

Biography of Dr. Tamara Cofman Wittes

President, National Democratic Institute

Tamara Cofman Wittes became the fourth president of NDI in 2024. Before joining the Institute, she served as Director of Foreign Assistance in the U.S Department of State. Previously, she led the Russia sanctions effort for the State Department's sanctions coordination office. Dr. Wittes also served in the State Department from 2009 - 2012 as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, coordinating U.S. policy on democracy and human rights in the Middle East during the Arab uprisings.

Dr. Wittes spent nearly twenty years as a foreign policy scholar at the Brookings Institution, including as director of its [Center for Middle East Policy](#). Her analysis focused on U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, political and economic change in the region, and the Arab-Israel conflict.

She is an adjunct professor at Georgetown University, where she has taught courses in international relations, Middle East policy, and security studies. Dr. Wittes was one of the first recipients of the Rabin-Peres Peace Award, established by President Bill Clinton in 1997.

Dr. Wittes has published three books, most recently [Foreign Policy Careers for PhDs: A Practical Guide to a World of Possibilities](#) (Georgetown University Press, 2023). She holds a bachelor's in Judaic and Near Eastern studies from Oberlin College, and master's and doctoral degrees in Government from Georgetown University. She is a founder of the Leadership Council for Women in National Security, and served on the board of the National Democratic Institute from 2014 - 2022. She is also a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and Women in International Security.

A native of Michigan, Dr. Wittes lives in Washington, D.C., where she tends a robust pollinator garden.