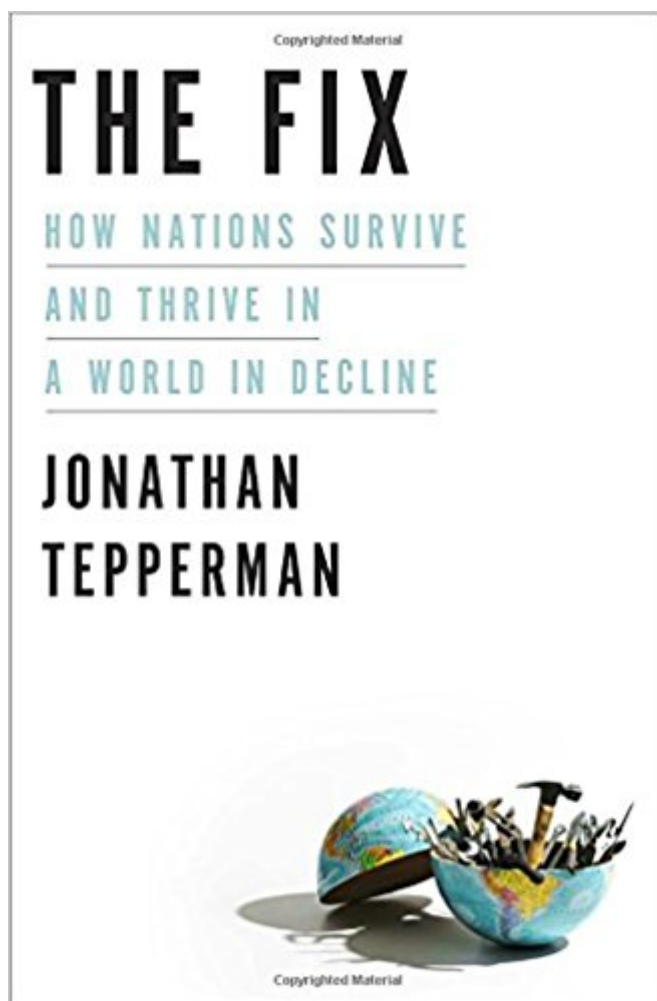


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The Fix: How Nations Survive And Thrive In A World In Decline



Synopsis

A provocative look at the world's most difficult, seemingly ineradicable problems and the surprising stories of the countries that solved them. We all know the bad news. The heady promise of the Arab Spring has given way to repression, civil war, and an epic refugee crisis. Economic growth is sputtering. Income inequality is rising around the world. And the threat of ISIS and other extremist groups keeps spreading. We are living in an age of unprecedented, irreversible decline or so we're constantly being told. Jonathan Tepperman's *The Fix* presents a very different picture. The book reveals the often-overlooked success stories, offering a provocative, unconventional take on the answers hiding in plain sight. It identifies ten pervasive and seemingly impossible challenges including immigration reform, economic stagnation, political gridlock, corruption, and Islamist extremism and shows that, contrary to the general consensus, each has a solution, and not merely a hypothetical one. In his close analysis of government initiatives as diverse as Brazil's Bolsa Família program, Indonesia's campaign against radicalism, Canada's early embrace of multiculturalism, and Mayor Michael Bloomberg's efforts to prevent another 9/11, Tepperman captures the moments in time which reveal the broadly applicable measures which can boost and buttress equality, incomes, cooperation, and cohesion in wildly diverse societies. He flips conventional political wisdom on its head, showing, for example, how much the U.S. Congress could learn about compromise and conciliation from its counterpart in Mexico. Tepperman has traveled the world to write this book, conducting more than a hundred interviews with the people behind the policies. Meticulously researched and deeply reported, *The Fix* presents practical advice for problem-solvers of all stripes, and stands as a necessary corrective to the hand-wringing and grim prognostication that dominates the news, making a data-driven case for optimism in a time of crushing pessimism.

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Customer Reviews

I particularly like the premise of this book - rather than just complain about the problems of the world, find places that did something effective to deal with the problems, and detail what they did, so others can go and do likewise. Ten issues are covered: inequality of income and wealth, immigration, Islamic extremism, Reconciliation after civil war, Corruption, the Resource Curse, Shale Oil, the Middle-National-Income trap, and two types of political Gridlock, Each gets a chapter, showing how a particular country (or in one case a city) was able to overcome one of these problems effectively, and what others can learn from that experience. As is often the case in such books, the author has some personal biases that will please those who share them, and annoy those who don't. For this book, I'm in the latter camp. The author likes to see national governments involved in fixing problems, whereas I'm often in favor of leaving such action to individuals and localities. (One of my favorite quotes is from the cartoon strip Pogo: "Don't just do something, stand there.") The author writes: "Gridlock means no progress." and I pencil into the margin "Also no decline." As for the solutions, many of them were VERY interesting. I'm in Mexico at the moment, so was particularly interested in the chapter on how Mexico got its government out of gridlock. I learned a lot, and the one paragraph summary of what really happened to the 43 students murdered on September 26, 2014 was amazingly clear.

I am somewhat suspicious of books like this appeared to be due to past experiences but in this case I have been pleasantly surprised. Not certain whether to categorise this as a business or political administration book, the author sets out to offer some hope that gridlock and political impasses can be shattered and real solutions to real problems found. He offers ten case studies from around the world where despite formidable if not near impossible odds have been shattered and by extension suggests that even in countries like the United States a better future can be provided for millions of people. There are similarities found in all of the case studies, a state of crisis and hopelessness, intransigent participants, bureaucratic and ideological administrations being some of them. Radical change brought about by pragmatic and sometimes visionary leaders, a willingness to look outside of standard practice, and, not necessarily being an intellectual. For that alone I would highly

recommend this book to anyone involved in any sort of public administration to even a minor extent although I feel that for many the message would not get through due to the inherent nature of the beast and the desire to at least protect, in not enlarge the particular bureau or agency involved to respond to the incentive structure which currently exists. The broader point of this book, though not perhaps the original point of the author is the nature and problems of institutions both for themselves and for the wider society within in which they are embedded. Institutions exist to apply policy decisions to their targets. They also provide shortcuts to prevent recurrent trial and error strategies and to enable action to take place.

When I saw a book about politics with the title "The Fix", I thought the author would talk about how "the fix is in". In other words, how corruption is hurting countries around the world. But although the book does discuss corruption as one of ten big problems, I was pleasantly surprised to find that "the fix" does not refer to that corruption, but instead means "the solution". Jonathan Tepperman thinks he has found the solution to all the problems that beset countries around the world. Tepperman thinks that indeed there are many big problems. The introduction is very gloomy. He thinks we live in times of "crushing pessimism". Even the subtitle calls our world one "in decline". He identifies 10 specific problems: (1) inequality, (2) immigration, (3) Islamic extremism, (4) civil war, (5) corruption, (6) the resource curse, (7) energy, (8) the middle-income trap, (9) gridlock I, and (10) gridlock II. And what is the fix? Tepperman never makes that clear. He does identify the cause: "while the details of all the troubles currently wracking the world vary, they share an underlying cause: the failure of politicians to lead." So presumably, the fix is for politicians to now step up and lead. To find "the wisdom and intestinal fortitude to do what's necessary". To have guts. But not lead like a Donald Trump, who Tepperman runs through a long list of adjectives to lambast. Tepperman labels Trump's policies on immigration "quasi-fascist race-baiting", "venting his spleen at Muslims", tapping a "rich vein of white male anxiety and bigotry", "xenophobia", "bizarre", and "dispiriting, craven, and utterly un-American".

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