



## Forged Through Fire: War, Peace, and the Democratic Bargain

By John Ferejohn, Frances McCall Rosenbluth

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**Forged Through Fire: War, Peace, and the Democratic Bargain** By John Ferejohn, Frances McCall Rosenbluth

**Peace, many would agree, is a goal that democratic nations should strive to achieve. But is democracy, in fact, dependent on war to survive?**

Having spent their celebrated careers exploring this provocative question, John Ferejohn and Frances McCall Rosenbluth trace the surprising ways in which governments have mobilized armies since antiquity, discovering that our modern form of democracy not only evolved in a brutally competitive environment but also quickly disintegrated when the powerful elite no longer needed their citizenry to defend against existential threats.

Bringing to vivid life the major battles that shaped our current political landscape, the authors begin with the fierce warrior states of Athens and the Roman Republic. While these experiments in “mixed government” would serve as a basis for the bargain between politics and protection at the heart of modern democracy, Ferejohn and Rosenbluth brilliantly chronicle the generations of bloodshed that it would take for the world’s dominant states to hand over power to the people. In fact, for over a thousand years, even as medieval empires gave way to feudal Europe, the king still ruled. Not even the advancements of gunpowder—which decisively tipped the balance away from the cavalry-dominated militaries and in favor of mass armies—could threaten the reign of monarchs and “landed elites” of yore.

The incredibly wealthy, however, were not well equipped to handle the massive labor classes produced by industrialization. As we learn, the Napoleonic Wars stoked genuine, bottom-up nationalism and pulled splintered societies back together as “commoners” stepped up to fight for their freedom. Soon after, Hitler and Stalin perfectly illustrated the military limitations of dictatorships, a style of governance that might be effective for mobilizing an army but not for winning a world war. This was a lesson quickly heeded by the American military, who would begin to reinforce their ranks with minorities in exchange for greater civil liberties at home.

Like Francis Fukuyama and Jared Diamond’s most acclaimed works, *Forged*

*Through Fire* concludes in the modern world, where the “tug of war” between the powerful and the powerless continues to play out in profound ways. Indeed, in the covert battlefields of today, drones have begun to erode the need for manpower, giving politicians even less incentive than before to listen to the demands of their constituency. With American democracy’s flanks now exposed, this urgent examination explores the conditions under which war has promoted one of the most cherished human inventions: a government of the people, by the people, for the people. The result promises to become one of the most important history books to emerge in our time.

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## **Editorial Review**

### **Review**

“This isn’t the story we’re taught in high-school civics. But it’s a compelling one, powerfully told by two scholars with mastery of their subject. The authors walk the reader through 2,500 bloody years of Western history, from the Peloponnesian wars to the war in Vietnam, highlighting, again and again, a brutal trade-off: The emergence and consolidation of democracy depends on warfare, and a particular kind of warfare, at that... Their magisterial volume makes the case in persuasive and explicit detail.”

**- Rosa Brooks, *Wall Street Journal***

“In this hugely erudite, deeply engaging, and highly readable book, John Ferejohn and Frances Rosenbluth conjoin a mastery of 2,500 years of military history with cutting-edge political science to produce a convincing and sobering account of how mass mobilization for war led to the rise of modern democracy. This deep dive into history offers new insight into the democratic dilemmas we now face as we enter a world of globalization, nationalism, and inequality, when war is no longer a driver of popular self-government.”

**- Josiah Ober, professor of political science and classics, Stanford University, and author of *The Rise and Fall of Classical Athens***

“Democracies are rare, so history tells us, and fragile. How do they arise? In a vivid and insightful analysis that reaches back to the ancient Greeks and up to the twenty-first century, Ferejohn and Rosenbluth link the rise of democracy to mass mobilization warfare. War, they show, shapes political institutions, but politics affects war.”

**- Philip T. Hoffman, Rea A. and Lela G. Axline Professor of Business Economics and professor of history, California Institute of Technology**

“This sweeping, sophisticated historical analysis charts the interplay of war, state-building, and franchise extension from ancient Athens to the civil rights revolution in the United States that followed World War II. While never losing sight of the timelessness of the main argument about the conflict between elite and mass, all the subtle nuances, contingencies, and tradeoffs are brilliantly brought out in this innovative, compelling account.”

**- James E. Alt, Frank G. Thomson Professor of Government Emeritus, Harvard University**

“With an account that spans continents and centuries, John Ferejohn and Frances Rosenbluth explore the complex and shifting ties between wars and democratic government. Academic stars in comparative politics, they provide a brilliant account of the growth and decline of modern democracy, and of their causes in the very technology of warfare.”

**- J. Mark Ramseyer, Mitsubishi Professor of Japanese Legal Studies, Harvard Law School**

“Impressive, wide reaching, extremely important?this book provides a welcome impressive historical sweep of the connection between democracy and war. It reaches back to the Greek classics to draw on key concepts in how to understand political systems, then takes us through major episodes and cases in world history, war, and revolution. We’ve long known ‘politics does not stop at the water’s edge,’ as the old cliché put it. This book makes it clear why. A must-read.”

**- Peter Gourevitch, Distinguished Professor Emeritus, School of Global Policy and Strategy and Department of Political Science, University of California, San Diego**

“This densely argued but readily accessible book is full of fascinating asides worthy of books of their own. . . . A book of big ideas backed by fine-grained analyses, worthy of attention by readers with an interest in history and contemporary events alike.”

- **Kirkus Reviews (starred review)**

“Illuminating...The book begins with fascinating chapters about war and democracy in classical Athens and Rome; later chapters explore the nineteenth century’s grand armies and the emergence of “total war” in the twentieth century, which had profound effects on the expansion of democratic life in the West.”

- **G. John Ikenberry, Foreign Affairs**

#### About the Author

John Ferejohn is the Samuel Tilden Professor of Law at New York University and a member of the National Academy of Sciences as well as the American Academy of Sciences. He is the author of *Pork Barrel Politics* and the coauthor of *The Personal Vote* and *A Republic of Statutes*.

Frances McCall Rosenbluth is the Damon Wells Professor of Political Science at Yale University and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She is the author of *Financial Politics in Contemporary Japan* and the coauthor of *Japan’s Political Marketplace*; *The Politics of Oligarchy: Institutional Choice in Imperial Japan*; *Women, Work, and Power*; and *Japan Transformed*.

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