

Security and Democracy Forum

Quarterly Dispatch (August 2025)

It's been a remarkable first month for the Security and Democracy Forum. In a short time, we've launched our site, published original research and opinions, and started building a network of practitioners, policymakers, and civic leaders committed to the idea that national security must serve democracy and not undermine it. As we continue to grow, your feedback, engagement, and participation will help shape what comes next. Whether you're here to read, write, or get involved, thank you for being part of this emerging community. - *Graham Markiewicz, SDF Executive Director*

Newly Released Report: Purging in the Name of Reform

Our newest policy paper, *Purging in the Name of Reform: The Weaponization of Anti-Corruption Rhetoric in Authoritarian Contexts*, examines how anti-corruption rhetoric, once a hallmark of democratic reform, is increasingly used by authoritarian and illiberal regimes to centralize power, suppress dissent, and erode judicial independence. Through case studies of China, the Philippines, El Salvador, and others, it distinguishes genuine reform efforts from coercive political tools and proposes a framework for assessing anti-corruption legitimacy in global contexts. [Download the report here.](#)

Fellowship Launch: The Founders' Fellowship

We're thrilled to launch the Founders' Fellowship, a short-term, cohort-based program designed to support the next generation of national security leaders. Open to graduate students and early-career professionals, the Fellowship offers mentorship, publication opportunities, and a behind-the-scenes look at how policy and democracy intersect. Applications are now open through the end of August. Know someone who would be a good fit? [Learn more and apply.](#)

Featured! Clearer Than Truth Podcast

SDF Executive Director sat down with the hosts of the *Clearer Than Truth* podcast to talk about founding the Security and Democracy Forum, fighting the global rise of authoritarianism, counter-terrorism in Afghanistan, and great power competition. [Listen to the episode here.](#)

Top Reads This Month



[The New Uniform: Future of Patriotism or Privatization of Public Service?](#)

The op-ed explores Detachment 201, a new Army Reserve unit that commissions tech executives as officers to help modernize military technology.

While acknowledging the strategic benefits, it raises concerns about bypassing traditional military service, potentially creating a two-tiered force that privileges elite civilian expertise over shared sacrifice.



[You Can't Just Move the Mine: Why 'De-Risking' Isn't Enough for Critical Mineral Security](#)

This op-ed argues that simply shifting critical mineral supply chains away from China, so-called "de-risking," is insufficient if the alternative partners are equally unstable or undemocratic. To build true resilience, the U.S. must invest in long-term, values-based partnerships grounded in diplomacy, transparency, and development—not just market incentives.



[Turning Valor into Voltage: Veterans and the Grid of Tomorrow](#)

This op-ed highlights how the bipartisan Veterans Energy Transition (VET) Act connects transitioning service members with critical roles in the energy and manufacturing sectors, addressing both veteran underemployment and national labor shortages. By strengthening programs like SkillBridge and offering incentives to employers, the bill helps align military talent with the country's clean energy and infrastructure needs.

Get Involved

We're actively looking for volunteers, contributors, and advisors to join our growing team. Right now, we're especially in need of a volunteer strategic communications advisor to help manage outreach and promotion. If you're interested in contributing your time or expertise, we'd love to hear from you.

Call for Submissions

Have an idea that belongs in the national conversation? We welcome op-eds, analysis, and long-form essays from practitioners, academics, and emerging voices. Our editorial team is especially interested in topics that intersect with DIMEFIL dimensions of power: diplomacy, information, military, economics, finance, intelligence, and law. [Pitch us your piece!](#)

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