

SOURCES OF LEGITIMACY

RETHINKING US-AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

A Conference, co-hosted by
The Political Science Section of the German Association for American Studies,
Atlantische Akademie Rheinland-Pfalz e.V.,
Freie Universität and Bard College Berlin

Date: May 25-27, 2023

Location: John-F.-Kennedy Institute, Freie Universität Berlin

Organizers: Christian Lammert, David Sirakov, Boris Vormann & Sarah Wagner

An attempted coup, voting rights in peril, a loss of trust in politicians and political institutions: There seems to be no end to the ongoing crises shaking American democracy. The legitimacy of central political institutions and actors are under threat. Meanwhile, the international liberal order, which created the framework for American Political Development in the post-World War II moment, has been challenged by the Russian attack on Ukraine and new power blocs undermining American hegemony.

Legitimacy can be understood as a multi-dimensional concept, encompassing beliefs on the proper sources, values, goals, procedures, and outcomes of a given institutional order. Considering that both the domestic political order in the U.S. as well as the international order built around American hegemony have come under immense pressure, this conference will provide a forum to discuss the crises of legitimacy of relevant institutions, ideals, and actors.

Which normative ideals have sustained the legitimacy of political institutions and principles at home and abroad? Why is it that the legitimacy of these institutions and ideals are being questioned so fundamentally at this particular historical moment? What are the consequences of a lack of stability at home for the functioning of democratic institutions? How, if at all, can the legitimacy of democratic institutions be restored? Or, more fundamentally, have these institutions ever been truly legitimate in the eyes of all citizens? In which ways is the international order changing and how does this affect the legitimacy of the United States as a global actor? In which ways are the national and the global crisis tendencies connected?

The conference call for papers is seeking submissions related to the following topics:

- Sources of legitimacy in democratic systems
- Democratic ideas and values
- Democratic backsliding and illiberal tendencies
- The quality of democracy in the United States
- American Exceptionalism and nationalism
- The system of checks and balances (horizontal and vertical)
- Partisan polarization
- Elections and electoral systems;
- Political parties
- Political institutions
- Income and wealth inequality
- Economic foundations of democracy
- Legitimacy and public policy
- International liberal order
- International institutions

Please submit your short abstract (250 words maximum) to the organizers
(politics@jfki.fu-berlin.de) by December 15, 2022.