

House Intelligence Committee Open Hearing

26 February 2019

Rep. Devin Nunes

Opening Remarks

Today we will hear from a panel on the national security implications of authoritarianism. We welcome the recognition from Committee Democrats that Russia and China pose the primary strategic threats to the United States—a point committee Republicans have been emphasizing for many years. In the 114th and 115th Congresses, this Committee examined these threats along with those from other malign actors seeking to harm our country, and I welcome the opportunity for the Committee to continue to do so.

Nonetheless, I am concerned this hearing is not the appropriate forum to undertake a broad survey of authoritarian regimes. This would be more appropriate for the Committee on Foreign Affairs rather than the Intelligence Committee, which is the sole committee in the entire House charged with overseeing the intelligence and intelligence-related activities of the United States Government.

Furthermore, I hope this hearing will not become a venue for making spurious comparisons between authoritarian governments and democracies. Though these false analogies may be useful for partisan political purposes, they diminish and trivialize the degree of suffering, repression, and violence that people endure under actual authoritarian regimes.

Soon, the President will submit his FY20 budget to Congress, and the Committee will be charged with setting the funding authorizations for the most sensitive intelligence programs of our Government. In preparation for the budget release, we urgently need to hold classified oversight briefings. I hope that we will be having more of those intelligence-related briefings, as we are among a small handful of House Members who have the appropriate accesses and responsibility to conduct such oversight.

I hope this committee quickly returns to our core responsibilities, and I yield back the balance of my time.