

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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### **Ranking Member Jamie Raskin**

### **Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery**

### **“Defending America from the Chinese Communist Party’s Political Warfare, Part I”**

### **April 17, 2024**

Authoritarian states use propaganda to dehumanize their victims and mask the brutality of their rule. The propagandist’s purpose, Aldous Huxley said, “is to make one set of people forget that another set of people is human.”

Today, for example, Vladimir Putin tries to make people forget about the humanity of 38 million Ukrainians he wants to control. He tries to make people forget about Alexei Navalny whom he poisoned, falsely imprisoned, and killed. China tries to make people forget about the humanity of millions of Tibetans and Uighurs who President Xi persecutes, incarcerates, and represses.

**But with their intensive programs of propaganda today, the autocrats seek not only to subdue their own populations but to confuse and demoralize people who live in democratic societies.**

**Today’s hearing is about China’s political warfare. But China exists as part of an axis of authoritarian powers and parties, the center of which is Russia, whose propaganda playbook the CCP studies carefully and increasingly imitates and follows.**

In the struggle between democracy and authoritarianism today, the central military battlefield is Ukraine, which has been invaded and hammered by Putin’s army. More than 10,000 civilians have died, and 12 million people have been driven from their homes. Russia spread terror with rape, child kidnapping, torture, and murder.

And China is assisting Russia in its filthy war of aggression by helping Putin rebuild its military industrial complex. And China is watching closely what happens in Ukraine. As Prime Minister Kishida of Japan told us last week, “The Ukraine of today may be the East Asia of tomorrow.”

**But if Ukraine is the central military battlefield in this showdown, the democratic societies of the world are the central psychological and political battlegrounds as the tyrants systematically inject lies and disinformation into our politics.**

**For a decade now, our intelligence community, law enforcement, and national security agencies have warned of the systematic and pervasive efforts by Vladimir Putin, his intelligence operatives, his Internet Research Agency, and his allies to destabilize our politics, affect our election outcomes, and poison our society with divisive racial, ethnic, religious, and ideological propaganda.**

Just this morning, the Washington Post reported on a “secret” document written by Russia’s Foreign Ministry. As the article explains, “Russia is seeking to subvert Western support for Ukraine and disrupt the domestic politics of the United States and European countries, through propaganda campaigns supporting isolationist and extremist policies.”

Russia's Foreign Ministry says that Ukraine is the main crucible of our times. According to the Post: "The document says the outcome of Russia's war in Ukraine will 'to a great degree determine the outlines of the future world order,' a clear indication that Moscow sees the result of its invasion as inextricably bound with its ability — and that of other authoritarian nations — to impose its will globally."

Ukraine is where the world must stand against tyranny and authoritarianism.

**And now China is working to follow Russia very closely.**

An article this month in the Washington Post titled, "China's Advancing Efforts to Influence the U.S. Election Raises Alarms," states that: "In an echo of Russia's influence campaign before the 2016 election, China appears to be trying to harness partisan divisions [in America] to undermine the Biden administration's policies." The Foundation for Defense of Democracies identified as part of this effort at least "170 inauthentic pages and accounts on Facebook that have pushed anti-American messages, including pointed attacks on Mr. Biden."

**Many of these disinformation nodes bring Chinese and Russian propaganda together to undermine U.S. foreign policy.**

"In February, according to the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, a Chinese account on X calling itself a Western name alongside a 'MAGA 2024' reference shared a video from RT, the Russian television network controlled by the Kremlin, to claim that Mr. Biden and the CIA had sent a neo-Nazi gangster to fight in Ukraine. (That narrative was debunked by the investigative group Bellingcat.)" But the very next day, "the post received a enormous boost when Alex Jones, the podcaster known for spreading false claims and conspiracy theories, shared it on the platform with his 2.2 million followers."

**This kind of Chinese-Russian-MAGA propaganda and disinformation circuit now penetrates Congress itself.**

For example, Putin is trying to stop the democracies from aiding Ukraine by claiming that his imperial war of conquest is really meant to remove Nazis from power—"de-Nazification" he calls it. He invites us to believe that Ukraine is a Nazi state even though it is actually a liberal representative democracy committed to the equal rights and freedoms of all its citizens and even though the people chose as their President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the only Jewish person serving as a president anywhere in the world outside of the state of Israel.

Yet the "denazification" myth has spread to the MAGA precincts of Congress. Just this week, one of our colleagues on this Committee, who is trying to topple the Speaker of the House simply because he wants to allow a fair floor vote on a security package to the Ukrainian people, recycled a defamatory lie about Ukraine. She tweeted, "It is antisemitic to make Israeli aid contingent on funding Ukrainian Nazis."

I learned of this Tweet from an outraged Ukrainian American constituent whose Christian family was involved in saving Ukrainian Jews from both Hitler and Stalin's armies. She said it was "painful beyond words" to see "Marjorie Taylor Greene publicly slandering Ukrainians, who are only trying to protect their fellow citizens from Russian mass-murder."

A similar disinformation ploy has also fundamentally distorted the work of our own Committee over the last year.

The key evidence in this Committee's protracted impeachment inquiry, Alexander Smirnov's infamous FBI Form 1023, replete with salacious allegations about multimillion dollar bribes to President Biden, turned out to be a tissue of lies planted by an individual with close and extensive ties to Russian intelligence.

**Republican Members of Congress have thus, in either a gullible or collaborationist state of mind, used Russian-generated disinformation to call democratic Ukraine an enemy of the United States, to deny the people of Ukraine desperately needed military assistance, and to try and impeach the President of the United States who had committed no offense, much less an impeachable one.**

**Even with a decade of Reports from federal national security and intelligence agencies establishing Russia's active measure campaigns in American politics, many of our Republican colleagues try to drown out such warnings by mindlessly chanting "Russia hoax" or "Russia, Russia, Russia," essentially asking us to believe Vladimir Putin over our own public officials.**

I'm happy to say that won't work anymore. The Republican Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee and the Republican Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee are themselves forcefully sounding the alarm about the saturation of American politics and Congress by Russian propaganda.

Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul warned earlier this month that, "Russian propaganda has made its way into the United States, unfortunately, and it's infected a good chunk of my party's base." Chairman McCaul has called out members of the Republican party for, "spreading Russian [propaganda]."

Intelligence Committee Chairman Mike Turner reiterated McCaul's warning that specific disinformation ploys have penetrated Congress, adding that as a result of Russian propaganda, he said, "There are members of Congress today who still incorrectly say that this conflict between Russia and Ukraine is over NATO, which, of course, it is not."

**Our rejection of foreign propaganda interference in our politics should not depend on whether our party is the victim or the beneficiary of it. We all lose when our political dialogue falls prey to the disinformation of foreign states who are not members of our national political community. Foreign governments have no right to define our campaigns, control our elections, or thwart our legislative process.**

The Ukrainian people are fighting a momentous battle against tyranny and corruption to defend democracy. We need to be on their side and that means we must disentrall ourselves from the disinformation and propaganda tactics being waged against us by all the autocratic powers, meaning Russia and China but also Iran and North Korea and others.

It is time we work together on this project, Mr. Chairman, and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses, especially Professor Snyder, a leading historian of Europe and leading analyst on how authoritarian governments work and how they try to undermine freedom and democracy.

Thank you kindly, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

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