

Governance for Peace

Governance for Peace presents a comprehensive analysis of the dimensions of governance that are most likely to prevent armed conflict and foster sustainable peace. It is an accessible study written for the general reader that brings together the best empirical evidence across numerous disciplines showing how effective governance and inclusive, participatory and accountable institutions help to reduce violence by addressing social needs and providing mechanisms for resolving disputes. This balanced and incisive book gives meaning to the term ‘good governance’ and identifies the specific features of political and economic institutions that are most likely to promote peace within and between states. Concepts and topics examined in the book include political legitimacy, human security, ‘political goods,’ governance and power, inclusion, accountability, social cohesion, gender equality, countering corruption, the role of civil society, democratic participation, development as freedom, capitalism and economic growth, the governance of markets, China and the ‘East Asian peace,’ the European Union, and global institutions.

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Governance for Peace

*How Inclusive, Participatory and
Accountable Institutions Promote
Peace and Prosperity*

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Preface

This book argues that peace and prosperity are advanced through accountable systems of governance and effective institutions of mature democracy. Ours is an optimistic analysis, drawing from a large body of empirical evidence to show that myriad indicators associated with good governance, international development, and peace and security are moving in positive directions. This research shows, we believe, that consolidated forms of democratic governance that deliver public goods equitably are capable of preventing war and maintaining stability. We recognize that governance can be weak, corrupt and abusive, and that violence is prevalent in these conditions, but the dominant pattern in much of the world in recent decades has been toward stronger institutions, more democracy and less war.

In the last few years, however, trends have moved in the opposite direction. In much of the world, progress toward greater political freedom and democracy has stalled, and authoritarian regimes have consolidated. Even in Europe and the United States, democracy is facing significant challenges. Far-right populist parties, such as France's National Front and the Dutch Party for Freedom, have risen from obscurity to transform the politics of virtually every Western European country.¹ Demagogic leaders in Hungary, the United States and other countries have used xenophobic messages to gain and consolidate political power. Populist leaders are questioning the value of international institutions and norms that have

¹ Roberto Stefan Foa and Yascha Mounk, "The Danger of Deconsolidation: The Democratic Disconnect," *Journal of Democracy* 27, no. 3 (July 2016): 5–17.

increased global prosperity and, as we show in this book, have contributed to a more peaceful world.²

Many people in the West are losing faith in democratic institutions. The 2015 Eurobarometer survey revealed that 62 percent of Europeans distrusted their national governments.³ In the United States, a 2014 Gallup Mood of the Nation poll showed that 65 percent of Americans were dissatisfied with their system of government, continuing a pattern of increased discontent over the past decade.⁴ Job approval ratings of the US Congress have been abysmal in recent years, averaging just 17 percent in 2016.⁵ The declining health of democracy is evident in low levels of voter participation, distrust of political leaders, the corrupting influence of money in elections, and increasing polarization and gridlock. Out of this discontent leaders like Viktor Orban in Hungary and Donald Trump in the United States have been elected to power.⁶

The elements of this ‘illiberal’ democracy are common across different countries. The use of distortion, innuendo and even charges of criminality against political adversaries. Attempts to suppress the vote of opposing constituencies. Disregard for existing political conventions and norms. Pressures against independent media. These and related practices are a threat to the core institutions of democracy.

Some analysts see disturbing parallels between the right-wing populism of today and the rise of extremism during the 1930s. They draw lessons from the breakdown of democracies in Europe and Latin America in the 1930s, and from episodes of political intolerance in US history, citing classic studies by Juan Linz, Seymour Martin Lipset and others.⁷

² Joseph S. Nye, “Will the Liberal Order Survive?” *Foreign Affairs* 96, no. 1 (January/February 2017): 15.

³ European Commission, *Standard Eurobarometer* 83, Spring 2015, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb83/eb83_first_en.pdf.

⁴ Justin McCarthy, “In U.S., 65% Dissatisfied With How Gov’t System Works,” *Gallup Politics*, January 22, 2014, www.gallup.com/poll/166985/dissatisfied-gov-system-works.aspx.

⁵ Art Swift, “U.S. Congressional Approval Averages Weak 17% for 2016,” *Gallup Politics*, December 15, 2016, www.gallup.com/poll/199445/congressional-approval-averages-weak-2016.aspx?g_source=Politics&g_medium=newsfeed&g_campaign=tiles.

⁶ John Shattuck, “Resisting Trumpism in Europe and the United States,” *American Prospect* Longform, December 2, 2016, <http://prospect.org/article/resisting-trumpism-europe-and-united-states>.

⁷ Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, eds., *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Rabb, *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790–1970* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).

Democracy is at risk when leaders encourage, tolerate or justify actions that go beyond the limits of acceptable politics. Critics contend that Trump exhibited these tendencies in his 2016 campaign by denigrating women and religious and ethnic minorities, pledging to jail his opponent, and suggesting he might not accept the electoral results.⁸ Larry Diamond described the failure to challenge such behavior as a form of “democratic disloyalty.”⁹

Other writers question the analogy with the past. Today’s populists may be anti-liberal, but they are not fascists, Sheri Berman writes.¹⁰ To describe Orban or other leaders as ‘fascist’ obscures more than it clarifies. The extremists of the 1930s shared a virulent opposition to democracy and a deep suspicion of capitalism. Today’s leaders claim they want to improve democracy. They criticize the system but propose no alternative to it, offering vague promises to make government better and more responsive. They are not threatening to close legislatures or cancel elections, at least not yet. Joseph Nye argues that there are sufficient institutional buffers against turbulence now at both the domestic and international level that a descent into the economic and geopolitical chaos of earlier decades “is not in the cards.”¹¹ The institutions of democracy in the United States and Europe have deep roots. Robust civil societies provide citizens with myriad ways of voicing their concerns and influencing political outcomes.

Berman and Nye do not discount the seriousness of the current challenges, however, and they emphasize the need for political leaders and citizens to address the underlying causes of public discontent. The problems of democracy are deeply rooted and go beyond the practices of particular leaders. As Berman notes, the way to ensure that right-wing populism does not threaten the peace is “to make democratic institutions, parties, and politicians more responsive to the needs of all citizens.”¹² This means addressing the problems of rising economic and social inequality, ending

⁸ Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, “Is Donald Trump a Threat to Democracy,” *New York Times*, December 16, 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/12/16/opinion/sunday/is-donald-trump-a-threat-to-democracy.html?&moduleDetail=section-news-o&action=click&contentCollection=Opinion®ion=Footer&module=MoreInSection&version=WhatsNext&contentID=WhatsNext&pgtype=article.

⁹ Larry Diamond, “It Could Happen Here,” *The Atlantic*, October 19, 2016, www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/10/trump-democracy-election-2016/504617/.

¹⁰ Sheri Berman, “Populism is not Fascism,” *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 6 (November/December 2016): 39–44.

¹¹ Nye, “Will the Liberal Order Survive?”

¹² Sheri Berman, “Populism is not Fascism.”

political gridlock through more inclusive citizen participation, and reducing the corrosive influence of corruption. In short, strengthening the institutions of democratic governance.

These are the challenges we address in the chapters that follow. We argue that the capacity and quality of governance both domestically and internationally are key factors in determining the prospects for peace and the well-being of society. This is true in Western democracies as much as it is in fragile states and conflict-affected regions. Stability and peace are most assured in settings of consolidated democracy, where governing institutions enforce the rule of law and provide effective services for all, and where people are able to participate actively and hold government institutions accountable. An informed and engaged citizenry is an essential bulwark against authoritarianism and an important force for peace.

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