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978-1-107-01699-6 - Making Democratic Governance Work: How Regimes Shape Prosperity, Welfare, and Peace

Pippa Norris

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Making Democratic Governance Work

How Regimes Shape Prosperity, Welfare, and Peace

This book focuses on three core questions. Is democratic governance good for economic prosperity? Has this type of regime accelerated progress toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals, social welfare, and human development? Does it generate a peace dividend and reduce conflict at home?

Despite the importance of understanding these questions and the vast research literature generated, remarkably little consensus has emerged about any of these issues. Within the international community, democracy and governance are widely advocated as intrinsically desirable and important goals. Nevertheless, alternative schools of thought continue to dispute their consequences – and thus the most effective strategy for achieving a range of critical developmental objectives. Some believe that human development is largely determined by structural conditions in each society, such as geographic location, natural resources, and the reservoir of human capital, so that regimes have minimal impact. Others advocate promoting democracy to ensure that leaders are responsive to social needs and accountable to citizens for achieving better schools, clinics, and wages. Yet others counter that governance capacity is essential for delivering basic public services, and state-building is essential in postconflict reconstruction prior to holding elections.

This book advances the argument that both liberal democracy and state capacity need to be strengthened in parallel to ensure effective development, within the constraints posed by structural conditions. Liberal democracy allows citizens to express their demands; to hold public officials to account; and to rid themselves of incompetent, corrupt, or ineffective leaders. Yet rising public demands that cannot be met by the state are a recipe for frustration, generating disillusionment with incumbent officeholders, or, if discontent spreads and becomes more diffuse, with the way that the regime works, or even ultimately with the promise of liberal democratic ideals. Thus governance capacity is also predicted to play a vital role in advancing human security, so that states have the capacity to respond effectively to citizens' demands.

The argument is demonstrated using systematic evidence gathered from countries worldwide during recent decades and selected cases illustrating the effects of regime change on development.

Pippa Norris is the Paul F. McGuire Lecturer in Comparative Politics at Harvard University and an Australian Research Council (ARC) Laureate Fellow and Professor of Government and International Relations at the University of Sydney. She is the author of a dozen related books published by Cambridge University Press, including *Driving Democracy* (2008) and *Democratic Deficit* (2011). Her contribution to the humanities and social science has been recognized most recently by the award of the 2011 Johan Skytte Prize (with Ronald Inglehart) and the 2011 Kathleen Fitzpatrick Australian Laureate Fellowship.

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PIPPA NORRIS

Harvard University



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Preface and Acknowledgments

This book has followed a lengthy period of gestation. The original stimulus for writing this volume was my experience five years ago directing the work of the democratic governance practice within the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), where I was frequently confronted by the practical challenges of development. On many occasions, colleagues from related agencies and bureaus asked how the United Nations' commitment to strengthen the institutions and processes of democratic governance contributed toward other urgent priorities facing the organization, from achieving the Millennium Development Goals to overcoming the challenge of enduring poverty, mitigating the effects of climate change and environmental degradation, peace building and reducing the grievances leading to armed conflict, and combating HIV-AIDS. We were engaged in writing the UNDP's strategic plan, which sought to express a coherent vision demonstrating how the work of all parts of the organization tied together. At the time, I, like many colleagues in the organization, remained frustrated that we struggled to provide a plausible response to these requests. Of course, we offered anecdotal stories and illustrations from common practices, but little that could be regarded as conclusive evidence. How did improving electoral administration in Liberia, strengthening parliaments in Burundi, expanding the capacity of public sector management in Ukraine, or advising on anticorruption strategies in Guatemala actually help deliver clean water, reduce hunger, expand growth, or prevent humanitarian crises?

After a long period of reflection, this book seeks to provide at least a partial answer to these puzzling questions. I learned a tremendous amount from these discussions with UNDP colleagues, especially Pauline Tamasis, and also from collaborating with many other international development agencies over the years, including the World Bank; the National Democratic Institute (NDI); the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA); the Council of Europe; the European Union (EU); and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

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The intellectual foundations for this book also build upon my previous research. Earlier books have compared democratic institutions, culture, and processes, including studies about value change and societal modernization, public support for democratic principles and practices, patterns of political engagement and activism, the distribution of religious and secular values, women's representation and gender equality, the impact of political communications and new digital technologies, and the design of power-sharing constitutions. As the next step, it seems timely and important to turn from analyzing the multiple causes of democratization to understanding some of the potential consequences.

I was also encouraged to do so by many Harvard students who have taken my classes on democracy and democratization over the years, as well as by colleagues from economics and other disciplines, who frequently urged me to address the consequences of political reform for achieving many other development objectives. In my classes, students learned about theories of democratization and measures of the quality of democratic governance, the principles of electoral design, the options for power-sharing constitutions, the ways that countries reduce corruption and expand access to justice, and so on. They were curious to learn about these issues, but, they often asked, would democratic governance actually help confront the challenges they faced back home – in Nigeria and Ghana, Burma and Pakistan, Afghanistan and Ethiopia, Mexico and Brazil? Would elections help overcome endemic problems of poverty and inequality? Would power-sharing reduce violence and instability? Would inclusive parliaments prove more responsive to social needs? Would good governance help development aid reach clinics and food banks rather than enriching the bank accounts of elites? They were natural skeptics. In many ways, based on my reading of the research literature, so was I.

Well, maybe, I usually responded. Possibly. Under certain conditions. But instead of puzzling about the instrumental consequences, I answered more confidently, democratic governance can and should be valued as intrinsically good, in and for itself. Citizens should be able to choose their own representative governments, exercising the basic right to determine their own fates, irrespective of any impact on other dimensions of development. After all, as specified in Article 21(3) of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.” Students often wanted to be convinced, but this answer was only partially persuasive. Many continued to express the hope that, in addition to its intrinsic value, democratic governance would also deliver concrete instrumental benefits to improve people's lives in the world's poorest societies. Whether these connections can be demonstrated to skeptics is challenging, however, and irrespective of our personal values and beliefs, the empirical evidence deserves to be thoroughly and systematically examined, with an open mind about the final conclusions. I was still reluctant to go down this road, realizing how

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far this would force me to travel ill equipped into disciplinary territories well beyond the familiar and comfortable tribal boundaries of comparative political science. Given my initial skepticism, and my commitment to democracy, I was also concerned that the evidence might run counter to my own values, providing fodder to support democracy's critics and to prop up illiberal regimes. In many ways, the journey has proved difficult but worthwhile, and this book reflects my long-delayed response to my students, colleagues, and UNDP practitioners.

Contemporary headlines around the world also reinforced the importance of understanding the issues considered in this book, not least the unfolding developments in the "Arab uprisings." The Tunisian regime transition proved relatively peaceful, after ousted leader, Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, fled in January 2011. Morocco introduced reforms to the monarchy and held elections in late 2011 in which the moderate Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD) won the most seats. By contrast, elsewhere in the region, the events toppling the regime of President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt were characterized by sporadic outbreaks of violence and street protests before the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi Nour won the first post-transition elections. Libyans experienced an outright civil war, Yemen saw prolonged instability, and unrest has simmered in Jordan, while brutal suppression of protest movements occurred in Syria and Bahrain. The uprisings, like the transformation of postcommunist Central and Eastern Europe in the early 1990s, have been carried out in the name of promoting democracy, although survey evidence suggests that a democratic regime may be desired for its assumed instrumental consequences, and thus the potential benefits for growth and peace, as much as for its intrinsic value.

The final catalyst for this project arose from participating in the American Political Science Association Taskforce on Indicators of Democracy and Governance, under the leadership of Henry Brady and Michael Coppedge. Meetings at the University of California, Berkeley, and the Annenberg Public Policy Center in Philadelphia, and continuing our debates in floods of emails, forced us all to think harder about the core concepts and measures in this subfield. A broad consensus was quickly established about concepts and standard indices of liberal democracy, but our search to identify equally coherent ideas and measures of good governance proved more challenging and frustrating.

As always, this book also owes immense debts to many friends and colleagues. Research for the project was generously supported by the award of the Kathleen Fitzpatrick Australian Laureate from the Australian Research Council, for which I am immensely grateful. The project also draws heavily on the work of the Quality of Governance (QoG) Institute at the University of Gothenburg, including their shared datasets and ideas generated at an early workshop at the Institute. The theme of the book started to be developed following conversations over the years with colleagues at Harvard's Kennedy School (HKS) of Government and the Department of Government at Harvard University. I also greatly appreciate the academic hospitality offered by the

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Department of Government and International Relations at the University of Sydney, and I am deeply indebted to Michael Spence, Duncan Ivison, and Simon Tormey for facilitating the arrangement of my visit, as well as to all colleagues in the department. Sydney provided a welcoming home for completing the book manuscript.

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