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Chairman Yoho, Ranking Member Sherman, thank you for the opportunity to testify before the subcommittee on this important issue.

My remarks today will focus on how a rising China has increasingly been able to wield influence that chills free expression within democracies around the world. Successfully controlling political speech and expression at home has morphed into a broader approach that seeks to manipulate, suppress and surveil expression and the free exchange of ideas outside China's borders. This is not simply about "telling China's story," as Chinese authorities like to claim – it is also about shutting down a more contextualized version of China's story, as well as suppressing at a global level the discussion of a growing number of issues that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) finds sensitive.

This has an impact on academic freedom at universities and schools around the world, on the international publishing sector, on communications infrastructure and independent media in developing countries, and on a free and open Internet. Beijing uniquely wields this influence due to China's market appeal and growing stature, employing a combination of carrots and sticks. As Xi Jinping's power consolidation and other events have demonstrated, China is moving in both a more authoritarian and a more global direction – which means these trends are likely to intensify.

Taking domestic tactics overseas

With the advent of the Internet, many originally thought the Chinese government would find it impossible to control the political impact of communication within its borders. But the Internet has not only spread but flourished within China, all while the Chinese government has fine-tuned its management of politically sensitive expression. Since I first began studying this issue many years ago, the shape of the Internet within China has certainly changed, but the overall tactics used by the Chinese government have generally remained stable. First, technological innovation has enabled fine-grained censorship and increasing surveillance, now made possible by tremendous amounts of data collection in a weak rule-of-law environment. Second, while the actual censorship and surveillance apparatus is important, equally important is the inducement of self-censorship at all levels, which relies on fear and an implicit understanding of taboo issues. And finally, control and/or co-optation of the infrastructure of ideas and communication (including the actual pipes, the regulatory environment, and the private sector) is key, such that the interests of those innovating within and powering the information sector within China run parallel to - or, at the very least, not counter to – the interests of the Party.

Just as in the past with respect to the flow of information within China, many now also find it difficult to believe that the CCP can exert influence over expression and communication outside its borders. Yet what we learn from its existing domestic approach is that a) it works; and b) it is possible to use similar tactics on an international scale to dampen or distort the free exchange of ideas. As noted in the National Endowment for Democracy's recent report on "sharp power," authoritarian regimes inevitably project overseas the values they live by within their borders[i]. This projection of influence has already had a chilling effect within democracies.

Impact on democratic principles

Recent examples have been numerous. With respect to encouraging self-censorship, academic publishing in particular has been in the spotlight. Cambridge University Press agreed to Chinese officials' request to censor within China articles pertaining to sensitive issues such as Tibet and the Tiananmen Square massacre; this decision was reversed after protests and petitions from the academic community. Yet publisher Springer Nature went forward with a similar arrangement, arguing that by censoring a small percentage of their content in China, the remainder can be made available. Variations of this argument – the "greater good" argument – have been advanced by numerous institutions and companies to justify acquiescing to CCP censorship.

Confucius Institutes, which have been lauded internally by Chinese officials as successful influence vehicles, have also come under scrutiny as a growing number of scholars voice concerns that the presence of such Chinese government-funded centers on campus within democracies, including in the United States, are constraining academic freedom. This is particularly relevant when the agreements struck between universities and Confucius Institutes are opaque, as they frequently are, and when the educational institutions in question lack the resources to fund independent Asian or Chinese studies centers. As some have noted, decisions taken within liberal democracies to censor prestigious journals at the source – or conversely to acquiesce implicitly to a highly sanitized, university-sanctioned version of China's story – gives the unfortunate impression to all that the CCP's version of history is the only one, endorsed by the international scholarly community.[ii]

This is particularly of concern in younger democracies, which frequently lack deep expertise on China. In regions of the world ranging from Latin America to Central Europe to sub-Saharan Africa, the Chinese government has actively shaped the "infrastructure of ideas" through backing think tanks, investing in media outlets and infrastructure, and co-opting elites through exchanges and privileged access to officials and experts in China. In this way, the CCP has restricted the diversity of knowledge and opinion on China in areas where it has strategic interests, with the most prominent and politically connected voices frequently being those associated with the CCP. Notably, this is not limited to positive advocacy for CCP objectives, but includes the marginalization or exclusion of issues that the CCP deems sensitive. This list of issues is constantly expanding, a dynamic that itself encourages even more self-censorship.

In the young and struggling democracies of sub-Saharan Africa, the Chinese government and government-linked companies have invested millions in communications infrastructure and media. Official Chinese cooperation arrangements with the continent – like the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation – have included arrangements for cooperation in film and TV production, Chinese support for radio and TV digitalization, and thousands of exchanges for African journalists. These "training" exchanges involve not so much training in the fundamentals of independent journalism but "training in the Chinese agenda," as some African independent journalists put it. The full ramifications of these

developments have gone under-explored for a variety of reasons, including lack of capacity in the independent media sector to contextualize what is happening and clear incentives on the part of governments in Africa to cooperate with Chinese state objectives.

Finally, the Chinese government's multi-pronged effort to shape the future of the Internet has implications for free expression, privacy and surveillance globally. Chinese tech companies, now among the largest in the world, have pioneered domestic censorship and surveillance at home (in the absence of strong rule of law protections and civil society that can freely advocate for citizens' rights) while simultaneously pushing into overseas markets, a trend likely to accelerate under the Belt and Road Initiative. As I have noted elsewhere, it is reasonable to explore whether Chinese firms with global ambitions plan to follow the same CCP dictates with respect to data-gathering, surveillance and policing of communication abroad as they do at home. Meanwhile, the Chinese government continues to push its concept of "cyber sovereignty" at the international level, a model of authoritarian control over information that would end the Internet's potential to serve as a platform for global free expression. It is useful to note in this context that, rather than upholding values of free expression, Silicon Valley often invokes the "greater good" argument to justify censorship within the Chinese market.

The scale of these activities would have been impossible were it not for the tremendous market power China now wields. The CCP uses its unique carrots (including investments and market or other forms of access) in combination with its sticks (including denial of market and other forms of access, investment, or visas; and using pressure points on individuals and/or institutions) to create a foundation for its influence. As the Belt and Road Initiative rolls out throughout great swathes of the world, dwarfing the Marshall plan and engendering worries of "debt trap diplomacy," these carrots and sticks are likely to be deployed in greater measure.

<u>Addressing the challenge: prioritizing and reaffirming core democratic institutions and values</u>

Why is it important to address the "greater good" argument, advanced by those who say some degree of CCP-imposed censorship or interference is worth the trade-offs? Because in the eyes of the CCP, any decision by democracies to compromise their values is binary: either you are willing to do so or you aren't. Degree is unimportant. For some time, as the CCP's ambitions have grown, democracies have essentially conveyed the message that they are not willing to defend their own core values. As a result, the Chinese authorities increasingly set the rules with institutions within the democracies on standards of free expression, a development with enormously troubling implications if we remain on this trajectory.

Democracies are slowly coming to grips with this fact. Yet while the issue must be confronted head-on, it would be a mistake to think that the best way to address such heavy-handed tactics by authoritarian regimes is through similarly heavy-handed tactics by democracies that would have the effect of subverting the very values that undergird democratic systems. Democracies should be proactive in asserting why norms such as transparency, accountability, pluralism and the free exchange of ideas are critical to their interests. They must also be precise and thoughtful in formulating nuanced responses to authoritarian influence. Actions that fan xenophobia, restrict pluralism, or contravene core principles will not only weaken democratic institutions, but will conveniently make the CCP's own case that democracies are inherently flawed and hypocritical.

With this in mind, democracies might consider:

- Continuing to uncover the ways in which the CCP's influence activities are impinging on democratic institutions outside China's borders, and to share information on "best practices" for dealing with these activities while respecting democratic values;
- Facilitating democratic learning and supporting the capacity of local independent media to report in a dispassionate way on issues relating to China, particularly in countries or regions without deep capacity to do so;
- Seeking transparency in institutional agreements with Chinese government-affiliated institutions, such as Confucius Institutes and others. Particularly when public funds in democracies are involved, civil society should insist on understanding whether fundamental issues such as freedom of expression are placed at risk;
- Collectively supporting existing norms relating to academic freedom and freedom of expression (within publishing, the scholarly community, think tanks, etc.) so that individual actors are not as susceptible as they are now to being picked off and pressured by the Chinese government or its surrogates;
- Within relevant private sector industries, standing up initiatives that establish voluntary, mutual adherence to accepted norms of free expression and fundamental human rights;
- Encouraging democratic solidarity among countries that are grappling with their engagement with China. Such solidarity will invariably lead to more effective and democratically sustainable outcomes, given the scope of the challenge.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to answering your questions.

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[i] *Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence*. International Forum for Democratic Studies, National Endowment for Democracy, December 2017. https://www.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Sharp-Power-Rising-Authoritarian-Influence-Full-Report.pdf Accessed 3/19/2018.

[ii] Alexander Dukalskis, "The Chinese Communist Party has growing sway in Western universities," Democratic Audit. http://www.democraticaudit.com/2018/01/04/the-chinese-communist-party-has-growing-sway-in-western-universities/ Accessed 3/19/2018.