

Freedom House, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), and the McCain Institute Launch Task Force on US Strategy to Support Democracy and Counter Authoritarianism

Washington - October 15, 2020 — Freedom House, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), and the McCain Institute are proud to announce the launch of a new bipartisan Task Force on US Strategy to Support Democracy and Counter Authoritarianism.

The Task Force was formed to address the significant global decline in democratic freedom and the rise in authoritarianism that endanger U.S. national security and the post-World War II political order. The rapid pace of change, marked by globalization, digitalization, migration, rising economic inequality, and the shift in global power balances, has created uncertainty and disruption, challenging democracies and creating a space for authoritarians, populists, nationalists, and kleptocrats to flourish.

For the first time since the 1990s, a majority of countries in the world are not democratic and the majority of people do not live in democracies. The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified this trend of democratic retreat, as authoritarian regimes use the pretext of public health to crack down on individual liberties and suppress the media while awarding themselves emergency powers.

Looming political and economic crises exacerbated by the pandemic also threaten the political processes and underlying stability of many democracies. The United States itself is under significant pressure, having recorded declines in major indices tracking democracy over successive years. The nation's current societal turmoil, specifically the reckoning over the consequences of systemic racism, reminds us that our own journey to an ever stronger democracy is far from over. Not only must we address the promotion of human rights and democracy with humility, but we must also consider new responses that address newfound skepticism to the United States' traditional leadership in these efforts.

Such profound geopolitical changes demand an urgent, strategic response. Stronger diplomatic, development, and security strategies are needed, as the

efforts of successive American administrations have proven insufficient to stem this democratic backslide. Freedom House, CSIS, and the McCain Institute are convening a senior-level, bipartisan Task Force of leaders, experts, and former policy makers to develop practical recommendations for a U.S. strategy that places the advance of democracy and the fight against authoritarianism at the heart of American foreign and national security policy.

Co-Directors

- **J Alexander Thier**, Senior Democracy Fellow (Non-resident) at Freedom House and former USAID Assistant to the Administrator for Policy, Planning, and Learning
- **Anne Witkowsky**, Senior Democracy Fellow (Non-resident) at Freedom House and Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stability and Humanitarian Affairs

Members

- **Nicole Bibbins Sedaca**, Deputy Director and Professor, Master of Science in Foreign Service Program, Georgetown University and Kelly and David Pfeil Fellow at the George W. Bush Institute
- **Sheila S. Coronel**, Toni Stabile Professor and Director, Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism, Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia University
- **Ambassador Eileen Donahoe**, Executive Director of the Global Digital Policy Incubator at Stanford University, FSI/Cyber Policy Center
- **Michael J. Green**, Senior Vice President for Asia and Japan Chair, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Professor and Director of Asian Studies, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service
- **Dr. E. Gyimah-Boadi**, CEO, Afrobarometer
- **David J. Kramer**, Senior Fellow in the Václav Havel Program for Human Rights & Diplomacy and Director for European & Eurasian Studies at Florida International University's Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs
- **Tod Lindberg**, Senior Fellow, Hudson Institute
- **Stuart Levey**, Former Under Secretary of Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence

- **Rory MacFarquhar**, Former Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Global Economics and Finance, National Security Council
- **Ambassador Sarah E. Mendelson**, Distinguished Service Professor of Public Policy, Head of Heinz College in Washington, DC, Carnegie Mellon University
- **Ashley Quarcoo**, Senior Fellow, Democracy, Conflict and Governance Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
- **The Honorable Randall G. Schriver**, Chairman, Project 2049 Institute
- **Ambassador Thomas A. Shannon, Jr.**, Senior International Policy Advisor at Arnold & Porter, and former Under Secretary of State
- **Vera Zakem**, Senior Technology and Policy Advisor at the Institute for Security and Technology and Founder of Zakem Global Strategies

The Task Force will produce a report with findings and recommendations by the spring of 2021.

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