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MIAMI CONFERENCE ON GLOBAL DEMOCRACY 2024

DEMOCRACY HAS NEVER FELT MORE FRAGILE.

Even in countries with longstanding democratic values, forces are at work eroding the free arena that is so fundamental to a democratic society. In 2023, political rights and civil liberties diminished in 52 countries and grew in only 21, according to Freedom House, which tracks democracy scores around the world.

The annual Miami Conference on Global Democracy, presented by the Steven J. Green School of International & Public Affairs on April 18, 2024, explores the phenomenon of contemporary democratic backsliding. The school dedicates this day of learning to deepening our understanding of the underlying causes, motivations and methods that contribute to the erosion of democracy throughout the world.

The mission of the Green School is to prepare students to be citizens of the world, supporters of democratic principles and changemakers of tomorrow. The school's leaders believe that the best hope for strengthening democracy is to grapple with and understand the challenges democracy is facing.



WELCOME REMARKS

DEMOCRACY FACES FORMIDABLE CHALLENGES, BUT ‘BRIGHT SPOTS’ PROVIDE HOPE

The second annual Miami Conference on Global Democracy opened with welcome remarks from Shlomi Dinar, dean of the Steven J. Green School of International & Public Affairs. The goal of the conference, Dinar said, was “to shine a light on how waning public support for democracy, economic inequality and social tensions, populist politics, external pressures from great power competition, and the weakening of political institutions and processes have contributed to a steady decline in democracy worldwide.” According to Freedom House, he said, global democracy has been receding under pressure from authoritarian forces for the past 17 years.

“2023 was another discouraging year for democracy,” Dinar said. “Freedom House characterized it as a year of ‘repression, violence, and a steep decline in overall freedom.’ Around the world, freedom weakened, and people’s basic rights were repressed. Yet there were bright spots. There were places and moments that gave us reasons to be optimistic about the future of democracy.”

Despite discouraging signs of the backsliding of democracy, he said, “We firmly believe that it is still possible to reverse the decline. And we hope today to draw some lessons that can help strengthen democracy across the globe and build a better world.”

He noted that the topic of human rights and democratization is a strategic theme at the Green School, playing a role in the faculty’s research and teaching, and cutting across much of the school’s work.

Dinar thanked the Green School’s partners in presenting the conference, the Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation and Freedom House, along with sponsors: the Dorothea Green Lecture Series and the Václav Havel Program for Human Rights and Democracy.



Shlomi Dinar



PANEL ONE

DEFENDING DEMOCRACY IN AN AGE OF SHARP POWER

U.S. and allies need to respond to challenges from authoritarian regimes

The first panel of the day examined some of the ways authoritarian regimes attempt to reach beyond their borders and weaken democracy in other countries. Introduced by Mitzi Uehara Carter of the Department of Global and Sociocultural Studies and moderated by Jessica Adler from the Department of History, the panel featured Christopher Walker of the National Endowment for Democracy, Glenn Tiffert of the Hoover Institution, Alina Polyakova of the Center for European Policy Analysis, and Eric Lob from the Department of Politics and International Relations.

“We know democracy and freedom are contested concepts, and a careful and nuanced approach is absolutely needed,” Carter said as she framed the discussion. “The panelists will be discussing how authoritarian regimes can increase censorship in the public sphere, shred the confidence of citizens, and eventually undermine democratic processes.”

Walker, who popularized the term “sharp power” in 2017, defined the phrase as the use of instruments like media, education and technology to exert influence in a way that undermines democratic norms and institutions. He kicked off the panel by discussing the origins of sharp power in the aftermath of the Cold War, a historical moment that created opportunities for authoritarian actors to exploit open institutions in free societies.



From left: Christopher Walker, Glenn Tiffert, Alina Polyakova, Eric Lob and Jessica Adler

Democracies have been complacent about the way authoritarian regimes use these instruments, Walker said. “Countries like Russia, China and Cuba, which themselves do not permit free expression within their borders, actually operate on the basis of misinforming their public as a matter of policy and use corruption as a way to manage their own systems. They don’t necessarily check those norms and behaviors at their borders when they start to operate beyond them,” he explained. Democracies need to change their mindset and develop new strategies to counter sharp power. “The good news is there’s been a good deal of response in recent years undertaken both by the non-governmental sector and governments in many places, and we should embrace that, but we certainly shouldn’t be satisfied with that.”

An example Walker gave of the use of sharp power is China’s engagement in university settings, which often has the effect of monopolizing ideas, suppressing alternative narratives and exploiting partner institutions. “Those characteristics are deeply at odds with pluralism, volunteerism and competition, all of the things one would customarily see in open societies,” Walker said.

Tiffert, whose area of expertise is China, noted that for decades, America’s top research partners were all other liberal democracies. “Partners respected similar norms of human subjects treatment and of human rights. In the last 15 years, China has emerged in that club of countries, in many cases as the top international collaborator. For all the right reasons, we don’t want to treat any country differently. But that’s an ideological position that’s in defiance of reality, because to treat China like Canada is foolish, suicidal and not a sustainable strategy. China poses particular challenges with regard to technology transfer, misappropriation of knowledge, theft, but also affecting the narratives and discourses within our universities, and affecting the safety of students on our campuses through transnational repression.”

At first, he said, “We welcomed China hoping to transform it, hoping it would become more like us. That’s a gamble that did not pay off. And now we’ve been seized by a moral panic and we’ve swung very hard in the other direction.”

He mentioned a presidential proclamation signed in 2020 that restricts visas for postgraduate students with ties to China’s military-civil fusion strategy, and a law passed in 2023 by the Florida legislature requiring that offers of graduate assistantships and fellowships to students from seven so-called countries of concern (Cuba, China, Iran, Russia, North Korea, Syria, Venezuela) undergo review by a state board even if they have met federal visa requirements. “We have not yet built the infrastructure to make the nuanced decisions to do the right thing,” Tiffert said. “It’s easy to have the door wide open, and it’s easy to slam it shut. But the hard part is the balance in between.”

Polyakova, who has written about how democratic societies fight against foreign disinformation, said that Russia has in recent years significantly ramped up its use of the tools of sharp power to spread disinformation. “It’s become far more dangerous in the last two years, since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. And while they’re doubling down, we’re not. Until we learn how to respond in democratic ways to the kinds of undermining challenges and destructive capabilities that authoritarian states like Russia and China have developed and deployed against us and our allies and partners across the world, we’re not going to survive the phase of geopolitical restructuring that we are currently living through.”

Lob, who wrote about Iran in his 2020 book *Iran’s Reconstruction Jihad*, spoke about how that repressive regime is expanding its influence in Africa and Latin America through a government agency that operates similarly to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

“Iran has been less sophisticated than China and Russia, but it’s been increasingly active in terms of cyber and influence operations,” Lob said. “Since October 7th, we’ve seen those activities drastically escalate, targeting Israel in different ways using cyber capabilities. Iran was also very active in that area in our 2020 election and will likely be very active in that area in 2024, not just as retribution but as a tool of destabilization and to leverage and exploit the polarization that is increasingly becoming a problem in democratic states and societies.”

All of the panelists asserted that it’s time for the U.S. and its allies to step up dramatically. Polyakova said, “In the West, we’re still living in a bubble of false security. For generations we’ve had the privilege of living in relative peace and security. But that is over. It hasn’t quite seeped in, that we really have to be on a war footing. It takes a complete rethinking of how we engage as governments in public diplomacy. And we’re losing the battle as we speak.”

EXAMINING THE TIES BETWEEN ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND DEMOCRACY

USAID'S Michael Camilleri explains how Democracy Delivers produces concrete results

Michael Camilleri brought a uniquely optimistic perspective on democracy to the conference in his keynote address about his work with the Democracy Delivers Initiative at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Democracy Delivers focuses on places around the world where there are promising developments related to democracy, bringing economic resources so that government, civil society and citizens can support and strengthen democratic gains. He was introduced by Mihaela Pinteau, associate professor and chair of the Department of Economics, who noted how economic aid is a vital factor to support countries experiencing challenges and opportunities in the transition to democracy.

Camilleri led Democracy Delivers and served as senior advisor in the Office of USAID Administrator Samantha Power until a week before the FIU conference, when he was appointed acting assistant administrator of the USAID Latin America and Caribbean Bureau. The subject of his keynote was the vital role economic aid plays in helping countries navigate the challenges and opportunities that arise during democratic transitions.

“You have probably seen images of USAID professionals responding to national disasters or delivering emergency food aid,” he said. “You may be familiar with our efforts to combat HIV/AIDS and other diseases, to help farmers improve crop yields, to better children’s learning outcomes and to facilitate private sector job growth.”

Now, in response to almost two decades of declining global freedom, USAID has taken steps to deepen its democracy work in ways that produce concrete results, such as lowering food prices or reopening markets after a natural disaster.

Why is USAID so deeply invested in strengthening democracy? The short answer, according to Camilleri, is that democratic political systems, though imperfect, are the best way to achieve peace, prosperity and sustainable development. USAID has data to back up this claim: Research published in 2019 by MIT economist Daron Acemoglu and colleagues demonstrates that democracies are more successful than autocracies at boosting economic development.

“We are demonstrating in a way that a free press or a vibrant civil society cannot always do, that democracy delivers [economic benefits]. As Zambian President Hichilema put it, ‘You cannot eat democracy.’”



Michael Camilleri

Camilleri cited two countries, Tunisia and Moldova, as examples of the intersection of democracy and economics. At the outset of the Arab Spring, the people of Tunisia overthrew an authoritarian ruler and the country transitioned to democracy, holding free and fair elections and expanding protections of human rights. But under democratic rule, economic growth slowed and the country's democratic experiment is currently in jeopardy. Moldova also fought corruption, standing up to Russian aggression and establishing a democratic government. Russia responded by cutting energy supplies and imports of products vital to the country's economy. The economy suffered, but Moldova found success through economic diversification and partnerships with western countries.

These examples demonstrate that democracies need to deliver economic improvement alongside political freedoms to maintain public support. Opponents of democratic rule, often aided by external autocratic regimes, will take advantage of public discontent to reverse reforms and regain control.

"The Democracy Delivers Initiative aims to tilt the balance in democracy's favor by surging support, resources and attention to countries at precisely the moment when the stakes are highest, when they are experiencing a promising but fragile moment of democratic opportunity. And nowhere is that task more important than in societies that have managed to elect democratic reformers or throw off autocratic or antidemocratic rule through peaceful protests or successful political movements," Camilleri said.

Democracy Delivers is currently focused on supporting Armenia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Malawi, the Maldives, Nepal and Zambia, working to expand USAID's impact in critical sectors. To illustrate the Democracy Delivers approach, Camilleri cited its efforts in Tanzania, where President Samia Suluhu Hassan assumed office in 2021 and swiftly initiated measures to create a more democratic society. Early in her term, she championed maternal health as a priority and endorsed an emergency transport and referral system that reduced maternal mortality by 38% in a specific district. At her request, USAID stepped in to help President Hassan scale the program nationwide within a year; it is now being expanded to Lesotho, Kenya, Malawi and beyond.

Another aspect of Democracy Delivers' work involves leveraging the U.S.'s convening power and applying diplomatic tools. "This might include brokering a meeting between a country's president and the CEO of a major American company to discuss potential investment, or helping a government negotiate its way out of a sovereign debt default so it can increase spending on social services," he said.

The Democracy Delivers Initiative is only two years old and is a work in progress, Camilleri said, but has already accomplished much. "We are moving fast. We're learning as we go. We're asking lots of questions: How long do democratic openings last? What makes them most likely to succeed? What kinds of support are most effective?"

He concluded, "We must update our democratic playbook for a world in which democracy is not just under threat, but under attack. And it is essential we develop the tools to serve support quickly and impactfully to democratic bright spots when and wherever they emerge."



THE PLAYBOOK FOR UNDERMINING DEMOCRACY

Sustained tactics, including use of social media, threaten societal resilience

The afternoon panel, which looked at how anti-democratic forces within a country work to secure political power by eroding the pillars of democracy, was introduced by Aleksandra Restifo of the Department of Religious Studies and moderated by Milena Neshkova of the Department of Public Policy and Administration. The panel featured Inga Trauthig of the University of Texas, Austin; Adrian Shahbaz of Freedom House; Tatiana Kostadinova of the Department of Politics and International Relations; and Besiki Kutateladze of the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice.

The panel explored the specific tactics governments use to erode democracy and to suppress people’s ability to express dissent, often in the name of security. After Kostadinova framed the discussion by summarizing the factors that have contributed to the erosion of democracy around the world, Shahbaz outlined the playbook many authoritarians have followed to undermine democracy, pointing out that many of them share common tactics.

Shahbaz defined a three-step process:

- Dividing the public. “These would-be autocrats scapegoat immigrants, members of the LGBTQ community, or different ethnic and religious minorities as being responsible for all of the country’s problems.”



From left: Inga Trauthig, Adrian Shahbaz, Tatiana Kostadinova, Besiki Kutateladze and Milena Neshkova

- Capturing institutions, specifically the media. “Independent media outlets that had been struggling financially are bought out, oftentimes against their will, by businesspeople who are very close to the president or prime minister.”
- Changing the rules. Once in power, which they often attain through corrupt or deceptive means, leaders “use legal means to just change the rules in their favor.”

Trauthig spoke about how authoritarian leaders use social media for propaganda, for misinformation and to further their own agendas. “Social media is normalized now as a tool for manipulating public opinion, spreading propaganda and controlling speech,” she said. “That’s a seismic shift.”

Authoritarians are always looking for new tools and new means of deception. “One of the innovations we’ve identified is employing encrypted messaging apps like WhatsApp, Telegram and Viber into their propaganda social media toolkit,” Trauthig said.

Having recently returned from India, she highlighted Narendra Modi as a leader who has excelled in building a WhatsApp propaganda ecosystem.

Autocrats also “love social media influencers,” she said. The propaganda they spread is often embedded in health and wellness advice. “They seem more authentic rather than campaign-y, and they are easier to control than journalists.”

But she added, “Social media still has the potential of democratic organizing. When I speak to independent journalists in India, they say they never would survive without social media,” because the traditional media is controlled by the government.

After discussing other countries where democracy is in peril, including Hungary and Georgia, the conversation circled back to India. “It’s perhaps the most important country because it’s the world’s largest democracy,” Shahbaz said. “What we’ve seen there is democratic backsliding happening in a sustained way over the past 10 years.”

[The elections in India, which concluded on June 1, actually had surprising results: Although Modi returned to power for a historic third term as prime minister, the more than 600 million Indians who headed to the polls declined to give him an outright majority, and Modi will have to govern the country in coalition for the first time.]

To limit the exploitation of new technologies by authoritarian leaders, Trauthig exhorted governments to enforce laws against paying propagandists to impersonate real people online, and to put regulations in place to make social media companies accountable for some of the ways they are exploited.

She added, “I think the last most difficult part is increasing what we would call societal resilience. That means spreading the word that propaganda is everywhere, that you can be manipulated online pretty easily.”

As for other responses to the problem of autocrats undermining democracy, Kostadinova emphasized the importance of voting. “Large segments of the electorate are so disappointed in their government that they choose not to participate in the political process. More efforts need to be made to mobilize people to vote.”

Shahbaz said, “According to Freedom House data, what reverses democratic backsliding, what creates democratization, is people standing up and making their voices heard. In Senegal, very recently the president wanted to postpone elections. People got on the streets and said, ‘No, we’re not going to allow this.’ And he walked it back. An opposition politician then won the election.” He gave several other examples, including Guatemala, where an anti-corruption president was elected.

Kutateladze talked about watching this dynamic play out in Georgia, his homeland. “People have been on the streets protesting against a new law, a very Russian-style foreign agent law, which requires reporters, civil society members, and NGOs to register as basically foreign agents if they receive 20% of their funding from abroad. The law is proposed on the premise of transparency, but Georgians are protesting, as we speak—tens of thousands of them, especially the youth.”

He said that 90% of Georgians support joining the European Union, which means cutting ties with Russia, “because we’ve seen what those laws have done in Russia in terms of completely eliminating dissent. What distinguishes Georgia from Russia is those critical voices that you hear on the streets. We have several independent media channels, and civil society is very robust.”

“Ultimately,” Shahbaz concluded, “there’s no magic button or a technology that we can invent. It’s actually just about humans interacting with one another and using what is most human about us to go out and interact with each other and to express ourselves.”

ALL INDIVIDUALS PLAY A ROLE TO STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY

The conference’s closing remarks were delivered by Melissa Baralt of the Department of Modern Languages. She noted that although the day was mostly spent examining some of the ways that democracy is backsliding, time was also taken to look at how democracy can be nurtured in places where it is growing, even when that growth is small and tentative.

Baralt quoted John Stuart Mill: “After the primary necessities of food and raiment, freedom is the first and strongest want of human nature.” While democracy is not equivalent to freedom, she said, the principles of a democratic society are most likely to result in freedom for its citizens. “Giving people a voice, even the most marginalized people in a society, is a central feature of a successful democracy. In countries where democracy is being suppressed, the rights of marginalized people are the first to be sacrificed.”



Melissa Baralt

Baralt gave several examples of places where that is happening, including Ghana, whose parliament passed a draconian bill in February that increases criminal penalties for consensual same-sex conduct and criminalizes individuals and organizations that advocate for the rights of LGBT people.

In her own work as a linguist, Baralt said she studies second-language acquisition. “Suppressing or eliminating native languages is another way that societies marginalize vulnerable people and that democracy activists fight to protect. Language is a symbol of identity, and freedom to speak the language you choose to speak is an indicator of democracy,” she said.

“We’ve talked today about some very troubling situations, but we’ve also found some reasons to be optimistic. In Poland, a coalition of opposition parties was able to unseat the ruling Law and Justice Party, even though that party manipulated government-controlled media and state resources. USAID, which we heard about earlier from our keynote speaker Michael Camilleri, did a report on democracy bright spots, mentioning the Dominican Republic, Malawi, the Maldives, Moldova, Nepal, Tanzania and Zambia. Admittedly, some of these bright spots shine more intensely than others in their commitment to democratic reform, but all are working to fight corruption, create more space for civil society, and respect the rule of law.”

Baralt reflected, “I hope that when we all come together to convene next year, the list will be longer and the bright spots will be shining even brighter.”

She expressed the hope that all who participated gained a deeper understanding of the challenges facing democracy and the opportunities to strengthen it. “We’re all engaged in the work of shoring up democracy. Everyone here can play a part. Learn, read, vote, speak out, even on social media. We cannot repair the whole world at once, but we can engage in the work. In fact, everyone, we must.”



Jessica L. Adler

Jessica L. Adler, associate professor of History at FIU, researches and teaches about health care, war and society, and incarceration in the U.S. She is completing a book about the history of medical services in U.S. prisons. Her ongoing research focuses on factors shaping contemporary health-related conditions in carceral facilities and late-20th-century transformations in the U.S. veterans' health program.

Adler's first book, *Burdens of War: Creating the United States Veterans Health System*, is about the World War I-era origins of the nation's largest integrated health care system. She has published articles in peer-reviewed journals, including *Health Affairs*, the *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, the *American Journal of Public Health* and the *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*. She has collaboratively led community-based public history projects and written for news outlets including *The Washington Post*, *The Hill*, *The Miami Herald* and *USA Today*.

Melissa Baralt

Melissa Baralt, associate professor of Modern Languages at FIU, is an applied psycholinguist specializing in first and second language acquisition, language development in children and language teaching. At FIU, she aims to advance disciplinary and public knowledge about how the brain acquires language and what teachers, caregivers and parents can do to maximize the language learning process. Her funded research focuses on providing language-based support for at-risk children to maximize their language and literacy outcomes, and on best practices for supporting language teachers and learners. Baralt was awarded a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to support a collaboration between FIU and Florida Memorial University to improve modern language curricula and teacher-training programs.

Prior to coming to FIU, Baralt was a primary school teacher in Maracaibo, Venezuela. She grew up on army bases as her father served 40 years in the U.S. Army. Experiencing different cultures and languages, and watching her father learn Iraqi Arabic, motivated her to become a linguist.

Michael Camilleri

Michael Camilleri is acting assistant administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Latin America and Caribbean Bureau. Previously, he was senior advisor in the office of USAID Administrator Samantha Power, where he led the agency's work on democratic bright spots. From April 2021 to December 2022, he served as executive director of USAID's Northern Triangle Task Force.

Prior to joining USAID, Camilleri was director of the Peter D. Bell Rule of Law Program at the Inter-American Dialogue. From 2012 to 2017, he served in the Obama-Biden administration as the Western Hemisphere advisor on the Secretary of State's Policy Planning Staff and as director for Andean Affairs at the National Security Council. Earlier in his career he worked as a human rights lawyer at the Organization of American States, the Center for Justice and International Law, and with a coalition of civil society organizations in Guatemala.

Camilleri is a former term member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and his analysis has appeared in *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.

Mitzi Uehara Carter

Mitzi Uehara Carter is an assistant teaching professor of Anthropology and East Asian Studies and the director of FIU's Global Indigenous Forum (GIF). Her approach to interdisciplinary research is shaped by her research and joint appointments in Global Sociocultural Studies, Asian Studies, and African and Africa Diaspora Studies, as well as her own lived experience as a person of Black and indigenous descent. Her current book project traces her mother's journey from war torn Okinawa to a racially segregated U.S. South. Her work has been published in the *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, Princeton University Press, University of Southern California Press and University of Tokyo Press.

As GIF director, Carter organizes career-readiness workshops for indigenous students and faculty development opportunities for indigenous faculty and graduate students. As a member of the Mellon Foundation-funded project Commons for Justice, Carter is producing the Global Indigenous Podcast Network, which highlights indigenous perspectives on environmental disaster risks and resilience in South Florida.

Shlomi Dinar

Shlomi Dinar, dean of the Steven J. Green School of International & Public Affairs, is a professor in the Department of Politics and International Relations. His research spans the fields of international environmental politics, security studies and negotiation, with particular interest in conflict and cooperation over transboundary freshwater.

Among his publications is *International Water Scarcity and Variability: Managing Resource Use Across Political Boundaries* (University of California Press, 2017), which he coauthored. His writings have appeared in such journals as *International Studies Quarterly*, *Journal of Peace Research*, *Political Geography*, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, and *Foreign Affairs*.

He has participated in several collaborative consultancy projects for the World Bank that included team members from the United States, Spain and Israel. He is currently on the editorial board of *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law, and Economics*.

Dinar sat on the Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship Selection Committee. He has addressed the NATO Advanced Research Workshop and has given talks at many academic institutions. He was an Anna Sobol Levy Fellow at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Pemberton Fellow in the Institute of Advanced Study at Durham University, United Kingdom.

Tatiana Kostadinova

Tatiana Kostadinova is professor of Politics and International Relations and director of the European and Eurasian Studies Program at FIU. Her research and teaching interests include political institutions, with a special emphasis on electoral systems and reform, East European democratic transition and comparative public policy. Her primary teaching area is comparative politics. She has been the recipient of several grants, including the American Political Science Small Research Grant and a Fellowship Program Award from the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

Kostadinova's first book, *Bulgaria 1879-1946: The Challenge of Choice*, explores Bulgarian parliamentary elections, party strategies and voter behavior. Her 2012 book *Political Corruption in Eastern Europe: Politics After Communism* analyzes the emergence of corruption as a major obstacle to successful democratic transition. Other publications include book chapters and journal articles in *American Journal of Political Science*, *Electoral Studies*, *Journal of Peace Research*, *European Journal of Political Research*, *Political Research Quarterly*, *Party Politics* and *Europe-Asia Studies*.

Besiki Luka Kutateladze

Besiki Luka Kutateladze is an associate professor in FIU's Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice. He is also a founder and co-manager of Prosecutorial Performance Indicators, a national research and technical assistance project focusing on prosecutorial reform. Kutateladze specializes in performance indicators, prosecutorial discretion, racial disparities, and hate crime reporting and prosecution. His scholarship has been featured in publications including *Criminology*, *Justice Quarterly*, and *Law & Human Behavior*. His work has been referenced by *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Miami Herald*, *The Tampa Bay Times*, *The Orlando Sentinel*, *The Huffington Post* and *The Crime Report*.

Kutateladze was the founding research director at the Institute for State and Local Governance of the City University of New York. From 2008 to 2013, he played a crucial role in the development of the United Nations Rule of Law Indicators and their implementation in Haiti and Liberia. In 2002, Kutateladze was the U.S. State Department fellow from the Republic of Georgia.

Eric Lob

Eric Lob is an associate professor in FIU's Department of Politics and International Relations. His research focuses on the intersection of development and politics in the Middle East. Lob is the author of *Iran's Reconstruction Jihad: Rural Development and Regime Consolidation after 1979*, which examines how the Islamic Republic mobilized activists and promoted development in the countryside to consolidate power against its internal and external opponents. His articles have appeared in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, *Iranian Studies*, *Middle East Critique*, *The Middle East Journal* and *Third World Quarterly*, among other publications.

Lob currently teaches courses on comparative politics and international relations of the Middle East and on political violence and revolution. Before joining the faculty at FIU, he was a postdoctoral research fellow at Brandeis University's Crown Center for Middle East Studies. Between 2009 and 2011, Lob conducted fieldwork and studied Persian in Iran.

Milena Neshkova

Milena I. Neshkova is an associate professor of Public Policy Administration and faculty coordinator for the Master of Arts in Global Affairs program in FIU's Green School. Her research interests include citizen participation in government, the role of bureaucracy in democratic systems, managing public money, comparative public administration, and fighting corruption. She is a recipient of competitive grants from the National Science Foundation, the Kauffman Foundation, and the European Union Center of Excellence. Her work has appeared in peer-reviewed journals including *Public Administration Review*, *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *Governance*, *American Review of Public Administration*, *Policy Studies Journal* and *Journal of European Public Policy*.

Prior to coming to the U.S., Neshkova had a successful journalism career in Bulgaria. Her editorial work during the time of transition and democratization in Bulgaria introduced her to practical aspects of public policy. She has taught courses in public management, policy analysis, budgeting, financial management, research design, and statistics at doctoral, master's and undergraduate levels.

Mihaela Pinte

Mihaela Pinte is an associate professor of Economics at FIU and is currently the department chair. She has also been a visiting scholar at the International Monetary Fund and held a teaching position at the University of Maryland. Her research interests span macroeconomics, economic growth, development and demographic economics.

Pinte has worked on public policy and the way governments can affect welfare and growth through taxation and the provision of public goods; how R&D, learning, structural change and international trade affect aggregate labor productivity; and how family structure affects female labor participation and household welfare. Her research has been published in leading peer-reviewed journals including *Review of Economic Dynamics*, *Journal of Macroeconomics*, *Journal of Economic Dynamics and Control*, and *Economic Modelling*.

Alina Polyakova

Alina Polyakova is president and CEO of the Center for European Policy Analysis and the Donald Marron Senior Fellow at the Henry A. Kissinger Center for Global Affairs at the Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies.

Polyakova is a recognized expert on transatlantic relations, European security including Russia and Ukraine, tech policy and populism. She is the author of the book *The Dark Side of European Integration*, which examines the rise of far-right political movements in Europe. Her policy reports and articles have appeared in *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Foreign Affairs* and *The Atlantic*. She is a frequent commentator for major media outlets such as Fox News, CNN and BBC.

Polyakova previously served as founding director for Global Democracy and Emerging Technology at the Brookings Institution and director of Research for Europe and Eurasia at the Atlantic Council. She has held numerous fellowships, including at the National Science Foundation, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and the Fulbright Foundation.

Aleksandra Restifo

Aleksandra Restifo, Bhagwan Mahavir Assistant Professor of Jain Studies in the Department of Religious Studies, researches emotion and its role in ritual and social culture in South Asian religions, with a focus on Jainism. Her current book project, *The Theater of Renunciation: Aesthetics of Emotion in Medieval Jainism*, examines the ways in which emotion participates in Jain metaphysical theories, ritual practice, devotional expression and community formation. Through an exploration of emotional concepts and perceptions of emotional experience in medieval Prakrit and Sanskrit sources, Restifo's work offers a new understanding of the processes that underlie change and continuity in Jainism.

Restifo has received fellowships from the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Arts and Humanities Master's Scholarship at SOAS, American Institute of Indian Studies and South Asian Studies Council at Yale. Her work has been published in the *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, *Sikh Formations*, *Religions* and the *International Journal of Jaina Studies*. She held postdoctoral research positions at the University of Oxford and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Adrian Shahbaz

As vice president of Research and Analysis at Freedom House, Adrian Shahbaz oversees the organization's portfolio of annual publications and special reports. These include Freedom House's flagship study *Freedom in the World*, the widely consulted annual reports *Freedom on the Net* and *Nations in Transit*, and new streams of work on transnational repression, China's global influence, election integrity and media freedom.

Shahbaz previously served as Freedom House's director for technology and democracy. He has authored or coauthored internet freedom analyses, including *The Global Drive to Control Big Tech* (2021), *The Pandemic's Digital Shadow* (2020), *The Crisis of Social Media* (2019) and *The Rise of Digital Authoritarianism* (2018). He has appeared on news outlets such as the BBC, CNN and NPR, and his commentary has been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *WIRED*. Prior to joining Freedom House, he worked as a researcher at the UN Department of Political Affairs, the European Parliament and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Glenn Tiffert

Glenn Tiffert is a distinguished research fellow at the Hoover Institution and a historian of modern China. He co-chairs Hoover's project on China's Global Sharp Power and directs its research portfolio. He also works closely with government and civil society partners around the world to document and build resilience against authoritarian interference with democratic institutions.

Tiffert has worked extensively on the security and integrity of ecosystems of knowledge, particularly academic, corporate and government research; science and technology policy; and malign foreign influence. He serves on the executive committee of the University Research Security Professionals Association, established to help heighten security awareness in academia. He has authored or contributed to numerous Hoover publications, among them *Eyes Wide Open: Ethical Risks in Research Collaboration with China*. He is a specialist on the political and legal history of the People's Republic of China and is pioneering the integration of computational methods drawn from data science into the study of Chinese history.

Inga Kristina Trauthig

Inga Kristina Trauthig is the head of research of the Propaganda Research Lab at the Center for Media Engagement at the University of Texas at Austin. She conducts original research and helps lead the lab's strategy and management as co-principal investigator. Previously, she was a research fellow with the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation at King's College London.

Trauthig is interested in understanding violent and non-violent extremism and the societal impacts of emerging technologies, particularly regarding shifting power dynamics and related security implications. Her writing has appeared in both popular and scholarly outlets including *The Hill*, *Lawfare*, *New Media & Society*, and *Political Research Quarterly*. Her work and comments have been featured by outlets including Al Jazeera, BBC, CNN, *Foreign Policy* and *The Washington Post*. She is also an associate with the Institute of Middle Eastern Studies at King's College, Stanford University and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

Christopher Walker

Christopher Walker is vice president for Studies and Analysis at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). He oversees the department that is responsible for NED's multifaceted analytical work, which includes the International Forum for Democratic Studies, a leading center for the analysis and discussion of democratic development.

Prior to joining the NED, Walker was vice president for Strategy and Analysis at Freedom House. Prior to Freedom House, he was a senior associate at the EastWest Institute, and program manager at the European Journalism Network. Walker has also served as an adjunct professor of International Affairs at New York University. He has testified before congressional committees and appeared regularly in the media. His articles have appeared in numerous publications, including *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Foreign Policy.com*, *Die Welt* and *The Moscow Times*. He is co-editor with Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner of *Authoritarianism Goes Global: The Challenge to Democracy*.

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