

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 23, 2023

The Honorable Avril Haines
Director of National Intelligence
Office of the Director of National Intelligence
1500 Tysons McLean Drive
McLean, VA 22102

The Honorable William J. Burns
Director
Central Intelligence Agency
1000 Colonial Farm Rd.
Langley, VA 22101

Dear Director Haines and Director Burns,

As Members of the Select Committee on the Strategic Competition between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party (“CCP”), we are deeply concerned that the CCP and other foreign adversaries of the United States are working to capitalize on our vacant Speaker position in the U.S. House of Representatives and constant threat of government shutdowns to discredit democracy globally and promote authoritarian governance models abroad.

Following the removal of Kevin McCarthy as Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives on October 3rd, *Global Times*—a CCP propaganda tabloid—published an opinion article¹ on its English-language website, that stated that the United States “had long presented itself as a ‘beacon of democracy,’” but “with its domestic political turmoil, this myth has been shattered.” The article states “the failure of the American democratic system domestically has raised questions about American values on the international stage.” Continued coverage of the Speaker race from *Global Times* and other People's Republic of China (PRC) media outlets similarly focuses on the chaos of the U.S. political system. This is the CCP’s message targeting international audiences in the English language, and it’s part of a broader global propaganda campaign to sow doubt about the strength of the United States and our democratic values.

Therefore, we respectfully request a classified briefing from the U.S. Intelligence Community (“IC”) on how the CCP and our foreign adversaries are leveraging current political dysfunction in the U.S. House of Representatives to discredit democracy globally in their efforts to promote an alternative authoritarian model of governance internationally, enhance their ability to form economic and national security alliances, and harm our standing with strategic partners. More specifically, we request a briefing covering the following:

1. What global messaging from the PRC and foreign adversaries highlighting the vacant Speaker seat and potential government shutdown—including through social media, newspapers, radio, TV, and official government interactions—has the IC identified?
2. Within this messaging, what efforts has the IC identified that promote a PRC-led alternative or model apart from a U.S. or Western-led approach to development, governance, and security forums and frameworks?
3. What are the demographics of the targeted audiences and countries—including Gross Domestic Product per capita, Productive Capacities Index (PCI) score, and Democracy score—for this messaging?
4. How does the IC assess the impact and effectiveness of this messaging on the targeted audiences?
5. Does the IC have evidence that the CCP has directed, coordinated, or amplified this messaging?

¹ “Removal of McCarthy Signifies Further Polarization of American Politics.” *Global Times*, October 6, 2023, www.globaltimes.cn/page/202310/1299328.shtml.

6. Does the IC assess that the current state of Congress presents an opportunity for the CCP and state and nonstate adversaries to sow disinformation both in the United States and abroad?
7. How does the IC assess PRC and foreign adversary messaging regarding the current state of Congress compared to previous messaging tactics these actors have employed?
8. How does the IC assess the impact of the current state of Congress on the thinking of top decisionmakers of the CCP and other foreign adversaries regarding the United States' ability to respond to global security crises?
9. How does the IC assess these top decisionmakers' thinking about strategic competition with the U.S., such as whether the U.S. will have the resolve to support its allies and partners in the event of a crisis, including regarding Taiwan?
10. Does the IC have evidence that the CCP is exacerbating or will exacerbate dysfunction in the U.S. Congress to diminish U.S. resolve to support its security partners?

The IC has repeatedly emphasized that the PRC seeks to extend its influence abroad while undermining democracy and U.S. interests. The IC's 2023 Annual Threat Assessment² highlighted that "efforts by Russia, China, and other countries to promote authoritarianism ... is helping fuel a larger competition between democratic and authoritarian forms of government." The IC also noted that "China is attempting to sow doubts about U.S. leadership, undermine democracy, and extend Beijing's influence." We must now be clear-eyed that current U.S. political dysfunction is providing the CCP with fodder to achieve its objectives, and we must assess the extent to which it is succeeding.

Even the State Department's Global Engagement Center,³ the Wall Street Journal,⁴ and the New York Times⁵ reported in late September that Beijing has been spending billions of dollars annually on a global campaign of disinformation, including on U.S. social media platforms, laundering English-language articles written by fake authors in influential local media, and placing pressure on foreign universities and newspapers that publish content deemed offensive to the PRC. The country holds itself as a responsible global power, yet a policy of coercion, suppression of truth, and propaganda underpins its public diplomacy.

The PRC's skewed framing of U.S. democracy is not new—as early as 2017, Chinese media articles started using the phrase "order of China and chaos of the West." Senior CCP officials used the phrase with growing frequency throughout 2021.⁶ This anti-democratic messaging has clear implications for our strategic competition and global security and stability, as the PRC has made it explicit that it seeks to export its authoritarian model abroad and lead "the world in terms of comprehensive...international influence by the middle of the century."⁷ CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping has promoted the PRC's authoritarian one-party model as providing "a new option for other countries and nations who want to speed up their development while preserving their independence."⁸ And last week, as Xi opened the Belt and Road Forum in Beijing, he outlined an eight-point plan for the Belt and Road Initiative to facilitate development in other countries and expand the

² *Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community*, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, February 6, 2023. <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/ATA-2023-Unclassified-Report.pdf>

³ *Special Report: How the People's Republic of China Seeks to Reshape the Global Information Environment*. Global Engagement Center, Department of State, September 28, 2023.

⁴ Volz, Dustin. "China is Investing Billion in Global Disinformation Campaign, U.S. Says," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 28, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/world/china/china-is-investing-billions-in-global-disinformation-campaign-u-s-says-88740b85>.

⁵ Myers, Steven Lee. "China Uses 'deceptive' Methods to Sow Disinformation, U.S. Says," *The New York Times*, September 28, 2023, www.nytimes.com/2023/09/28/technology/china-disinformation-us-state-department.html.

⁶ "Chapter 3, Section 1- Year in Review: Security Politics, and Foreign Affairs," *2021 Annual Report to Congress*, U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2021.

⁷ Xi Speech to 20th National Congress of CCP, October 2022.

⁸ Xi Speech to 19th National Congress of CCP, October 2017.

influence of the PRC globally, particularly in developing countries. The PRC model, as we have seen in the export of surveillance technologies from Ecuador to Zambia to Kyrgyzstan, however, values political control over individual freedoms and liberties. This is a model that we cannot accept. Democracy may be messy, but the protection of our fundamental freedoms is inherent to our core values as Americans.

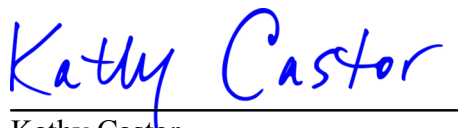
Today marks the 20th day in a row that the Speaker of the House position has been vacant, and we are 25 days away from our government's funding expiring. As we head into our 20th vote on installing and removing a Speaker of the House, the U.S. House must work to restore order as soon as possible. At the same time, it is imperative that the United States understands the full extent to which the PRC and other foreign adversaries are exploiting the chaos and dysfunction of the U.S. Congress for their own gain: to promote authoritarian models of government internationally, to enhance their image as reliable economic and security partners, to harm our standing with our own allies and partners, and to sow discord in the United States and abroad. If for no other reason, it is imperative that the leaders of this institution understand that dysfunction in the U.S. Congress poses real national security risks that affect their constituents.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. We respectfully reiterate our request for a thorough and classified intelligence briefing on this matter, and ask it take place by October 31, 2023.

Sincerely,



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Ranking Member



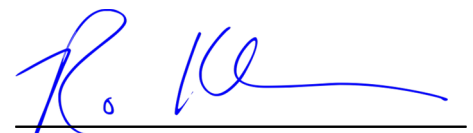
Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



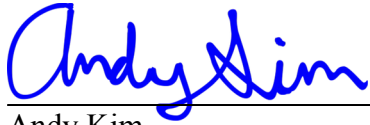
André Carson
Member of Congress




Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



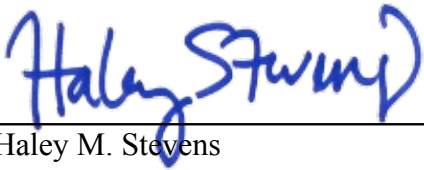
Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andy Kim".

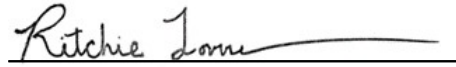
Andy Kim
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mikie Sherrill".

Mikie Sherrill
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Haley Stevens".

Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ritchie Torres".

Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jake Auchincloss".

Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shontel M. Brown".

Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress