

AN ALLIANCE OF DEMOCRACIES:

From Concept to Reality
in an Era of Strategic Competition

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This report is a product of the Scowcroft Center's Democratic Order Initiative, which is aimed at reenergizing American global leadership and strengthening cooperation among the world's democracies in support of a rules-based democratic order.



Alliance of Democracies

The Alliance of Democracies Foundation is a non-profit organization founded in 2017 by Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the former NATO Secretary General and former Prime Minister of Denmark. The vision of the Alliance of Democracies Foundation is to become the world's leading "megaphone" for the cause of democracy. The Foundation organizes the annual Copenhagen Democracy Summit. The Alliance of Democracies also convenes the Transatlantic Commission on Election Integrity, a group of political, business, tech and media leaders on both sides of the Atlantic dedicated to preventing the next wave of foreign election meddling.

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Leaders from democratic nations, including Australia, India, South Africa, and South Korea, join a G7 summit working session, June 12, 2021. REUTERS

This is the third in a five-part series of Atlantic Council publications calling for the United States and its allies to revitalize the rules-based international system and establish new institutions to strengthen cooperation among democracies to succeed in an era of strategic competition.

The first, *Present at the Re-Creation: A Global Strategy for Revitalizing, Adapting, and Defending a Rules-Based International System*,¹ sets forth an overarching global strategy for the United States and its allies that focuses on the need to strengthen cooperation among democracies, while simultaneously seeking to engage other global powers in areas of common interest.

The second, *From the G7 to a D-10: Strengthening Democratic Cooperation for Today's Challenges*,² proposes the creation of a new D-10 as a core group of leading democracies to develop joint strategies for addressing today's most pressing global challenges.

This report makes the case for an Alliance of Democracies and draws on relevant sections from these previous publications.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On December 9–10, President Joe Biden will host a Summit for Democracy, a virtual event to which the leaders of more than one hundred democracies worldwide have been invited. The summit is aimed at setting forth an affirmative agenda for “democratic renewal” and tackling “the greatest threats faced by democracies today through collective action.”³ This will kick off what the administration is calling a “year of action,” which will culminate in a second summit, this time in person, approximately one year later.

The summit convenes at a time when democracy is facing unprecedented challenges. Autocratic powers, particularly China and Russia, have become 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.⁴ Meanwhile, democracies are on the defensive as they seek to contend with these global threats. Many nations, including the United States, face deeply polarized electorates

and increasing distrust in institutions among their own citizens. As Biden has highlighted, 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.”⁵

The alliance would help foster cooperation to defend against a wide range of threats to democratic countries, counter authoritarianism, and advance shared interests and values.

To succeed in this new era, the United States and its democratic allies and partners must strengthen cooperation. Working together, leading democracies retain a

1 Ash Jain and Matthew Kroenig, *From the G7 to a D-10: Strengthening Democratic Cooperation for Today's Challenges*, Atlantic Council, June 8, 2021, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/from-the-g7-to-a-d-10-strengthening-democratic-cooperation-for-todays-challenges/>.

2 Ash Jain and Matthew Kroenig, *Present at the Re-Creation*, Atlantic Council, October 30, 2019, 11, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/present-at-the-re-creation/>.

3 “The Summit for Democracy,” US Department of State, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/summit-for-democracy/>.

4 Jain and Kroenig, *From the G7 to the D-10*.

5 Joe Biden, “Remarks by President Biden at the Virtual 2021 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/>.

preponderance of power over China and other revisionist autocracies that would allow them to decisively shape global outcomes. But they need new institutions, formal and informal, that are fit for purpose, and reflect the evolving global distribution of power and the nature of today's challenges. While institutions created in the post-World War II era, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), have convened democracies for decades, most are segmented by geographic region. But this system of institutions requires adaptation and renewal to address the challenges of today's world. The United States and its allies need new entities that facilitate cooperation not just in specific regions, but among larger groups of democracies worldwide.⁶

An Alliance of Democracies could play an essential role in this regard. It would serve as a political alliance aimed at forging common threat assessments and coordinating strategies among democracies to position the free world for success in the growing strategic competition with revisionist autocratic powers. The alliance would help foster cooperation to defend against a wide range of threats to democratic countries, counter authoritarianism, and advance shared interests and values.

Support for closer alignments among democracies is building. In hosting the Group of Seven (G7) summit earlier this year, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson sought to advance the idea of a D-10 club of democracies.⁷ Lawmakers in the United Kingdom (UK) and Canada have expressed support for new coalitions of democracies, and the “traffic light coalition” that will form a new government in Germany explicitly referenced support for initiatives such as an “Alliance of Democracies” in a recent policy paper.⁸ In the United States, proposals for closer cooperation among democracies have drawn bipartisan support among lawmakers in Congress.

In addition, former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and former US National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley were joined by distinguished former officials from nineteen democracies worldwide—including former

NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt, and former Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi—in endorsing a Declaration of Principles that called for partnerships that bring together likeminded governments, including “a potential new alliance of free nations” to advance a rules-based order.⁹ A call to create such an alliance was also made by signatories to the Copenhagen Charter for an Alliances of Democracies, issued earlier this year, which includes the heads of the Endowment for Democracy, National Democratic Institute, and International Republican Institute.¹⁰

Biden's call for a Summit for Democracy and the underlying rationale for convening such a summit—advancing democratic cooperation in the context of a global struggle between democracy and autocracy—could help propel the idea of an alliance forward. The administration's plan for a series of summits—one this year and one next—could engender habits of cooperation among democracies, providing the building blocks for a sustainable network of democracies. If these summits continue on an annual basis, they could serve as a *de facto* alliance, leaving the door open to a more formalized entity down the road.

This report explains why an Alliance of Democracies is needed today, and how the leaders of the free world should act to bring this concept into reality. It describes the strategic context for the creation of such an alliance, its potential mission and organizational structure, and its proposed membership – initially, perhaps thirty or forty consolidated democracies that share concerns about challenges to the free world and are committed to taking action. The report proposes specific areas around which to prioritize alliance action. It addresses concerns that have been raised about a potential Alliance of Democracies, and contends that the strategic benefits of such an alliance outweigh the costs, including the political and diplomatic capital that would be required to create it. The report describes how an Alliance of Democracies could galvanize meaningful cooperation on global challenges and help restore confidence in the free world.

6 Jain and Kroenig, *From the G7 to a D-10*.

7 Patrick Wintour, “UK Plans Early G7 Virtual Meeting and Presses Ahead with Switch to D10,” *Guardian*, January 15, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/15/uk-plans-early-g7-virtual-meeting-and-presses-ahead-with-switch-to-d10>.

8 Coalition Policy Paper, October 2021; <https://www.tagesschau.de/sondierungen-153.pdf>; Coalition Agreement, November 24, 2021, <https://www.spd.de/koalitionsvertrag2021/>

9 *Declaration of Principles for Freedom, Prosperity, and Peace*, Atlantic Council, 2019, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/declaration/>.

10 “Copenhagen Charter for an Alliance of Democracies,” Alliance of Democracies Foundation, 2021, <https://www.allianceofdemocracies.org/initiatives/the-copenhagen-democracy-summit/copenhagen-charter/>; https://www.voanews.com/a/europe_former-nato-chief-calls-common-front-counter-trade-aggression/6205843.html.



Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin meet at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, June 6, 2019. REUTERS

II. STRATEGIC CONTEXT / THE NEED FOR AN ALLIANCE OF DEMOCRACIES

Challenges to the Existing Democratic 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.

- 1** 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, and respect for individual rights and freedoms, the rule of law, and democracy.¹¹

- 2** Formal and informal entities that serve to propagate and enforce these norms. This includes inclusive organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as more regional-focused entities such as NATO and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and informal bodies such as the G7 and the Group of 20 (G20).

- 3** 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 of regional and bilateral security alliances, leading global economic institutions that promote free trade and financial flows, and championing the expansion of democratic values.¹²

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

¹¹ Jain and Kroenig, *Present at the Re-Creation*

¹² Ibid., 11.

powers themselves, these principles served as the basis for the establishment of many of the institutions that were created to advance cooperation on global security, economics, and governance.¹³

But autocratic states are engaged in increasingly aggressive efforts to challenge the rules-based order led by the United States and its democratic allies and partners. Russia has emerged as a significant challenger to this order. In 2008 and 2014, Russia invaded Georgia and Ukraine, redrawing the map of Europe by force for the first time since World War II. Russia's meddling in foreign elections, coercion through military intimidation, economic boycotts, energy disruptions, arms sales, and targeting of individuals in Europe with chemical agents 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

The challenges posed by China and Russia are setting the terms for a new era of strategic competition between democracies and autocracies.

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 explicit military threats against neighbors, such as Taiwan, 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.¹⁵ On the economic front, China's unfair trade and economic policies run contrary to liberal economic norms and have provided China's state-run economy—and companies within it—unfair commercial advantages. Beijing has engaged in what many now consider a genocide against the Uyghur population in Xinjiang, and is dismantling Hong Kong's liberal institutions despite its international treaty commitments.¹⁶

The challenges posed by China and Russia are setting the terms for a new era of strategic competition between democracies and autocracies. Both regimes have escalated the use of economic and diplomatic coercion to pressure states, particularly those along their periphery, to accept their policy preferences. They have become more assertive in supporting other autocratic regimes to suppress human rights and stifle pro-democracy movements. Both have expanded their 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 by conducting joint military exercises, working together on cyber capabilities, and coordinating their positions in international forums.¹⁷

Other Challenges to the Rules-Based Order

A host of other challenges are threatening the stability and success of the rules-based democratic order, many of which are exacerbated by Russian and Chinese actions. New technologies—including artificial intelligence, quantum computing, genetic engineering, 5G, nanotechnology, 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.¹⁸

Nuclear proliferation also remains an important concern, as 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.¹⁹

On the economic front, 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

13 Ibid., 10.

14 Monty G. Marshall, Ted Robert Gurr, and Keith Jagers, "Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800–2017, Center for Systemic Peace, October 24, 2018, <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/p4manualv2017.pdf>; Jain and Kroenig, *Present at the Re-Creation*, 11.

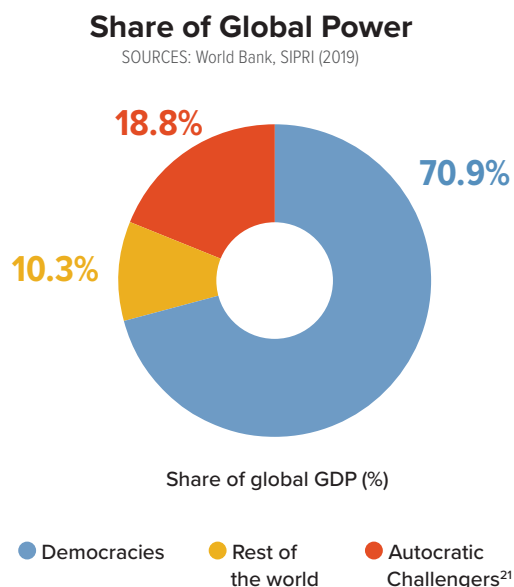
15 John Feng, "China's Sovereignty Over South China Sea Indisputable, Beijing Claims," *Newsweek*, August 26, 2021, <https://www.newsweek.com/chinas-sovereignty-over-south-china-sea-indisputable-beijing-claims-1623219>

16 Ibid.

17 Stephen J. Hadley and Paula J. Dobriansky, *Navigating the Growing Russia-China Strategic Alignment*, Atlantic Council, 2020.

18 Jain and Kroenig, *From the G7 to a D-10*.

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



democratic world to question free-market economies and the value of global engagement.²⁰

Meanwhile, 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 accompanied by 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

Limitations of the UN System

In the face of these challenges, the inclusive international architecture that demonstrated so much potential as the Cold War ended appears to have reached its limits. Autocratic powers have become increasingly sophisticated in their ability to wield influence from within inter-governmental organizations, such as the UN, to block the United States and its allies from achieving their goals. Despite its intended role as the primary entity for global cooperation, the UN Security Council has again become a stage for conflict among the great powers. While they

have collaborated on certain concerns such as terrorism, piracy, and organized crime, Russia and China have sought to counter what they view as a US-led effort to use the UN to constrain their influence and reshape the global environment at their expense. To be sure, UN inaction is often the result of policy differences among democratic allies. But 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 successive use of their veto power to protect autocratic regimes in Syria and Venezuela.²³

Chinese and Russian malign influence has also penetrated the UN's specialized agencies, making it increasingly difficult for democracies to advance their interests. For example, the appointment of China's Zhao Hulin to the secretary-general position of the International Telecommunications Union has given Beijing outsized influence on setting international technical standards for communications networks.²⁴ China has used its position in the World Health Organization to block a meaningful inquiry into COVID-19's origins. While the UN remains an important framework for multilateral engagement across a wide range of issues, it cannot be relied upon for meaningful action on the challenges to the rules-based system posed by autocratic rivals China and Russia.

²⁰ Jain and Kroenig, *From the G7 to a D-10*.

²¹ This includes China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea.

²² "Climate Commitments Not on Track to Meet Paris Agreement Goals as NDC Synthesis Report is Published," United Nations, press release, February 26, 2021, <https://unfccc.int/news/climate-commitments-not-on-track-to-meet-paris-agreement-goals-as-ndc-synthesis-report-is-published>.

²³ "UN Security Council Working Methods," Security Council Report, December 16, 2020, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-security-council-working-methods/the-veto.php>.

²⁴ Kristine Lee, "It's Not Just the WHO: How China Is Moving on the Whole U.N.," *Politico*, April 15, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/04/15/its-not-just-the-who-how-china-is-moving-on-the-whole-un-189029>.

The Need to Strengthen Democratic Cooperation

To succeed in this new era of strategic competition, leading democracies need to leverage their collective capabilities and influence to defend against autocratic challenges. Stronger coordination among nations that share common interests and values is key to an effectively managed global order.

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 and make up roughly three quarters of global gross domestic product (GDP).²⁵ In the security realm, democratic 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.²⁶ In combination with the European Union (EU), the transatlantic partnership provides nearly eighty percent of official developmental aid worldwide.²⁷ And, the twenty highest-scoring countries in terms of soft-power influence are all democracies.²⁸ 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.²⁹ 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.³⁰ Moreover, if

the leading democracies can expand their ranks to include others such as India, Brazil, and South Africa, their influence within the international system can be even more pronounced. Concerned about China's influence, democracies in the developing world have become increasingly open to expanding cooperation with Western democracies. India, in particular, has recently 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.³¹

A Two-Track Approach for Global Engagement

The US-led, rules-based order needs to be adapted and revitalized for a new era. 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.

As noted in an Atlantic Council strategy paper, *Present at the Re-Creation*, to advance and defend the rules-based order, the United States and its allies need to engage on two tracks—working with all major global powers through the UN and other inclusive organizations on issues where cooperation is feasible, and, at the same time, pursuing stronger cooperation among democracies by creating new institutions that bring likeminded allies and partners together to advance shared interests and values.

Formal institutions, such as the UN, already provide platforms for democratic and autocratic powers to come together and discuss global issues. Existing bodies for democratic cooperation, like NATO, tend to be segmented by geographic region. What is missing is a mechanism for sustained coordination among democracies globally, particularly on issues where meaningful action through inclusive institutions is infeasible.

25 Jain and Kroenig, *From the G7 to a D-10*.

26 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>.

27 Jain and Kroenig, *From the G7 to a D-10*.

28 "Soft Power 30," University of Southern California, <https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/users/softpower30>.

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

30 Jain and Kroenig, *From the G7 to a D-10*.

31 Ibid., 11.



President Joe Biden joins French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel in speaking virtually at the Munich Security Conference, February 19, 2021. REUTERS

III. AN ALLIANCE OF DEMOCRACIES—PURPOSE AND PRIORITIES

Alliance Mission

The time has come to establish a new Alliance of Democracies that would bring together the United States and its allies in NATO and the Asia-Pacific and other willing democracies worldwide that share a commitment to defending shared interests and values. It would serve as a political alliance aimed at forging common threat assessments and coordinating strategies among democracies to position the free world for success in the growing strategic competition with revisionist autocratic powers. The alliance would help foster cooperation to defend against a wide range of threats to democratic countries, counter authoritarianism, and advance shared interests and values.

While not precluding cooperation on military matters, the alliance would be aimed primarily as an entity to bolster political cooperation among democracies to address shared challenges to the rules-based democratic order. It would align the collective resources of its members and facilitate burden sharing and allocation of responsibilities.³² By bringing together free nations from around the world, it would serve to coordinate strategies and actions to address common challenges under a single umbrella.³³

Top Priorities for Alliance Action

The Alliance of Democracies would provide a highly visible platform for fostering solidarity among democratic allies and partners in the face of threats and challenges. But to succeed, such an entity must be more than symbolic. Issuing joint statements and coordinating small-scale initiatives will not be sufficient. Instead, the alliance will need to focus on galvanizing meaningful action to address the most pressing challenges facing the democratic world.

The democratic world faces three defining challenges that should become immediate priorities.

1 Systemic competition with autocracy. The first defining challenge is the increasing assertiveness by China and Russia to disrupt and displace the democratic-led, rules-based international system. China and Russia are using military, diplomatic, and economic coercion—including cyber operations, malign finance, and other “wolf warrior diplomacy” tactics to threaten the security of democratic neighbors and pressure governments and corporations to accommodate Beijing’s or Moscow’s interests.³⁴ Both powers are using tools of technology and surveillance and other tactics to crack

³² Jain and Kroenig, *Present at the Re-Creation*.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Gloria Xiong, “Beijing Increasingly Relies on Economic Coercion to Reach its Diplomatic Goals,” *Washington Post*, July 23, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/07/23/beijing-increasingly-relies-economic-coercion-reach-its-diplomatic-goals/>.

down on pro-democracy movements in their own countries and are increasingly aligning their efforts to suppress such movements in other places around the world.³⁵ In addition, China and Russia have embarked on increasingly successful propaganda and disinformation campaigns, utilizing their own global television networks and social media operations to deride liberal democracy as hypocritical and ineffective.

In response, the alliance can serve as a platform for democracies to take more coordinated actions on each of these fronts, and help ensure that the free world succeeds in this systemic competition between democracy and autocracy. For example, the alliance could facilitate more coordinated sanctions and other measures against autocratic regimes that are engaged in coercive activities, and provide a mechanism to coordinate assistance to targeted democracies.³⁶ The alliance could also foster efforts to make democracies less vulnerable to economic coercion, including, for example, by facilitating alternative supply chains related to sensitive technologies and critical energy supplies.³⁷ In addition, the alliance can help invigorate coordinated support to pro-democracy movements around the world by advancing the norm of a “right to assist,” promoting new approaches and tools to support civil-resistance movements, and constraining the efforts of authoritarian governments to suppress such movements.³⁸ Finally, the alliance can orchestrate counter-disinformation campaigns and impactful public-engagement efforts to highlight the dangers of authoritarianism and the virtues of democracy, aimed at influencing audiences within their own countries and around the world.

2 Democratic backsliding. The second defining challenge facing the free world is that of democratic backsliding within established democracies. Whether through the acquiescence of their electorate or manipulation of electoral processes, populist leaders in many democracies have been using their authority to undermine democratic norms. According to Freedom House, in every region of the world, “democracy is under attack by populist leaders and groups that reject pluralism and demand unchecked power to advance the particular interests of their supporters, usually at the expense of minorities and other perceived foes.”³⁹

The alliance can serve as a mechanism to hold states accountable for their democratic practices at home. Building on the pledge system being considered for the Summit for Democracy, countries could be asked to make specific commitments to advance democratic renewal at home as part of their alliance membership obligations. The alliance can also promote discussions on best practices among democratic governments to deal with these challenges, and ways to bolster the independence of institutions that can serve as checks on the potential abuse of power by populist leaders. These include the independence of the judiciary, electoral commissions, and media, all of which are critical to the defense of democratic norms. Even for long-standing democracies, like the United States, which has faced its own internal challenges, a forum to share best practices and hold each other accountable to democratic norms could prove useful.

3 Emerging technologies. The third defining challenge to the free world is that posed by emerging technologies. Such new technologies, as discussed above, have the potential to significantly shape the future of geopolitics the global system. While these innovations promise great benefits, they also carry serious and potentially disruptive risks, including new 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. To counter this trend, the alliance should build a technology initiative to set common standards for advanced technologies that are consistent with liberal norms. The goal is to ensure that the democratic world prevails in the race for advanced technologies. The newly established US-EU Trade and Technology Council, as well as the G7’s focus on technology at the latest summit, could provide solid foundations to expand technology cooperation in this area across the democratic world.

By prioritizing these three challenges, the alliance would assume a compelling and meaningful agenda that could result in concrete outcomes over the foreseeable future.

In addition, the alliance can help foster cooperation in other areas, including those currently facilitated through

35 “Authoritarian Interference Tracker,” Alliance for Securing Democracy, 2021.

36 The Alliance of Democracies Foundation has called for democracies to make a commitment similar to that of NATO’s Article 5, in which states coming under economic attack could ask for unified support, including retaliatory measures, from fellow democracies. See: “Copenhagen Charter for an Alliance of Democracies.”

37 Michael Green, “An Alliance of Democracies Is Essential,” *Interpreter*, June 16, 2021, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/alliance-democracies-essential>.

38 Peter Ackerman and Hardy Merriman, “Preventing Mass Atrocities: From a Responsibility to Protect to a Right to Assist, Campaigns of Civil Resistance,” International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, May 2019, <https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/right-to-assist/>; Michael McFaul, “It’s Time to Up Our Democracy Promotion Game,” *American Purpose*, November 12, 2021, <https://www.americanpurpose.com/articles/its-time-to-up-our-democracy-promotion-game/>.

39 “Democracies in Decline,” Freedom House, 2021, <https://freedomhouse.org/issues/democracies-decline>.

other forums and institutions such as the G7, the WTO, and the OECD. The alliance would not substitute for or replace existing frameworks of cooperation. Rather, it would complement and reinforce these efforts by providing another vehicle for coordination among a larger grouping of democracies on a range of global challenges, including the following.

Infrastructure assistance. The alliance can help facilitate coordination of the Build Back Better World infrastructure initiative that that G7 announced in June, which is a “values-driven, high-standard, and

transparent infrastructure partnership led by major democracies to help narrow the \$40+ trillion infrastructure gap in the developing world.”⁴⁰ The aim is to collectively catalyze hundreds of billions of dollars of infrastructure investment for low- and middle-income countries in the coming years, and to ensure that the free world is once again in a leading role as a provider of international development assistance, as opposed to China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The Alliance in Action

Hypothetical Future Scenario: Estonia under Pressure

One year after Lithuania’s withdrawal from the so-called 17+1 Agreement— a central and eastern European trade and cooperation agreement with China – Estonia decides to pull out of the agreement as well, and later joins Lithuania in allowing Taiwan to open a representative office in Tallinn. Angered by these moves, Beijing imposes an economic boycott on Estonia. In a show of support for Beijing, Russia launches its own pressure campaign against the government of Estonia, alleging that the Baltic state has been instigating domestic unrest in Russia, and threatens to cut off Russia’s entire supply of refined petroleum, a product that Estonia is dependent upon for its energy needs.

As a member state, Estonia turns to the Alliance of Democracies for support. Meeting to discuss the matter, the Alliance Steering Council approves a resolution condemning the actions of China and Russia and calls for member states to support a European Union-led energy bridge to provide emergency shipments of refined petroleum to Estonia in the event of a Russian cut-off. The resolution warns that if the Kremlin follows through on its threat, it will result in steep restrictions on the import of refined petroleum by all members of the alliance. It also calls on members to increase oil production and tap into their strategic petroleum reserves to help stabilize economic markets if such restrictions become necessary.

Thirty-four alliance members agree to support the resolution. Russia responds by escalating its rhetoric and threatening to take other coercive measures against any nation that decides to join such a ban. But faced with the prospect of serious economic harm, Moscow quietly and gradually backs away from its threats.

40 “Fact Sheet: President Biden and G7 Leaders Launch Build Back Better World (B3W) Partnership,” White House, June 12, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/12/fact-sheet-president-biden-and-g7-leaders-launch-build-back-better-world-b3w-partnership/>.

Climate action. The alliance could advance coordination among democracies to address climate change as a complement to current efforts building on the Paris Agreement and COP26 summit. Sustainable progress on greenhouse gas reduction will require action by all major emitters, including China, but democracies can play a proactive role in galvanizing climate coordination to shape the rules governing carbon-intensive goods. The outcome would be coordinated efforts to align policies and drive ambition to combat climate change and collectively advance green technologies.⁴¹

Combating corruption. Corruption in its many forms is a fundamental challenge to the rule of law that undermines functioning governments and breeds cynicism about democracy as a political system. Authoritarian leaders thrive in corrupt environments, and have “weaponized corruption to consolidate their rule and undermine confidence in democratic processes and norm.”⁴² The alliance could help advance cooperation among democratic governments to combat corruption and kleptocracy by serving as a venue for new initiatives aimed at fighting corruption and increasing financial

transparency, including those that may come from the Summit for Democracy, which has included fighting corruption as one of its major themes.

Economic resilience. The alliance could provide a platform to help coordinate actions by democracies, including at the WTO, to counter unfair trade practices of autocratic rivals, particularly China. It could also serve as a platform to align around 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. Ultimately, the alliance could help link together the transatlantic and transpacific trade agendas in a new free-world trade agreement or economic alliance.

A host of other issues could benefit from coordination through the alliance, such as those related to nuclear proliferation, terrorism, and the development of norms for outer space. While these may be areas for future engagement, the success of the alliance will hinge on its ability to advance cooperation on the defining challenges facing the free world described above.

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

42 Samantha Power, “Statement by Administrator Samantha Power on Anti-Corruption,” US Agency for International Development, press release, June 4, 2021, <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/jun-4-4021-statement-administrator-samantha-power-anti-corruption>.



Leaders attend the NATO summit in Brussels, Belgium, June 14, 2021.

IV. STRUCTURING AN ALLIANCE

Organizing for Success

While forming the right institutions does not guarantee success, it can help make effective cooperation more likely. To be sure, 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. 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.⁴³ The effectiveness of the alliance proposed here will depend on its formal design, including membership, structure, and decision-making process.⁴⁴

Alliance Membership

To succeed, the alliance must ensure that its membership is conducive to generating meaningful action. Membership should be limited to relatively likeminded nations that have demonstrated a genuine commitment toward advancing the stated goals and mission of alliance. Like the European Union and the OECD, the alliance should establish criteria for membership based on adherence to certain norms and standards that will govern which countries are admitted.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Barbara Koremenos, Charles Lipson, and Duncan Snidal, "The Rational Design of International Institutions," *International Organization* (2001): 761-799, <https://www.iijl.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Raustiala-The-Rational-Design-of-International-Institutions-2010.pdf>.

Criteria for membership should be based on the following:

1 Commitment to democratic principles. As a baseline, membership should be reserved for consolidated democracies. Determining which countries qualify as democracies will be a daunting exercise, but it can be done. Objective assessments, such as that by Freedom House or V-Dem can be used to determine which countries have demonstrated a commitment to respect political rights and individual liberties—two key hallmarks of genuine democracies.⁴⁵ For backsliding countries, it will be important to distinguish between leaders who are brazenly obstructing democracy—and therefore should be excluded—and those whose actions are constraining democratic norms in more limited ways and for whom alliance membership might offer an incentive to reform.

2 Shared concerns over challenges to the democratic world. For the alliance to be effective, it is important that members come to the table with a shared sense of mission and purpose. Membership should be limited to democracies that share concerns over the key challenges facing the free world—especially those posed by China and Russia—and aligned in their desire to preserve and defend a rules-based, democratic world order.

3 Willingness to take action. To succeed, the alliance must be able to take meaningful action, and that, in turn, depends on the political willingness of those joining. It is not enough for governments to sign up to broad aspirations; rather, members must be prepared to act to confront key challenges, including the defining challenges described above, and should join the alliance with an expectation to produce meaningful outcomes. At the same time, it will be important that the alliance provide space for differing views and consideration of a range of policy options, and for taking into account the consequences and impacts of any proposed actions before they are approved.

To ensure that they meet the second and third criteria, proposed alliance members should be prepared to sign onto a declaration that reflects their concurrence over the framing of the threats facing the democratic world and their commitment to act, both domestically and internationally, to advance the purpose and mission of the alliance.

Based on these criteria, the alliance would result in a list of members much smaller than those included in the Summit for Democracy—perhaps, initially, just thirty or forty countries.⁴⁶ But, as long as the alliance includes the world's most influential democracies—including the United States,

and key allies and partners in Europe, NATO, and the Indo-Pacific, the actual number of countries that join will be less important than whether those that do join are able to generate effective action.

Moreover, membership in the alliance need not be deemed permanent. Rather, it could be structured around two-year terms, for example, to be renewed if the governments continue to meet the criteria for membership described above.

Structure and Organization

In addition to general membership, the alliance will need a governing body consisting of influential democracies that can help set priorities and make decisions. To this end, a steering council could be created to include a core group of influential democracies—perhaps a fifteen-member council that would consist of members of the G7 or D-10, plus other large democracies, as well as a few at-large alliance members that would rotate every year.

To avoid a stalemate, decisions of the steering council could be structured to require a super-majority, rather than consensus among all members. For example, the consent of ten or twelve members could be required to vote in the affirmative to pass resolutions, statements, or other measures—though the United States and other large powers would need to be comfortable with a voting structure in which their views could potentially be overridden. But such a structure may be more palatable given that actions taken by the steering council (other than those relating to membership or internal organization) would be deemed as advisory, as opposed to binding, for alliance members. Instead, the alliance would encourage coalitions of the willing to implement approved actions. For example, if the steering council were to vote to impose sanctions against a country, members would be encouraged to join in support, but would not be obligated to do so.

While perhaps not required at the outset, the alliance would benefit from having a permanent secretariat to provide logistical and administrative support to coordinate meetings and activities, and a location in which its activities would be conducted. As with the OECD, for example, which is headquartered in Paris, member states could designate a representative who would participate in regular and ongoing consultation among alliance members. Key decisions could be facilitated by political directors of the alliance, and an annual leaders' summit could ensure that the alliance is given the stature and importance it will require to make a meaningful impact.

45 Freedom in the World, Freedom House, 2021, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>; Democracy Reports, V-Dem, 2021, <https://www.v-dem.net/en/publications/democracy-reports/>.

46 Over one hundred countries have been invited to the Summit for Democracy. See "Participant List," US Department of State, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/participant-list-the-summit-for-democracy/>



US and EU officials meet at the inaugural US-EU Trade and Technology Council in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on September 29, 2021.

V. THE ROAD AHEAD—CREATING AN ALLIANCE

A Moment of Opportunity

The idea of an Alliance of Democracies dates back centuries. Philosopher Immanuel Kant, in 1795, proposed a “federation of free nations” that would serve as the foundation for a world of perpetual peace, whose goal would be to advance “the maintenance and security of the freedom of the state itself and of other states in league with it.”⁴⁷ The concept of an Alliance of Democracies gained credence in the midst of World War II. In 1940, US journalist Clarence Streit proposed an alliance of Atlantic nations, and later proposed that NATO form a tighter union over time.⁴⁸ James Huntley, who served as chairman of the Atlantic Council in the 1980s, proposed an “international community of democracies” based on a treaty for mutual defense, a free-trade zone, and a central council made up of advanced democratic economies.⁴⁹

In 2000, then-Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, along with her Polish counterpart Bronislaw Geremek, established the Community of Democracies, an entity that supports adherence to common democratic values. Other ideas focused on the establishment of a “concert of democracies,” a “global NATO,” and additional forms of coalitions

intended to bolster cooperation among democracies on the basis of shared values and interests.⁵⁰ Subsequently, former Republican presidential nominee Senator John McCain, in 2008, proposed a League of Democracies to unite the world’s democracies toward a common mission: to work together “in the cause of peace.”⁵¹

More recently, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the former NATO secretary general and former Danish prime minister, has called for an alliance of democracies to serve as a political alliance to confront common security challenges, advance economic trade, promote democracy, coordinate policies within international institutions, and coordinate joint humanitarian interventions.⁵² In addition, Madeleine Albright and former US National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley were joined by distinguished former officials from democracies worldwide—including Rasmussen, former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt, and former Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi, in endorsing a Declaration of Principles calling for partnerships that bring together likeminded governments, including “a potential new alliance of free nations” to advance a rules-based order.⁵³

47 Immanuel Kant, “Perpetual Peace,” 1795, <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/kant/kant1.htm>.

48 John Davenport, *A League of Democracies: Cosmopolitanism, Consolidation Arguments, and Global Public Goods* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

49 Ibid.

50 John Ikenberry and Anne-Marie Slaughter, “Democracies Must Work in Concert,” *Financial Times*, July 10, 2008, <https://www.ft.com/content/fd9e2fdc-4e7f-11dd-ba7c-000077b07658>; Ivo Daalder et. al, “Global NATO,” Brookings, 2006.

51 Liz Sidoti, “McCain Favors a League of Democracies,” *Associated Press*, April 30, 2007, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/30/AR2007043001402.html>.

52 Anders Fogh Rasmussen, *The Will to Lead: America’s Indispensable Role in the Global Fight for Freedom* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2016); Toomas Henrik Ilves, “We Need a Global League to Protect against Cyber Threats to Democracy,” *Washington Post*, October 5, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldpost/wp/2017/10/05/we-need-a-global-league-to-protect-against-cyberthreats-to-democracy/>.

53 *Declaration of Principles for Freedom, Prosperity, and Peace*, Atlantic Council, 2019, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/declaration/>.

The Alliance in Action

Hypothetical Future Scenario: Backsliding in Brazil

Brazilian citizens head to the polls in the country's next presidential election, and soon after the balloting concludes, the Tribunal Superior Eleitoral—Brazil's election commission—announces the results that show the incumbent president has been defeated by his election opponent. Alleging widespread voter fraud, the president refuses to accept the legitimacy of the results and calls for a second election. With legal challenges presented, Brazil's Supreme Federal Court ultimately dismisses claims of widespread election fraud. But as the end of his term approaches, the president announces that he will not step down, vowing that he will only do so if he were to lose in a second “real” election. Despite mounting pressure from Brazilian leaders across the political spectrum, a constitutional crisis looms as large segments of the population believe the fraud allegations and consolidate their support for the president.

At the urging of Brazilian political leaders, the Alliance Steering Council meets to discuss the matter. The council issues a resolution calling on the Brazilian president to respect the democratic process, or face the imposition of targeted sanctions, including a travel ban and asset freeze against him, his family members, and close associates.

Thirty-nine alliance members, all except Brazil, agree to support the resolution. Bolstered by the strong showing of international support, Brazilian leaders ramp up pressure on the president. With his own party threatening to abandon him, and faced with the prospect of becoming an international pariah, the president agrees to step down from office as his term expires.

A call to coalesce an Alliance of Democracies was also made by signatories the Copenhagen Charter for an Alliance of Democracies, issued in May 2021, including the heads of the National Endowment for Democracy, National Democratic Institute, and International Republican Institute.

Today, the political climate is riper than ever to establish a new Alliance of Democracies. Across Europe, leading politicians and political parties have spoken about the need for more strategic, democracy-centered networks—or alliances—of democracies. Boris Johnson proposed the creation of a D-10 grouping of democracies that would include crucial Indo-Pacific allies.⁵⁴ In the UK Parliament, too, the concept of a “band of liberal democracies” has circulated among members as a potential “force for good” to “help the world stand up to autocratic regimes.”⁵⁵

In Germany, the “traffic light coalition” that will form the next government recently issued a policy paper that expressed support to boost cooperation among allies and explicitly

referenced support for initiatives such as an “Alliance of Democracies.”⁵⁶ Leading German politicians, including Johannes Vogel, deputy chairman of the Free Democratic Party (FDP), have called for a “global democratic alliance” to help democracies better mobilize in the competition with growing autocracies.⁵⁷ While some European governments remain skeptical of such an alliance, particularly over concerns about driving ideological cleavages or provoking China, there appears to be greater openness to considering ways to foster greater cooperation among democracies.⁵⁸

Other allies across North America and the Indo-Pacific have expressed budding interest in new forms of democratic cooperation. Members of the Canadian Parliament have identified the growing urgency of democracies to “stand together to promote values of democracy and human rights” in the face of “increasing authoritarianism and coercive diplomacy” by autocrats.⁵⁹ Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen has also called for a new coalition

54 Ash Jain and David Gordon, “Forget the G-7—Biden Needs a D-10 to Rally the Democracies,” Hill, June 11, 2021, <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/557870-forget-the-g7-biden-needs-a-d-10-rallying-the-democracies>.

55 Jamie Wallis, “Global Britain,” UK House of Commons, 2021, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-01-11/debates/AD141381-635D-41B0-A909-48EF110029CD/GlobalBritain?highlight=d10#contribution-F6A0AF6E-467C-4F58-97B5-89AD5ABA5465>.

56 Coalition Policy Paper, October 2021; <https://www.tagesschau.de/sondierungen-153.pdf>; Coalition Agreement, November 24, 2021, <https://www.spd.de/koalitionsvertrag2021/>.

57 Johannes Vogel, “Eine Allianz der Demokraten,” Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung, January 19, 2020.

58 Nicolas Tenzer, “Europe Must Push Joe Biden's Alliance of Democracies,” *Conversation*, April 12, 2021, <https://theconversation.com/europe-must-push-joe-bidens-alliance-of-democracies-158735>.

59 Marc Garneau, “Debates (Hansard) No. 107,” Parliament of Canada, May 31, 2021, <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/43-2/house/sitting-107/hansard>.

of democratic countries to maintain the rules-based order and deter Chinese aggression.⁶⁰

In the United States, forging closer cooperation among democracies has drawn bipartisan support among lawmakers in Congress. Several new frameworks for democratic cooperation in targeted areas have been proposed. On technology, for example, current bipartisan proposals for a “democracy technology partnership” seek to “develop a ... strategy among democratic countries to compete against growing technological strength and influence ... [of] authoritarian regimes.”⁶¹ On anti-corruption, through the House of Representatives’ anti-corruption caucus and related Helsinki Commission activities, bipartisan lawmakers have pushed for the democratic world to more strategically counteract authoritarian corruption and malign influence in the West.⁶²

Creating the Alliance

Biden’s call for a Summit for Democracy and the underlying rationale for convening such a summit—advancing democratic cooperation in the context of a global struggle between democracy and autocracy—could help propel the idea of an alliance forward. But moving from concept to reality will require a dedicated effort by the United States and enthusiasm for the idea by key allies, especially given the pushback that such a proposal could generate. Skepticism about such an alliance may stem from democratic governments concerned about exacerbating tensions with China and Russia in an increasingly polarized world. Moscow and Beijing are also likely to engage in efforts to pressure smaller democracies not to join such an alliance; already, the Summit for Democracy has generated harsh criticism from these two powers.⁶³

There are three possible tracks for bringing such an alliance to fruition.

1 Formally establish an alliance. The first, most straightforward track is for a sufficient number of governments to agree on the establishment of an Alliance of Democracies as a new, standalone international entity.

While there are a number of avenues by which such an entity could be established, the year of action that will follow the initial summit meeting could provide a window of opportunity to push this forward. To jumpstart this effort, the Biden administration could follow the Summit for Democracy by establishing a working group that would consider options to formalize a network of democracies after the two-part series of summits concludes. The next G7 Summit in Germany could also provide a venue to discuss plans to structure such an alliance. If such plans find sufficient support among key governments, they could provide the basis for endorsement at the second Summit for Democracy in late 2022.

2 Create an informal core group of democracies.

Another option is to create a core group of democracies, such as an enlarged G7 or D-10 plus, as the foundation for an Alliance of Democracies, and use this group to facilitate coordinated action on the key challenges identified above, including through existing frameworks such as the OECD, the US-EU Trade & Technology Council, and other dialogues. Over time, as this group demonstrates the ability to generate meaningful impact and effectiveness, it could be expanded to include other committed democracies worldwide. Such a core group could be established at the leaders’ level, perhaps on the margins of the G7 Summit, with subsequent meetings taking place at the level of foreign ministers or political directors, which would serve as the vehicles for collaboration and coordinated action.⁶⁴

3 Build on annual democracy summits. The administration’s plan for a series of summits—one this year and one next—could engender habits of cooperation among democracies, providing the building blocks for a sustainable network of democracies that could grow into a more formalized entity over time. If the series of democracy summits convened by the Biden administration continues on an annual basis, it could effectively serve as a de facto alliance. Analogously, the G7 began as a series of annual leaders’ summits to deal with economic issues, and subsequently expanded its purpose to include regular economic consultations and,

60 “Taiwan’s Tsai Ing-wen Calls for Alliance of Democracies to Oppose China,” *Kyodo News*, September 8, 2020, <https://news.abc-cbn.com/overseas/09/08/20/taiwans-tsai-ing-wen-calls-for-alliance-of-democracies-to-oppose-china>. Then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo endorsed an alliance of democracies to counter China. See: David Brunnstrom and Daphne Psalidakis, “Pompeo Urges More Assertive Approach to Frankenstein China,” *Reuters*, July 23, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-pompeo-idCAKCN24O310>.

61 “Bipartisan Senators Introduce Legislation to Reassert Democratic Leadership in Technology Strategy and Development,” Senator Mark Warner, press release, March 4, 2021, <https://www.warner.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2021/3/bipartisan-senators-introduce-legislation-to-reassert-democratic-leadership-in-technology-strategy-development>.

62 “Inter-Parliamentary Alliance Against Kleptocracy to Unite Political Leaders in Transatlantic Battle Against Corruption,” Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, press release, December 3, 2021, <https://www.csce.gov/international-impact/press-and-media/press-releases/inter-parliamentary-alliance-against-kleptocracy>.

63 Anatoly Antonov and Qin Gang, “Russian and Chinese Ambassadors: Respecting People’s Democratic Rights,” *National Interest*, November 26, 2021, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/russian-and-chinese-ambassadors-respecting-people%E2%80%99s-democratic-rights-197165>.

64 Ash Jain and Matthew Kroenig, *From the G7 to a D-10*.

eventually, political and security issues. A similar course for an Alliance of Democracies would depend, however, on a decision by the Biden administration (and, eventually, its successor) to continue convening annual democracy summits beyond the two scheduled meetings, and the willingness of other leading democracies to continue to participate.

The first option provides the most direct path to structure an Alliance of Democracies. But if this path proves to be politically impractical, the second and third options could provide feasible approaches to galvanize cooperation among democracies, while leaving open the possibility of forging a formal alliance down the road.

The Alliance in Action *Hypothetical Future Scenario:* *The Race for Nanotechnology*

Reaping the rewards of its heavy investments in advanced nanotechnology research, China achieves a major scientific breakthrough in nanocatalysis, the use of ultrafine nanoparticles to increase the rate of a chemical reaction.⁶⁵ Made from various compounds, these breakthrough nanocatalysts are poised to drive major advances in biofuels, water purification, and chemical production, all but ensuring that China will dominate the field of renewable energy and make the rest of the world strategically dependent on Chinese energy supply chains in the future.

Faced with a true “Sputnik” moment, leading democracies turn to the Alliance of Democracies for action. The Steering Council backs a proposal advanced by the US-EU Trade and Technology Council to establish an \$800 billion fund to support a new government-industry nanotechnology investment partnership, aimed at galvanizing practical research in this field, including by drawing on rare mineral composites found in the soils of certain alliance members.

Thirty-four member states agree to contribute to the investment fund and join the nanotechnology partnership. Within three years, the initiative produces an unprecedented technological advance in nanocatalysts – putting the democratic world on track to lead the development of 21st century energy sources.

65 For more on China's advances in nanotechnology, see Hepeng Jia, et al., “China Leading Researchers Set Their Sites on New Frontiers,” *Nature*, May 26, 2021, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-01405-0>. Also see Ben Halder, *How China: Is the Future of Nanoscience*, OZY, February 20, 2020, <https://www.ozy.com/the-new-and-the-next/cloning-to-cancer-china-is-driving-the-future-of-small-science/256094/>.



The United Nations Security Council meets about the situation in Syria, February 28, 2020.

VI. OBSTACLES AND CRITIQUES

An Alliance of Democracies aimed at promoting cooperation on key challenges offers real potential, but there are legitimate critiques about such an alliance that require careful consideration.

1 An Alliance of Democracies could polarize the international community and undermine the UN, leading to a new Cold War dynamic with Russia and China.

Chief among these concerns is that establishing a new alliance 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. This is an important factor to consider, as it is not in the interest of the United States or its allies to provoke a confrontation with China or Russia, or to undermine the UN system. But the reality is that the global order is already polarized. China and Russia are deepening their cooperation across a range of domains. Competition between democratic and autocratic powers is now an established feature of the current system. The only question is whether, and how, democratic nations will choose to respond. The formation of an Alliance of Democracies would add an additional layer to the existing venues for cooperation among democracies, such as NATO and the G7. And, while Beijing and Moscow may prefer otherwise, there is not much they can do to prevent democracies from working together in these forums. Moreover, the alliance would not supplant the United Nations. The UN

Security Council, the G20, and other inclusive frameworks will continue to provide mechanisms for engagement and cooperation with China and Russia on common concerns.

2 Democracies need to cooperate with non-democracies to address challenges posed by China.

Another major critique is that the United States and its allies need the support of non-democracies—such as Singapore, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates—to deal with systemic challenges, particularly those posed by China, and that creating an exclusive club of democracies could jeopardize such cooperation. There is no doubt that the United States and its democratic allies need to stay engaged with non-democratic partners to facilitate cooperation on shared challenges, including China. But the formation of an alliance would not interfere with existing avenues for cooperation with non-democracies. Multilateral cooperation with non-democratic partners would continue across multiple domains. The alliance would simply provide an additional platform for cooperation with a broader set of likeminded states.

3 An Alliance of Democracies sounds useful in principle, but meaningful action will prove difficult, given that democracies have such varying interests.

Another important critique is that the alliance risks a lowest-common-denominator approach, falling short

in its aim to facilitate meaningful cooperation on key challenges, given the widely varying perspectives of its member states.⁶⁶ To be sure, 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. While there are no guarantees, an Alliance of Democracies would create an incentive to work together, and democracies are more likely to cooperate if they are brought together regularly in such an alliance than if they are not.

4 The existing Community of Democracies has had limited success; there is nothing to suggest a new alliance of democracies would be any different.

The Community of Democracies (CoD) is an international organization of democracies aimed at promoting democratic norms. However, the CoD's mission is narrow and its impact has been limited, primarily focusing on election monitoring and occasional statements of concern regarding democratic setbacks.⁶⁷ In addition, the CoD has been hampered by the inclusion of a significant number of non-democracies, which has made meaningful action difficult.⁶⁸ In contrast, the Alliance of Democracies would have a broader mission than the CoD, and, as discussed above, its membership would be limited to consolidated democracies based on a set of criteria that would make meaningful action more likely. Moreover, the strategic context that compels the creation of an Alliance of Democracies is markedly different than that which existed at the time of CoD's formation. The increasing threat from autocratic powers creates a greater imperative for members of the

alliance to work together in pursuit of common goals and outcomes.

5 The strategic benefits of an Alliance of Democracies are slim in comparison to the heavy political lift that will be required to form it.

Perhaps the greater obstacle to getting an Alliance of Democracies off the ground is bureaucratic inertia. Creating a new alliance would require a significant commitment of political and diplomatic capital by officials of leading democracies, particularly the United States, whose support would be key to bringing the alliance to fruition. Officials may determine that the operational benefits of an alliance are not worth the arduous political effort required to get it off the ground, and that it is good enough to rely on the existing architecture—the G7, NATO, OECD, and smaller coalitions around specific issues—to address current challenges.

Smaller coalitions of democracies focused on discrete issues are certainly useful, and may be able to generate meaningful outcomes. But, an Alliance of Democracies would provide benefits that such coalitions cannot replicate. The Biden administration has framed the current era as a historic inflection point between autocracy and democracy. The alliance would provide a signature initiative that is directly responsive to this challenge—one that demonstrates leadership and can help align the democratic world in a common strategic direction. The alliance provides an umbrella to facilitate more effective cooperation across key challenges, and it would do so in a highly visible and symbolically significant mechanism that is likely to resonate with domestic and international public audiences in ways that smaller coalitions of the willing cannot. Moreover, while creating a new alliance will require a significant diplomatic investment, the steps required to move from a two-part summit convening the world's democracies to a more structured and sustainable network of democracies would not be overly burdensome.

66 Hal Brands and Charles Edel, "A Grand Strategy of Democratic Solidarity," *Washington Quarterly* 44, 1, March 23, 2021, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0163660X.2021.1893003>.

67 "About the CoD," Community of Democracies, <https://community-democracies.org/values/organization/>.

68 Signatories to the Warsaw Declaration, Community of Democracies, <https://community-democracies.org/app/uploads/2016/10/2000-Warsaw-Declaration-ENG.pdf>

VII. CONCLUSION

A new Alliance of Democracies, with a mission focused on defining challenges facing the free world, could galvanize the broader democratic community around a common purpose. It would send a signal to autocratic rivals that leading democracies are serious and prepared to act in meaningful ways to push back on their coercive and malign activities. Such an alliance would serve as one of several overlapping networks of democratic cooperation that include NATO, the G7, the Indo-Pacific Quad, Five Eyes, and smaller coalitions and dialogues on specific issues, such as AUKUS and the US-EU Trade and Technology Council. In addition, a new D-10 (plus) could provide a mutually reinforcing counterpart to a larger Alliance of Democracies and potentially serve as the basis for its steering council.

For the United States, an Alliance of Democracies offers a platform to align other influential democracies in a common approach to China, Russia, and other global challenges on which it needs allies on board to succeed. For European democracies, the alliance provides a framework to coordinate more closely with democracies beyond the transatlantic arena, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, at a time

when expanding strategic partnerships could be useful. For middle power and smaller democracies, the alliance would serve as a platform to influence key policy decisions and work under a common umbrella to deal with the threats of autocratic coercion and other challenges.

Building strategic solidarity among democracies is perhaps the greatest single achievement that can result from Biden's Summit for Democracy.

Building strategic solidarity among democracies is perhaps the greatest single achievement that can result from Biden's Summit for Democracy. The United States and its allies should seize the window of opportunity that currently exists to establish such an alliance and create the foundation for democracies to succeed in what is likely to be a multi-decade era of strategic competition.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the program and research staff that helped develop this report, including Danielle Miller and Joel Kesselbrenner with the Atlantic Council, and Danielle Piatkiewicz and Mariam Chikhladze with the Alliance of Democracies Foundation.



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