Election integrity at stake: Report highlights governance issues in the US

Friday 18 October, 2024

Los Angeles/DNA – With less than three weeks to go until the November 5 presidential election, a new analysis warns that declining democratic accountability in the US means the power of American people's voice will be diminished.

The report, titled "Democratic Distortions and a Struggling State: The United States on the Eve of the 2024 Presidential Election", highlights critical governance challenges that threaten the efficacy of the US political system.

According to the researchers from the Luskin School of Public Affairs at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), the Los Angeles-based Berggruen Institute and the Hertie School, a university in Berlin, Germany, both democratic accountability and state capacity have sharply declined in the US since 2015, particularly in key swing states.

Democratic accountability, which encompasses electoral, social, and institutional accountability, has decreased significantly, the report concludes. For example, electoral accountability scores dropped from 92 points (out of 100) in 2015 to 82 points in 2021.

"Declining democratic accountability means that the power of the American people's voice will be diminished – both in terms of electoral voice and the power of social institutions to check elected officials once in office", the authors behind the new Berggruen Governance Index (BGI) report conclude, adding that a second Trump presidency would pose major challenges for the already flagging electoral system.

Even more dramatic declines in democratic norms were observed at state level, with "critical consequences for electoral integrity". Many of the important swing states such as North Carolina, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, or Georgia have seen large drops, the report says.

North Carolina was singled out as one stark example. The state has seen the biggest drop in democratic norms of any swing state, declining from near 100 in the mid-2000s to less than 25 in 2018. "This drop, and those in many other states, occurs in the context of well-documented crackdowns on voting rights that reached an 'unprecedented' level in 2023", the authors write.

Voter turnout, a crucial metric of engagement, lags behind other advanced democracies, raising concerns about public involvement in decision-making. It stood at 66 per cent in 2020, trailing most Western European countries where elections were held between 2018 and 2022.

The report also notes what it calls "another widespread problem in the U.S. electoral system – the outsized role of money in politics", adding that the trend is exacerbated by landmark US Supreme Court decisions that have removed limits on electoral spending. This dynamic, the researchers conclude, has led to a political landscape in which the voices of average citizens are increasingly being marginalized.

According to the report, the provision of public goods in the US has seen a slight increase; however, it is still below levels found in many peer nations. High public spending on healthcare has not translated into improved outcomes, raising questions about sustainability amid rising public debt. Both presidential candidates are expected to expand the deficit, with potential implications for long-term public goods provision.

Regarding state capacity, the report finds a broad and steady erosion since 2000, occurring across the sectors of fiscal capacity, coordination capacity and delivery capacity. Weakened state capacity negatively affects the US government's ability to respond to crises or natural disasters. This can lead to popular anger and increasing frustration with government efficacy, the report argues.

If the Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris won on November 5, the researchers believe that she would likely continue some of President Joe Biden's current policies and investments, in turn possibly reversing declines in state capacity. On the other hand, Republican candidate Donald Trump is more likely in the opinion of the researchers to apply drastic cuts to the US administrative state.

Overall, the findings highlight critical governance challenges that have developed over time, impacting democratic accountability, state capacity, and public goods provision in the US. These challenges will

Media:



Related Sectors:

Government ::

Related Keywords:

Election :: Democracy :: Analysis ::

Scan Me:

persist regardless of the election outcome, the researchers say.

A Democratic Party-led administration may address these issues better than one led by Donald Trump, but “both scenarios face significant obstacles”, the report concludes.

“While the balance across all three dimensions suggests that a Harris administration may be to the long-term benefit of US governance, many of the factors we identified as shaping the preexisting dynamics of US politics could limit the likelihood of this outcome”, the report says.

This text and the accompanying material (photos and graphics) is an offer from the Democracy News Alliance, a close co-operation between Agence France-Presse (AFP, France), Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata (ANSA, Italy), The Canadian Press (CP, Canada), Deutsche Presse-Agentur (dpa, Germany) and PA Media (PA, UK). All recipients can use this material without the need for a separate subscription agreement with one or more of the participating agencies. This includes the recipient's right to publish the material in own products.

The DNA content is an independent journalistic service that operates separately from the other services of the participating agencies. It is produced by editorial units that are not involved in the production of the agencies' main news services. Nevertheless, the editorial standards of the agencies and their assurance of completely independent, impartial and unbiased reporting also apply here.

Further coverage by the Democracy News Alliance can be found in the DNA digital newsroom at https://www.presseportal.de/en/nr/174021

Contact:

Democracy News Alliance, Christian Röwekamp, roewekamp.christian@dpa.com

Company Contact:

_

news aktuell

E. desk@newsaktuell.de
W. https://www.newsaktuell.de/

View Online

Additional Assets:

Newsroom: Visit our Newsroom for all the latest stories:
https://www.newsaktuell.pressat.co.uk