Introduction

Governance and Conflict Prevention

In the American west disputes over land and power contributed to an often bloody history featuring the iconic image of a cowboy with a Winchester rifle and a six-shooter by his side. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the flood of farmers and ranchers pouring into the frontier territories generated ongoing disputes over grazing rights, ownership of stock, access to water and the control of land. These 'Range Wars' often spilled over into armed violence. In the case of one such feud, the Sutton-Taylor range war in southern Texas, a dispute between two ranching families grew into a tit-for-tat killing spree that eventually left more than 35 people dead and required the intervention of the State Police and the fabled Texas Rangers (as well as the notorious outlaw John Wesley Hardin, eventual subject of the Johnny Cash song "Hardin Wouldn't Run").

These disputes did not end with the dawn of the twentieth century, or even the twenty-first. In large tracts of the American west, sharp differences continue over how public and private rangelands should be developed. Competing constituencies of environmentalists, Native American communities, weekend hikers, ranchers, logging companies and the federal government regularly engage in intense arguments over regulations regarding access and development. In these modern disputes, however, the disagreements are not contested with revolvers and Bowie knives, but rather through lawsuits, op-eds, political advocacy, digital media campaigns and neighborhood organizing. While the emotions attached to these disputes may be as strong as in the past, they are settled today through political and legal agreements, not by the Texas Rangers.

In some parts of the world the conditions of the 'Wild West' still prevail, and many people are trapped in cycles of violent conflict. Legitimate institutions for resolving disputes are weak, non-existent, or have been shattered. Corrupt and oppressive forms of governance are prevalent. The local forces engaged in fighting are not ranchers but insurgents and militias. Terrorist networks pose a global threat, and brutal civil wars rage in Syria, Iraq and other countries.

In much of the world, however, the trend has been toward less violence. As societies have become more economically developed and interdependent, they have acquired structures of effective governance and are able to settle disputes without armed conflict. Rival communities and groups that once used weapons today rely on governmental institutions and legal systems to resolve conflicts. A zone of relative peace and prosperity has emerged, stretching across North America, Europe, East Asia and beyond. This zone is characterized by mature systems of governance that provide the full range of public goods and enable individuals and communities to make decisions and resolve disputes without bloodshed. The European Union has been at the core of this development, although its future is more uncertain after Brexit and other recent shocks. East Asia has also become less warlike and prosperous. More stable and less violent political conditions have emerged in much of Latin America and parts of Africa. Although the prospects for peace are being threatened on many fronts – strains within the EU, authoritarianism in Russia and other countries, weak and oppressive states across the Middle East, deep inequalities in many countries and an increase in the number of armed conflicts over the last five years – the general trend has been toward less war.

Steven Pinker highlights this in his influential book, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*. Pinker documents a long-term trend in human affairs toward a reduction in armed violence, which he calls perhaps "the most important thing that has ever happened in human history."[1] His analysis has been hotly contested,[2] but the available evidence indicates a "real and remarkably large" historical decline of human violence.[3] Pinker

[1] Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Viking, 2011), xxi.
[2] See, for example, Elizabeth Kolbert, "Peace in Our Time: Steven Pinker's History of Violence," *New Yorker*, October 3, 2011; and the critical essays by Bradley Thayer, Jack Levy and William Thompson in "The Forum: The Decline of War 2013," *International Studies Review* 15, no. 3 (2013): 393–419.
[3] *The Human Security Report 2013: The Decline in Global Violence: Evidence, Explanation, and Contestation* (Vancouver, BC: Human Security Research Group, Simon

attributes this development to improved governance and the emergence of the nation state, economic growth, the empowerment of women, and greater social mobility and literacy. Peace becomes more likely, he argues, in societies that are governed well – in mature and prosperous democracies with greater gender equality that are economically and politically interdependent. These trends – consolidated state governance, commerce, feminization, cosmopolitanism and what he calls "the escalator of reason" – are enduring forces that over the centuries have made armed violence less prevalent.[4]

Noticing this long-term trend is not equivalent to claiming that the world is peaceful. Armed violence remains a persistent reality. Contending groups often resort to violence as they vie for power and control over resources, causing massive civilian suffering and instability. Since the end of World War II tens of millions of people have lost their lives in violent conflict. Forty active armed conflicts were recorded in the world in 2015, according to data provided by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program in Sweden. This was a nearly 20 percent increase over the previous year. Nearly all of the reported armed conflicts were within states rather than between them. Eleven of the conflicts were characterized as wars, with more than a thousand deaths annually.[5] The bloodiest was in Syria, followed by Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Pakistan, Ukraine, Israel, South Sudan and Somalia. The recent increase is worrisome, but since the end of the Cold War levels of armed conflict have declined and even with the increase are lower now than during much of the twentieth century.

Fraser University, 2014), 10, www.hsrgroup.org/human-security-reports/2013/overview .aspx.

[4] Others have emphasized the trend toward reduced armed conflict. See John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: Basic Books, 1989); Randall Forsberg, "The End of War," *Boston Review*, October/November 1997; Azar Gat, *War in Human Civilization* (Oxford University Press, 2006); Joshua S. Goldstein, *Winning the War on War: The Decline of Armed Conflict Worldwide* (New York: Dutton, 2011); John Horgan, *The End of War* (San Francisco: McSweeney's Books, 2012); and the Human Security Research Group's Human Security Reports for the years 2005, 2009/ 2010, 2012 and 2014, at www.hsrgroup.org/human-security-reports/human-security-report.aspx.

[5] See Thérése Pettersson and Peter Wallensteen, "Armed Conflicts, 1947–2014," *Journal of Peace Research* 52, no. 4 (July 2015): 536–550. Throughout this volume we use the UDCP definitions. Armed conflicts are defined as contested incompatibilities concerning government and/or territory involving the use of armed force in which at least one of the parties is a state that has between 25 and 999 battle-related deaths per year. Wars are such conflicts that have more than 1,000 battle-related deaths per year, at www.pcr.uu.se/ research/ucdp/definitions/definition_of_armed_conflict/.

Social science has identified some of the key pathways toward peace. New knowledge is accumulating to illuminate more precisely the conditions associated with preventing war and maintaining peace. Increasingly rigorous quantitative methods are available to document and offer explanations for the presence or absence of war, generating significant findings on the drivers of conflict and the conditions conducive to peace. While many uncertainties and lacunae remain in the emerging body of research, sufficient evidence now exists to say with confidence that the reduction of armed conflict is possible. Trends are moving generally in that direction, despite recent headlines suggesting otherwise. Greater understanding of the lessons to be drawn from this research can help in shaping policies and structures for conflict prevention.

In this book, we review diverse findings from a wide body of literature to examine the role of governance in determining the prospects for peace. We argue that systems of 'good' governance are essential conditions for reducing the risk of armed violence. Many studies on peace and development emphasize the importance of good governance, but few define precisely what this means. We attempt to unpack the term and give it definition through a focus on the conditions that are most likely to enhance the prospects for peace. Ours is an evidence-based analysis that identifies the elements of governance that foster prosperity and peace. We synthesize the most significant empirical studies to show that armed conflict is less prevalent in states that deliver public goods effectively and equitably, and in societies that are fully democratic, with high levels of per capita income, where women are empowered, and which are extensively integrated with transnational trade networks and global governance institutions.

Within these findings are deeper patterns of congruence. Governance that promotes peace tends to be inclusive, participatory and accountable. It provides public goods to all stakeholders, guarantees economic freedom and the rule of law, protects human rights, and offers inclusive and participatory forms of equitable representation for major constituencies. Inclusive, participatory and accountable institutions and policies enhance public legitimacy and help to reduce the risk of armed conflict. Governance enhances peace when people trust the political system and turn to it to resolve their differences. As the capacity and quality of governing institutions improve, the numbers of disagreements that might lead to armed conflict diminish and the means for resolving disputes increase. Conflicts and differences among individuals and communities remain, but they are less likely to lead to violence.

We define peace as the absence of armed conflict. Our focus is on the negative peace of avoiding war rather than the broader concept of positive peace which encompasses human rights and social justice. We adopt this approach not for lack of sympathy with the concerns of justice but to prioritize the prevention of violent conflict. We agree with Joshua Goldstein that ending war is important in itself, not as a derivative of a broader agenda for social justice.[6] In this book we focus on what can be measured empirically. We present social science evidence on the predictors of armed conflict and the conditions of peace.

As we examine this evidence, we find that the conditions associated with the absence of armed conflict, negative peace, are strongly correlated with factors that are commonly identified with the social justice dimensions of positive peace. Equitable access to social opportunity, institutions of inclusion rather than exclusion, the opportunity to voice grievances and hold leaders accountable, guarantees of political and economic freedom, the empowerment of women – all are directly related to peace. They are also associated with conditions usually subsumed under the heading of social justice. The conditions of positive peace lead to the avoidance of armed conflict. Negative peace and positive peace are thus interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The indicators that measure one define the other.

The concept of quality peace helps to bridge the two approaches. As developed by Peter Wallensteen it refers to the conditions for preventing the recurrence of armed conflict. The essential ingredients for assuring peace are safety, dignity and predictability in people's lives. "Quality peace means the creation of conditions that make the inhabitants of a society … secure in life and dignity now and for the foreseeable future."[7] Peace is not simply the absence of war but the maintenance of conditions that reduce the risk of armed conflict. Chief among these is good governance, which is a lens broad enough to encompass the dynamic interrelatedness of many complex factors. It encompasses not only protection against armed violence but human rights and the rule of law, freedom from discrimination and repression, and equitable access to education, health care, and other public goods and services. Quality peace emerges when governance systems establish durable conditions of safety, economic well-being and human dignity.

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[6] Goldstein, *Winning the War on War*, 204.
[7] Peter Wallensteen, *Quality Peace: Peacebuilding, Victory, and World Order* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 6.

governance capacity and quality

Governance is the means of making and implementing collective deci-
sions. It is a general term that encompasses the functions of government,
but it goes beyond the role of the state to include civil society and the pri-
vate sector. Our focus is primarily on governance within states, the locus
of most armed conflicts, but we also address inter-state, regional and glo-
bal dimensions. When we speak of governance we refer not only to the
institutions of state but to the organizations and networks of society, and
the ways in which social cohesion and public perceptions of legitimacy
influence state behavior and contribute to peace. Governance is exercised
through formal and informal institutions, networks, and widely shared
values and norms that guide behavior. It applies to political, economic
and social realms at local, national and transnational levels.

Governance is about power. It is about how decisions are made, by
whom, for what purpose and for whose benefit. Struggles about political
and military power and control over resources and territory are at the
heart of almost all armed conflicts. Power can be exercised through coer-
cive means and the threat of punishment, through economic exchange
and patronage, or through shared identity and public trust. Governance
is more efficient and less costly when it achieves cooperation through
trust rather than coercion. We develop these ideas in Chapter 1 and
throughout the book.

Governance is not always peaceful or good, nor is it intended to be. In
many countries governance is not established to serve the common good
but is a system for preserving and increasing the power and wealth of
corrupt elites. It is an instrument of domination and exploitation rather
than social betterment. Nor is civil society always a force for good. Non-
state actors sometimes promote hatred and intolerance. Violent extrem-
ists use the Internet to build support for terrorism. The world is often a
nasty and brutish place, as Hobbes wrote, not only in the competition for
power between states but in abusive systems of governance within states
and in society. The possibilities for good governance are nonetheless real,
and it is important to understand the factors that generate cooperation
and peace so that their benefits can spread further.

With Pippa Norris we emphasize both the capacity and the quality of
governance as essential conditions for assuring development and peace.[8]

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[8] Pippa Norris, *Making Democratic Governance Work: How Regimes Shape Prosperity,
    Welfare, and Peace* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Governance capacity includes the ability to provide security and deliver social goods. Preserving public safety is an essential function of governance and is obviously necessary for peace, but research shows that security is also enhanced through the provision of social goods. The extent of education and literacy, the availability and quality of health care, the reliability of public infrastructure – all are elements of social capacity and are correlated with greater prospects for peace and stability. Social capacity empowers people to play an active role in shaping the political and economic decisions that affect their lives. High levels of human capital and the presence of strong social safety nets facilitate economic growth and development, which are fundamental to the creation of more peaceful societies. The political, economic and social empowerment of women is a measure of both social capacity and quality and also helps to reduce the likelihood of armed conflict.

Effective governance fosters peace in two fundamental ways, by ameliorating the conditions and grievances that cause people to fight, and by offering mechanisms for resolving and transforming disputes without violence. Decision-making structures that provide inclusive channels for hearing grievances and settling disputes reduce the risk of armed violence. The evidence shows that institutionally mature democracies are more peaceful than other forms of governance. This is the liberal peace theory. Fully developed democratic states almost never wage war on one another and are less likely than partial democracies or autocracies to experience civil conflict. Regime type matters greatly in reducing the risk of war.

As we explore below, however, the relationship between democracy and peace is subject to qualification. Well established and highly institutionalized democracies are indeed less likely to experience internal armed conflict and also tend to have higher levels of prosperity and economic growth. When states are transitioning from authoritarianism to democracy, however, they face a greater risk of civil conflict and tend to be unstable and poorly governed. This is especially true for states with low per capita income.

China poses a different kind of challenge to the liberal theory. It is an authoritarian regime with strong institutions that has achieved high levels of economic growth and in recent decades has not experienced internal armed conflict or war with its neighbors, although its military and economic assertiveness is growing. The experience of China seems to show that institutional capacity and high levels of economic growth can bring peace and stability even in the absence of formal democracy. This

does not mean that democracy is unimportant, but it indicates that other aspects of governance, especially the ability to deliver public goods and achieve economic growth, may be equally important. When democracy is fully mature it is an essential element of good governance for peace, but institutional capacity and economic development are also critically necessary.

The empirical evidence reviewed in this volume suggests that governance systems are more likely to advance the prospects for peace when they are:

1. inclusive in their scope, with guarantees of civil and human rights and systems of fair representation for sharing power and gaining access to resources;
2. participatory in their form, with opportunities available for all individuals and significant social groups to voice their concerns in political and social systems and play an active role in economic and public life; and
3. accountable in their operations, based on the rule of law and accessible mechanisms of judicial and political redress, with transparency and the right of citizens to organize and express opinions.

As societies develop more inclusive institutions, they tend to become more peaceful. Studies show that conflict risk is reduced when significant ethnic groups are included in decision making and have equitable access to resources. Inclusive systems increase the willingness of participants to accept institutional decisions. As political, economic and social equality becomes institutionalized the risks of armed violence diminish. Ethnic exclusion and marginalization, by contrast, make conflict more likely. Governance systems that successfully include diverse social groups are more likely to avoid violence.

Inclusion and participation are closely related, the former referring to universal rights, the latter defining how those rights are exercised through active political, economic and social engagement. Inclusion means that governance programs incorporate and apply equally to all communities, while participation means that those communities play an active role in creating and shaping the programs that affect their lives. Participation incorporates democratic forms of political decision making but also includes access to economic opportunity and membership in associations that bridge ethnic and social divides. Participatory political regimes in which all significant constituencies can participate and voice their concerns are less likely to experience internal armed conflict and rarely wage

war on each other. Economic growth and development are greatest in open and fair market systems that provide opportunities for all to engage in commerce. Studies of social capital show that interethnic associational linkages are associated with a lower risk of armed conflict. Participatory systems are more likely to create peaceful outcomes.

Accountability enhances peace by bolstering the effectiveness, legitimacy and capacity of governance institutions to provide necessary public goods. Accountability is the means of ensuring that public decisions are implemented according to agreed rules and procedures in a manner that is perceived as fair and legitimate. When governance systems are unable or unwilling to guarantee the rule of law or provide basic services to all groups, the risk of armed conflict increases. Accountability is reflected in political mechanisms for constraining executive authority, controlling corruption and subordinating security forces to civilian control. Accountability also depends upon transparency, access to information and a vibrant civil society.

Inclusivity, participation and accountability define the essential qualities of governance that enhance the prospects for peace. These qualities apply to economic as well as political decision making and implementation. Economic systems promote peace when property rights and opportunities for market access are available to all, and when market freedoms are balanced by social protections against exploitation, corruption and oligopoly. Political systems reduce the risk of conflict when they are highly representative and participatory and provide equitable opportunities for people to voice their concerns. Empirical evidence consistently confirms the importance of these qualities of inclusion, participation and accountability. They go together and reinforce one another in advancing peace.

AN EMERGING CONSENSUS

The importance of governance for peace and development is widely recognized in international policy. This is reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015. Many of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in that Agenda refer to governance and peace. Goal 16 makes the connection explicit, calling upon nations to: "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels." The targets approved by the UN for achieving Goal 16 include reducing corruption; developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions;

ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making; and strengthening national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels.[9] This linkage of development with peace, governance and the rule of law is unprecedented and was forged through extensive consultation and debate among many governments, international institutions and civil society groups leading up to the 2015 General Assembly.[10]

A milestone in this process was the 2013 High-level Panel report, *A New Global Partnership*, which called for "a fundamental shift – to recognize peace and good governance as core elements of well-being." The report described freedom from fear, conflict and violence as "the most fundamental human right" and the essential foundation for building more peaceful and prosperous societies. People everywhere expect and deserve their governments to be "honest, accountable, and responsive to their needs," the report observed. It called for building "sound institutions" and urged a "transparency revolution" so that people can see how taxes, aid and revenues from extractive industries are spent.[11] Advancing good governance, the Panel concluded, is essential for creating conditions of peace and prosperity. To achieve economic development and reduce the risk of armed conflict requires "building effective and accountable institutions" of governance.[12]

One of the most influential reports in building this awareness was the World Bank's 2011 World Development Report (WDR). Success in overcoming poverty, the report argued, depends upon preventing armed conflict and building more legitimate and capable systems of governance. The risk of armed conflict in any society is determined by "the *combination* of the exposure to *internal and external stresses* and the strength of that society's 'immune system' " [emphasis in original].[13] Preventing

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[9] United Nations Development Program, *Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 16: Promote Just, Peaceful, and Inclusive Societies*, www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/.

[10] See Erin McCandless, "Civil Society and the 2030 Agenda: Forging a Path to Universal Sustainable Peace through Policy Formulation," in *Civil Society, Peace and Power*, edited by David Cortright, Melanie Greenberg and Laurel Stone (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016).

[11] United Nations, *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development*, The Report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (United Nations, 2013), 9.

[12] Ibid., 27.

[13] World Bank, *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2011), 7.