

FROM THE G7 TO A D-10: Strengthening Democratic Cooperation for Today's Challenges

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British Prime Minister Boris Johnson hosts a virtual meeting of G7 leaders on February 19, 2021.
Geoff Pugh/Pool via REUTERS

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the world emerges from a devastating pandemic, the United States and its democratic allies and partners face a daunting array of global threats and challenges. Authoritarianism is rising, Iran and North Korea continue to advance their nuclear programs, and the race for advanced technologies is heating up. Climate change is irreversibly altering the planet, while wage stagnation and unemployment threaten to derail the makings of a global economy recovery.

More profoundly, the world is entering new era of strategic competition. For the first time in more than three decades, the United States and its allies face a systemic challenge from autocratic rivals that seek to disrupt or displace the rules-based democratic order. As President

Joe Biden highlighted during his remarks to the Munich Security Conference in February, the world is in the midst of a fundamental debate—an inflection point—between “those who argue that autocracy is the best way forward” and “those who understand that democracy is essential to meeting [today’s] challenges.”¹

China is growing more powerful and Russia more assertive in challenging key tenets of the global system, each in their own ways but increasingly aligned, as they engage in coercive tactics to expand their influence. Meanwhile, democracies are on the defensive as they seek to contend with these global threats even as many, including the United States, face deeply polarized electorates and growing political dysfunction at home.

1 “Remarks by President Biden at the 2021 Virtual Munich Security Conference,” White House, February 19, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/02/19/remarks-by-president-biden-at-the-2021-virtual-munich-security-conference/>. President Biden’s remarks on the autocratic challenge liberal democracies are facing were echoed by many European leaders speaking at the the MSC Special Edition. See Tobias Bunde, “Beyond Westlessness: A Readout From the Munich Security Conference Special Edition 2021,” Munich: Munich Security Conference, February 2021, <https://doi.org/10.47342/NLUJ4791>.

To position themselves to succeed in this new era, the United States and its democratic allies and partners will need new means to strengthen cooperation. They need institutions, formal and informal, that are fit for purpose, and reflect the evolving global distribution of power and nature of today's challenges. While many institutions created after World War II, including NATO, continue to play an important role in convening democracies, others, such as the Group of Seven (G7), need to address the challenges of today's world. The United States and its allies need to adapt existing entities or create new ones to facilitate deeper cooperation among the world's democracies.

With the rules-based democratic order under threat, leading democracies need to develop common strategic approaches that pool their collective influence to confront today's challenges. To this end, this paper proposes a formal Democracies Ten—a "D-10"—aimed at fostering strategic alignment and coordinated action among a group of like-minded, influential democracies to advance a rules-based democratic order.

Membership in the D-10 would be based on criteria identifying a select group of nations that are *strategically likeminded* and have also demonstrated a *capacity for global influence*. The resulting group would bring together the current members of the G7 plus Australia, South Korea, and the European Union. In addition, the D-10 could include—though not necessarily from the outset—India, South Africa, and/or Brazil, if concerns over like-mindedness can be overcome. With about 60 percent of global gross domestic product (GDP), a new D-10 would serve as a powerful mechanism to align the world's most influential democracies around a coordinated set of strategies to address global challenges.

The D-10 can serve to drive a common approach to counter the wide range of autocratic threats posed by Russia and China. It can forge a technology initiative to develop common norms and standards for advanced technologies and more resilient supply chains. It can provide a channel for rebuilding commitments to free and fair trade, and a new climate initiative to collectively ad-

vance green technologies. A D-10 can organize collective strategies to counter authoritarianism and support democratic movements around the world. And it can facilitate a common approach to nuclear proliferation by Iran and North Korea, and coordinate defense strategies and military investments across the free world.²

While the concept of a D-10 was developed more than a decade ago,³ it has recently risen to the top of the global agenda and has garnered widespread interest.⁴ British Prime Minister Boris Johnson signaled his support for the idea by inviting the leaders of Australia, South Korea, India, and, more recently, South Africa, to the June G7 summit. Separately, President Biden has called for revitalizing cooperation with democratic allies, and is seeking to organize a Summit for Democracy next year. And, several other leaders, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, have called for closer democratic cooperation on challenges, including those posed by China and Russia. While there are differing views among governments on the merits and format of a D-10, the concept has

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2 Ash Jain and Alex Pascal, "Alliances First: Joe Biden's Historic Opportunity to Reshape Global Order," *National Interest*, December 1, 2020, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/alliances-first-joe-biden%E2%80%99s-historic-opportunity-reshape-global-order-173564>.

3 The D-10 construct was initially developed as a US-Canada policy planning dialogue in 2008. The Atlantic Council has been convening the D-10 Strategy Forum as a Track 1.5 platform with officials and experts since 2015. See also Ash Jain, "Like-minded and Capable Democracies," *Council on Foreign Relations*, January 3, 2013, <https://www.cfr.org/report/minded-and-capable-democracies>; David Gordon and Ash Jain, "Forget the G-8. It's Time for the D-10," *Wall Street Journal*, June 17, 2013; Matthew Kroenig and Ash Jain, *Present at the Re-Creation*, *Atlantic Council*, October 30, 2019, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Present-at-the-Re-Creation.pdf>.

4 Kurt Campbell and Rush Doshi, "How America can Shore up Asian Order," *Foreign Affairs*, January 12, 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-01-12/how-america-can-shore-asian-order>; Erik Brattberg and Ben Judah, "Britain's D-10 Summit of Democracies Beats a Moribund G-7," *Foreign Policy*, June 10, 2020; Eddie Fishman and Siddharth Mohandas, "A Council of Democracies Can Save Multilateralism," *Foreign Affairs*, August 3, 2020; Anders Fogh Rasmussen, "A New Way to Lead the Free World," *Wall Street Journal*, December 15, 2020; James Rogers, "Move Over, G7 – We're Going to Get the 'Democratic Ten' Now," *The National Interest*, June 20, 2020; Brad Glosserman, "Enough of the G7 - let's have a G10," *The Japan Times*, June 1, 2020; Yuichi Hosoya, "Protecting Democracy in a Free and Open Indo-Pacific," *Japan Times*, March 2, 2021.

gained increasing support among policymakers in the United States and other leading democracies.

This paper describes the strategic context and rationale for the creation of a D-10, its potential mission and membership, and how it would be organized. It proposes specific areas around which to prioritize action and practical steps to realize this entity, given the current views of potential members. The paper also addresses concerns about the D-10, including how to avoid perceptions that this will lead to a more polarized world or a new Cold War-like confrontation among great powers. Finally, it suggests that while there may be some duplication of effort between the two, it may be politically advantageous to retain the G7 for now, while simultaneously creating a D-10. A transition away from the G7 and toward a D-10 may take place gradually as the framework proves effective and meaningful over time.

The D-10 is not intended as a security alliance or an alternative to the United Nations (UN) Security Council, nor is it directed at confronting or containing China or any other nation. Rather, it is aimed at rallying the world's most powerful democracies around a common cause—advancing a rules-based democratic order based on shared values and common interests. The overarching strategic challenge facing the United States and other democracies is whether they can preserve a rules-based democratic order that reflects these values, or “whether the world will slip back toward a state in which illiberal regimes and coercive practices are ascendant.”⁵

5 Hal Brands and Charles Adel, “A Grand Strategy of Democratic Solidarity,” *Washington Quarterly*, March 23, 2021.

II. STRATEGIC CONTEXT—THE CONTEST FOR A RULES-BASED DEMOCRATIC ORDER

The foundation of the order

Over the past seventy-five years, leading democracies across North America, Europe, and the Asia-Pacific have established a rules-based order aimed at defending shared security interests, promoting free-market economies, and advancing shared democratic norms. This order has proven highly successful, facilitating unparalleled levels of peace, security, and global prosperity, and fostering freedom for hundreds of millions of people around the world. The primary attributes that have helped foster a post-World War II global order that is predominantly free and democratic include the following:⁶

A set of rules and norms encouraging peaceful, predictable, and cooperative behavior among states that is consistent with fundamental values and principles—*inter alia*, respect for sovereignty, limits on the use of force, free flows of global capital and trade, respect for individual rights and freedoms, the rule of law, and democracy.⁷

Formal and informal entities that serve to propagate and enforce these norms. This includes inclusive organizations such as the UN and the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as more exclusive entities such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and informal bodies such as the G7 and the Group of 20 (G20). These institutions are designed to facilitate cooperation in advancing international rules and norms and providing a forum to discuss and settle disputes.

The role of powerful democratic states to help preserve and defend the system. The United States and its democratic allies and partners in Europe and Asia have played a central role in promoting and defending the rules-based system by serving as the core

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Scholars have described this post-World War II global system as a “liberal international order,” “rules-based international order,” “democratic world order,” or simply, the “free world.” Norms and principles that are central to this order, which this paper refers to as a “rules-based democratic order,” include the following, which span the security, political, and economic realms.⁹

- **Sovereignty and territorial integrity.** A fundamental norm underpinning the post-World War II order is that states should respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other states. As reflected in the UN Charter, territorial aggression—the use of force to seize territory or resources from another—is prohibited,

6 Kroenig and Jain, *Present at the Re-Creation*.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid. Also see: Patrick, Stewart, “World Order: What Exactly Are the Rules?” *Washington Quarterly*, April 29, 2016; *Declaration of Principles for Freedom, Prosperity, and Peace*, Atlantic Council, 2019, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/declaration/>.

and states are to refrain from the use of force in their conduct with other states (except in self-defense and other limited situations).

- *Freedom from foreign coercion and interference.* Closely related is the principle that states in the international system should be able to conduct their own affairs, domestic and foreign, without coercion, intimidation, or violence, and that democracies should be free from foreign meddling in elections, disinformation, cyberattacks, or undue interference by outside powers in governing their societies.¹⁰
- *Advancement of democracy and human rights.* The hallmark principle of a democratic order is that governments should be accountable to their citizens and are obligated to protect the fundamental liberties of their people, including the right to participate in the democratic process and select their own leaders in free and fair elections.
- *Free trade and an open, competitive global economy.* Another key principle of the postwar order is an open global economy that reflects free-market principles, free and fair trade, and transparent and predictable rules and standards.
- *Nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction.* States are obligated to cease development and acquisition of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons (with exceptions for certain states as, for example, in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty), and have a duty to prevent their acquisition, particularly by governments that have threatened the security of other states.
- *A prohibition on terrorism.* States and non-state actors have an obligation to refrain from engaging in or supporting acts of terrorism, including violence directed against civilians, suicide attacks, hostage takings, and hijackings.
- *Prevention of genocide and mass atrocities.* Preventing genocide, mass atrocities, crimes against humanity, and widespread violence against civilians is an important global norm. States have an obligation to refrain from engaging in or facilitating the commission of such atrocities.
- *Accessibility and protection of the global commons.* Freedom of air and sea navigation, and open access to outer space and cyberspace, as well as the protection of the global climate and the environment, are important global norms.

¹⁰ Patrick, Stewart, "The Unruly World: The Case for Good Enough Global Governance," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2014, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2013-12-06/unruly-world>.



Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) in St. Petersburg, Russia, June 6, 2019. *Dmitri Lovetsky/Pool via REUTERS*

Democracy vs autocracy

The international order constructed by the United States and other leading democracies after World War II largely reflects these norms and principles. While they have been inconsistently applied, and at times violated by the leading powers themselves, they served as the basis for the establishment of many of the institutions that were created to advance cooperation on global security, economics, and governance. The Atlantic Charter, issued by the United States and the United Kingdom in 1941, set forth an aspirational vision for a global order grounded in principles of nonaggression, self-determination, and open trade and led to the creation of a series of new international entities, including the United Nations, NATO, and the Bretton Woods system of international trade and economic cooperation.

However, with the start of the Cold War, it became clear

that this order would be contested. Opposed by a block of communist states led by the Soviet Union, the scope of many of these norms was limited to the nations of the “free world,” though the institutional composition was mixed. After the fall of communism and collapse of the Soviet Union beginning in 1989, it appeared the world was headed toward a strategic convergence in favor of a rules-based democratic order. The newly emerged Russian Federation partially transitioned toward democracy and free markets, and signaled its support for rules and institutions of the global order. China, too, seemed prepared to do away with its communist zeal, embracing free markets and engaging in trade and economic liberalization that many believed would inevitably lead to a more open political system.

But this notion of strategic convergence proved to be a myth.¹¹ Although China embraced state-led capitalism, its authoritarian leaders tightened, rather than loos-

¹¹ Thomas J. Wright, *All Measures Short of War: The Contest for the Twenty-First Century and the Future of American Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017).

ened, their grip on their people. And, after ascending to the presidency, Xi Jinping has taken increasingly assertive steps to push back against the principles of a rules-based order. Russia, after a brief window of democracy, has reverted back to authoritarian rule under Vladimir Putin.¹² Both leaders see the rules-based democratic order as a potential threat to the legitimacy of their regimes, and to their desired spheres of influence in their regions and across the globe.¹³ As a result, both have embarked on separate, but sometimes converging, strategies to counter this order.

As noted in a previous Atlantic Council strategy paper, *Present at the Re-Creation*, Russia has emerged as a significant challenger to the rules-based order. In 2008 and 2014, Russia invaded Georgia and Ukraine, respectively, redrawing the map of Europe by force for the first time since World War II. Russia's meddling in foreign elections, and its attempts to coerce its neighbors through military intimidation, economic boycotts, energy disruptions, and arms sales, are inconsistent with norms relating to self-determination and foreign interference. Moreover, Moscow's support for autocratic governments, from Syria to Belarus to Venezuela, has undermined the potential for democratic reform in these societies.¹⁴

If Russia seeks to disrupt the order, China may be seeking to displace it. As it has risen, China has frequently violated fundamental principles and norms of the rules-based system. Beijing's assertion of its "nine-dash line" in the South China Sea, its self-proclaimed air-defense identification zones, and its claims of "indisputable sovereignty" over disputed territories underscore its ambitions to carve out a regional sphere of influence. On the economic front, China's unfair trade and economic policies run contrary to liberal economic norms, and have provided Chinese companies with unfair commercial advantages. Beijing has engaged in what many now consider a genocide against the Uyghur population in Xinjiang, and is seeking to dismantle Hong Kong's democratic institutions, despite its treaty commitments.¹⁵

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The challenges posed by China and Russia are setting the terms for a new era of strategic competition between democracies and autocracies that is likely to play out over the foreseeable future. Two common features stand out in their efforts to undermine the rules-based democratic order. The first is their use of economic and diplomatic coercion to pressure states, particularly along their periphery, to accept their policy preferences. The second is the use of disinformation to try to influence the outcomes of elections in democratic nations. Moreover, despite often competing interests, China and Russia are becoming increasingly aligned. They are conducting joint military exercises, working together on cyber capabilities, and coordinating their positions in international forums.¹⁶ While it is unlikely they form a deep and trusting alliance anytime soon, the ties between the two powers are growing, and "in virtually every dimension of their relationship—from the diplomatic to defense and economic to informational realms—cooperation between Beijing and Moscow has increased."¹⁷

12 David Gordon and Fen Hampson, "The Enduring Myth of Democratic Convergence," *Diplomat & International Canada*, September 27, 2015, <https://diplomatonline.com/mag/2015/09/the-enduring-myth-of-democratic-convergence/>.

13 Matthew Kroenig, *The Return of Great Power Rivalry: Democracy versus Autocracy from the Ancient World to the U.S. and China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

14 Kroenig and Jain, *Present at the Re-Creation*.

15 Ibid.

16 Stephen J. Hadley and Paula J. Dobriansky, "Navigating the Growing Russia-China Strategic Alignment," Atlantic Council, June 29, 2020, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/strategic-insights-memos/navigating-the-growing-russia-china-strategic-alignment/>.

17 Andrea Kendall-Taylor and David Shullman, "Navigating the Deepening Russia-China Partnership," Center for New American Security, January 14, 2021, <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/navigating-the-deepening-russia-china-partnership>.



A handout photo made available by the Munich Security Conference (MSC) shows US President Joe Biden (screen) speaking during the Munich Security Conference 2021 Special Edition, in Munich, Bavaria, Germany, February 19, 2021.

[Handout photo/EPA/EFE]

A daunting set of global challenges

Several other significant challenges are threatening the stability and success of the rules-based democratic order, many of which are exacerbated by Russian and Chinese actions. Among the most salient are the following:

Advanced technologies. New technologies, including artificial intelligence, quantum computing, genetic engineering, 5G, and robotics, are developing rapidly and will significantly shape the future of the international system. While these innovations promise great benefits, they also carry serious risks, including potential new global security challenges. If China or other autocratic nations succeed in developing these emerging technologies ahead of the democratic world, they could gain significant economic and military advantages, and will be in a stronger position to set standards and norms for these technologies that are inconsistent with liberal values.¹⁸

Nuclear proliferation and terrorism. North Korea continues to develop and expand its nuclear-weapons capability, while it threatens the stability of democratic nations in its region, including South Korea and Japan. Meanwhile, Iran retains a latent nuclear-weapons capability and possesses the most sophisticated ballistic-missile program in the Middle East, while it continues to support terrorist groups and armed militias across the region.

The rise of authoritarianism. Last year, Freedom House recorded a fifteenth consecutive year of a decline in global freedom.¹⁹ From Syria to Venezuela to Belarus, autocratic leaders have worked to consolidate their grips on power in the face of popular unrest. And, according to Freedom House, “more authoritarian powers are banning opposition groups or jailing their leaders, dispensing with term limits, and tightening the screws on any independent media that remain.”²⁰ Autocrats who rule by force and coercion, “from Russia to China, across the Middle East

18 Ash Jain, *Create a Democratic Technology Alliance*, Atlantic Council, April 8, 2021, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/100-ideas-for-the-first-100-days/79-create-a-democratic-technology-alliance/>; Kroenig, *The Return of Great Power Rivalry*.

19 Sarah Repucci, “Freedom in the World 2020: A Leaderless Struggle for Democracy,” Freedom House, 2021, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2020/leaderless-struggle-democracy>.

20 Ibid.

and Central Asia, to Latin America and Africa” have become “more adept—and daring—at building a parallel universe to the liberal democratic order.”²¹ At the same time, growing political polarization and unresolved social and economic grievances in the United States and other nations have undermined faith in democratic institutions at home and fueled a narrative of democratic dysfunction that threatens the foundation of a democratic world order.

Global economic challenges. Protectionist measures, unfair subsidies, and the theft of intellectual property, including by China, are critical challenges to an open global economy. At the same time, wage stagnation, economic inequities, and uneven benefits of trade have led many in the democratic world to question free-market economies and the value of global engagement.

Climate change. Climate change is on the verge of becoming irreversible and could result in profound changes to the planet. While the Paris Climate Agreement and other multilateral agreements have sought to reduce global carbon emissions, these steps will not be sufficient to keep emissions below the target levels set by leading scientific panels. Higher average global temperatures are leading to an increased frequency of violent storms and droughts, rising sea levels, and forced migrations, all of which are threatening vulnerable societies and may contribute to conflicts over natural resources.²²

The need to strengthen democratic cooperation

While global power is shifting, the leading democracies in North America, Europe, and the Asia-Pacific continue to possess the preponderance of power in the international system.²³ Together, democratic states across the world make up roughly three quarters of world GDP.²⁴

In the security realm, Western power is even more pronounced. The United States and its closest allies collectively commit more than six times the resources to defense expenditures annually than do Russia and China combined.²⁵ In combination with the EU, the transatlantic partnership provides nearly 80 percent of official developmental aid worldwide. And the twenty countries with the most soft power in the world are all democracies.²⁶

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These assets provide the United States and its democratic allies with an enormous source of leverage in addressing global challenges. Democratic allies and partners provide legitimacy, global reach, and collective resources; their support and alignment are key to reinforcing the rules, norms, and institutions of the international system.²⁷ With the world's largest economy and military, and still unmatched global reach, US leadership will be determinative in the success of this rules-based order. Among the top-ten global economies, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Italy are also critical to shaping an effective global order. Japan, Australia, and South Korea are the linchpins of democratic support in the Asia-Pacific and have an essential role in defending the system, particularly in the context of China.²⁸

Moreover, if the leading democracies can expand their ranks to include others such as India, Brazil, and South

21 “Before a New Iron Curtain Falls,” *Washington Post*, June 7, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/before-a-new-iron-curtain-falls/2016/06/07/1ada7386-2847-11e6-b989-4e5479715b54_story.html.

22 Kroenig and Jain, *Present at the Re-Creation*.

23 Ibid.

24 “GDP: (Current US \$),” World Bank, last visited June 28, 2019, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=AF&name_desc=false&view=map; “Polity IV Project, Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2017,” Center for Systemic Peace, 2017, <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html>.

25 Nan Tian, et al., “Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2018,” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, April 2019, <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2019/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-world-military-expenditure-2018>.

26 “Soft Power 30,” *University of Southern California*, <https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/users/softpower30>.

27 Kroenig and Jain, *Present at the Re-Creation*.

28 Ibid.

Africa, their influence within the international system can be even more pronounced. In the past, these rising democracies have often been ambivalent about aligning themselves behind statements and actions that require a public stance against other global powers, such as China and Russia, or that require imposing sanctions or utilizing coercive diplomacy.²⁹ As reflected by their continuing engagement in organizations like the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of Seventy-Seven (G77), these rising democracies have tended to emphasize traditions of nonalignment and noninterference.³⁰ But, as these nations recognize that their interests are more aligned with those of the democratic world, the situation is evolving. India, in particular, has in recent years sought closer economic and security relations with other leading democracies, pursuing closer bilateral ties with the United States, the EU, Japan, and Australia, and embracing the Indo-Pacific Quad in the context of the challenges from China.

Limits of the G7 and other entities

Despite their intended role in facilitating global cooperation, many inclusive institutions, including the UN Security Council, have been undermined by their inability to achieve consensus on major global security challenges. China and Russia's willingness to block Security Council action has become increasingly pronounced over the past decade, particularly on matters relating to territorial sovereignty and democracy—as illustrated by their use of their veto power to protect autocratic regimes in Syria and Venezuela.³¹ The United States and its allies should continue to work through the UN and other inclusive multilateral institutions. But to address many of the most pressing challenges posed by these autocratic states, they will need new institutions to foster deeper cooperation among likeminded democratic states.

Transatlantic cooperation has been facilitated through institutions such as NATO, and frameworks such as the US-EU Summit and other multilateral consultations. Bilateral alliances—and, more recently, the Indo-Pacific Quad—have facilitated engagement in the Asia-Pacific. The G7 has played an important coordinating role among democracies. But managing today's security challenges requires better coordination across the Atlantic, the Indo-Pacific, and other regions of the world. While there are several existing multilateral entities comprising democracies, they are insufficient by themselves to address

the range of challenges facing the United States and its allies today.

The G7. The G7 is an informal grouping of industrialized democracies—Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States—whose leaders meet annually to discuss issues related to the global economy, as well as political and security issues. The G7 also meets at various other levels across participating governments, including foreign ministers, finance ministers, justice ministers, political directors, and others. It originated as a meeting of finance ministers from five nations in light of the Arab oil embargo in 1973, and convened for the first time at the leaders level in France in 1975. The group was subsequently expanded to include Italy and Canada. Russia was invited to what became the Group of Eight (G8) after the Cold War, until Putin's invasion of Crimea in 2014 set the terms for its eviction.

While global power is shifting, the leading democracies in North America, Europe, and the Asia-Pacific continue to possess the preponderance of power in the international system.

With Russia's exclusion, the current G7 has served as a venue for consultation among leading democracies. But, the G7 is too narrowly constructed, excluding key Asia-Pacific allies, even as Asia becomes the focal point of strategic challenges facing the rules-based order. And, while its mandate has expanded over the past decade, the G7—originally constituted as a grouping of “highly industrialized nations”—remains bureaucratically weighted toward economic issues, with lead roles for G7 coordination housed within the economic teams of many participating governments. At the same time, because the G7 engagement at the ministerial level has expanded across multiple subject areas, it often lacks strategic focus, and its primary activities tend to revolve around negotiations over the wording of lengthy communiqués.

NATO. Some have suggested that an expanded NATO could serve as a forum to promote cooperation among a larger group of democracies from around the world.

29 India, Brazil, and South Africa, for example, abstained from a recent UN General Assembly resolution calling for Russia's withdrawal from Crimea.

30 Jain, “Like-minded and Capable Democracies.”

31 “UN Security Council Working Methods,” Security Council Report, December 16, 2020, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-security-council-working-methods/the-veto.php>.



Yoshihide Suga, Japan's Prime Minister, second from left, speaks while a monitor displays U.S. President Joe Biden, Scott Morrison, Australia's Prime Minister, and Narendra Modi, India's Prime minister, during the virtual Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) meeting at his official residence in Tokyo, Japan, on Friday, March 12, 2021. *Kiyoshi Ota/Pool via REUTERS*

NATO engagement with democracies in Asia and other regions is highly desirable. However, NATO's focus is on mutual defense and security cooperation, whereas current threats and challenges will require coordinated action on a wider range of diplomatic activities, such as sanctions, foreign assistance, and technology coordination. Other important priorities, such as the promotion of democracy and human rights, remain largely outside NATO's purview, and could distract from its core mission.³²

The Indo-Pacific Quad. Cooperation with Asia-Pacific powers, including Japan, South Korea, and Australia, has primarily been structured around bilateral alliances, particularly with the United States. More recently, however, the Indo-Pacific Quad is beginning to serve as a venue for multilateral cooperation among a group of democracies, including the United States, Australia, Japan, and India. Initiated as a security dialogue in 2007, the Quad was reinvigorated in 2017 as an effort to promote gradual convergence around multiple issues, including critical and emerging technologies, counterterrorism, cyber-

security, disaster recovery, and, more recently, COVID-19. Quad foreign ministers convened for the first time in 2017, and a leaders summit was held virtually in March 2021—signaling the potential importance of this venue for cooperation in the context of China. But, while it holds real promise, the Quad is limited to cooperation among Indo-Pacific powers.

The Community of Democracies (CD). Established in 2000, the CD is an international organization of democracies aimed at promoting democratic norms. However, the CD's mission is narrow and its impact has been limited, primarily focusing on election monitoring and occasional statements of concern regarding democratic setbacks.³³ In addition, the CD has been hampered by the inclusion of a significant number of non-democracies, which has made meaningful action difficult to achieve.

Ad hoc groupings and coalitions. The United States has also relied on specialized groupings and ad hoc coalitions that bring together likeminded partners to advance

32 Jain, "Like-minded and Capable Democracies."

33 "About the COD," *Community of Democracies*, <https://community-democracies.org/values/organization/>.

common goals. The G7 Artificial Intelligence Group, the Proliferation Security Initiative, the Missile Technology Control Regime, and the Friends of Syria group, for example, each provided mechanisms to facilitate cooperation among groupings of states on particular crises or issues. But, these entities are, by design, focused on a narrow and specific set of challenges. Moreover, it is diplomatically

time consuming and inefficient to structure a new grouping for each specific new global challenge. And, given the desire to coalesce around a similar group of leading democracies, it may be more advantageous to have a standing body serve as a core group to structure cooperation at a strategic level.



III. THE D-10: MISSION AND MEMBERSHIP

Goals and mission

The world has changed dramatically since 1945, and new challenges have emerged. The task at hand is to develop the architecture, with new international institutions, oriented toward the threats and challenges of the twenty-first century. To succeed in this new era of strategic competition, leading democracies need to leverage their collective capabilities and influence to defend against autocratic challengers. Stronger coordination among nations that share common values and interests is key to an effectively managed global order. To this end, a new Democracies Ten—a “D-10”— can serve to foster strategic alignment and coordinated action among a group of like-minded, influential democracies to advance a rules-based democratic order.

The D-10 would provide a standing framework for consultation at the strategic level, facilitating collaboration on the most important challenges facing the global order. It can serve to drive a common approach to counter the wide range of autocratic threats posed by Russia and China. It can forge a technology initiative to develop common norms, standards, and resilient supply chains for advanced technologies. It can provide a channel for rebuilding democratic commitments to free and fair trade, and a new climate initiative to collectively advance green technologies. A D-10 can organize collective strategies to counter authoritarianism and advance democratic governance. And it can facilitate a common approach to nuclear proliferation by Iran and North Korea, and coordinate defense strategies and military investments across the free world.³⁴

The D-10 would provide a standing framework for consultation at the strategic level, facilitating collaboration on the most important challenges facing the global order.

More broadly, the D-10 could focus on facilitating a consensus on strategic priorities and longer-term objectives, and better ways to align resources, allocate responsibilities, and address gaps in collective capabilities among D-10 states. It could also serve as a core group for broader coalitions of nations on specific issues, and as a consultative platform to quietly align positions and shape agendas in other multilateral venues, including the UN.³⁵

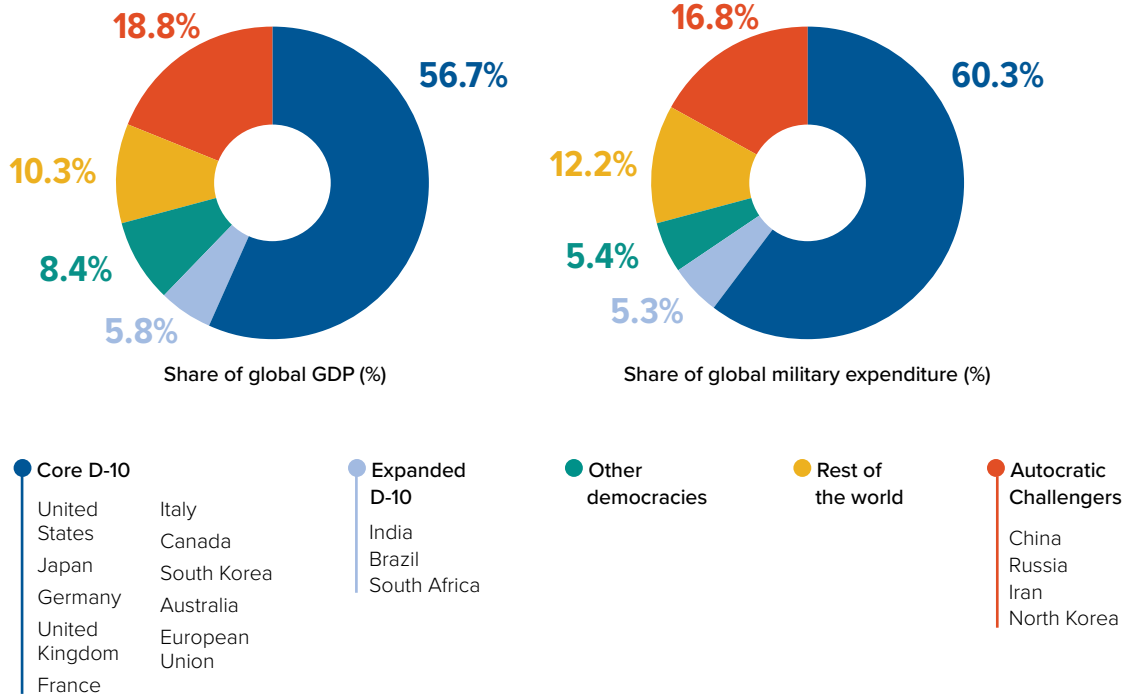
The benefits of a D-10 are threefold. First, it would provide a mechanism for strategic coordination among leading democracies across the globe. In addition to serving as a consultative body, it would provide an impetus for joint decision-making and coordinated action to address today's challenges. Second, it would reinforce the virtues of democratic solidarity, making clear to friends and foes alike the democratic world is united in its determination to uphold a rules-based democratic order. Finally, it would serve as a signal to domestic audiences, highlighting the need to stand together with democratic allies and partners to defend shared values and advance common interests.

³⁴ Jain and Pascal, “Alliances First: Joe Biden’s Historic Opportunity to Reshape Global Order.”

³⁵ Kroenig and Jain, *Present at the Re-Creation*.

Share of Global Power

SOURCES: World Bank, SIPRI (2019)



Participating nations: Strategically likeminded and highly influential

The premise behind the D-10 is that a small group of likeminded and influential democracies can serve as an effective and visible vehicle for coordinated action on global challenges. To be effective and aligned, the group needs to remain narrow in size and selective in its membership. Two criteria should guide which nations would be invited to join.

The first is *strategic like-mindedness*; that is, states that share a commitment to democratic values at home, have a vested interest in advancing a rules-based democratic order, and have a shared understanding of the nature of threats to that order. While they may have differing policy prescriptions, they should have a common sense of purpose in support of the D-10's proposed mission.

The second is *capacity for global influence*; that is, a demonstrated willingness and capability to act on a global scale. This would focus on democracies that possess significant economic, military, and diplomatic re-

sources, and are willing to utilize their global influence to help advance a rules-based democratic order.

The key to the D-10's effectiveness is to keep the group limited to a relatively small number of member nations. To succeed, it is important to bring to the table "the smallest possible number of countries needed to have the largest possible impact on solving a particular problem."³⁶ A group of ten—or, up to a maximum of twelve or thirteen—members would allow for meaningful engagement among powerful democracies on key strategic challenges. While regional diversity could help strengthen the appeal of a D-10, a higher priority should be placed on effectiveness and outcomes. It is better to keep the group small and likeminded in order to facilitate meaningful consensus, rather than expanding too quickly and risking diluting outcomes and impact.

Applying these criteria, the D-10 would include leading transatlantic states, including Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States. From the Asia-Pacific region, it could include Japan, Australia, and South Korea. With the addition of the EU, which would amalgamate the capabilities of other European states,

36 Moses Naim, "Minilateralism", Foreign Policy, June 21, 2009.

D-10 Members

SOURCE: World Bank (2019)

Core D-10	Global GDP (%)	Global Rank
United States	24.4%	1
Japan	5.8%	3
Germany	4.4%	4
United Kingdom	3.2%	6
France	3.1%	7
Italy	2.3%	8
Canada	2%	10
South Korea	1.9%	12
Australia	1.6%	13
European Union	17.8%	---
Total	56.7%	

Expanded D-10	Global GDP (%)	Global Rank
India	3.3%	5
Brazil	2.1%	9
South Africa	0.4%	38
Total	5.8%	

the resulting D-10 would constitute a powerful and influential and forum of likeminded democracies.³⁷

But the door should remain open to other large democracies whose global influence is rising and who may be prepared to align more closely with the D-10. India, as the world's largest democracy and fifth-largest economy, could be a valuable contributor to the D-10's efforts to confront global challenges. However, New Delhi's close security ties with Russia and recent democratic backsliding have raised questions about its potential to join a club of leading democracies.³⁸ Brazil, the largest democracy in Latin America and thirteenth-largest economy, could also be a strong candidate for the D-10, though it remains am-

bivalent about its relationship with the West.³⁹ As Africa's second-largest nation and a member of the G-20, South Africa should also be considered for inclusion; however, its strong ties with Moscow and Beijing could complicate its participation in a D-10.

Before these three countries are formally invited to join a D-10, a common understanding on strategic priorities and mutual expectations—including with regard to democratic commitments at home and dealing with autocratic challenges abroad—will need to be reached. It may be beneficial to look at the latest G7 foreign-minister communique, which was substantially more forward leaning on Russia and China than past statements, as a good baseline for strategic like-mindedness. The statement included the following provisions:

- On Russia, G7 members express “deep concern” that the “negative pattern of Russia’s irresponsible and destabilizing behavior continues, including the build-up of Russian military forces on Ukraine’s borders and in illegally-annexed Crimea, its malign activities aimed at undermining other countries’ democratic systems, its malicious cyber activity, and use of disinformation.”⁴⁰
- On China, G7 members express “deep concern about human rights violations and abuses in Xinjiang and in Tibet, especially the targeting of Uyghurs, members of other ethnic and religious minority groups, and the existence of a large-scale network of political re-education camps, and reports of forced labor systems and forced sterilization and China’s decision to erode democratic elements of the electoral system in Hong Kong.” In addition, they express concern “regarding practices that undermine such free and fair economic systems, including on trade, investment and development finance.” They pledge to “work collectively to foster global economic resilience in the face of arbitrary, coercive economic policies and practices,” and “urge China to assume and fulfil obligations and responsibilities commensurate with its global economic role.”⁴¹

37 Jain, “Like-minded and Capable Democracies.”

38 Russia remains India's largest defense supplier. See: Pranay Sharma, “A Message for US and China and India and Russia Put Two and Two Together,” *South China Morning Post*, April 30, 2021, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3131683/message-us-and-china-india-and-russia-put-two-and-two-together>. India was downgraded from “free” to “partly free” by Freedom House in March 2021. See: Soutik Biswas, “Electoral Autocracy: The Downgrading of India’s Democracy,” BBC, March 16, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-56393944>.

39 See: Gustavo Rubeiro, “Bolsonaro Suggests Coronavirus Is Part of China’s Biological War,” *Brazilian Report*, May 5, 2021, <https://brazilian-report/liveblog/2021/05/05/bolsonaro-suggests-coronavirus-is-part-of-chinas-biological-war/>; Harold Trinkunas, “Testing the Limits of China and Brazil’s Partnership,” Brookings, July 20, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/testing-the-limits-of-china-and-brazils-partnership/>.

40 “G7 Foreign and Development Ministers’ Meeting: Communiqué,” *UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office*, May 5, 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/g7-foreign-and-development-ministers-meeting-may-2021-communicue/g7-foreign-and-development-ministers-meeting-communicue-london-5-may-2021>.

41 Ibid.

Ultimately, a D-10 that includes the world's most powerful democracies — established and emerging — would be compelling. But this is an aspiration that may not be immediately achievable. A more practical way forward on membership is to begin with a core D-10 group that includes the G7 members plus Australia, South Korea, and the EU, while leaving the door open to India, Brazil, and South Africa to join over time as they demonstrate the requisite criteria for strategic like-mindedness and capacity for global influence (the name of the group may or may not need to be altered to reflect the group's expansion).⁴²

Level of engagement

The D-10 construct has its origins in a State Department policy planning staff initiative launched in 2008, in coordination with the Canadian foreign ministry, which convened policy planning directors from US allies across the Atlantic and Pacific for a strategic dialogue on global challenges. Subsequently, the D-10 Strategy Forum, hosted by the Atlantic Council since 2015, has served as an unofficial platform to engage policy planning officials and experts from leading democracies on advancing a rules-based democratic order.⁴³

As a formalized entity, the D-10 should be organized to convene at three levels.

1 National leaders. D-10 leaders should meet at an annual summit to discuss cooperation and publicly reinforce the importance of democratic solidarity. While primarily ceremonial, these D-10 summits would highlight the D-10's role as a steering committee for the rules-based order, and serve as a launchpad to announce joint decisions on key issues and release common strategies. The summit could also serve as a venue to release a quadrennial global security strategy that sets forth an aligned approach for D-10 nations to pursue.

2 Foreign ministers, joined by national security advisors. The D-10 should be centered around the leadership of foreign ministers, who will be charged with outlining strategic priorities and make ultimate decisions for coordinated strategy and policy actions. In-person meetings of foreign ministers would be convened twice per year, supplemented by regular video-conference convenings on a monthly basis, designed to facilitate deeper coordination and reinforce habits of cooperation. National security advisors from the D-10 should be invited as standing members to join these meetings as well.

3 Senior-level officials. In addition, the D-10 should meet at senior working levels to coordinate strategy in specific areas, with the aim of driving common action. D-10 political and policy planning directors, for example, could be charged with developing common strategies for dealing with China and Russia. Defense officials could discuss the coordination of defense strategies, declaratory policy, operational concepts, and military burden sharing. Nonproliferation directors could meet to discuss strategies for North Korean and Iranian nuclear weapons, while economic and finance ministers could outline strategies for a common economic agenda. Democracy directors could meet to organize common strategies for supporting human rights and democracy assistance.

In addition, each D-10 government should appoint a senior official—perhaps a D-10 “special envoy”—that would lead ongoing coordination, in a role similar to, but more visible than, that played by G7 Sherpas. A small secretariat staff could also be created, and possibly embedded within the foreign ministry of one of the member states, to schedule, organize, and facilitate D-10 meetings. The presidency of the D-10 would rotate among its members and, if the G7 is retained, the D-10 presidency could coincide with the G7 presidency (at least until the UK is slated to host again in 2029).

42 As proposed, the European Union would be counted as the tenth member of the “D-10”, just as it is in the G-20. However, the “D-10” label could still be used if the group expands to eleven; the EU need not be included in the count (similar to its current status in the G7). As additional members join, the entity could be referred to as a “D-11” or “D-12”, or, perhaps still the “D-10”. Other numerically-named entities have retained their original name, even as the number of participants has increased. The G-77, for example, a UN group of developing countries, now has 134 nations. In the sports world, the Big Ten college football conference in the United States now has fourteen teams.

43 The D-10 Strategy Forum includes the G7 plus Australia, South Korea, and the European Union. India was invited to the most recent meeting in June 2020. See: *D-10 Strategy Forum, Atlantic Council*, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/programs/scowcroft-center-for-strategy-and-security/global-strategy-initiative/democratic-order-initiative/d-10-strategy-forum/>.

IV. THE D-10 IN ACTION: WHAT WILL IT ACHIEVE?

To succeed, the D-10 will need to have clearly identified priorities. In contrast to the G7, which has a vast agenda and whose communiqués often delve into dozens of topics, the D-10 would be focused on the most salient strategic challenges facing the democratic world, on which this group would be particularly well situated to galvanize effective action.

Given today's challenges, the D-10 agenda could be prioritized around the following six issues.

1 Autocratic coercion. At the top of the D-10's agenda should be the challenge of autocratic coercion posed by China and Russia. In response to China and Russia's growing assertiveness, the United States and its allies have relied primarily on sanctions and other measures—imposed unilaterally or, at times, coordinated bilaterally or through the G7. What is lacking is a “whole of free world” strategy for addressing the full range of economic, diplomatic, and governance challenges posed by these nations. The outcome of the D-10 efforts in this space would be a coordinated global strategy for dealing with Russia, and separately with China, that sets forth a holistic framework focused on strengthening the capabilities of democracies and jointly defending the order in the wake of these challenges, while also seeking cooperation with these powers on issues of common concern, in order to achieve a more stable relationship.

2 Technology cooperation. Technology cooperation is another key priority area for the D-10, which can serve to facilitate cooperation on harnessing new technologies. As highlighted in a recent report of an Atlantic Council bipartisan Commission on the Geopolitical Impacts of New technologies and Data, the United States and like-minded nations must work together on a range of areas critical to national and economic security, including communications and data science, AI, biotechnologies, space, robotics, and quantum computing.⁴⁴ The D-10 could develop a common strategic agenda on technology cooperation. It can serve as a core group of ‘techno-democracies’ to help end strategic dependence on autocratic rivals for sensitive critical technologies, ensure that the democratic world prevails in the race for advanced technologies, and create associated norms

and standards, consistent with liberal values, that will determinately shape the twenty-first century.⁴⁵

3 Trade and economic engagement. The D-10 could focus on developing an innovative new architecture—a revised Bretton Woods—for managing the global economy and aligning the free world through



Technology challenges will require stronger cooperation among leading democracies

more fair and sustainable trade agreements. The outcome will be an agreement on a shared agenda for redesigning global economic institutions, with an emphasis on free and fair trade and more equitable and inclusive economies that provide more direct benefits for citizens of democracies and for nations around the world.

4 Nuclear proliferation. The D-10 should focus on addressing the challenges of nuclear proliferation by Iran and North Korea. The outcome will be agreement on a coordinated strategy for Iran, and a separate one for North Korea, addressing how to deal with the nuclear ambitions and other challenges they pose to the rules-based democratic order. The strategy would articulate a commonly agreed set of goals that can be implemented in other venues, such as P5+1 talks with Iran or, if resurrected, the Six-Party Talks with North Korea.

5 Democracy promotion. The D-10 should set forth new models for supporting democracy around the world. The free world needs new tools, grounded in support for nonviolent civil resistance, that make clear to au-

44 *Report of the Commission on the Geopolitical Impacts of New Technologies and Data*, Atlantic Council 2021, page 8, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/geotech-commission/exec-summary/>. Honorary Co-Chairs of the Commission include Senators Mark Warner and Rob Portman, and Representatives Suzan DelBene and Michael McCaul.

45 Jain, *Create a Democratic Technology Alliance*. Jain and Kroenig, *Present at the Re-Creation*.

tocratic leaders that their repression will be met with meaningful penalties and coordinated action. The outcome will be a coordinated new strategy prioritizing assistance to pro-democracy groups and synchronized pressure on authoritarian governments to implement democratic reforms.

6 *Climate cooperation.* Finally, the D-10 should focus on solutions to the climate crisis. Sustainable progress on climate change will require agreement among all major emitters, including China. But democracies can play a pro-active role in galvanizing climate coordination by working together to shape the rules of trade governing carbon-intensive goods.⁴⁶ The outcome would be a coordinated D-10 climate strategy to align policies and drive ambition to combat climate change and collectively advance green technologies.

At the top of the D-10's agenda should be the challenge of autocratic coercion posed by China and Russia.

By prioritizing these six areas, the D-10 would be seized with a compelling and meaningful agenda that could result in concrete outcomes over the foreseeable future. There are several other potential issues on which coordinated action among leading democracies could be useful, and the D-10 will need to be nimble in order to re-focus as new challenges arise.⁴⁷ However, driving a consensus among the D-10 will not come easy. Despite their common worldviews, D-10 governments each have their own policy preferences and priorities, as well as domestic constituencies and political considerations that may make consensus around common action difficult to achieve. A framework that places a priority on democratic solidarity, backed by a determination among D-10 leaders to reach a common view, could help lead to the development of coordinated strategies on these key challenges.⁴⁸

46 James A. Baker III, George P. Shultz, and Ted Halstead, "The Strategic Case for US Climate Leadership," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-04-13/strategic-case-us-climate-leadership>.

47 See John Davenport, *A League of Democracies*, Routledge, 2019.

48 Hal Brands and Charles Edel, "A Grand Strategy of Democratic Solidarity," *Washington Quarterly*, 44, 1, March 23, 2021, 29–47, DOI: 10.1080/0163660X.2021.1893003.

V. AVOIDING A NEW COLD WAR, AND OTHER CONCERNS

A new entity aimed at promoting cooperation among like-minded democracies offers real potential, but there are other legitimate concerns about a potential D-10 that require careful consideration.⁴⁹ Chief among these concerns is that establishing a new D-10 will be perceived as an anti-China coalition that could play into a new Cold War dynamic, which would exacerbate current tensions and further polarize the international community. It is not in the interest of D-10 states to engage in confrontation with China or Russia. Nevertheless, strategic competition between democratic and autocratic powers has already become an established feature of the current international system. The D-10 simply recognizes this reality and provides a useful way to organize that, if managed effectively, need not lead to a more confrontational approach.

In fact, the D-10 could encourage cooperation with Beijing and Moscow by aligning the democracies around a common approach for engagement. The United States and its allies should continue to seek dialogue and engagement with Moscow and Beijing at the UN, the G20, and other entities on issues where there may still be an alignment of interests (e.g., countering terrorism and nuclear proliferation).⁵⁰ The outcomes of these negotiations may be better for leading democracies if China is forced to negotiate with full knowledge that its counterparts are united around a common approach.

Other concerns have been raised about the D-10, including the following:

- *Will the D-10 lack legitimacy if it is limited to a small, exclusive group of leading democracies?*

Some suggest that by limiting its membership to only a small group of democratic allies and partners, the D-10 will be perceived as lacking the legitimacy that other, more inclusive venues enjoy.⁵¹ While expanded membership is one means to establish organizational legitimacy, it is not the only one. Every state, or even every geographic region, in the inter-

The D-10 is premised on the notion that because of their shared commitments to democratic values and likeminded assessments of global threats and challenges, democracies are more likely to find common ground in confronting these challenges.

national system need not be included in an organization in order for it to be seen as legitimate; what matters is that the entity is logically constituted and fit for purpose. The D-10, as proposed, has a clear rationale and criteria for membership. Like the G20 and G7, it can garner legitimacy over time by demonstrating its utility in producing effective action and outcomes.

- *Will the D-10 supplant or hinder cooperation at the UN Security Council? Isn't it better to work with all willing nations, whether they are democratic or not?*

The D-10 is premised on the notion that because of their shared commitments to democratic values and likeminded assessments of global threats and challenges, democracies are more likely to find common ground in confronting these challenges. At the same time, it is important for D-10 members to find ways to cooperate with other nations, democratic or not, on issues about which they share common interests. In addition to China and Russia, they should seek avenues to advance cooperation with nations, such as Vietnam and Singapore in the Indo-Pacific, as well as Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia in the Middle East. Multilateral cooperation should continue across multiple domains; the D-10 adds another, more strategic layer of engagement among a select group that will not interfere with these other efforts.

49 Jain, "Like-minded and Capable Democracies."

50 See also Tobias Bunde et al., "Munich Security Report 2021: Between States of Matter – Competition and Cooperation," Munich: Munich Security Conference, June 2021, <https://doi.org/10.47342/CYPE1056>.

51 Ibid.

■ *Will democracies cooperate? What happens when consensus within the D-10 is out of reach?*

Critics suggest there is little reason to believe that a new D-10 will succeed in facilitating cooperation on strategic challenges, given the widely varying perspectives of D-10 member states. To be sure, D-10 democracies have differing interests and priorities, and will often diverge on how to address specific challenges. Nevertheless, the institutions within which they operate can be important for generating cooperation. Structured appropriately, entities that bring together the right group of democracies can facilitate and encourage cooperation by providing a channel for dialogue and placing an emphasis on the need to project democratic solidarity in the face of shared challenges. By limiting membership to a group of relatively like-minded nations, the D-10 has a better chance of overcoming differing positions and aligning its members toward common actions, with an emphasis on maintaining democratic unity.

■ *Is the D-10 duplicative with plans for a Summit for Democracy?*

While plans for the summit are still being formulated, the Biden administration's proposed Summit for Democracy appears likely to include a larger group of nations, with an agenda more focused on challenges to democracy itself – both at home and abroad. On the other hand, the D-10 is intended to encourage strategic alignment among a more select group of likeminded and influential democracies around a specific set of global challenges. These two efforts could be mutually reinforcing. The D-10 could serve a platform to help plan summit priorities, and shape its outcomes, including the development of a new global charter that sets forth common principles and inspires the free world to action.



G7 Foreign Ministers meet in London on May 4, 2021
 [State Department Photo by Ron Przystucha/ Public Domain]

VI. MAKING IT REAL—A PRACTICAL WAY FORWARD

An expanded G7 or a new D-10?

The United Kingdom signaled its support for the D-10 construct in May 2020, as a club of democracies initially focused on fifth-generation (5G) technology coordination.⁵² Last fall, Prime Minister Johnson extended invitations to the leaders of Australia, India, and South Korea, with the apparent intention to expand the G7 into a new D-10.⁵³ However, these plans were scaled back when certain governments, including Japan, Germany, France,

and Italy, reportedly expressed concerns about reshaping the G7.⁵⁴

Still, the UK has moved forward with plans to bring together the three additional countries, as well as South Africa, as “guests” at the G7 Summit, and the group will reportedly issue a new “Open Societies Charter” reflecting support for common principles.⁵⁵ While it has not an-

52 “Downing Street Plans New 5G Club of Democracies,” *Times*, May 29, 2020, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/downing-street-plans-new-5g-club-of-democracies-bfnd5wj57>; “UK Seeks Alliance to Avoid Reliance on Chinese Tech: The Times,” Reuters, May 28, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-tech-coalition/uk-seeks-alliance-to-avoid-reliance-on-chinese-tech-the-times-idUSKBN2343JW>.

53 Patrick Wintour, “Boris Johnson to Visit India in January in Bid to Transform G7,” *Guardian*, December 15, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/15/boris-johnson-to-visit-india-in-january-in-bid-to-transform-g7>.

54 “Japan Pushes Back against UK Plan to Boost G-7 Asia Reach,” Bloomberg, January 27, 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-27/japan-pushes-back-against-u-k-plan-to-boost-g-7-reach-in-asia>.

55 “Johnson Invites South African Leader to G7,” Reuters, March 22, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/britain-g7-safrica/uk-pm-johnson-invites-south-african-leader-to-g7-idUSS8N2HX05H>.

nounced a position, the United States appears open to the notion of a D-10, in keeping with Biden's call for reinvigorating democratic alliances and closer cooperation among democracies. The Canadian government also appears generally supportive of the concept.

Going forward, a key question is whether the D-10 should replace the G7, or if both entities should proceed simultaneously. Each of these options have tradeoffs that merit further consideration. The first option is to expand the G7 and reshape its mission. Since Russia's expulsion, the G7 has become a de facto mechanism for coordination among likeminded democracies. It already has a regularized process for convening meetings of national leaders, foreign ministers, and other senior officials, and could be expanded in its membership and expressly repurposed to advance the proposed goals of a D-10, as outlined in this paper.⁵⁶ A second option is to retain the G7 in its current form and establish a new D-10 as a separate entity, with a defined mission statement and organizational structure.

With regard to the first option, transitioning the G7 to a D-10 would be logistically straight-forward. The G7's regularized meetings could be fairly easily expanded to include new members, and having a single entity avoids the task of managing two potentially overlapping frameworks. On the other hand, abrogating the G7 poses some significant risks, including the possibility that consensus on key issues that was possible in the G7 may not be as readily achievable in a D-10.

While there may be some duplication of effort between the two, it may be more practical and politically advantageous to retain the G7 for now, while separately establishing a new D-10. The D-10 could be utilized to build consensus on the central strategic challenges described in this paper, while the G7 could continue to advance cooperation on a broader agenda of global issues. A transition away from the G7 and toward a D-10 may take place gradually as the framework proves effective and meaningful over time. To maximize efficiencies, D-10 meetings, particularly at the leader and foreign minister levels, could be scheduled to take place around the same time as G7 meetings, as is the case with this year's G7 summit.

The D-10 would provide a highly visible new construct to rally leading democracies around a common purpose. It creates an imperative for action in a moment of historical challenge that cannot be achieved by making incremental reforms to an existing framework like the G7.

The larger question is whether the political effort required to forge a new D-10 is worthwhile. Establishing a new international entity – formal or informal – is no small task, and decisions about who is in and who is out are thorny and will inevitably lead to diplomatic fallout. The key question is: does the D-10 provide sufficient strategic benefits to merit the effort, or is the G7, with a set composition, good enough for now?

The D-10 offer significant advantages over the G7 that make it strategically worthwhile to pursue, despite the diplomatic heavy lift that may be required to create it. Its membership and mission would be tailored to meet the challenges of today's world. Its purpose would be clear, and its outcomes would be more strategically focused. But perhaps the most compelling rationale is that as the world enters an era of strategic competition, leading democracies must be prepared to take dramatic steps to meet current challenges. The D-10 would provide a highly visible new construct to rally leading democracies around a common purpose. It creates an imperative for action in a moment of historical challenge that cannot be achieved by making incremental reforms to an existing framework like the G7.

⁵⁶ As Jain notes, "The G7 is being rebranded as a group of like-minded democracies, as opposed to a group of 'highly industrialized nations.'" Michael Crowley, "Blinken and G7 Allies Turn Their Focus to 'Democratic Values,'" *New York Times*, May 4, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/04/world/europe/blinken-g-7-china-russia.html>. Also see: Ishaan Tharoor, "An Emerging New Alliance of Democracies," *Washington Post*, December 18, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2020/12/18/an-emerging-new-alliance-democracies/>.

A practical way forward

While the UK has taken the lead in advancing the D-10 concept, the construct will not materialize without proactive US support. For the Biden administration, the D-10 offers a new paradigm for American leadership — treating democratic allies as core partners in shaping a global order that reflects common interests and ideals. US backing for the concept could be instrumental in getting other G7 members on board, and if the administration finds potential merit in this concept, it should designate a senior official or former ambassador to quietly explore options for getting this off the ground. In addition, Germany's role in shaping a D-10 could be significant, as it will host the G7 in 2022 under the leadership of a new chancellor. Canada could also be instrumental, given its early efforts in support of a D-10 forum and its past role in leading the establishment of other multilateral entities (such as NATO and the G20).⁵⁷

In the meantime, several practical steps can be taken to ensure the D-10 construct remains on a forward path. Following the UK Summit, behind-the-scenes meetings of the D-10 officials should be organized to advance consultations on specific challenges, including, for example, on technology cooperation, new climate and green energy initiatives, and a new free trade agenda. Other difficult issues, such as how to reduce strategic dependency on Chinese trade and sensitive technologies, or Russian energy, can also take place in Track 1.5 meetings (such as the D-10 Strategy Forum), where officials can exchange views in a more informal, off-the-record setting. The goal of these meetings is to socialize officials across various levels of government to the D-10 construct and the potential benefits it may produce over time.

Second, individual member states should be consulted on how to address potential concerns regarding the D-10. For European powers, the D-10 could help anchor the US and Britain into a common platform to advance a rules-based order, while providing a bridge to engage increasingly influential Asia-Pacific powers. French and German concerns about the D-10 playing into an anti-China nar-

rative could be addressed by finding new approaches to engage China on issues where cooperation may be possible. For Japan, the D-10 can help ensure that South Korea is grounded in a coalition of democratic allies, while bringing European partners into a common framework to address Indo-Pacific challenges, including North Korea. The US can play a particularly useful role by convening trilateral strategic dialogues with Seoul and Tokyo to help encourage greater strategic alignment, including on issues such as China.

Third, the US and others should engage in separate dialogues with potential D-10 members, starting with Australia and South Korea, and also India, South Africa, and Brazil, to assess commonality of worldviews and steps that can be taken to address concerns on like-mindedness and willingness to support issues prioritized for the D-10's agenda.

Fourth, leading democracies should continue to foster cooperation on specific issues through other existing platforms, including the such as the G7 Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence and the Quad's Critical and Emerging Technology Working Group. As these efforts gain traction and demonstrate results, it could make it easier to consolidate strategic coordination on these issues through the D-10.

Finally, if and when there is a common determination to formalize a D-10, a working-level meeting of D-10 officials should be organized to discuss specific ways forward for shaping a new entity and set forth a charter document that frames the goals and mission of the D-10. This could build on the UK's proposed "open societies charter" that is slated for consideration at the G7 Summit, but with greater specificity in terms of organizational details and priorities, including a potential secretariat staff to help organize meetings on an ongoing basis. A new D-10 could be targeted for launch at a leaders-level meeting to signal its elevated importance, potentially on the margins of the Summit for Democracy, which President Biden intends to host next spring, or possibly at the G7 Summit, which Germany will host later in 2022.

57 The Canadian government organized a policy planning meeting in Toronto in 2008 that served as a pre-cursor to the D-10, and hosted the first D-10 Strategy Forum in Ottawa in 2014. Former Canadian foreign minister Lester Pearson was one of the key players in the formation of the NATO alliance (see https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_161511.htm, and former Canadian prime minister Paul Martin is often credited as the architect of the G20. (see <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/paul-martin-an-architect-of-the-g20-has-advice-for-justin-trudeau-as-he-heads-to-china>).

VII. CONCLUSION

Historians will view 2021 as a potentially transformative year in the international system—a year that signaled the end of a global pandemic, marked a transition from a dark period of nationalism and populism, and heralded a new era of strategic competition between democracy and autocracy. Looking back at this time, they will look to assess how the world's leading powers responded to these momentous developments, including how the global order was restructured and what new entities were established to position the democratic world to succeed.

A new D-10 could be one of those entities. For the Biden administration, and for the leaders of other leading democracies, the establishment of a D-10 could serve as a legacy, becoming one of several new entities for democratic cooperation created specifically for the challenges of a new global era. Other constructs could include a new Democratic Technology Alliance, a Free World Trade

Agreement that aligns the free world around a common vision for expanding a free and fair global economy, and perhaps a broader Alliance of Free Nations to advance shared values and common interests.⁵⁸ The D-10 could also complement other frameworks for engaging global powers – perhaps a reinvigorated G20 or a smaller concert of powers that includes China and Russia to focus on issues of global convergence.⁵⁹

While it would be compelling to form an expanded D-10 that brings together both established and rising democracies, the primary consideration should be on maximizing effectiveness and influencing outcomes on the most important challenges facing the rules-based order. Whatever form it takes, a D-10 core group of strategically like-minded and influential democracies could provide a pivotal new framework for the democratic world to succeed in an era of strategic competition.

58 For more on these concepts, see Ash Jain and Matthew Kroenig, *Present at the Re-Creation*.

59 Richard Haass and Charlie Kupchan, "The New Concert of Powers," *Foreign Affairs*, March 23, 2021.

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