



# Trust: A History

*Geoffrey Hosking*

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## **Trust: A History** Geoffrey Hosking

Today there is much talk of a 'crisis of trust'; a crisis which is almost certainly genuine, but usually misunderstood. *Trust: A History* offers a new perspective on the ways in which trust and distrust have functioned in past society, providing an empirical and historical basis against which the present crisis can be examined, and suggesting ways in which the concept of trust can be used as a tool to understand our own and other societies.

Geoffrey Hosking argues that social trust is mediated through symbolic systems, such as religion and money, and the institutions associated with them, churches and banks. Historically, these institutions have nourished trust, but the resulting trust networks have tended to create quite tough boundaries around themselves, across which distrust is projected against outsiders. Hosking also shows how nation-states have been particularly good at absorbing symbolic systems and generating trust among large numbers of people, while also erecting rigid boundaries around themselves, despite an increasingly global economy. He asserts that in the modern world, it has become common to entrust major resources to institutions we know little about, and suggests that we need to learn from historical experience and temper this with more traditional forms of trust, or become an ever more distrustful society, with potentially very destabilising consequences.

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