes in China and Russia, and some of their partners in Venezuela, and Iran, and Cuba are on the march. It gives me a sense of encouragement that we are having this bipartisan and purposeful conversation at this critical moment in the arc of democracy in human history.

So if I could, to Madam Secretary, Secretary Albright, your opening was just tremendous and inspiring. I was texting two of my kids who are college students and said, if you can find this right now, you should watch it. It is more important than anything you are learning in class. And to Under Secretary Dobriansky, thank you as well for your voice, and your service, and for your engagement.

I do not think that our toolkit has kept up with the emerging threats to democracy, and, in particular—in particular, both the manipulation of technology by authoritarian regimes. The chairman put out a very powerful report about digital authoritarianism and the ways in which China is using the tools in the digital age. But I also do not think we have matched it with good old-fashioned engagement, outreach, and investment. The Development Finance Corporation is an attempt in a small way at answering the Belt and Road Initiative. The Millennium Challenge Corporation is an attempt at continuing to engage in development in fragile states where we are trying to provide support. But we are under funding democracy and governance, and I think we are underutilizing those tools.

As the chairman in this Congress of the Appropriations subcommittee that will help give some resources and some lift to these initiatives, I would welcome your thoughts, Madam Secretary, Madam Under Secretary, on how we can strengthen our toolkits so that those countries that are fragile and that are backsliding that want to choose to come our way have got both the means and the ability to do so before civil space closes irreparably, and before they end up captured in the debt trap diplomacy of the Belt and Road Initiative irreversibly. Madam Secretary, if I could first go to you.

Secretary ALBRIGHT. Well, thank you very much, and I do think that part of the problem has been—is that there is a movement on the other side. There is kind of rising nationalism in a number of different countries, which is interpreted in many ways in creating what has been now called illiberal democracies. Hungary is a perfect example of that where Orban, who used to be one of our favorite dissidents, all of a sudden decided that he was going to use the problem of immigrants or ethnic groups within Hungary to try to make nationalism greater and then pushing back on democracy in every way. By the way, one of the books I wrote was called “Fascism: A Warning,” and I do think that it is—it was a warning in terms of the fact that the basic divisions that are in society are then exacerbated by those leaders who want to make them worse, identify with one group at the expense of another who then become

the scapegoat. So I think we need to look generally at what is going on in countries.

I also do think that we need to make our tools stronger or sharper, so to speak. I think that—I will obviously speak very strongly about the importance of funding the National Endowment for Democracy, various groupings, and we work together. By the way, one of the things that I always enjoy as chairman of NDI is to work with Senator Sullivan and IRI and do things together to show that working in bipartisanship is very important, that something that is the basic element of democracy is respect for an opposition party. So us working together and getting funding is—I cannot begin to stress how important it is. And I will be very happy, if I am welcomed, specifically to talk about the budgets because I do think they make a difference.

I also think that we have not done enough recently to really look at how information can be exchanged—not propaganda, but information—and that the various instruments that are part of that have been either underfunded or have been malignly used in different ways. And we are dealing with a very different kind of system, as I mentioned earlier, that the Russians are able to use from their Communist Party experience. And I do think that what we have to figure out is how to put our money in a way where it really does make a difference, and the aid programs, and you mentioned the MCC and a number of ways. And you have been instrumental in helping the Institute of Peace—by the way, Paula and I were on this together—about how to deal with fragile states because they then become petri dishes for those who hate us and are very dangerous. And I think we need to keep examining how to do that.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Madam Secretary. If I might, just a closing point that Senator Cornyn and I have a bipartisan bill about strengthening civics education within the United States. In recent surveys, there are as many young Americans who support and believe in socialism as believe in capitalism. There are profound doubts about democracy, particularly after the events of January 6th and the disinformation about the value and legitimacy of free and open societies that we have lived through. It is my hope that on a bipartisan basis, we can move to a renewed investment in civics education to strengthen our own democracies you have both spoken to.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator COONS. Mr. Chairman, I see my time has expired, and I appreciate your indulgence.

The CHAIRMAN. Absolutely.

Ambassador DOBRIANSKY. Mr. Chairman, may I give a—

The CHAIRMAN. If you can—

Ambassador DOBRIANSKY. I will be very fast. I just want to say the Senate—

The CHAIRMAN. I am sorry. Time wise, we are a little constrained, so.

Ambassador DOBRIANSKY. I am going to be very fast. The Senate—Senator, you are correct on the toolkit. We definitely need to ramp up our toolkit. Secondly, you mentioned the Development Finance Corporation and also EXIM Bank and—or MCC. Both play an important role. And I did want to add EXIM Bank, and the rea-

son why I happen to chair the Chairman's Council on China Competition at EXIM Bank, and, quite frankly, our businesses are not on a level playing field, quite frankly, with what the Chinese are doing. So, let me just say it is an important question, and it is one that has to be dealt with, the toolkit.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much. I am sure, as the chairman of the subcommittee, he will have—Senator Coons will have opportunities to further involve himself in getting the expertise he wants to hear from, but thank you for the question. With that, I understand that Senator Johnson is with us virtually.

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Johnson?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. Well, maybe we will come back to him. I understand that Senator Paul is with us virtually.

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Paul?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. Then let us go to Senator Rounds, who I understand is with us virtually.

Senator ROUNDS. Yes, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Rounds is recognized.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, and I would just like to take this opportunity to thank both of our panelists today for their service to our country, and thank you very much for your expert testimony today as well.

I think the most recent conversations that have been going on here, I think, are getting to the heart of something that we should discuss in more detail with regards to those countries who we would love to have join the group of democracies around the world. They look at the United States as someone, an organization that they would love to have as an ally, as a friend, as a partner in business, and working in humanitarian efforts as well. And yet in many cases, we are seen as coming in as a big brother and basically looking at them saying, we are going to tell you how you ought to do business. We are going to tell you how you should change things in your own country. At the same time, you have both Russia and China, as you have indicated, both looking at our very open society and the way that we not only are self-critical, which is appropriate, where we try to make ourselves a more perfect union, they see it as saying that we are not perfect and we should not be criticizing those who we are suggesting that we know better than.

And yet at the same time, while both Russia and China are more than willing to criticize us and to point that out to the individual organizations or countries or leaders in countries that we are not perfect, they also come in with a huge toolkit, and I wanted to explore that just a little bit more. How do we as a Nation not only come in to say, look, we think there is a better way, and we think it is more appropriate to exercise a government which is democratic in nature, and at the same time, though, say that we want to be your business partner? What are we missing in the tool bag? Both of you have kind of spoken to the fact that that tool bag is so critical. Could you take just a few minutes and share with us what you

think are the items in the tool bag that either need to be improved upon or that need to be added?

Secretary ALBRIGHT. May I start? I do think that one of the things that we have made a point of with NDI is not to go around just saying it is the American way or no other way. I do think that it is important to work with other democratic countries to talk about that there is no one exact model, but that it is really the role of the people, and civil society, and the rule of law, but not—you cannot impose democracy. That is an oxymoron. What you can do is be supportive of various things in the countries that are going in that direction, but also make clear that it is not just American democracy. I think that is an important part.

I also do think, and I think this more and more, is that we need to have a different relationship with the private sector, the NGOs and civil society clearly, and then educational institutions, but also businesses because, as I said earlier, the economies in those countries have to be assisted because people want to vote and eat. And there has to be a way that the private sector is brought in very early, not at the end, in order to figure out how to help improve those societies so that that economic disparity is—disappears and that there is an equal opportunity, and that it does not give the opportunity for authoritarians that are trying to do something else to exacerbate those divisions. But I think we need to look more specifically at how to improve the toolbox, sharpen it. It is not as if we do not have the tools. We just are not using them, I think, in a very clever way.

The CHAIRMAN. Mm-hmm.

Ambassador DOBRIANSKY. I agree with everything that the Secretary has said. I would say, Senator, that in some democracies, you cannot just pick it up and transplant a model onto the soil of another country. It does not work. So what is crucial in terms of a strategic approach, you have to work with the grassroots. You have to be guided by what is happening on the ground, and every country is different in that regard. I think the Secretary is absolutely right in highlighting the private sector working with businesses, and I would only add one piece to that, and that is something that both NDI and IRI and the entire NED family has done. And that is that it is not just the United States reaching out, but actually we co-partner. We do projects with Australians. Let us take Burma, in the case of Burma, working with the French and working with the Australians. That kind of partnership also, I think, adds strength to the advancement of democracy. It is not unilateral.

Senator ROUNDS. I think sometimes one of the best toolbox—or tools that we have in the toolbox is the relationship that we have with other allies when we join together to help. And I cannot tell whether I have any time left or not, but, Mr. Chairman, I will yield back if I do. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. The senator is just right about on the button. Thank you very much. Senator Kaine has been waiting patiently and chairs the subcommittee on one of the most important parts of the world where this question is very prevalent, in the Western Hemisphere.

Senator KAINÉ. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and what great witnesses. So just looking at the news this morning before I came, I saw two interesting announcements that exemplify the topic. The first was an announcement by the Quad—U.S., India, Australia, Japan—that they are going to join together to accelerate the development of vaccines in India to use in India and other countries in Southeast Asia, democracies in the region working together for something good. The second was an announcement by China and Russia that they are joining together to explore building a lunar space base together on the moon, so cooperation between authoritarian adversaries that have traditionally been pretty skeptical of each other. This is high stakes stuff right now.

The question that I want to ask, Senator Romney asked why are we not being more successful, and, Madam Ambassador, you said complacency. I think there is another “C” word that I want to make sure we get right and that is “consistency.” You know, I think if you look at the history of democracy promotion initiatives of the United States, you often run into some consistency challenges. In this hemisphere, the U.S. helped topple the Guatemalan left-leaning democratically-elected government in 1954, Chilean left-leaning democratically-elected governor—government 1973. But there has been sort of a tradition of tolerating the strong men on the right side, dictators, under the “he is an SOB, but our SOB,” apocryphal language that has been used about Somoza or about Trujillo.

Even more recently, the OAS that we want to strengthen to perform in the hemisphere did courageous work in calling out Venezuela, and we used that courageous work of the OAS to help assemble other nations that would pressure Venezuela. But when the OAS called out irregularities in the Honduran elections in 2017 and said the election should be rerun, the United States just went ahead and recognized the president anyway. And that president is now the subject of a massive drug prosecution that is going on in New York as we speak for helping potentially foment drug importation into the United States.

So I think sometimes when countries around the world look at us, they wonder are we being consistent about promoting democracy. A critique of the Cold War, for example, was President Truman announced the Truman Doctrine to protect democracies against authoritarians, but over time, it sort of devolved into check the Soviet Union, and we did not even mind authoritarians as long as they were not pro-Soviet Union. So the question is for both of you. How important is it, if we are going to promote democracy that we do it consistently and call out abuses, whether they are by left-leaning governments or right-wing governments?

Secretary ALBRIGHT. Senator, you have asked, I think, or made a point that is one of the most difficult ones. I teach, and I teach about decision making in the United States and foreign policy. And one of the hardest issues is consistency because we are inconsistent, and there are times that I have to admit that sometimes we have to be inconsistent because we cannot just cut off relations with a particular country, and so I do think this is the hardest question. I do think that what we need to do, however, is always call out the kinds of aspects that you have raised, which may not necessarily lead to us cutting off relationships with that country,

but that we need to at least make clear to the people within that country that we think that what has happened is inconsistent with the kinds of policies of developing democracy and helping them.

But I do think the hardest question is whether we have a consistent policy, and we do not, and I think in some cases we cannot, but I think that this all bears more examination because it is truly difficult. I have not believed that it is correct not to have diplomatic relations with a country because we need to know what is going on in that particular country for our own benefit so that we know what our policy should be.

Senator Kaine. Madam Ambassador. Thank you.

Ambassador Dobriansky. I will only add to your point, first, consistency does matter, and you are quite right in saying it, and I know this because I served as undersecretary. And then when I was in the Human Rights Bureau at the State Department, many countries would come forward and would say, well, that is not what the last Administration did or the Administration before that; that from Administration to Administration, there is a change of policy, a change of approach. So consistency does, in fact, matter.

I do think that one thing we have been very consistent on, at least as I see it, is that these values matter. They matter. They are part of what we are about. When I look at the immigration challenge that is before us, China and Russia are not facing an immigration challenge. People want to come to this country whether we are consistent or inconsistent and for all the flaws that we may have because they know that we have institutions where they can have transparency, a recourse for action if wronged, and economic opportunity, and a better way of life. So I would put that as a silver lining in this mix, at least in terms of as we evolve, and democracy is not a linear path. But let me add one more, and that is I think also in this question, the public-private component also matters. It is not just about the U.S. Government, but it is also about the work and the involvement of our private sector and what our private sector does in keeping our feet to the fire. And being here in—certainly here in the Senate, that is reminding us what the American people are about.

And I will end on this note. I have to say I am a strong proponent of the Quad, and I am really glad that you made that point. I think the Quad is a very important organization that has been key in terms of challenging China, and it is something that also matters in terms of democracy and proponent—the advancement of democratic values.

Senator Kaine. Thank you.

Ambassador Dobriansky. Thank you.

Senator Kaine. Thank you, Mr. Chair. What a great hearing. I have a million more questions, but my time is up.

The Chairman. I understand the feeling. Let me turn—I understand that Senator Hagerty is with us virtually.

[No response.]

The Chairman. Senator Hagerty?

[No response.]

The Chairman. I am sure some of these members may have had to go to another hearing. All right. I do not know of any other

member on the Republican side who is on virtually. If there is, please speak up and we will recognize you.

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. And if not, then we will go to Senator Booker, who I understand is with us virtually.

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Booker?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. If not, I will turn to Senator Schatz, who I understand is with us virtually.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to both of our testifiers. I want to talk a little bit about our public diplomacy efforts. The U.S. Agency for Global Media does great work through programs like Voice of America and Radio Free Asia, but we know that more people today get their information online. And so I am wondering, Secretary Albright, how you are thinking about how we should do public diplomacy in the information age. I know that you have made reference to the fact that, you know, these are tools of democratization, but they are also tools for autocrats. And how should the State Department, in particular, think about modernizing the tools? Radio is important, but it is not the main communications channel for most people around the globe.

Secretary ALBRIGHT. Thank you, Senator Schatz. I think, again, this is a very difficult question because we have not totally mastered how we deal with the new information tools at all, frankly, and that there are differences in the way the law looks at whether we have any—what the control is over the big tech companies that actually not only produce, but send on information. We also have great differences with our allies in terms of the whole rule of privacy and a variety of different issues.

I am going to—I have to tell you, I think—what I did was create a group of former foreign ministers, and we have just had a meeting on this virtually trying to sort out how—these are foreign ministers from all over the world—how, in fact, we are going to be dealing with this because this is not just an American problem. And I do think that it has an awful lot, again, to do—both Ambassador Dobriansky and I have talked about the private sector, but this is one place where there needs to be better cooperation and collaboration with the private sector and trying to develop some rules of the game.

I have been very—my whole interest when I was a real academic was in the role of information and political change, and I cannot tell you how important Radio Free Europe and Voice of America were in the post-communist world, and how people got their information on public diplomacy itself. But the questions recently about how they are—the tools being used are right up there in terms of trying to figure out the rules of the game. And I do think this is somewhere where Congress, and the executive branch, and the private sector really need to look at what the elements are and how to develop some kind of acceptable rules of the game on it because it is like the Wild West at the moment.

Senator SCHATZ. It sure is, and I would just offer the—to the extent that you have given us guidance to think through—our public diplomacy and our projection of democratic values abroad depends

on us setting an example. I think we need to be cautious when we consider changes to the law or an interpretation of the law as it relates to social media platforms, as satisfying as those might be, and think about how an authoritarian might use a certain fact pattern to shut down dissent. So I think it is—this stuff is really complex, and we need to understand some of our tech policy as a foreign policy question and not just for other committees.

Secretary, I would like to ask you about the National Endowment for Democracy and its affiliated groups. Obviously, you are the leader in NDI. How does NDI actually interact with the State Department and, in particular, can you talk about the success that you have had in election monitoring work?

Secretary ALBRIGHT. Well, first of all, we are funded partially by the U.S. Government, and USAID, and various other parts. We have very good relationships with the State Department. But I really do think that one of the things that we have to think about is how we operate in terms of explaining more what we are doing to people in this country and abroad, and the extent to which we are able, through NDI, and IRI, and the Endowment, to kind of talk about the value systems and how we operate. I do think—it was—you know, elections are necessary, but not sufficient, but I really do think that when we have ways that we monitor the elections and are able to say whether they are right or wrong, when we also are able to have representatives from the State Department and, frankly, members of Congress go to the various countries to explain how our system works rather than having it be something that is just in a book, I think that relationship is very important. And I hope that when we can actually travel again more, that more members of Congress will go and visit these countries.

And if I might just tag onto that, there are foreigners that come to the United States and the ambassadors, and I wish that more members of Congress would have real conversations in terms of the kinds of ways that our democracy works. I think it is very important to use all the branches of our Government.

Senator SCHATZ. My final question for you, Secretary, and this is—I think Chris Coons is going to love this one—is about the size of our Foreign Service. We have been the largest Foreign Service on the planet. That has been a point of pride, not just as a statistical matter, but because it means that we are projecting our power all around the world. I am wondering if you could comment on the importance of funding the Foreign Service in terms of democracy promotion for the chairman of the Subcommittee on State and Foreign Ops.

Secretary ALBRIGHT. There is no question that the Foreign Service, the State Department, is essential in going out abroad and explaining what this country is about. The State Department, I was very proud to be asked to head it, very proud of the people who worked there, and I think that we do not recognize enough what a hard job it is. You know, people think of Foreign Service as people that get dressed up and go to receptions. It is one of the more difficult jobs in the Government. We now have to do training for our diplomats when they go abroad in terms of dealing with terrorist situations and difficulties, and we do not have enough people.

And partially, what I find—I do believe in a strong military, but I have to say the difference in the budget of what the Pentagon gets, which is somewhere around \$700 billion, in comparison to what the State Department, which is at any time somewhere between \$40 and \$50 billion, which not only has to pay the diplomats, but have buildings that they can operate in, the security, and then obviously the programs, which are the most important part. So our very important tool of talking about our values and being the eyes and ears of the U.S. Government is being underfunded.

And so I am grateful that you asked that because I really felt when I was there, that we were not, in fact, understood well enough in terms of how we project America's national security issues and values.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. I think that would be classified as a leading question if you were in a courtroom, but, in any event, Senator Coons is taking copious notes. I understand Senator Van Hollen is with us virtually.

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Van Hollen.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I want to thank both our terrific witnesses for being with us this morning and really pick up on the threads of some of the other questions that have been made. But the Biden administration has been talking more and more about looking at the frame of techno-democracies versus techno-autocracies, really putting China front and center, a country, which, of course, through its Belt and Road Initiative and other initiatives, is seeking not only to export its technology, whether it be Huawei or other forms of cutting-edge technology, but also, in the process, export its model, and including the surveillance state, which may be very attractive to authoritarian governments that want to have both control over their citizens and also prevent active dissent.

But my question really gets to what Senator Kaine was getting at. As we—as we pursue that model, and I am interested how useful you think that overall model is, how do we also look at consistency across the board. Secretary Albright, you mentioned Hungary. If you look at Turkey, they have also, for example, shut down access to the internet and social media over time. Right now in India, the Modi Government permanently blocked over 500 accounts of people who were dissenting against the Modi Government's handling of the farmer protests and threatened to lock up Twitter and Facebook employees that did not enforce this decision. In fact, Twitter, as a result, blocked 500 accounts.

So if you could just talk about how we—how we deal with that in the context of this overall framing because I could not agree more with comment that the Quad, for example, is a really important entity, and we need to pursue that. So how do we pursue those interests, and, at the same time, try and apply some consistency to those issues, like freedom of the internet and dealing with governments that are using their powers to clamp down on dissent by shutting down dissent on the internet?

Secretary ALBRIGHT. I really do want to answer that, but I do not want to keep doing the kind of thing that we are thinking about

as criticizing what happened in the past. What has happened here, we did not pay attention to what was going on, there is no question, and kind of dismissed the fact of what the Chinese were doing. And we have been absent, and the Chinese are on a march to prove their importance and are taking up the vacuum that we created. And we need to understand that without just going back, but we do need to know that we have not been consistent and we have not been present. I also think that what needs to happen is—by the way, what I do when I teach, I say foreign policy is just trying to get some country to do what you want, and so what are the tools? And my course is called the National Security Toolbox, and there are not a lot of tools. And what we do mostly is turn to the sanctions tool because it is one that you can have some immediate effect with if you find the people that are doing the various things that you disagree with. But it has to be watched very carefully, and it has to be used in a way that is more precise, I think, in the targeted tools, and I do think we need to do that.

The Chinese are roaming freely because we have not been around, and I think that we need to also develop a policy, to go back on something, which is in terms of including the private sector in terms of helping the countries that need help economically, not just through aid, but through the kinds of things that the private sector can do, and we need to see that there is space for us to operate in. I am troubled by my own answer on the consistency because I would like to see consistency, but it is hard, and I think that we need to recognize that in some cases it is not doable. But I do think also that we need to work with our partners, whether it is the Quad or various other alliance structures.

I note that, for instance, Secretary Blinken is going to go to talk to the Japanese and the South Koreans about the things that can be done more together, that the alliance structure, these are alliances of democracies, and, therefore, we should be able to figure out how we can deal with some of the issues that we have been talking about that do have to do with consistency and do have to do with the fact that we have been absent.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Ambassador Dobriansky, since this is the last question, we will let you also share your views.

Ambassador DOBRIANSKY. All right. Thank you. Senator, I think you raise important points. Consistency, I think we have established, is a challenge. It is a challenge for all the obvious reasons. But let me—let me add here, China is definitively waging a disinformation campaign. There are cyber intrusions, as we know, and also with their substantial economic, financial, and technological leverage, one of the biggest challenges is that other countries that engage massively in trade and finance with China are also constrained. They are very constrained in their actions. So it is not only the issue of our trying to engage, combat others, counter influence operations and social media, and expose them for what they are, but also there is the challenge of the fact that many countries are engaged by the nature of their relationships, and then they are not willing to actually step forward and join us in this battle. So that is something that I think is even, if I could say, not only the issue of consistency, but we have a real challenge here to look at, whatever continent it is.

I think back, and I will end on this note. Europe went ahead in December with the European Investment Agreement with China, and this was even before the Biden administration came in and said, let us collaborate on our approach to China. That already sets a type of foundation that is very hard to undo or even work around, so consistency matters. Complacency matters. But also, I think that we need to really look at our toolkit technologically. The issue of digitalization of authoritarianism is front and center for sure. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you both.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Seeing no other member present, unless there is some member who is with us virtually who we have not called upon, and if there is, please speak up.

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Hearing none, with the committee's thanks to both of you, Madam Secretary, Madam Ambassador, thank you so much for your insights. We appreciate it. This is a critical question, especially at the beginning of a new Administration, but certainly for the Senate to consider in its deliberations, and you have greatly helped us along the way. Thank you very much.

Secretary ALBRIGHT. Thank you all. Thank you very much.

Ambassador DOBRIANSKY. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. We have a second panel, which I now want to introduce and bring up.

Let me first welcome Dr. Peter Biar Ajak. Dr. Ajak is a civil society leader, political dissident, and scholar from South Sudan. An outspoken advocate for free elections, Dr. Ajak was convicted of disturbing the peace and jailed for 18 months in a South Sudanese prison. Let me welcome Dr. Ajak. I would next like to introduce Mr. Nathan Law. In 2017, at the age of 23, Mr. Law was elected to Hong Kong's Legislative Council and became the youngest legislative counselor in history, yet his election was overturned in July of 2017 following Beijing's constitutional reinterpretation. So let me welcome Mr. Law. And finally, let me welcome Wai Hnin Pwint Thon. She is a Burmese human rights defender working with a non-governmental organization, Burma Campaign UK and Advance Myanmar. Welcome, Wai Hnin.

With that, your full statements will be included in the record. We ask you to summarize them in about 5 minutes, and let me start with Dr. Ajak.

**STATEMENT OF PETER BIAR AJAK, PH.D., REAGAN-FASCELL
DEMOCRACY FELLOW, NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOC-
RACY, WASHINGTON, DC**

Dr. AJAK. Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, members of the committee, I am honored to testify today on a topic so close to my heart.

For 18 months, I endured a brutal illegal detention at the Blue House Prison operated by South Sudan National Security Service. My crime was criticizing President Salva Kiir's failed leadership of South Sudan, which has turned the promise of our hard-won independence into a decade-long nightmare. I survived this imprisonment and Kiir's later attempt to either kill or abduct me from

Kenya because of the support of many human right defenders, including several members of this committee. I am grateful to you all and the U.S. Government for saving my life and that of my family.

When South Sudan gained independence in 2011, Kiir was appointed—not elected—appointed president and charged with building institutions to allow for elections in 2015. But in 2013, he and former Vice President Riek Machar plunged our new nation into a civil war. Kiir used the conflict to defer elections from 2015 to 2018, and again to 2021. Although the current peace agreement requires elections to be held by March 2022, he is already proposing 2023 and beyond.

Meanwhile, he has built a repressive security state in the form of the National Security Service run by General Akol Koor Kuc, who personally oversees the planning and the commission of gross human right violations through Special Forces in his office. A four-person task force in Kuc's office identifies targets for extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearance, and arbitrary arrests. Kuc also manages numerous corrupt schemes, illegally extracting millions of dollars through public sector corruption.

Kiir's failure of leadership has been devastating. The poverty rate, which stood at 50 percent at independence, is now at 82 percent. We ranked dead last in the 2020 Social Progress Index, tied for the last place with Somalia in the 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index, and we scored only 2 out of 100 in the 2021 Freedom House Global Freedom Score. Our people are living in unrelenting horror.

The United States needs to send a clear message to Kiir that his repression of our people will no longer be tolerated, nor any further delay of elections. You should sanction perpetrators of gross human right violations, like Kuc, while urging the African Union to urgently set up the Hybrid Court on South Sudan to end impunity. If Kiir does not hold election on time, his already illegitimate regime will have expired. Since he was never elected by our people, this would necessitate a new political paradigm to ensure a successful transition to democracy. Despite severe oppression, our people made it clear in the recently-concluded National Dialogue that Kiir and Machar must exit the political scene. I hope the United States, this committee, will stand with our people.

The South Sudan case highlight five challenges to democracy not only in the Horn of Africa, but on the entire continent and globally. One, restriction of press freedom by dictators who know that information is power and who fear informed citizenry, and act to keep our people ignorant of their misery. Two, severe repression of political opposition and activists by tyrants who fear losing power. Lacking the ability to compete in free exchange of ideas, they resort to violence, intimidation, and harassment. Through Department of State, the U.S. should publicly identify and monitor the cases of bellwether activists and act swiftly and decisively when they face repression. If we are killed or detained with impunity, then who will fight for freedom in our countries?

Three, entrenched leaders who abuse term limit whom the U.S. must confront to reverse course. Four, Chinese promotion of authoritarianism through anti-democratic tactics, financial coercion, and physical intimidation. The U.S. need to counter China by supporting exchange programs and expanding access to U.S. insti-

tutions of knowledge. The U.S. also need to encourage its private sector to expand investment in Africa where Chinese capital is not only entrenching authoritarianism, but weakening instruments of accountability. Finally, sham elections that damper faith in democracy, making mockery of the sacred instrument through which the sovereign will of the people is expressed.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, the human desire for freedom and opportunity gives me hope that, with right policies and resolve, not only will dictatorship fail, but freedom will thrive. Thank you very much for the invitation.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Ajak follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. AJAK¹

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and Members of the Committee: I am greatly honored to testify today. This topic is close to my heart. For 18 months, I endured a brutal, illegal detention at the notorious “Blue House” prison, operated by South Sudan’s National Security Service (NSS). My crime was criticizing President Salva Kiir and his failed leadership of South Sudan, which has turned the promise of our hard-won independence into a decade-long horror. I survived this imprisonment and Kiir’s later attempt to either kill or abduct me from Nairobi, Kenya because of the support of many defenders of human rights around the world, including several members of the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives (many of whom are seated on this Committee). I am extremely grateful to each and every one of you and the United States’ Government for speaking out for me when my voice was silenced, and for acting quickly to save my life and that of my family.

It is only natural that I begin my testimony with the stalled democratic transition in South Sudan. We gained our independence on July 9, 2011 after our people voted overwhelmingly for separation in a referendum made possible by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005, which the United States brokered. At independence, Kiir assumed the presidency by appointment, charged with building democratic institutions that would allow for national elections to be held in 2015. But in December 2013, he and his former vice president Riek Machar (now the First Vice President) plunged our new nation into a civil war. Kiir used the conflict to defer the scheduled elections from 2015 to 2018, and again to 2021. And although the current peace agreement requires elections be held by March 2022, Kiir is already proposing 2023 and beyond.

In the meantime, he has built a repressive security state in the form of the NSS whose powers are concentrated in the hands of his kinsman, Gen. Akol Koor Kuc, who personally oversees the planning and the commission of gross human rights violations through Special Forces headquartered in his office. A four-person task force housed inside Kuc’s office identifies targets for extrajudicial killing, enforced disappearance, and arbitrary arrest. Once the targets are approved by Kuc, the Special Forces carry out the acts. Kuc has attended many executions and personally pulled the trigger on several occasions. As we speak, there are over 1,000 detained in secret NSS detention facilities across the country. Although less widely reported, Kuc oversees and manages numerous corrupt schemes illegally extracting millions of dollars from oil, banking, gold, timber, charcoal, gum Arabic, aviation, and other public sector corruption.

Kiir’s failed leadership of South Sudan has been costly to our people. As reported by the World Bank, the national poverty rate, which stood at about half of the population at independence is now at 82 percent;² our country ranked dead last in the 2020 Social Progress Index;³ it tied for the last place with Somalia in the 2020 Corruption Perception Index;⁴ and it scored only 2 out of 100 in the 2021 Freedom House’s Global Freedom Score.⁵ Although the oil is flowing, our people cannot tell where the money goes. Our diplomats have gone for nearly 2 years without salaries. Civil servants have not been paid for months. Even the country’s official army has gone for months without salaries. It’s only the brutal NSS and the Presidential Guard, who personally protect Kiir, that get salaries on a regular basis. Simultaneously, the inflation is high and the currency has lost value as the Government monetizes the deficit.

Indeed, it’s the people of South Sudan who bear the brunt of Kiir’s mismanagement of their country. Three million people remain in refugee camps in Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Sudan, the DRC, and the Central African Republic. More than seven million people are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance as the con-

fluence of conflict, floods, and macroeconomic crises devastate the population.⁶ Last year, we saw one of the largest discharges of water from Lake Victoria into the Nile, resulting in most of my home state of Jonglei being submerged in water. This led to increased displacement, forcing many families to move to Mangalla where they remain in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

To revive the stalled democratic transition in South Sudan and restore hope to our people, the United States, which midwived the birth of South Sudan and invested over 15 billion dollars since our independence, needs to send a clear message to Kiir that his repression of South Sudan's people will not be tolerated anymore and that any further delay of elections is unacceptable. Kiir and his partner in crime, Riek Machar, have imposed themselves on the people of South Sudan for too long. Despite the severe repression in the country, our people made this unequivocally clear in the recently concluded South Sudan National Dialogue, demanding that Kiir and Machar urgently find an exit route from the political scene. The United States, working together with the African Union, the United Nations, and others must demand that Kiir holds election by March 2022 since our people can no longer endure his awful rule.

Holding elections would require specific tasks to be completed such as the promulgation of a new constitution, the merger of various militias into a national army, the appointment of new Elections Commissioners, the conducting of the census, and the updating of the voter registry. However, given Kiir's reluctance to implement the peace deal, it is unlikely that any of these enormous tasks would be accomplished on time. This means that March 2022 will likely come with elections nowhere in sight, which is Kiir's intention since he is not interested in giving up power. If Kiir does not make progress on these vital areas, his already illegitimate regime will have expired. This would be the appropriate moment to consider Libe-rian model where that country's former dictator, Charles Taylor, was forced to step down to allow a genuine transitional government to shepherd the country towards the conduct of democratic elections.

Two urgent actions will need to be taken to make it clear to Kiir that he must organize credible elections on time. First, the U.S., which holds the pen on the Security Council's establishment and ongoing reauthorization of the U.N. Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), should secure new language in the next reauthorization resolution, which must be adopted by March 15, 2021, emphasizing that South Sudan must hold elections by March 13, 2022, as required by the Agreement, or be prepared to face actions that shall be determined by the Security Council. It should also add to the mandate of UNMISS and tasks it must undertake by all necessary means that it should support implementation of key activities required to enable elections to occur on time. Second, Kiir has claimed to have amended the 2018 Agreement to postpone elections until 2023 but this change has not been endorsed by the South Sudan's Parliament, which must by two-thirds majority approve any changes. The parliament has not even been established. If the Security Council does not explicitly reject this illegal move and insist that all parties must comply fully with the 2018 Peace Agreement, then it will have acquiesced to Kiir's bypassing the Agreement to push off elections for a year and set a dangerous precedent. Failing to hold him accountable next week will enable Kiir to extend the tenure of his already illegitimate regime beyond what is specified in the Agreement. This could very well spark large-scale violence with devastating consequences for our people and the Horn of Africa.

Finally, the U.S. should continue to hold individuals responsible for gross human rights violations and those thwarting the peace process accountable through imposition of targeted sanctions under South Sudan sanctions program, established by Executive Order 13664 and under the Global Magnitsky Act. These individuals should include the NSS Director-General, Gen. Kuc and his top cronies. The U.S. should also push the African Union to urgently set up the Hybrid Court on South Sudan to end the culture of impunity. Meanwhile the U.S. should continue to support civil society groups, church groups, community-based organizations, and women and youth coalitions that are working hard to build consensus among our people.

The stalled democratic transition in South Sudan highlights the challenges to democracy not only in our country, but also in the Horn, and the entire continent of Africa. Five key challenges inherent in South Sudan are omnipresent in the Horn of Africa and beyond, including:

1. *Restriction of press freedom:* The assault on journalists and press freedoms has become a global problem. The year 2020 set the record for the number of journalists detained, while the number of those murdered in the course of their work doubled from the previous year.⁷ The entire Horn of Africa with the exception of Kenya has consistently performed poorly in the treatment of journalists. While South Sudan

has habitually been the absolute worst, recently, Uganda and Ethiopia have seen shocking levels of repression of press freedoms. Even before the ongoing conflict in Tigray started, Prime Minister Abiy's record on the freedom of press was dismal. And the recent elections in Uganda have revealed to the world the extent to which President Museveni is willing to go to suppress his people in order to maintain power. Further down south, press freedoms have suffered since President Magufuli came to power in Tanzania. In Zimbabwe, the situation is worse than when Robert Mugabe was still in power with many journalists being arbitrarily detained, tortured, or killed.

The authoritarian leaders know that information is power and if people are informed, they will not accept the awful conditions to which they are subjected to live. Hence, by restricting press freedoms, the African dictators act to keep our people in the dark—to keep them ignorant of their misery. While social media has allowed activists in some cases to evade surveillance, authoritarian leaders have learned how to create disruptions through propaganda, disinformation and shutdown of the internet among others. Recently, China and Russia, working in concert with many African dictators have made this situation worst.

Yet, access to information is the bedrock of democratic institutions. While the U.S. invests heavily in access to information around the world, including in South Sudan, it is time to bolster these efforts. Those who impede the work of journalist must be held accountable and U.S. must increase its investment in free media. Moreover, the U.S. will also need to apply its superior technology and innovation to counter Chinese and Russian disinformation efforts.

2. *Severe repression of political opposition, human rights defenders, and activists:* Because authoritarian leaders are ruled by fear of losing power and control, they feel threatened by any hint of opposition. Lacking the ability to compete in free exchange of ideas, they resort to violence, intimidation, and harassment. My experience in South Sudan highlights this clearly, as do recent farcical elections in Uganda. Through state coercive apparatus, they detain, torture, or kill perceived opposition, forcing many to flee for their lives. While the U.S. often speaks out when these tragic events occur and imposes punitive actions (including sanctions under the Global Magnitsky Act), it can bolster these efforts. Through Department of State, the U.S. should publicly identify and monitor the cases of bellwether human rights defenders and democracy activists and act swiftly and decisively when they face repression. If we are killed or detained with impunity, then who would be left to push for democratic reforms in our countries? Therefore, developing measures to monitor the treatment of such activists around the world will go a long way towards creating political spaces that nurtures local movements and gives them the resilience they need to prosper.

Moreover, the U.S. should incorporate the protection of fundamental freedoms, including the treatment of political opposition, human rights defenders, and democracy activists into its broader foreign policy objectives. Instead of seeing promotion of democracy and stability as competing priorities, it can formulate a comprehensive framework that brings these two together since they are truly entwined. Such a framework can serve as the foundation of any defense, economic, or trade agreement with the United States and its allies. In addition, the U.S. should increase support to civil society and democratic forces by enhancing democratic civic education and the capacity of women and youth to contribute to policy issues in their countries.

3. *Entrenched leaders who abuse Term Limits:* Many leaders in Africa, including those who came to power on the promise of expanding democracy in their countries, have increasingly become entrenched.⁸ Once they consolidate power, they wish to remain there forever by removing Terms Limit. While Museveni did this long ago (removing both Terms and Age Limits), the practice has now become commonplace as we witnessed last year in Ivory Coast and Guinea. In the Horn of Africa, Kenya is the only country in which Terms Limit still means something. Since Parliament and Judiciary are often weak in many African countries, Terms Limit play a critical role in preventing power becoming concentrated in the hands of one person. The U.S. will need to bring this topic back on the top of agenda in dealing with African countries, deploying necessary inducements and disincentives to obtain the desired outcome.

4. *Chinese promotion of authoritarianism:* The Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) promotion of authoritarianism is a great concern in the Horn, the continent of Africa, and around the world. The CCP uses anti-democratic tactics, financial coercion, and physical intimidation to secure support for authoritarian leaders who are usually in cahoots with them. These efforts result in increased corruption, environmental degradation, and displacement of people. The Chinese investments in South Sudan, for instance, have only created misery in the form of severe oil pollution and

grand corruption, where South Sudanese oil is stolen by their leaders in coordination with Chinese oil companies.⁹ In recent years, China has become emboldened in promoting its Party-State model as a viable (even desirable) alternative to liberal democracy. It has invested extensively in exchange programs, offering scholarships to students, youth-wing of political parties, and African security forces to study and adopt its model. It has built cultural exchange centers all around the world, while deploying its companies to bolster corrupt authoritarian leaders.

The United States needs to take seriously the Chinese ambition for global dominance, aimed at remodeling the world according to its values. Rather than seeking to impose a binary choice on Africans between the United States and China, this requires intensified support to democracy efforts and democracy activists who are fighting to defend values of freedom in their own countries. Doing so will require augmented support to anti-corruption efforts, exchange programs such as the Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellowship, YALI, the Peace Corps, and many others. Looking long-term, the United States will need to provide scholarships and open up its institutions of knowledge. Moreover, the United States will need to encourage American private sector to expand its investments overseas, particularly in Africa, where Chinese capital is only entrenching authoritarianism and weakening instruments of accountability. Notwithstanding the risk averseness of American companies, the U.S. Government can create mechanisms to make such risks manageable for companies, encouraging them to expand responsible capitalism around the world. Relying on humanitarian and developmental aid alone will be too little to counter the increasing Chinese influence.

5. Sham elections that damper faith in democracy: While we in South Sudan have never had the privilege of choosing our own leaders, many Africa countries hold elections on a regular basis. However, these important processes of democracy have recently become farcical events. In the recently concluded elections in Uganda, Museveni managed to prevent independent monitoring of elections. This was also the case for last year's elections in Tanzania, Guinea, and Ivory Coast. In 2018, Emerson Managwagwa stole elections in Zimbabwe with impunity.

Elections are too important to be abused in such ways. They are the instruments through which the sovereign will of the people is expressed. While the U.S. Government often releases statements condemning misconduct, no meaningful actions usually follow such words. This will need to change. Moreover, the U.S. will need to increased funding for elections monitoring throughout the world. And this funding should not only just be for the voting, but for the entire process. Elections, after all, are not events, but crucial processes through which citizens renews the bonds of contracts that knit them together.

This year, 13 African states will hold elections, some of which have already occurred. It's important these elections are held with integrity. In addition, ensuring that the upcoming elections in South Sudan, which must be held by March 2022, are held with integrity will be crucial. The stalled democratic transition in South Sudan and Kiir's horrific violations of human rights with impunity has set an awful tone in the region. These abuses are now being replicated nearly everywhere in the region with the exception of Kenya and Sudan. By acting decisively to ensure that these elections are held on time and that a new political paradigm emerges in South Sudan, the United States will be sending an unequivocal message of hope to our citizens in South Sudan and the Horn that a new era has dawned. This requires important investments be made now to lay the foundation for democratic transition in South Sudan.

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, Members of the Committee: My presence before you today is a testament to the courage and the resilience of many democracy activists around the world. It also speaks to the critical importance of various mechanisms the U.S. Government already has in place to support the work of civil society, human rights defenders, and democracy activists. Indeed, while I am concerned about the growing threat of authoritarianism, I am also cognizant of the power of human desire for freedom and opportunity. And this gives me hope that with right measures and resolve, not only will dictatorship failed, but freedom will thrive. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this distinguished audience today!

Notes

¹The views expressed in this document are solely those of the author, and do not represent the views of the National Endowment for Democracy or any other organization.

²The World Bank, "The World Bank in South Sudan," [https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/southsudan/overview#:~:text=About%2082%25%20of%20the%20population,parity%20\(PPP\)%20poverty%20line.](https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/southsudan/overview#:~:text=About%2082%25%20of%20the%20population,parity%20(PPP)%20poverty%20line.)

³2020 Social Progress Index Ranking, <https://www.socialprogress.org/index/global/results>

⁴Corruption Perception Index 2020, https://images.transparencycdn.org/images/CPI2020_Report_EN_0802-WEB-1_2021-02-08-103053.pdf

⁵Freedom House, "Freedom in the World 2021: Democracy under siege," https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/FIW2021_World_02252021_FINAL-web-upload.pdf

⁶Care, "South Sudan Humanitarian Crisis," <https://www.care.org/our-work/disaster-response/emergencies/south-sudan-humanitarian-crisis/#:~:text=While%20the%20peace%20process%20between,of%20some%20form%20of%20humanitarian>

⁷Committee for Protection of Journalist, "Murders of Journalists more than doubled worldwide," <https://cpj.org/reports/2020/12/murders-journalists-more-than-doubled-killed/>

⁸<https://africacenter.org/spotlight/erosion-term-limits-africa-reflects-worrying-trend/>

⁹Yang Janli and Peter Biar Ajak, "How Chinese Corruption Spreads Misery Abroad," *The American Interest*, <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2020/09/22/how-chinese-corruption-spreads-misery-abroad/>

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Doctor Ajak. Mr. Law?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Law, are you with us virtually?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. While we figure that out, let me turn to Ms. Wai Hnin. Ms. Wai Hnin?

STATEMENT OF WAI HNIN PWINT THON, CAMPAIGNS OFFICER, BURMA CAMPAIGN, UK

Ms. PWINT THON. Thank you very much for this opportunity.

So when the head of the Burmese military, Min Aung Hlaing, staged the coup, he knew there was a price to pay, but, of course, he is expecting that he can get away with it, so it is very important for us to prove him wrong. In Burma, people are very brave and they are proving to Min Aung Hlaing that he is wrong. When the military divided and when they thought to arrest NLD leaders and other activists like my dad, they thought they could stop protests, but we have seen the biggest protests in more than 30 years. People are holding signs calling for democracy, and these signs are written in English because they want the world to help, but peaceful protests have been met with increased violence by the military. People are dying on the street every day, and children have been shot in the head. The military is using every tool they have to silence people from speaking out.

More than 60 people now have been killed for peacefully protesting, and we now have more than 2,000 people in prison since the coup started. And we do not know how many people have disappeared, and we have not been told where they are being detained or their condition, and they do not have any access to lawyers.

Today is my father's birthday. Nearly half my life, we have not been able to celebrate his birthday together because he is in prison for speaking out, and my first memory of seeing my Dad is through iron bars in Insein Prison. It is still very hard for me, although I am used to it, and at the same time, I am heartbroken and angry that so many children will now have to go through what I went through, growing up without a parent and not knowing when they will see the parents again. And this has to stop.

It is not just in the cities and against peaceful protesters that the military is attacking civilians. In Kachin State, the military is firing mortar bombs into villages, and more than 5,000 villagers are already hiding in the jungle. We see military trucks and soldiers on the streets of Yangon and other cities, but they never left the streets and many ethnic states. In the past 10 years of reform process, human rights violations against ethnic minorities have increased. The military saw sanctions relax, even as they would con-

tinue carrying on human rights violations against ethnic minorities. This created a sense of impunity for the military. They even thought they could get away with the genocide against the Rohingya, and so far they have. And, of course, they can—they think they can get away with staging a coup now because they were allowed to get away with genocide.

People in Burma want the coup reversed, and they want their democratically-elected government to be reinstated, but they do not want to go back under the military-drafted 2008 constitution. In the U.S., you would not accept a situation where your chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff chose three cabinet members. You would not accept him choosing 25 percent of the members of Congress. You would not accept it, and we cannot either. People are risking their lives asking for federal democracy, and the military was wrong to underestimate the courage and resistance by the people of Burma, but so far, Myanmar has not been wrong to think the international response would be weak. My country is now controlled by the battle-hardened soldiers. They are not diplomats. Statements alone are not enough. Of course we are realistic and we know that international action alone cannot free our country. We will win our own freedom, but international action has an important role to play.

I want to take this moment to thank the U.S. for being the first to act against the coup, freezing government reserves and sanctioning three military companies. You have been in the forefront of supporting human rights and democracy in my country, and I am really grateful for that. There is much more U.S. can and must do. You must target the economic interests of all the military and impose sanctions on military companies, including financial services and insurance. Now that the military control the government, revenues to them from oil and gas need to be stopped, along with trade in timber and gems from Burma. Please work with allies like the UK and EU to coordinate these targeted sanctions. And the U.S. has arms embargo, but most countries in the world do not. Please work with allies to build a global coalition of countries imposing arms embargo. In my written statement, I have listed more steps that can be taken. There are many measures that U.S. can take, diplomatic, economic, humanitarian, and legal.

In my country people are going out on the street every single day, protesting, knowing that they could be shot anytime, they could be arrested any time, and they could be beaten anytime. They are risking their lives, and they are doing everything they can. And we are asking, please, every tool you have and everything you can to help us. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Pwint Thon follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MS. PWINT THON

Thank you members of this committee for offering me an opportunity to testify.

When Min Aung Hlaing, the head of the Burmese military, held the coup on 1st February, he knew there would be a price to pay. He calculated the price would not be too high and that it would be a price worth paying.

It is essential that we prove his calculations wrong. We have to make the price higher than he expected.

In Burma the people have already done that. The military thought that by arresting NLD leaders, and leaders of the uprising in 1988, including my father, that they could stop protests.

Instead, there have been the biggest protests in more than 30 years. There is a mass civil disobedience movement, general strikes, and boycotts of military companies. There is amazing creativity as people find different ways to resist military rule. Communities are coming together to support each other.

But peaceful protest has been met by increasing violence by the military. People are dying on the streets. Children have been shot in the head after joining protests for the first time in their lives.

They are holding signs calling for democracy. And the signs are in English because they want the world to help.

More than 60 people have been killed. All unarmed civilians. At least two of those killed were tortured to death after being arrested.

The same soldiers who have been attacking and killing civilians in Shan State, Kachin State and Rakhine State, the same soldiers who committed genocide against the Rohingya, are now on the streets of the cities in central Burma.

They beat children just for watching protests, they loot and they kill. They are there to instill fear and terror and make people too scared to resist military dictatorship.

Since the coup, around 2,000 people have been arrested or are facing charges. The figure is likely to be much higher as we don't know how many are being arrested in more remote areas of ethnic states. We don't know how many people have simply disappeared.

For the families of those like my father who have been kept in detention, we also don't know what has happened to them. We have not been told where they are. They have not been allowed to see lawyers. We don't know if my father and other prisoners with serious medical conditions are getting the medication which they need to keep them alive.

For almost half my life my father had been in prison for supporting human rights. Today is his birthday and it's the 14th time we are unable to celebrate together because he is in jail. It is very hard for me even though I am used to it. I grew up with my father in jail for his political activities. My first memory of my father is seeing him through the bars of a jail cell.

I am heartbroken and angry at the same time that so many children will now have to go through what I went through, growing up without a parent, not knowing if or when they will ever be freed. This has to stop. Decade after decade, generation after generation. It never stops.

Even under Aung San Suu Kyi's Government there were more than 200 political prisoners. 200 families torn apart because the Government and military would not tolerate people asking for their human rights and full democracy.

The United States is right to demand the release of Aung San Suu Kyi, the President and arrested MPs. But it is equally important to free the teenager in Myitkyina, the mother in Lashio, the shopkeeper in Myawaddy, and the student in Loikaw.

The hundreds of people whose names are not known, who live in places most people have never heard of, but who risked death and jail to try to free their country. They are true heroes. We cannot again have a situation where the pressure is relaxed when the high profile political prisoners are freed. Never again should any political prisoner be left behind in Burma's jails.

At the same time as locking up those calling for human rights and democracy, faced with overwhelming public rejection of his justification for the coup, Min Aung Hlaing has freed well known racist nationalist prisoners from jail. People who incited, organized or took part in ethnic cleansing and genocide against the Rohingya and who incited and organized anti-Muslim riots.

There is a very real danger Min Aung Hlaing will play the nationalist anti-Rohingya and anti-Muslim card to try to deflect attention from the coup. Already we have seen Muslim political leaders targeted and killed. There are millions of Muslims in Burma and more than half a million Rohingya left in Rakhine State. Since 2012 we have repeatedly seen how the military tries to whip up anti-Muslim and anti-Rohingya sentiment to try to win public support. There is a very real danger the military will do the same again now.

It is not just in the cities and against peaceful protesters that the military is attacking civilians. In Karen State, where there is supposed to be a ceasefire, the Burmese military have been firing mortar bombs into villages and fields and threatening to use villagers as slave labor to carry their equipment. New soldiers and convoys of trucks of equipment are arriving. Already more than 5,000 villagers are now hiding in the jungle.

The armored trucks and soldiers on the streets of cities that we see today never left the streets in many ethnic areas.

In the past 10 years of the reform process, human rights violations against ethnic minorities in my country have increased. During the peace process, conflict has increased.

Since the reforms began 10 years ago, hundreds of thousands of people from ethnic minorities have had to flee conflict and human rights violations. Many are still living in squalid camps without proper shelter, food, medical care and education for their children.

They didn't see any gains in the past 10 years.

One protester in Kachin state told me: "It's great to see the world is finally paying attention to Burma again and starting to understand how ruthless the Burmese army is, but I hope they will still stand with us and not ignore the suffering of our ethnic people even after Aung San Suu Kyi is released."

The military saw sanctions relaxed, offers of military engagement and training and international companies working with their military companies, even as they carried on with the same human rights violations against ethnic minorities.

This created a sense of impunity for the military. They think they can get away with it. So they commit more crimes.

They even thought they could get away with genocide of the Rohingya, and so far they have.

A U.N. Fact-Finding Mission found that what took place against the Rohingya in 2017 was genocide and crimes against humanity.

In 2019 Min Aung Hlaing, the head of the military, was sanctioned by the United States. He was designated for his role in atrocities. But he and the other generals sanctioned had no assets in the United States to freeze. No further action took place following the designation. So all that was left was a visa ban.

The only United States sanction the Burmese military faced for committing genocide was that some of their soldiers were banned from taking holidays in the United States.

Having just been allowed to get away with genocide, of course Min Aung Hlaing thinks you will also let him get away with the military coup. For the sake of my country, you must prove him wrong.

If you look at the signs of the protesters on the streets, they don't want to go back to how things were before the coup.

It was an unacceptable situation with too many people, especially ethnic and religious minorities, not only left behind but suffering increased repression and human rights violations.

People want the coup reversed and the democratically elected government reinstated, but they do not want to go back to the military drafted 2008 Constitution.

They don't want to go back to a situation where the military commits genocide and is defended by the Government.

In the United States you would not accept a situation where your Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff chose three members of the cabinet and controlled every police force in the country.

You would not accept him setting his own budget.

You would not accept him choosing 25 percent of the members of congress.

You would not accept it, and nor do we.

Protesters risking their lives on the streets are calling for a federal democracy, like you have.

Min Aung Hlaing has been proved wrong in his calculations that he could stop protests and resistance by the people of Burma.

But so far he has not been proved wrong in his calculations that the response of the international community would be weak.

Statements are important and welcome, but they are ignored repeatedly by the generals. They expect it. They are military men. They are not diplomats. They respect strength and action.

We are realistic. We know that international action alone will not free our country. We will win our own freedom but international action has a critical role to play.

When we call for sanctions, we are not just making a plea for help.

We are calling on you to stop helping the military which oppresses us.

Almost every weapon and every item of military equipment and technology the Burmese military have comes from other countries or is based on technology from other countries.

Every military company has been created using finance, technology and equipment from overseas.

The military in my country is not isolationist. It has been built and financed with international support.

The United States has always been at the forefront of international action to support human rights and democracy in my country. We are grateful for that.

But today American companies are working for military owned companies. American companies help the military promote their company products which help pay for their guns and their bullets. American companies are channeling millions of dollars to the military.

I want to thank the United States for being the first to act after the coup, freezing Government reserves and sanctioning three military companies.

There is much more the United States can and must do.

The military are not the legal government of my country and the American Government must not accept them as such. They have no legitimacy and must not be recognized by the United States. We have elected MPs and they have formed a Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw. They have the elected mandate from the people. The military do not.

You must target the economic interests of the military. Sanctions on military companies, including their conglomerates, Myanmar Economic Corporation and Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings.

These sanctions must include services. Banking and finance. Consultancy and legal services. Insurance and reinsurance.

Now that the military control the Government, revenues to them from oil and gas need to be stopped. This should happen not by Chevron, Total and others pulling out, or shutting down the flow of oil and gas. That would leave many people in Burma and Thailand literally in the dark. Instead, international companies should be asked to stop all revenue and royalty payments. If they refuse, sanctions and anti-money laundering laws should be used to stop this revenue flow.

Timber and gems will also be big revenue earners for the military. The United States should sanction these sectors, barring imports whether they come directly or via third party countries.

At the same time, we don't want to see more general trade sanctions like removing trade privileges or a complete ban on imports from Burma. This will hurt ordinary people too much. We need smart and targeted economic sanctions.

The United States has an arms embargo, along with 40 other countries. That means 151 countries do not have an arms embargo or policies to prevent the sale of equipment to the military, or equipment and technology which can be used for repression.

You are the most influential country in the world. Please use that influence to work with allies like the UK to build a global coalition of countries imposing arms embargoes. In this way, regardless of China's veto at the U.N. Security Council, you can make progress towards a global arms embargo.

There are like-minded countries such as the UK, Canada and members of the European Union. Please work with them to coordinate targeted sanctions and where necessary, show leadership and drag them along behind you.

You have strong relationships with Japan and Singapore, countries which play a key role in the economic and political fortunes of the military. Please reach out to them.

Financial assistance to civil society organizations documenting human rights violations and working for democracy will be even more important now.

Victims of human rights violations by the Burmese military must also be a priority for humanitarian aid. Internally displaced people, the vast majority from ethnic minorities, have never received enough aid for shelter, food, medicines and education. They should be first in line for American aid. Refugees in camps in Thailand and Bangladesh are also living in unacceptable conditions without the support they need. Conditions which also make them especially vulnerable to COVID-19.

There is no shortage of measures which the United States can take, diplomatic, economic, humanitarian and legal. All that is needed is the political will.

By themselves some of these measures may seem small, but combined they will have an impact.

Your leadership in taking these measures will be encouraging others to do the same, multiplying your impact.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu has long supported our campaign and he once told us, everything that can be done must be done. If you haven't done everything you can, you haven't done enough.

On the streets in my country, young people come back onto the streets day after day despite knowing they could be shot. They put stickers on their phones with their blood type in case they are injured, and they put names of next of kin in case they are killed. They are doing everything they can.

We are asking you to do everything you can to help people in Burma. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. I understand Mr. Law is trying to connect with us. Mr. Law, are you with us yet?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I hope it is not the Chinese Government seeking to interfere with Mr. Law's testimony from Hong Kong. Well, let me turn to a round of questions. If we are able to connect, we will certainly intercede his testimony at that time. Let me turn to the ranking member for any questions.

Senator RISCH. Well, thank you. Ms. Hnin, your testimony was very good, particularly as far as details are concerned, and that is, what we always hunger for is details on top of the generalities that we know. But tell me this. The things that we have done, what is your—what is your idea of how this is going to end? I mean, the military takeover by the people who were in charge have shown that—over many years that they—that they can survive through a lot of pressure. How do you see this thing ending? What is your—what is your thought on that?

Ms. PWINT THON. Thank you very much, Senator. It is a very good question. So the military is not immune to pressure. The military is not immune to the, you know, international pressure. So, so far, it has been over a month since the coup started, and every day we have seen the situation getting worse and worse. It is not just cracking down on peaceful protesters anymore. It is pure killing in some parts of the country. And what we have seen from the international community is mostly statements of condemnation, and what we want them to do—and especially United States is very powerful, and you can use with your allies to, like I stated before, sanctions on military companies. They care about their pocket. They care about pressure. Of course these will not work straight away, but this will send a very strong message to the military that they need to respect human rights, and they need to stop violating human rights on the ground.

Senator RISCH. Well, thank you. I appreciate those observations. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. I understand that Senator Cardin is with us virtually. Senator Cardin?

Mr. LAW. Testing. Testing.

The CHAIRMAN. Is that Mr. Law?

Mr. LAW. Yes. Yes. I am so sorry, Chairman. I do not know why—the problem maybe is from my end, technical problems. Sorry.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. Well, we will recognize you now. Your full statement will be in the record, and if you can summarize your remarks. I read your statement. It is excellent. Go ahead.

**STATEMENT OF NATHAN LAW, PRO-DEMOCRACY ACTIVIST
AND FORMER HONG KONG LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEMBER**

Mr. LAW. Great. Thank you so much, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and the other distinguished members of the committee. It is really my honor to be able to testify in front of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

The state of democracy around the world is grim. The 2020 Varieties of Democracy Report found that 2020 was the first year since 2001 that there are more autocratic institutions than democratic ones in the world. The latest Freedom in the World 2021 Report, produced by Freedom House, also recognized this worsening democ-

racy decline. We all are in the 15th consecutive year of decline in the global freedom.

What Hong Kong people have suffered from in the past few years are clear examples of it. 2018, the year that Hong Kong people uprose. The scenes of millions of people marching down the streets captured the eyeballs of every corner of the world. We chanted for the promises made to us: democracy, autonomy, and freedom. Congressmen in the U.S. vowed their support to the movement and passed several bills, including the historic Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act. We were all grateful for the warm encouragement from around the world.

Yet starting from 2020, we have witnessed repeated crackdowns from the Chinese Communist Party. Assemblies have been banned, police brutality has emerged with impunity, and Beijing has circumvented all our local legislation and consultation process to impose the notorious National Security Law. Under the law, the Government can prosecute anyone who chants a protest slogan, display a Liberate Hong Kong flag, or even participate in a primary. The National Security Law is a convenient legal tool to silence the pro-democracy camp and strip away our basic rights.

Last week was particularly devastating. The Government has thrown 47 prominent activists in jail because they planned to exercise their constitutional rights to run for office and veto the Government's bills. Beijing has also announced an electoral reform in Hong Kong that turns the city's Legislative Council into a National People's Congress rubber stamp chamber. With the democratic candidates likely barred, Beijing's appointees will occupy more than half of the seats without an open election. The election in Hong Kong has become selection.

The erosion of freedoms in Hong Kong reflects the world Beijing wants to craft. Beijing is expanding its autocratic influence and denounces democratic values on a global scale. It tacitly stands behind the military junta in Myanmar by opposing actions from the U.N. Human Rights Council and justifying the coup as a major cabinet reshuffle. Hereby, I want to vow my support to the protestors in Myanmar because they have been through the toughest and bloodiest week in their anti-coup protest where dozens of citizens were killed by the soldiers' firearms. People died under the hands of tyranny. The casualties and disastrous consequences incurred by dictators are no less than climate emergencies or public health crises. Yet the international community seems very reluctant to tackle it with coordinated actions.

This latency has to be changed. We have to rise and defend global democracy. The fight starts with formulating global goals, visions, agendas, and actions. It can only be accomplished by democratic countries working together to avoid being divided and conquered by China. Here is the concrete direction that can fundamentally change the trend of democracy decline.

In the upcoming Democracy Summit, important democracies, including the G7, European countries, and the other democracies, should together with a preliminary formulation of an alliance for safeguarding democracy worldwide. The goal is straightforward. In the next 5 years, as long as we strive for a one-percent improvement annually in the Global Liberal Democracy Index, measured

by the renowned Varieties of Democracy Project, we can reverse the declining state of democracy worldwide by 2026, and rise back to the level around 2012, the highest Democracy Index human societies have ever achieved.

It is a measurable and essential goal if we are determined enough to fight the rise of authoritarianism. Reversing the trend of global democracy decline is the mission of our era. Combatting the rise of authoritarianism led by China and supporting Hong Kong's democratic movement is an important step to this Nation. Hong Kong people will never give up, and we will fight for democracy. As we say, [Speaking Cantonese language].

Thank you so much. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Law follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MR. LAW

Thank you Chairman Senator Menendez, Ranking Member Senator Risch, and the other members of the committee attending. It's my honor to be able to testify in front of the Senate foreign relations committee.

The state of democracy around the world is grim. The 2020 Varieties of Democracy report found that 2020 was the first year since 2001 that there are more autocratic institutions than democratic ones in the world. The latest "Freedom in the world 2021" report produced by Freedom house also recognizes this worsening democracy decline, and describes the situation as:

"Increasing autocracy threatens the rights of people in every corner of the world. This is a global emergency that awaits a coordinated response from the free world. Nearly 75 percent of the world's population lived in a country that faced deterioration last year."

We are all in the 15th consecutive year of decline in global freedom. What Hong Kong people have suffered from in the past few years are clear examples of it.

2019, the year that Hong Kong people arose. The scenes of millions of people marching down the streets captured the eyeballs of every corner of the world. We chanted for the promises made to us—democracy, freedom and autonomy. Congressmen in the U.S. vowed their support to the movement and several bills, including the historic "Hong Kong human rights and democracy Act", were passed. We were all grateful for the warm encouragement from around the world.

Yet, starting from 2020, we have witnessed repeated crackdowns from the Chinese Communist Party. Assemblies have been banned, police brutality has emerged with impunity, and Beijing has circumvented all our local legislation and consultation process to impose the notorious National Security Law. Under the law, the Government can prosecute anyone who chants a protest slogan, displays a "liberate Hong Kong" flag, or even participates in a primary in the pro-democracy camp. The National Security Law is a convenient legal tool to silent the pro-democracy camp and strip away our basic rights.

The last week was particularly devastating. The Government has thrown 47 prominent democratic figures in jail because they planned to exercise their constitutional rights to run for office and veto the Government's bills. Beijing has also announced an electoral reform in Hong Kong that turns the city's legislative council into a National People's congress style rubber stamp chamber. With the Democratic candidates likely barred, Beijing's appointees will occupy more than half of the seats without an open election. The election in Hong Kong has become SELECTION.

The erosion of freedoms in Hong Kong reflects the world Beijing wants to craft. Beijing is expanding its autocratic influence and denounces democratic values on a global scale. It tacitly stands behind the military junta in Myanmar by opposing actions from the U.N. human rights council and justifying the coup as "a major cabinet reshuffle." Hereby I want to vow my support to the protestors in Myanmar because they have just been through the toughest and bloodiest week in their anti-coup protest, where dozens of citizens were killed by the soldiers' firearms. I also stand in solidarity with the #Milkteaalliance members who are fighting for justice and democracy in their respective countries.

People died under the hands of tyrannies. The casualties and disastrous consequences incurred by dictators are no less than climate emergencies or public health crises; yet, the international community seems very reluctant to tackle it with coordinated actions.

This latency has to be changed. We have to rise and defend global democracy. The fight starts with formulating global goals, visions, agendas and actions. It can only be accomplished by democratic countries working together, to avoid being “divided and conquered” by China.

Here is the concrete direction that can fundamentally change the trend of democracy decline: In the upcoming April’s Democracy Summit, important democracies including the G7s, European countries and the other democracies should come up with a preliminary formulation of an alliance for safeguarding democracy worldwide.

The goal is straightforward: in the next 5 years, as long as we strive for a one percent improvement annually in the global liberal democracy index, measured by the renowned Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project, we can reverse the declining state of democracy worldwide by 2026, and rise back to the level around 2012, the highest democracy index human societies have ever achieved.

It’s a measurable and essential goal if we are determined to fight the rise of authoritarianism led by dictators like President Xi and safeguard the most needed values that guide humanity to dignity and prosperity.

Reversing the trend of global democracy decline is the mission of our era.

Thank you so much. I look forward to your questions.

*Attachment—BRIEF on the Latest Political Development in Hong Kong, March 2021,
From Nathan Law*

Takeaways

- Beijing loyalists will secure an overwhelming majority in the future legislature and the selection “election” for city leaders. The proposed overhaul will kill LegCo’s existing check and balance function as democrats will lose their veto power. Implications for the regulatory and investment environment can be far-reaching.
- Most, if not all, democrats will be barred from the election in practice since future candidates are subject to political screening. Even if they survive the new nomination and vetting requirements, they can still be disqualified, unseated or even charged under the national security law.
- Beijing leaders have already hinted that the new political reform is paving the way for further national security legislation, aka the controversial Article 23. The impact on the city’s future policies, especially those related to regulatory environments, can be far-reaching.

1. BEIJING’S POLITICAL OVERHAUL

Beijing is making a new effort to ensure “patriots” to take charge of all governance levels. To achieve this, the National People’s Congress, China’s rubber-stamp parliament, plans to pass a new political reform that is expected to be announced on March 11 this month. According to multiple local media citing unnamed sources, several reform options have been put on the table, including the following:

Changes in Selection Committee include:

- Expanding the size of the largely pro-Beijing committee that selects Hong Kong’s leader from 1200 to 1500 seats.
- Canceling the current 117 seats held by district councilors in the committee. The seats will go to Beijing-handpicked CPPCC members.

Changes in Legislative Council (LegCo) include:

- Expanding the seats in the Legislature from 70 to 90 seats.
- Cutting the number of directly elected seats: There are two reform options. The more radical one has reportedly gained more support, i.e. reducing the number of directly elected seats from 35 to 20 seats;
- Introducing an additional 40 seats that will be allocated to Beijing loyalists from the selection committee;
- Imposing a new requirement that future LegCo election runners have to be screened twice, one by the selection committee’s nomination and another by a new “vetting committee”. The vetting committee will screen future candidates’ qualifications, which include Beijing’s new demand of “loyalty.”
- Replacing the current proportional representation system of allocating the directly elected seats with a majoritarian one.

| | Hong Kong Current | Hong Kong Plan A | Hong Kong Plan B | Macao Current |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Directly elected seats | 35 seats (50%) | 20 seats (22%) | 30 seats (33%) | 14 seats (42%) |
| Indirectly elected seats | 35 seats (50%) | 30 seats (33%) | 30 seats (33%) | 12 seats (36%) |
| Selection Committee seats | | 40 seats (44%) | 30 seats (33%) | 7 seats (21%) |

Table: Composition of legislatures in Hong Kong and Macao

Similar to the promulgation of the national security law legislation, local Beijing loyalists are mostly out of the loop throughout the decision-making process of the new electoral reform. As a staunch pro-government lawmaker, Regina Ip, suggested, Beijing has already changed to whom it would listen and only consulted the top most trusted advisers. Even members of more established pro-Beijing local parties were excluded from the symposium in Shenzhen on the electoral changes in previous weeks. At the same time, a new political party has been established by mainland Chinese-born individuals. On March 9, they emphasized that “patriotism is their true colour” and vowed to gain seats and influence in the legislature and administration. In other words, current pro-government parties are losing Beijing’s trust and would be further marginalized in the future. Chinese-born lawmakers or mainland ex-pats will expectedly play a more vital role in city governance.

Unlike the previous three rounds of political reforms in Hong Kong, this reform is directly imposed by Beijing, without public consultation and legislative approval. Rita Fan, former delegate to the National People’s Congress Standing Committee, even commented that pro-democracy figures do not deserve to be consulted.

Implications

- *The Beijing-dominated selection committee becomes the new influential sector, with democratic representation falling in both the LegCo and the selection committee.* The share of directly elected seats drops to a record low, even worse than the figure in Macao (i.e. Directly elected seats only account for 22% in Hong Kong, compared to 42% in Macao). In their place, Beijing-trusted candidates can dominate a sizable number of seats in the LegCo.
- *Future election runners are subject to a two-step political screening* before voters can elect them. In practice, most of the opposition leaders will likely be barred from elections. Not to mention that candidates and election winners have to survive pre-and post-election disqualification mechanisms under the current arrangements.
- *Beijing loyalists are expected to secure an overwhelming 2/3 majority* in the LegCo, giving them enough authority to change the city’s election system and pass further security-related laws. When democrats lose their veto power against future draconian legislations, the political landscape alteration may affect the entire investment and regulatory environments.

- *Wolf-warrior-like politicians will become more active in local governance after the power reshuffles:* Under the loyalty-vetting mechanism of the proposed electoral framework, not only would democrats likely be screened out but so would moderate Beijing supporters who occasionally criticize the Government's policies. New pro-Beijing parties or wolf-warrior-like politicians will give more influential voices in the future policy-making process.

2. THE HEARING ON THE 47 PRO-DEMOCRACY FIGURES

On February 28, 2021, 47 pro-democracy activists were charged with a “conspiracy to commit subversion” for their participation in the legislative primaries last year. As the first and most expansive use of the new security law, the marathon hearing has the following implications:

- *Even voting, the most peaceful way of political expression, can be considered a breach of the national security law:* The case is a disregard of democracy since over 610,000 Hongkongers took part in the city's first-ever informal primaries. Most of the 50 democrats had obtained tens of thousands of votes. The case is a perfect example of Beijing's tightening red line in the territory—no matter how peaceful citizens expressed their political beliefs, Beijing cannot tolerate any dissenting voices.
- *Prosecutors can challenge the court's bail decisions:* 15 defendants were kept in custody even after initially being granted bail since government prosecutors had immediately appealed against the court's bail decision. The same trick is expected to be used on future arrestees.
- *Inhuman trial processing:* The processing is criticized as chaotic and judicially unfair. Throughout the 4-day hearings, at least eight defendants were taken to the hospital by ambulance. The 1st-day hearing lasted for 19 hours in total, which the defendants' family described as “torturing.” Several defendants complained about a lack of access to their lawyers. For 3 days, they had no access to showers or even proper rests.
- *Special treatments in prison:* All remands are subject to solitary confinement, including meals and exercise. At least four defendants were barred from contact with their families.
- *In addition to election runners, even facilitators have become Beijing's new targets:* On the eve of the hearing, the mediating platform, Power for Democracy, was forced to cease operation and disband after three of the organizers, Andrew Chiu Ka-yin, Au Nok-hin and John Clancey, were prosecuted. The platform has facilitated electoral coordination among pro-democratic parties for nearly 20 years since 2002. An electoral coordination platform as such is now facing unprecedented pressure.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Let me turn to—I understand we have a list of names here that may be online. Senator Booker?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Markey?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. Senator Coons.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the folks who have testified for your courage, for your determination, for your passion to fight for democracy. It is your sacrifice that encourages those of us here who are looking at how best to revive, and sustain, and advance our democracy in the United States.

Peter, thank you for being with us in person. It is wonderful to see you here safely and in Washington. As a prominent civil society leader in South Sudan, as someone who has endured imprisonment, I would be interested in hearing from you what you think this committee can best do to support the cultivation of democracy and peace in South Sudan, and what you can share with us about democratic trends more broadly across the continent, and what you see as the greatest threats to civil society in South Sudan and across the continent.

Dr. AJAK. Thank you. Thank you very much, Senator Coons, for your questions, and thank you for your support. One of the things that I remember very well from the prison was being briefed by the letter that you and Senator Booker wrote in demanding for my release. And it was—I was in solitary confinement at the time and was told that senators are speaking on your behalf and you have to find a way to keep them quiet, which was a crazy request given that I was in solitary confinement.

People of South Sudan are yearning for democracy. This is the reason why we sacrificed for more than two decades, fighting a civil war and fighting for our own independent state. But as you know, we have never voted. I am 37 years old, and I have never voted in my entire life, and that is because our president keep on postponing elections. Every time elections come up, he keeps postponing them. So one thing that this committee can do is to stress the importance of the elections that are scheduled for next year to take place on time and not be delayed again. This would require, of course, getting the U.N., especially the U.N. Mission in South Sudan, on board to review its mandate so that the elections are part of its mandate. It requires possibly looking at appointing a high-level U.N. envoy that shepherds the country toward the conduct of these elections.

It also requires supporting the civil society, doing exactly as what you did before, speaking out on behalf of activists. As I speak with you, there are 1,000 people detained in secret national security facilities across the country. So your voices matter, and it sends a message to Kiir that he is being watched and that he will be held accountable. Also urging the African Union to set up the Hybrid Court so that there is accountability for atrocities that have been committed in the country.

But going beyond, the region, the whole Horn of Africa is in crisis. What is happening in Tigray is shocking, and it requires U.S. to speak out forcefully. Also recently, as we have seen in Uganda, elections are being held, but they are sham elections because these dictators are the ones monitoring the elections, and, at the same time, the ones counting the votes. So in the end, they count it for themselves. So U.S. leadership in the region is critical because, as mentioned in the previous panel, U.S. have been absent in the last few years and it has allowed these authoritarian countries to take over, especially China. It requires really countering China.

Senator COONS. Thank you very much, Peter, and it is, I think, our intention in this committee and elsewhere to re-engage and re-engage actively in the Horn of Africa as well as throughout the rest of the world. If I might ask one more question, Mr. Chairman, just of Wai Hnin and Nathan. Thank you both for your courage. And I understand that, despite social media restrictions, internet blackouts, a critical means of organizing in the face of a coup and a crackdown has been access to social media. If you could each speak to the importance of a free and open internet and social media to democracy and to activism in Hong Kong and in Burma, I would welcome that. Here in the United States, we have a very polarized social media landscape that has led to some disinformation campaigns, and in our Congress, we will be debating how best to balance protecting free speech online and regulations to prevent

disinformation. So if you could in turn, Wai Hnin and Nathan, just briefly speak to that question. Thank you.

Ms. PWINT THON. For social media, it is very good for us because compared to 2007 and in the past uprising, we have seen the live footages of people on the street protesting. And now they are shutting down internet from 1:00 a.m. until 6:30 a.m. now, so we are worried what will happen because the military is doing nightly raids and people cannot report it on social media about the human rights violations happening on the ground.

So we are very grateful that we have live information coming up from the country, and also it give more evidence to the international community that they need to act now, but of course the military is also using their social media platform to spread false information as well. But on a greater level, we appreciate having the internet, and we need that nightly internet cut to be stopped so that, you know, human rights violations can stop happening during the night as well. Thank you.

Mr. LAW. Thank you for the question, Senator. First of all, Hong Kong people can still have access to Facebook and Twitter, these social media platform. But when they speak about the situation of Hong Kong or urging the international community to hold China accountable, they could be seen as breaching the National Security Law. So it really adds up and spread wide terror for them, making them afraid of expressing a genuine opinion online. Furthermore, China has been deploying its misinformation overseas, and also a lot of information warfare are conducting. So I have always been urging countries working with social media companies to really monitor and curb this misinformation campaign led by state actors, and to really safeguard democracy by stopping this infiltration to our system and uphold the values of democratic society.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Thank you very much. A vote is now under way, so I will just ask if there is any member who is on virtually who has not had an opportunity, if you would identify yourself. Let me start off—I understand that maybe Senator Hagerty is with us?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. I understand maybe Senator Markey is with us?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Markey? Senator Hagerty?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Is anyone out there?

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Chairman, this is Senator Van Hollen. How are you? I do not know if the others are here or not.

The CHAIRMAN. Having not heard from either one of them, I will turn to you, Senator Van Hollen.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank all three of our witnesses today for their powerful testimony and their courageous actions in support of freedom and democracy.

Mr. Law, I have a question for you because I joined with Senator Toomey, and last year we passed the Hong Kong Accountability Act, which provided additional authorities for the President of the United States to sanction officials responsible for the crackdown and taking away freedom and democracy in Hong Kong. The prior

Administration used that for some targeted measures against individuals. I was pleased to see the Biden administration issue some sanctions against those in Russia who have been very instrumental in the crackdown on Navalny. And we are urging the Biden administration now to take similar steps with respect to the further crackdown on Hong Kong. As you said, 47 democracy activists, you know, have been detained and threatened.

The sanctions authority allows for sanctions not only against individuals, but also banks that bank those individuals, the banks that those individuals rely on. Do you think it would be productive if the Biden administration both imposed further sanctions on individuals responsible for the crackdown, but also use that authority to sanction some of the banks that they do business with?

Mr. LAW. Thank you, Senator, for your questions. The answer is a resounding yes. It is an important tool by using sanctions to have deterrence effect on the individuals who are responsible for human rights violation, and, in fact, it is one of the very few tools that can really impose hardship on an individual level. So I agree that the list of sanctions on Chinese and Hong Kong officials should be expanded. And, on the other hand, sanctions on corporation which is colluding with the Chinese Communist Party on human rights violations is also important because sometimes these business, they are using the name of unknown political actors, but actually they are tacitly helping the Chinese Communist Party to promote its agenda, and while really taking advantage of our open and democratic values and system, but getting benefits from autocracies.

I think these kind of behaviors should be curbed, and the business sector should be warned very carefully that they should not be cooperating with the Chinese Communist Party and other dictators. Otherwise, they will face consequences. I think sanctioning is really such a clear message, and it is much needed.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. Right that is the idea is that those financial institutions that are enabling those individuals also recognize that they could be penalized through the sanctions. Let me just thank all of you. As the chairman said, a vote is on, and I see Senator Markey is here, but thank all of you for your testimony.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Van Hollen. Is Senator Markey with us?

Senator MARKEY. Thank you. Can you hear me, Mr. Chairman?

The CHAIRMAN. I can hear you loud and clear. You are recognized for 5 minutes.

Senator MARKEY. Beautiful. Thank you so much. Ms. Pwint Thon, thank you for being here with us today, and I am interested to hear how you think the United States can better support the Burmese people in their push for democracy following the military coup.

Ms. PWINT THON. Thank you so much, Senator Markey, and please take let me take this opportunity to thank you. I understand that you sponsored the—Burma's Political Prisoner Act as well. So this is the moment that, you know, we need that more than ever now because there are growing numbers of political prisoners in the country, and we need to continue. We need the U.S. to continue its support and aid from the NED and the Government to make a

difference because we need more organizations on the ground to document human rights violations in the country. So that is one aspect of it.

And also, the other thing is, like I said, sanctioning military companies and targeted sanctions is very important. We are asking for U.S. to establish a global arms embargo as well, global correlations of countries to impose an embargo. So when you have that—the China's vetoes at the U.N. Security Council, you can make progress towards that even with China. So that is one action the U.S. can take. And you have so many tools that you can use to help people in Burma, and please use those to help us.

Senator MARKEY. We will do. We are with you. We are going to have your back throughout this entire ordeal. We are going to come out on the other side of it, but we need the United States to exercise its historic moral, political, economic leadership, and we are going to do that. Thank you for your great leadership. And, Mr. Law, we have seen beautiful displays of solidarity between pro-democracy Hong-Kongers and Burmese protesters over the past several weeks. It seems that these protesters are sharing information on how to manage the brutal assaults by authorities. Do you see any unique opportunities for the United States Government or private industry to support these exchanges?

Mr. LAW. Thank you so much, Senator, and also for your continuous support for Hong Kong's democratic movement. I think for now, we can form virtual community on social platform. We can form mutual alliance that share our information and consolidate our support to each other's democratic circles. So it has been enhancing the ability of showing these protests to the world, and I think the democratic communities in the Western countries can also facilitate an exchange, increase the education on the threats of authoritarianism. And these processes is crucial because perception changes actions.

It really takes us to raise the awareness on what is happening in Hong Kong and Myanmar in order for us to get grassroots support in the Western countries and also push forward to change. What we are facing is a global democracy decline. It is a global democracy crisis. The Chinese Government is tacitly backing the Myanmar group, and this is a situation that we have to resolve with coordinated actions. So I think the Western democracies really take a huge role in here, and we are expecting consolidated efforts and organizations that could step up and to defend democracy.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, and, again, thank you for your leadership. Thank all of you for your leadership. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving me this opportunity. I know the roll call is on, but I appreciate it.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Markey. There is a vote going on, so we will have to bring this hearing to a conclusion. But I do want to ask each of you in 1 minute, which I know is always difficult, but in 1 minute, tell me the one thing you would want the United States to do as it relates to your specific country that you think would make a difference. Doctor.

Dr. AJAK. Thank you, Chairman, for that question. For me, the one specific thing that people of South Sudan needs is to exercise the right to elect their own leaders. We have never had that right,

and we have struggled for so long. We have sacrificed so many people for us to get our country, and since doing that, we have never had a chance to vote. The elections are supposed to take place next year. We want the U.S. help so that those elections happen and we finally get to vote. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Law.

Mr. LAW. Well, for now, we have to see the decline of democracy as a global crisis with global agendas, missions, actions. So I think the U.S. definitely could play the role of consolidating their efforts around the world, forming alliance that aims at tackling the rights of authoritarianism, and clearly positioning China as the greatest threat to our democracy and our rule-based international system. It requires a lot of cooperation and strength to do it, and I believe that the Western democracies have to come together under the facilitation of the U.S. and the other allies.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Ms. Hnin.

Ms. PWINT THON. Thank you very much. We want to see the Burma—the future of Burma, what we want to see is federal democracy with equal rights for every individual living in the country, and U.S. has already been using diplomatic pressure and other pressure. So I would like to urge the United States to use other measures that you have—economic, humanitarian, legal, and also diplomatic—continued diplomatic pressure on the military to stop human rights violations and stop this coup, and give people freedom, and human rights, and democracy that we deserve. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Well, thank all of you. You are vivid examples of why democracy is so important. And those willing to struggle for it in their respective countries, you give us all a sense of inspiration. We salute and recognize your individual sacrifices, and we thank you for sharing your stories with us in the Senate and with the world.

This record will remain open until the close of business tomorrow.

With the thanks of the committee to all of our witnesses, this hearing is adjourned.

Dr. AJAK. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 12:15 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]