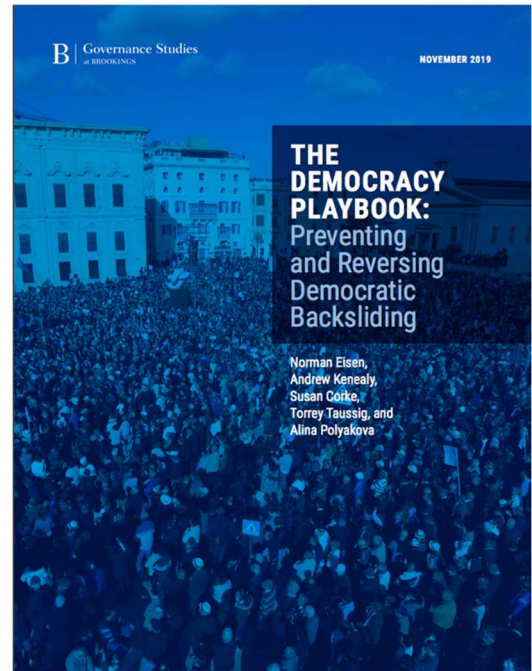


The Democracy Playbook

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The Democracy Playbook sets forth strategies that supporters of liberal democracy can implement to reverse democratic backsliding in Europe and make its democratic institutions work more effectively for citizens. The strategies are deeply rooted in the evidence: what the scholarship and practice of democracy teach us about what does and does not work. We hope that diverse groups and individuals will find this work useful as they design context-specific strategies for contesting the illiberal toolkit. The playbook is organized into two principal sections: one dealing with actions that domestic actors can take within democracies, including retrenching ones, and the second section addressing the role of international actors in supporting and empowering pro-democracy actors on the ground. These recommendations are summarized below.

Full report: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-democracy-playbook-preventing-and-reversing-democratic-backsliding>.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Part I: Domestic actors

1. Government and political party leaders should:
 - Be prepared for and invest in protecting against internal and external interference in elections.
 - Enact policies that promote and protect broad access to the vote, such as automatic registration or same-day voting.
 - Regulate the role of money in politics to retain trust in the democratic system.
 - Uphold institutional obligations and use their political power with restraint—but when norms break down, further legal mechanisms should be considered.
 - Defend the independence of the judiciary by establishing public procedures for the selection and retention of judges.
 - Implement judicial transparency mechanisms.
2. Political opposition groups should:
 - Form networks between other opposition groups, local electoral activists, civil society groups, and, where appropriate, international organizations and actors.
 - Create a unified democratic opposition where possible or consider using referenda as an alternative.
 - Increase election monitoring capacity and be prepared to use electoral abuse evidence as the basis for reform advocacy.
 - Engage new voters by presenting a positive and inclusive vision for the future—not only attacks on illiberalism.
 - Forcefully contest each individual illiberal act of non-democratic actors, calibrating the strength of the remedy to the severity of the threat.
3. Civil society should:
 - Seek broad, diverse, and large-scale participation in their activities.
 - Model organizationally what they seek to achieve in a democracy.
 - Establish defined goals, a clear vision, and an actionable agenda.

- Be prepared to use diverse and varied nonviolent tactics to increase the pressure on government and attract more people to participate.

Independent media should focus their efforts on four key areas:

- Occupational development and education.
- Professional associations to enable and support individual journalists on a range of issues.
- Media self-scrutiny and development of a robust media criticism community.
- Better internal governance of media outlets.

4. The private sector should:

- Resist corruption, cooptation, and state capture.
- Aim to do well by doing good, including through activism, philanthropy, and corporate social responsibility.
- Recognize the key role of social media companies, who should:
 - Prioritize digital media literacy.
 - Quickly remove material that violates the law and their codes of conduct policies.
 - Support narrowly tailored government regulations that do not infringe on users' right to free speech.
 - Intensify cooperation with other platforms to share best practices.

Part II: International actors

1. International actors should partner with domestic CSOs and NGOs by:

- Going local—enhancing collaboration with local NGOs to balance external support to more well-known and Westernized organizations.
- Building basic capacities of NGOs—especially local ones.
- Coordinating donor support to avoid overwhelming recipient organization bandwidth.
- Responding vigorously to government attacks on NGOs.
- Empowering nontraditional actors in addition to NGOs, such as businesses, individuals, universities, student groups, and think tanks.
- Developing domestic sources of funding and philanthropy, particularly in countries that are at risk of democratic backsliding.

2. International actors should assist domestic civil resistance and nonviolent movements by:

- Developing clear criteria for providing support.
- Thinking long-term.
- Establishing the local context.
- Promoting domestic ownership of the issues at the national and local level.
- Focusing on training and skills development across civil resistance and movement organizing.
- Helping to boost the efforts of independent media.

3. International actors should help counter disinformation by:

- Supporting independent media organizations and CSOs working to expose disinformation campaigns.
- Investing in and expanding organizational capabilities for monitoring disinformation campaigns emanating from foreign actors.
- Enhancing communication between democratic governance and social media companies.
- Advancing pro-democracy messaging.

4. Foreign governments and institutions should promote democracy in individual jurisdictions by:

- Leveraging EU structural funds.
- Enhancing support for civil society and the independent media
- Encouraging NGO-Government relations, when possible.
- Prioritizing governance and democracy issues.
- Advancing institutional channels.

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