



In a new report, “Challenging Autocracy from the Front Lines,” Venezuelan opposition leader and former political prisoner Leopoldo López describes the increasing collaboration between authoritarian regimes through economic, military, diplomatic, financial, and technological partnerships designed to bolster dictatorships and repress pro-democracy movements. As a result, 2022 marked the 17 consecutive year of global democratic decline, according to Freedom House. Today, 72% of the world’s population lives under some form of autocracy, up from 49% in 2011.

The global alliance of autocrats is not ideological, López writes; it is an interest-based union designed to guarantee impunity for human rights violators, undermine domestic opposition groups in authoritarian states, and disrupt democracies. Iranian mullahs, Chinese communists, and Russian nationalists all recognize the value of sharing intelligence and providing diplomatic and military support.

In addition to describing the collaboration between authoritarian countries, López proposes the creation of an international alliance to foster a more effective defense of democracy. This alliance would include pro-democracy activists from authoritarian states and their allies in democratic governments and would be designed to facilitate political action.

The report also emphasizes the need to develop and deploy technologies to facilitate international financing for pro-democracy movements, and calls for coordinated actions to combat sanctions evasion and free political prisoners. Finally, it suggests more effective collaboration in international institutions in defense of democracy.

We must build a global network of pro-democracy activists and democratic governments to work together, including in international institutions, to combat transnational authoritarianism.

We must engage in community building, mobilization, and training to improve non-violent pro-democracy activism.

Instead of abandoning sanctions, we should rethink the way they are designed and enforced. We must target the enablers—the companies, individuals, and networks that sup-

receive international assistance.

New digital currencies create opportunities for the direct transfer of funds to pro-democracy movements in autocratic countries, circumventing government controls.

We should develop new ways to combat misinformation, share information in support of democracy and human rights, and raise awareness of the global autocratic network, the threat it represents, and how to counter it.