

# S+F Sicherheit und Frieden Security and Peace

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**Populismus, Frieden und Sicherheit /**  
**Populism, Peace and Security**

**Interactions among Populism, Peace, and Security  
in Contemporary America**

Louis Kriesberg

**Populism's Call to Citizenship**

Christopher Holshek

**Populism on the World Stage**

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Nordatlantische Bündnis gefährdet**

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Poland's Illiberal Turn as an Authoritarian Threat**

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**The Consequences of Russian Populism**

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**The Securitization of Migration as a Threat to Liberal,  
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# Populism's Call to Citizenship

Christopher Holshek

**Abstract:** Current threats to democracy and the liberal world order from authoritarian populism are due to the failures in governance and civics that have given it fertile ground. Like terrorism, hybrid warfare, and other distributed people-centric challenges in peace and security within and beyond borders, authoritarian populism is an international strategic challenge in human security and peacebuilding. Strategies to combat authoritarian populism must: first, distinguish it as an international security challenge, including its use of strategic narratives to sway populaces; second, see it as a result of failed citizenship as much as failed government; and third, employ a strategic peacebuilding approach to governance and citizenship that is as bottom-up as top-down.

**Keywords:** Authoritarian populism, democracy, security, peacebuilding, citizenship, voluntary service

**Schlagwörter:** Autoritärer Populismus, Demokratie, Sicherheit, Friedensaufbau, Staatsbürgertum, Freiwilligendienst

## 1. Introduction

Benjamin Franklin cautioned that “those who would give up essential liberty, to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety.”<sup>1</sup> While an enduring dilemma in democratic governance, this precarious balance – in a globalized and digitized world – rests even more with the source of sovereignty in open, pluralistic societies. Current threats to democracy and the liberal world order have less to do with authoritarian populism than the failures in governance and civics that have given it fertile ground. Like many people-centric challenges in peace and security within and beyond borders, authoritarian populism is also an international strategic challenge in human security, civilian resilience, and peacebuilding. If liberty and safety are to find paradox instead of irony, then strategies to combat authoritarian populism must: first, distinguish it as an international security challenge, including its use of strategic narratives to sway populaces; second, see it as a result of failed citizenship as much as failed government; and third, employ a strategic peacebuilding approach to governance and citizenship that is as bottom-up as top-down.

## 2. Authoritarian Populism as an International Security Challenge

Authoritarian populism is both a local and global threat to peace and security. Today's nativism and nationalism, attacks on democratic institutions and truth, and the marginalization of minorities and immigrants threaten to undo the achievements of the liberal international order that created the greatest period of transatlantic peace and prosperity in modern history. It tears at the societal fabric of even the most durable democracies and dissolves the glue of international cooperation. It is tempting to see authoritarian populism as solely a problem of domestic politics. In a globalized world, however, it is also an international security problem – if only because it has proliferated in so many places at once. But there are more seismic reasons.

Among them is a steady surge in wealth disparity. The last time the Generalized Inequality Index was so high was when social turbulence and middle-class destruction brought on a world war,

depression, and another world war. The dismantling of resulting reforms by reactionary responses has winnowed the macro-managerial authority of public institutions. New corporatism is unleashing more destructive than creative sea changes – unhinging long-held political, economic, and social norms as once entrusted elites mismanage its disenfranchising impacts.

The enormous turmoil has also driven the physical as well as social unmooring of poorly connected constituencies, with unprecedented numbers of forcibly displaced persons and international migrants. Many seek sanctuary in Europe or the U.S., overwhelming current capacities to process them; in turn, igniting demographic disruptions and fanning xenophobia. The ensuing instability and uncertainty present entry points for terrorism as well as Putin's *dezinformatsiya* attacks on democratic processes, opening another front in his political war on NATO in addition to non-linear or “hybrid” warfare on Europe's shared periphery. The compromise of Western soft power has also enabled China to challenge Western moral authority on the world stage.

Since 1989, armed conflicts have involved more failed states than foreign invasions, causing mostly civilian deaths as illicit and violent extremist networks permeate national borders, spread chaos, and aggravate the angst that authoritarian populists exploit. Ironically, the responses of Western governments and media have helped tip political and popular scales in overreaction toward the hard power of security at the cost of the soft power of liberty.

Authoritarian populism also exacerbates globalization's erosion of national political authority, eviscerating faith in governance and undermining Westphalian frameworks to manage peace and security, finance and trade, and information. Its “strange brand of apocalyptic nationalism” and simplistic “energetic authoritarian solutions,” essayist Rana Dasgupta described, filling many subsequent gaps.<sup>2</sup> However, “these are not cures, but symptoms of what is slowly revealing itself to all: nation states everywhere are in an advanced state of political and moral decay from which they cannot individually extricate themselves.”

“Globalization,” stressed geographer-historian Jared Diamond, “makes it impossible for modern societies to collapse in

1 Pennsylvania Assembly: Reply to the Governor, 11 November 1755, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-06-02-0107>.

2 Rana Dasgupta, “The demise of the nation-state,” *The Guardian*, 5 April 2018; available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/apr/05/demise-of-the-nation-state-rana-dasgupta>.

isolation. Any society in turmoil today, no matter how remote can cause trouble for prosperous societies on other continents.”<sup>3</sup> The vulnerabilities, social grievances, and gaps in governance giving way to populism over here are much the same that hostile states and non-state illicit and extremist networks exploit over there, to disrupt or rewrite social contracts defining the spaces between individuals and governments. Whether in Central Europe, Central America, Central Asia or Central Africa – failing and fragile states are failing and fragile states.

Understanding authoritarian populism as an international security challenge doesn't make it less serious, but it may make it less hopeless. No wonder, for example, how NATO countries struggle with populist assaults at home as with asymmetric or hybrid warfare abroad – both their responses reflect a state-centric view of security. As with distributed, people-centric or “gray zone” problems of peace and security within and beyond borders, authoritarian populism demands a strategically collaborative response. “For the first time in history, we face the risk of a global decline,” Diamond warned. “But we also are the first to enjoy the opportunity of learning quickly from developments in societies anywhere else in the world today, and from what has unfolded in societies at any time in the past.”<sup>4</sup>

Although an existential threat, authoritarian populism is not the same comprehensive menace of fascism and communism. It feeds on the belief in the right of ordinary people to govern but appeals to a distorted sense of entitlement of constituencies sensing loss of social dominance or the perception of minorities of systemic abandonment – which is why it comes from the right or left. Its retaliatory sentiment, to nihilistic extremes, enables charlatans posing as their champions to gain and consolidate power. Metastasized populism is more an exclusionary irrational political logic than an inclusively rational program or philosophy. Because it has no holistic, integrated view of how politics, economics, or society should work, it is not a true ideology. It calls to kick out the establishment but rarely enunciates what replaces it – unless it pairs with an ideology. It works like a gateway drug – not as dangerous for what it does as what it can lead to.

It is also a scam. The great lie of authoritarian populism is its disinterest in government of, by, and for the people. Dressed as democracy for the disaffected, it eventually fails to deliver its outsized promises on the very grievances it exploits for its own power gain. There are models to defeat it like NATO's soft-power-led containment strategy, blueprinted in National Security Council policy paper (NSC-68), ultimately exposing the irreconcilable self-contradictions of Soviet communism. But at what cost?

Its real danger is in how it makes its victims, as in online phishing scams, unwittingly trash their system software. Likewise on low overhead, it makes those who believe it's helping become the “authors and finishers” of their own destruction, as Lincoln warned, by conjuring the lesser angels of their nature – fear, egotism, and ignorance. Brexit has worked this way, as has Trumpism. The Russians, after all, haven't hacked Western social media and exploited its built-in vulnerabilities to degrade them to gain strategic and psychological advantage.

### 3. The Power of Narrative

Authoritarian populism could be framed as an asymmetric form of political warfare – or a political form of asymmetric warfare. Either way, understanding narrative is fundamental to understanding their *modus operandi*. “Narrative is a strategic story,” explained American narrative strategist Ajit Maan. “It is the telling of a story in a certain way for a certain purpose. The way is identification. The purpose is influence.”<sup>5</sup> While inherently strategic, narrative impacts at more visceral levels, to the point of being neurological. “Through narrative we construct our personal and cultural identities,” she added. “Ideas and beliefs result from those identities, and actions follow.”

Narrative warfare is a strategic struggle over the meaning of information. As such, “it represents a deep threat to national and international security and cooperation,” Maan added. “When narratives are weaponized, they can undermine homeland security by shaking the faith of citizens in democratic institutions and the rule of law.”

Narrative is less about facts or truth and more about beliefs. Weaponized, it sets off powerful negative emotions like fear, ignorance, and cynicism, prompting irrational behavior. It is why many liberal governments and parties, vested in the rational actor theory of political behavior, struggle to push back against right-wing populist rhetoric by employing ideals, facts, reason, empathy, and awareness-raising, with often counterproductive results – and the answer to right-wing populism is not left-wing populism. Perceptions and imagery are often decisive, as the Spanish government learned last summer in its visibly rough handling of Catalanian protestors.

There are two indications of a country in trouble. One is when people blame everyone else but themselves for their predicament. The other is when they long for the past more than the future. As any subversive movement, authoritarian populism exploits these extant strategic narratives to make its own pitch: “Things are bad and getting worse. Those other people are to blame and the establishment won't help you. We will help you and restore order.” The punch line: “All you have to do is give us a little political power [i.e., liberty] and we'll sort out your insecurities.”

This works surprisingly well in affluent societies. With more to lose than gain, they become more conservative, zero-sum, risk-averse, and fear-factored. Comprehensive policies for a dizzying array of issues are unattainable as too many have too much stake in the *status quo*, the polity calcifies to preserve it, and governments fail to fulfill inflated expectations. Obsessed with decline and identity loss, they fall for simple, authoritarian answers to complex, democratic problems. Compounding the U.S. irony is its fading dominance of an international order it largely created and the national-security-über-alles and siege mentality that perpetual warfare has brought on – yet, one cannot have a war on populism any more than a war on terrorism.

As with terrorism, what works best against populism is less a counter-narrative and more of a compelling narrative. “The

5 Ajit Maan, “Narratives are about ‘meaning,’ not ‘truth,’” *Foreign Policy* “Best Defense,” Thomas E. Ricks, 3 December 2015; available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/12/03/narratives-are-about-meaning-not-truth/> See also Ajit Maan, *Narrative Warfare*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

3 Jarred Diamond, *Collapse – How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, New York: Viking, 2005, 23.

4 Diamond, see above n. 2, 23.

threat of authoritarian populism will not recede unless a new generation of political leaders offers a credible agenda for improving people's lives that is more appealing to the public than the populist alternatives," a joint report by the liberal Center for American Progress and conservative American Enterprise Institute concludes.<sup>6</sup>

If soft power is about persuasion, then narrative is actualized soft power; and, if identities are values in action, then narrative is value-based. Value-basing is essential to strategy, a process of making choices today about desired future outcomes. Values shape interests, which in turn inform strategy and policy, and then the actions of those implementing them. Identity is values in action, the connection between saying and doing. In a world swayed by narrative, the moral foundations of societies and governments wax more important. At home as well as abroad, what motivates people more than ideas is how they work in their own lives.

#### 4. Failed Government or Failed Citizenship?

Along with economic and social injustice, corruption is emblematic of failing and fragile states. While the Corruption Perceptions Index lists Western Europe and North America overall as best-performing, single countries like Hungary, Italy, Spain, and the U.S. are now on shakier ground.<sup>7</sup> A major driver of instability, the perception of corrupt public institutions drives disillusionment with them, further eroding the societal adhesive of trust that cements civilian resilience.

Corruption and the failure or fragility of a state or society owes mainly to poor governance. Governance, however, is much more than government. It includes collective political decision-making and public service delivery, whether through government structures at national, international, or sub-national levels, non-governmental or civil society organizations, a market, network, or social system, or through the laws, norms, or narrative or language of a society. As with corruption, it finds context in collective identity.

Surging demand for public service delivery comes from more complex and globally pervasive challenges and the rising expectations of interconnecting populaces. When established governments cannot deliver on these demands, among them security, people look to other sources, often at the cost of liberty. This leads to what political sociologist Larry Diamond perceived as a "democratic recession."<sup>8</sup> The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index has shown a decline in democratic governance over the last decade, with 89 of the 167 countries in 2017 scoring lower in just one year.<sup>9</sup> The index concluded that less than five percent of the world's population lives in a "full democracy" – which the U.S., it says, no longer is.

Governments, however, are not solely responsible for societal collapse – as both Diamonds suggest, it is much the other way around. While faltering civic qualifications are indicative of many countries that authoritarian populism plagues, it is most evident in the world's 21<sup>st</sup>-ranked democracy. In addition to this lagging performance in the Democracy Index, many measures show how Americans fall short as national and global citizens.

If Jefferson's "educated citizenry is a vital requisite" for a free people, Americans are in trouble. The OECD's 2015 Program for International Student Assessment ranked them 40<sup>th</sup> of 72 countries in mathematics, 25<sup>th</sup> in science, and 24<sup>th</sup> in reading skills.<sup>10</sup> With education aimed at commercial over civic preparedness, one-fourth of U.S. students are at or above proficiency in civics, history, and geography. One-third of native-born U.S. citizens cannot pass the civics test for naturalizing immigrants, who speak multiple languages.<sup>11</sup> The just under 50% voter turnout in 2018, while a 48-year record for midterm elections, still puts the U.S. behind most of its OECD peers. Equally disturbing is how the "fourth estate" has lost standing in the U.S., especially since the Trump election. The Press Freedom Index ranked it 45<sup>th</sup> out of 180 countries in 2018.<sup>12</sup>

Causative as indicative of civil underperformance has been a generational drop in signature American civic engagement and volunteerism. From charity groups to volunteer fire companies, U.S. civic institutions rely on elected representatives rather than appointed officials. As political scientist Robert Putnam detailed in his seminal *Bowling Alone*, participation in civic groups and organizations especially by younger persons declined precipitously in the late 20th century.

Despite interconnectivity, Americans are withdrawing from the world, in large and small. A once quaint small-mindedness has morphed into pervasive ignorance-based politics and open cognitive dissonance. Short-term, consumerist approaches are bad for the business model of a superpower struggling to shape world events rather than be shaped by them. The paralyzing divisiveness of Americans at home exacerbates their engagement gap abroad. As political commentator Steven Metz noted before the 2016 election, "foreign policy and national security have become useful partisan cudgels precisely because the public has limited understanding of them and thus gravitates to caricatures."<sup>13</sup> Their attention deficit disorder presses foreign policy toward ever-greater reliance on the military as the first rather than last resort. With little patience to sustain good governance at home, how could Americans do so abroad?

The issues that shape the contract between a people and its government are essentially moral matters of choice. Ironically, the irresponsible political behavior of a country's citizenry – in allowing anti-democratic narratives to normalize and in

6 Dalibor Rohac, Liz Kennedy, and Vikram Singh, *Drivers of Authoritarian Populism in the United States*, Center for American Progress and American Enterprise Institute, May 2018; available at: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/democracy/reports/2018/05/10/450552/drivers-authoritarian-populism-united-states/>.

7 *Corruptions Perception Index 2017*, Transparency International, 21 February 2018; available at: [https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption\\_perceptions\\_index\\_2017](https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017).

8 "Democratic Rollback: The Resurgence of the Predatory State," Larry Diamond, *Foreign Affairs*, March-April 2008.

9 *Democracy Index 2017*, Economist Intelligence Unit, available at: <http://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>.

10 These figures are summarized at "Program for International Student Assessment" (PISA); available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Programme\\_for\\_International\\_Student\\_Assessment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Programme_for_International_Student_Assessment).

11 See "The Nation's Report Card," National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017; available at: <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/>; and, Grant Addison, "Failing the Civics Test, Coast to Coast," *National Review*, 20 April 2017.

12 These data are summarized and updated at "Press Freedom Index," Reporters Without Borders (RSF); <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>.

13 Steven Metz, "For U.S., a Clear and Present Danger: Hyper-Partisanship," *World Politics Review*, 4 December 2015; available at: <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/17366/for-u-s-a-clear-and-present-danger-hyper-partisanship>.

neglecting civic responsibilities – has facilitated the irresponsible behavior of its political leadership, making their feared national decline a self-fulfilling prophecy. In a democratic society, it's one thing to have the right kind of leadership; but, it's another to have the right kind of people to lead.

## 5. Strategic Peacebuilding as Ground-Up Governance

From a broad, historical perspective, Dasgupta implied a metaphysical federalization of sovereignty and political authority since Westphalia in the secularization from God to the nation-state to the individual. Correspondingly, security has also devolved – even though state rivalries camouflaged intra-state conflict during the Cold War. The democratization of violence that terrorism exemplifies tolls the end of its monopolization by state actors, among them military forces. But if violence can democratize, so can peace and governance. And if the essence of war is political, human, and psychological, so is the essence of peace. Peacebuilding is more about political strategies to get at the destabilizing gaps and grievances of societal governance that beget conflict over there – or give rise to authoritarian populism over here.

As an international security issue, authoritarian populism is better framed as a human security challenge in strategic peacebuilding. In a larger sense, building peace is an ongoing process of maximizing stakeholders and minimizing spoilers to governance and civil society. It is also a political process in building constituency to respond to the vulnerabilities, grievances, and gaps that governments fail to reconcile. Peacebuilding is inherently a strategic process of building ground-up governance – thinking globally while acting locally. It promotes local ownership and civilian resilience to manage complex conflict and its interconnectivities and interdependencies by helping to build collaborative platforms and narratives for cross-sector civil dialogue and learning. This process is also called stabilization – a political endeavor to create conditions where locally legitimate authorities, systems, and people can peaceably manage conflict, to paraphrase the 2018 U.S. Stabilization Assistance Review. Among the overarching conditions are personal freedom and respect for human rights for all and not just a chosen few.

Security and stability are components of peace – not the other way around. The answer to the authoritarian populism may not be to scale down political innovation as much as to power it up. The emerging consensus, as in the Sustainable Development Goals, is that stability, security, resilience and peace and freedom are better gained, maintained, and sustained in ways more collaborative and community-based, eliciting inclusive leadership and citizenship – as informal as formal, local as global. This puts democratic societies at a distinct strategic advantage. Democratic governance is indeed an inefficient way to govern. Its value, instead, lies in harmonizing discordant interests, managing complexity and diversity, and empowering constituents.

The adaptive dynamics of strategic peacebuilding apply universally. “Nations must be nested in a stack of other stable, democratic structures – some smaller, some larger than they – so that turmoil at the national level does not

lead to total breakdown,” Dasgupta posed. They must also leverage intergovernmental resources and regional cooperation mechanisms that democratize countries by empowering people through the promotion of local, national, and global citizenship.

The European Union is perhaps the best regional model for this. “The European model of the welfare state – combined with values of liberal democracies in the framework of the European Union—has in principle produced very good results,” journalist Tessa Szyszkowitz told Carnegie Europe. “Where it has not, EU leaders need to start reforming EU structures,” including its own democratization.<sup>14</sup> In addition to more effectively coordinated policies on cross-border issues like migration, climate change, and trade, it must help enable a new narrative on European identity that all European citizens can find workable in their lives.

## 6. Citizenship's Call to Service

The idea of citizenship as a base component of peacebuilding has gained some traction, but only in promoting “a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity” in the fourth Sustainable Development goal or of “corporate citizenship” in the private sector's role. Citizenship as foundational to security and stability has so far seen sparse treatment in national or international peace and security institutions, research and academic centers, public organizations or agencies, think tanks and other institutions, and journals and media.

“Citizen participation is proffered as one antidote to the post-truth assertions of populist political movements,” a paper in the *International Journal of Health Policy and Management* reads.<sup>15</sup> Crowd-sourcing, social media, and other technocratic approaches, while more expedient, risk an “expertocratic” political class for populists to target resentment. “It is therefore necessary to also consider other forms of citizen participation that can envisage a form of populist engagement with marginalized groups of citizens who are at risk of political exploitation by populist leaders and those groups who are at greatest risk of exclusion by nativist policies.” “Instead of rejecting populism,” Migration Policy Institute Associate Director Natalia Banulescu-Bogdan told Carnegie Europe, “mainstream politicians should co-opt it... by becoming more responsive to ‘everyday’ concerns.”

Intrinsic to an evolving idea of governance, citizenship must also find a new conceptual framing, moving away from what Dasgupta described as “inherited privilege” or “the consequences of accidental advantages such as birth.” In other words, a new, global ethos of national identity must guide national policies and laws of citizenship and immigration and assimilation,

14 July Dempsey, “Judy Asks: Does Europe Have an Alternative to Populism?” *Judy Dempsey's Strategic Europe*, Carnegie Europe, 30 August 2018; available at: <https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/77134>.

15 Ewen Speed and Russell Mannion, “The Rise of Post-truth Populism in Pluralist Liberal Democracies: Challenges for Health Policy,” *International Journal of Health Policy and Management*, Article 1, Volume 6, Issue 5, May 2017; available at: [http://www.ijhpm.com/article\\_3322.html](http://www.ijhpm.com/article_3322.html).

toward what the late Senator John McCain called “ideals and not blood and soil” in his farewell letter.<sup>16</sup>

Popular involvement, the health policy paper posits, should “eschew a consumerist approach, and instead prioritize citizen participation in decision-making, and an increase in democratic accountability.” As such, democratic citizenship in a globalized world would best find value, identity, and narrative in an ethos of service to others in shared spaces. If the essential grievance of governance is inadequate public service delivery, then the gaps that give way to resentment – and the instability it engenders – are best filled by enabling and empowering grieved persons and groups to become stakeholders in the common civic enterprise. In short: Americans and Europeans have to get back in the habit of democracy, which is neither self-correcting nor sustained by its institutions as by the people who give them life. Nations of passive observers watching others make decisions easily succumb to anger, cynicism, and indifference.

Citizenship that thinks globally and acts locally and fosters a more collaborative and inclusive mindset is antidote to narcissism and exclusion. Service-powered citizenship also promotes value-based strategic thinking – connecting the here and now with the big picture and the long run. This helps people feel more empowered and hopeful, resilient to the darker narratives of exclusion and division. It could even, paradoxically, help restore faith in government by giving people something to talk about other than politics, creating space for less toxic civil dialogue. Good citizenship drives good governance and good leadership, morally grounded in personal and social responsibility and accountability. Walking the talk, it draws people together, overcoming divisiveness. In the United States, it could help put the *unum* back into *E pluribus unum*.

The idea of bringing people together through a narrative of local, national, and global citizenship as heavily weighted in common denominators as in numerators is also important to European unity and identity – and the revitalization of the transatlantic community of values. Realizing the importance of the relationships between peoples and not just governments, the Germans are conducting a “Year of Germany in the U.S.,” including over 1,000 cultural events in all 50 states to foster citizen-level democratic engagement.<sup>17</sup> The role of educational and civic institutions, clubs, sports, etc. as bridging platforms for cross-cultural democratic dialogue is essential here, as is the emerging power of women mainstreamed in these processes.

Citizenship that starts with service learning can also enfranchise disconnected youth and marginalized groups. Community service helps them obtain vital 21st century economic qualifications, among them team-playing, team-building, and team-leading along with interpersonal and problem-solving skills, fostering the networks from which the majority of people now find vocations. And it can lower the aggregate cost of public service delivery. The

implications for a better qualified and more competitive work force, a revitalized and more stable middle class, more shared prosperity, and general societal resilience are enormous.

Populism presents a strategic opportunity to complete globalization's dangerously unfinished work to bring people in instead of leaving them out. It is a wake-up call for establishments to try honesty as a policy, rein in corporate and lobby influence, and address long-neglected grievances – at home and abroad. NATO countries would do as well to put their own houses in order as to “export stability,” recalling how their political mismanagement, from colonialism to security and development assistance, has contributed to instabilities leading to the streams of African and Latin American economic migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers now knocking on their doors.

Moreover, they must reform national narratives and legal frameworks about citizenship as a form of participatory governance and service as a rite of passage that apply equally to those who already live in their societies as those who wish to. That includes universal civics testing as public school graduation requirement along with mandatory community, public, or national service through public-private initiatives and civic organizations as government programs.

As corporate citizens, the mass and social media have a key responsibility in shaping narratives that promote democratic values, inclusiveness, community empowerment, and service citizenship – mindful of the pervasive effect of constant sensationalistic negative news as a fertile ground for populism. In many ways, life in most communities in Western countries is better than advertised. “Americans don't realize how fast the country is moving toward becoming a better version of itself,” New America Foundation founder James Fallows reported in *The Atlantic*.<sup>18</sup> Media coverage could shift away from an obsession with national politics as a reality show – which plays well into demagoguery – and tell more stories about civic success and community innovation, introducing their societies to more compelling and empowering exemplary narratives.

Answering the call to citizenship – local, national, and global – empowers people to embrace and renew the strength and promise of globalization and multicultural democratic society. Greatness is a lot of small things done well. The paradox of service-powered citizenship is that by helping others, one helps oneself, securing the blessings of liberty to themselves and their posterity in the process of passing the baton of generational leadership. When we change ourselves, we change our communities. By changing our communities, we change our countries. And when we change our countries, we change the world.



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