

Recommendation paper – December 2023

Recommendations for Strengthening Democracy in National Security Strategies



DEMOCRACY
REPORTING
INTERNATIONAL

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1. Recognizing Authoritarianism as a Security Threat

- Understand and articulate the security risks posed by authoritarian regimes, both domestically and internationally.
- Acknowledge that while not all authoritarian regimes are aggressive in foreign relations, they are more likely to initiate conflicts than democracies.
- Recognise that transitional periods create significant risks and instability as well as opportunities.

2. Authoritarianism as a Core Foreign Policy Issue

- View internal governance in other states as a significant foreign and security policy matter while keep recognizing democracy as a value as such.
- Incorporate democratic values and human rights into the strategic framework, the organizational setup of foreign ministries and the curricula of diplomat schools. Connect the security community and the democracy/human rights community better.
- Identify and react to coalition-building among non-democratic countries and stress political corruption as over-arching threat.
- Tell the positive story of democracy, do not undermine its appeal by stressing democratic doom and gloom.

3. Utilizing the Foreign Policy Toolbox for Democracy Support

- Employ the full spectrum of foreign policy tools, including diplomacy, trade, finance, sanctions, and security cooperation, to support democratic governance.
- Ensure foreign relations interact with the diversity of partner countries, including political opposition, marginalized groups, civil society, and rural areas. Treat civil society in other countries as an important counterpart, in addition to problematic governments.

- Act and fund strategically in countries where democratic forces have still a chance to succeed over authoritarian trends.

4. Strengthening Global Democratic Partnerships

- Emphasize the natural partnership between democracies in countering authoritarian threats.
- Use smart, multi-faceted approaches in democratic cooperation, use megaphone diplomacy only where it is useful, not as a substitute for a strategy. Consider risks for democratic partners when choosing tools.

5. Renewing the Global Democracy and Human Rights Infrastructure

- Make it a goal of security strategies to improve and bolster international and regional bodies and frameworks that defend democracy and human rights. Advocate for transparency, accountability, and the reduction of authoritarian influence in global bodies.
- Differentiate between support of democracy and containment of authoritarianism.
- Additionally, to the focus on national levels, understand and respond to regional and local governance.

6. Ensuring Credibility through Honesty and Clarity

- Maintain self-critical and accurate public messaging, acknowledging the complexities of domestic politics in partner countries.
- Ground the notion of democracy in foreign policy within the framework of international law, focusing on democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

7. Avoiding Cold War Dichotomies

- Refrain from simplistic democracy vs. autocracy narratives in the many cases where partner countries domestic arrangements are in the grey zone between democracy and autocracy.
- Avoid a cold war approach of “them” versus “us”, but respond firmly to challenges posed by authoritarian regimes, such as disinformation campaigns and political interference.

8. Prioritizing Democracy at Home

- Address the erosion of democracy within democratic countries more assertively. Highlight backsliding of democracies as security concern.
- Use all available tools to uphold democratic standards within the community of democratic countries.

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