



Patrice McMahon, Community of Democracies Advisor

Patrice McMahon is at CoD through a Council on Foreign Relations International Affairs Fellowship. She is a Professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) in the United States, and is writing a book on Polish humanitarianism, [Ordinary People](#), with a grant from the National Endowment for Humanities (NEH). McMahon's research focuses on humanitarian affairs, peacebuilding, civil society activism, and U.S. foreign policy.

She is the co-author and co-editor most recently of [Activism in Hard Times in Central and Eastern Europe: people power](#) (Routledge Press), the author of [The NGO Game: Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in the Balkans and Beyond](#) (Cornell University Press, 2017) and is the co-author of [American Exceptionalism Reconsidered: U.S. Foreign Policy, Human Rights and World Order](#) (Routledge: 2017).

Her research has appeared in various publications, including *Foreign Affairs*, *Political Science Quarterly*, *Human Rights Quarterly*, *East European Politics and Societies*, *Democratization*, and *Ethnopolitics* and has been supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the U.S. Fulbright Commission, American Council for Learned Societies (ACLS), the U.S. Department of State, NCEER, the Soros Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and the Polish Science Foundation.

Her academic career and professional appointments have focused on democratization, civil society activism, human security, and transnational politics. These interests developed while working at The German Marshall Fund in Washington, DC. She earned a Ph.D. in Political Science from Columbia University, with a specialization in post-communist transitions and global security.

Throughout her career, she has researched key issues at the heart of CoD's goals. Her research has focused on how Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) countries navigate the challenges of building democratic institutions while grappling with ethnic diversity, violence, and democratic backsliding. In addition to writing or participating in eight book projects, she has published in a wide range of academic, policy and journalistic outlets.

Her research interrogates the dynamics of transnational politics and the nexus of international ambitions and local realities. Her book, *The NGO Game* examines the role of international non-governmental organizations in shaping post-conflict institutions. This research directly supports CoD's emphasis on the international actors fostering democracy and promoting human rights. After living in China and writing about human security, American exceptionalism, democracy promotion, and US foreign policy, she transitioned back to working on Poland and CEE, most recently investigating societal responses to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. At present, her NEH grant, *Ordinary People: how Polish society responded to Ukraine and the future of humanitarianism*, and recent publications focus on grassroots responses for helping refugees and promoting

democracy during war. As a Senior Fulbright Scholar at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań in 2023, she conducted interviews, arranged focus groups, and collaborated with Polish colleagues.

Beyond her scholarly work, her experience in academic leadership positions have prepared her to contribute meaningfully to the CoD's mission. As the former Director of the University Honors Program, the Director of Global Engagement, and Director of Global Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the US, she designed programs aimed at raising awareness of global issues and fostering cross-cultural understanding and global norms.