

《双语新闻：美国排名日益萎缩》

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World economic freedom has reached record levels, according to the 2014 Index of Economic Freedom, released Tuesday by the Heritage Foundation and The Wall Street Journal. But after seven straight years of decline, the US has dropped out of the top 10 most economically free countries.

For 20 years, the index has measured a nation's commitment to free enterprise on a scale of 0 to 100 by evaluating 10 categories, including fiscal soundness, government size and property rights. These commitments have powerful effects: Countries achieving higher levels of economic freedom consistently and measurably outperform others in economic growth, long-term prosperity and social progress. Botswana, for example, has made gains through low tax rates and political stability.

Those losing freedom, on the other hand, risk economic stagnation, high unemployment and deteriorating social conditions. For instance, heavy-handed government intervention in Brazil's economy continues to limit mobility and fuel a sense of injustice.

It's not hard to see why the US is losing ground. Even marginal tax rates exceeding 43% cannot finance runaway government spending, which has caused the national debt to skyrocket. The Obama administration continues to shackle entire sectors of the economy with regulation, including health care, finance and energy. The intervention impedes both personal freedom and national prosperity.

But as the US economy languishes, many countries are leaping ahead, thanks to policies that enhance economic freedom—the same ones that made the US economy the most powerful in the world. Governments in 114 countries have taken steps in the past year to increase the economic freedom of their citizens. Forty-three countries, from every part of the world, have now reached their highest economic freedom ranking in the index's history.

Hong Kong continues to dominate the list, followed by Singapore, Australia, Switzerland, New Zealand and Canada. These are the only countries to earn the index's "economically free" designation. Mauritius earned top honors among African countries and Chile excelled in Latin America. Despite the turmoil in the Middle East, several Gulf states, led by Bahrain, earned designation as "mostly free."

A realignment is under way in Europe, according to the index's findings. Eighteen European nations, including Germany, Sweden, Georgia and Poland, have reached new highs in economic freedom. By contrast, five others—Greece, Italy, France, Cyprus and the United Kingdom—registered scores lower than they received when the index started two decades ago.

The most improved players are in Eastern Europe, including Estonia, Lithuania and the Czech Republic. These countries have gained the most economic freedom over the past two decades. And it's no surprise: Those who have lived under communism have no trouble recognizing the benefits of a free-market system. But countries that

