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# The future of democracy: the end of democracy as we know it

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The end of  
democracy as  
we know it

## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this article is to explore the future of democracy, given the transition the countries of the world are experiencing.

**Methodology** – The paper draws on literature concerning democracy, ICT and artificial intelligence. A framework for understanding the working of democracy is developed. This framework or model is tested in 20 countries, and conclusions are presented.

**Findings** – Globally, there is a shift taking place away from representative democracy toward less democratic forms of government.

**Originality** – Most studies are implicitly dogmatic in assuming that representative democracy is a superior form of government. The influences of corporations, media and the elite are moving representative democracy away from the ideal of democracy.

**Conclusions** – The future of democracy is uncertain. It is not likely that representative democracy will become the universal form of government. Global government is possible, but it is not likely to be a representative democracy.

**Keywords** Democracy, Direct democracy, Rule by experts, Rule by a strong leader, Rule by the military

**Paper type** Conceptual paper

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## Introduction

Democracy comes from the Greek and literally means “the rule of people.” Democracy was mistrusted for more than 2,000 years. It reemerged in the late 18th century, first in the USA and continued to expand to Western Europe and beyond (Mazower, 2013). Democracy is a system of governance where the people are ruled by the people for the people, as expressed by President Lincoln in his Gettysburg address in 1863. Democracy is an ideal that is pursued by men and probably will never be fully met. The concept of democracy is now a dogma in the West. Sir Winston Churchill once said, “Indeed it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time. . .” (The International Churchill Society, 2016). In the West, we are convinced it is a superior form of government, and many refuse to acknowledge that there are billions of humans living in non-democratic societies and that these societies are making progress too (BBC, 2010). One of the most successful non-democratic states is China. The Singapore model of the *de facto* one-party state of just being pragmatic and not sticking dogmatically to an ideology inspired in 1978 the then-president of China, Deng Xiaoping, and started China’s journey to become today’s giant, creating a sizable middle class in China (VPRO, 2009b; Tiezzi, 2018).

In an interview with Fareed Zakaria, author and CNN commentator Lee Kuan Yew (LKY), the founding father of Singapore in 1965, stated that democracy is a superior form of government, but Singapore can only now start to worry about that, now that Singapore has a growing economy and people have means of making a living (Zakaria, 2007; YouTube, 2018a).



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Given the progress of non-democratic societies, it raises the question if democracy is indeed a superior form of government.

To illustrate the dysfunction of current representative democracy, I present the case of the abolishment of taxes on dividends on shares in the Netherlands as presented by the member of the opposition Jesse Klaver on his Facebook wall ([Facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/jesseklaver), 2018). He states that the new legislation to reduce taxes on income from dividends was directly induced by the multinational corporation (MNC) Shell. The consequence is that billions of Euros are withheld from the people in the form of fewer public services and disappear into the pockets of shareholders. Klaver states, "In other words, the MNC writes its own laws." The issue was debated in Parliament and the opposition asked for the resignation of Prime Minister Rutte, but there was not a majority supporting this motion ([Tweedekamer.nl](https://www.tweedekamer.nl), 2018). After a few months of protest, the proposition was recalled by the Prime Minister.

The questions that are answered in this paper are as follows: What are the factors that are endangering representative democracy? In what direction is democracy heading? What are the possible scenarios for democracy?

Others are asking the same questions ([Janik, 2013](#)).

### Methodology

The paper draws on literature on democracy, ICT and artificial intelligence and critical reflection on the matter. About 20 countries were conveniently selected, analyzed and categorized to try to understand what is happening with democracy. This was based on the framework that was constructed based on the literature review. Part of the review is the comparison of the countries based on indexes referring to democracy, trust, freedom of the press, gross domestic product, human development, happiness, corruption and income distribution. The objective is to see if there is a correlation between factors. The draft of the article was discussed with peers and adjusted.

### Literature review

To answer the question if democracy is superior to other forms of government, one needs to further explore the concept of democracy. It is not just a procedure or process. It is also an outcome. Democracy must lead to a more just and equal society. Democracy is a procedure, a process and a way of life; however, in today's world, it has been reduced to just a procedure.

In essence, we are revisiting the old philosophical dilemma posted by Plato: philosopher-king ([Oxenbergh, 2015](#); [Hickel, 2016](#), p. 142). Philosopher-king is the idea that the best form of government is the one in which philosophers rule. The ideal of a philosopher-king was born in Plato's dialogue Republic as part of the vision of a utopian just city.

The concept of democracy is related to the concept of social contract. Before the social contract, there was the natural state. People understood that it was better to give up some individual freedom to the state for the whole of society to make progress based on a social contract. "Government exists to protect our natural rights" ([Oxenbergh, 2015](#)). Evolution of the state continued, and the trias politica of Montesquieu became the norm, further evolving to the notion that the authority resides with the people, who through elections delegate their power to their representatives and government. In essence, the people have the last word.

In general, people associate democracy with representative democracy. In reality, there is a spectrum of forms of government: Representative democracy, direct democracy, rule by experts, rule by a strong leader and rule by the military. [Mazower \(2013\)](#) refers to Jacob Talmon's term "totalitarian democracy" to highlight the pretensions of fascism and communism to the democratic inheritance. According to a Pew Research survey ([Wike et al., 2017](#); [Alexander, 2017](#); [The Economist, 2018a](#)), 78 per cent of those surveyed agree with the

representative democratic system. One half approves of democracy but also favors at least one of the alternatives of democracy. Technocracy is a strong alternative; it is more or less half and half. In countries where there is economic growth, people trust the government more. The less schooling, the more people are pro a junta. In wealthier countries, people favor representative government. In the West (including Australia), people are committed to representative government (Figure 1).

According to Abbas (2012), three developments are pressuring democracy today. These developments are as follows:

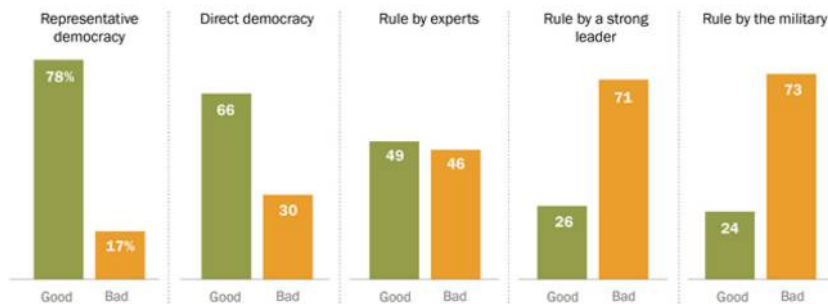
- (1) Globalization: de-sovereignization and marginalization of community;
- (2) IT: the fragmentation of public space; and
- (3) Power: concentration of wealth and influence.

The outcomes of the three developments are predictable: less attention to investment in the future, eroding optimism among the wider population, emergence of a permanent underclass (e.g. groups that have been living in poverty and those who have been living on welfare, etc.), the shrinking of the middle class in traditionally industrial nations, limited social class mobility and solidifying of elite power and rising spiritual and moral disintegration. These have given rise to extremism and/or apathy. Consequently, most societies have become segmented and dominated by elite and lobbyist groups. However, segmented societies do not thrive and without vigorous virtues (self-reliance, personal responsibility, industriousness and a passion for freedom), these societies are doomed to decline (Brooks, 2011).

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### Widespread support for representative and direct democracy, but many are also open to nondemocratic alternatives

Would \_\_\_ be a good or bad way of governing our country?



Note: Percentages are global medians based on 38 countries. Full question wordings for political systems: Representative democracy, "A democratic system where representatives elected by citizens decide what becomes law"; Direct democracy, "A democratic system where citizens, not elected officials, vote directly on major national issues to decide what becomes law"; Rule by experts, "Experts, not elected officials, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country"; Rule by a strong leader, "A system in which a strong leader can make decisions without interference from parliament or the courts"; Rule by the military, "The military rules the country."  
Source: Spring 2017 Global Attitudes Survey, Q29a-e.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Source: Wike *et al.* (2017)

Figure 1.  
Support for forms of  
government

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Much has been said about the failures of liberal democracies. Although they are typically rich and peaceful, many of their citizens are discontented. Globalization and technology have made them fear for their jobs. The culture wars ensure that more or less everyone feels disrespected by someone. The rise of autocracy is in part a reaction to these looming historical trends. But, it is also because power-hungry leaders have learned how to exploit them. You cannot have autocracy without an autocrat ([The Economist, 2018a](#); [Berman, 2018](#)). Others [Beller \(2018\)](#) add Islamic fundamentalism and further concentration of the population in urban areas as factors changing democracy. Islamic fundamentalism in particular can be considered part of the immigration issue.

Harari is also pessimistic on the future of democracy. He envisions a future where citizens are controlled by a minority, who have technology and data at their disposition to do so ([Harari, 2018a, 2018b](#)). The British philosopher A. C. Grayling states that democracy is in crisis due to institutional dysfunction, citizens unequipped for practical judgment and the distortion of corporate power. He is concerned about the development of democracy into plutocracy and oligarchy ([Kelly, 2017](#)).

David Runciman explores how democracy ends. He concludes that democracy is suffering a midlife crisis. Democracy will survive President Trump. The strength of democracy is that there is room for self-questioning and self-correction. He does not believe that the Chinese model is the future. China will get into trouble when its economic growth slows down ([Rawnsley, 2018](#)).

[Levitsky and Ziblatt \(2018\)](#) are less optimistic about the future of democracy in the USA. According to them, democracies can be taken down via the electoral system. Elected autocrats use the institutions as political weapons against others. They buy off the press and private sector, or bully them into silence. This has become possible because political basic norms have eroded: mutual tolerance and forbearance.

Christophe Buffin de Chosal argued in *The End of Democracy* that democracy will end because it has served its purpose. The purpose was to bring an organized minority to power to rule over a disorganized majority. The role of an elected parliament is the legitimization of the government serving the interest of the oligarchy and not the common good. Moral people cannot be in politics because they are not willing to serve the oligarchy. The democratic system cannot be reformed because 4 to 6 years is too short a period. Democracy will devolve into chaos and/or a totalitarian system ([YouTube, 2018b](#)).

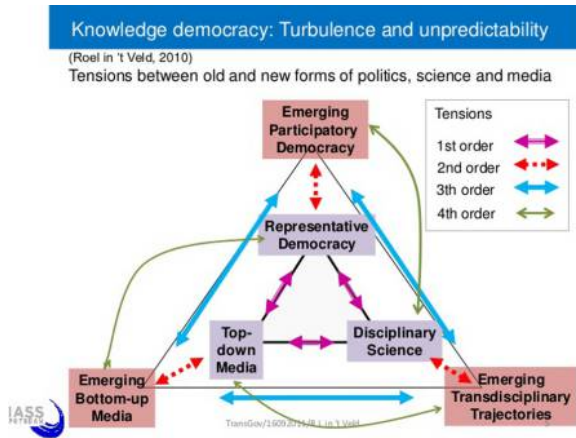
### Explanatory models

To understand the interrelationships between the factors involved in shaping democracy, some models might help. In ['t Veld \(2014\)](#) coins the concept of knowledge democracy (KD). Knowledge democracy is the further entanglement of politics, media and science. There is an increasing tension between the old and the new ways. The model of KD focuses on three interrelated factors: democracy, media and science ([Figure 2](#)).

Democracy (politics) is influenced by media and science and vice versa. Currently, there are two competing forms of democracy, according to this model: representative democracy versus the emerging participatory democracy or direct democracy.

The limitation of the KD model is that it remains within the democracy dogma and reduces the spectrum of democracy forms (representative democracy, direct democracy, rule by experts, rule by a strong leader and rule by the military) to a dichotomy (representative democracy versus participatory democracy).

Another limitation of the KD model is that it focuses on only three factors: democracy, media and science. As we have already seen and will explain further, there are several other factors involved.



Source: In 't Veld (2014)

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Figure 2. Knowledge democracy

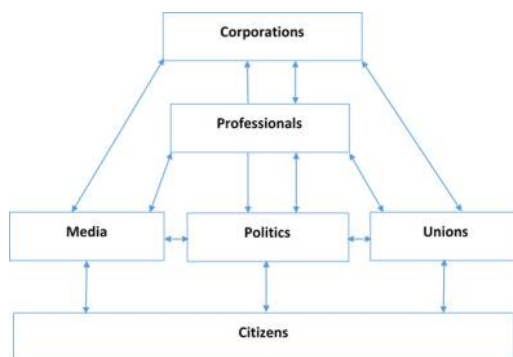
There is another triangle formed of politics, media and corporations: the party financiers. Politics is the dependent variable, and the desired outcome is democracy. The financiers in a sense own the media as well as the political party. This triangle places the voters or citizens (the second dependent variable) outside of the equation or at least considerably damages their position vis-a-vis politics (Goede, 2006) (Figure 3).

In the next paragraphs, the factors introduced by Abbas (2012) and others will be further explained.

The triangle of the state (politics), the citizens and capital (corporations) was established by Karl Marx around 1840 (Adam, 2010). We arrived at the same triangle without explicitly traveling the Marxist road.

*Politics*

The first dependent variable is politics. It is about who governs and how to obtain and maintain power.



Source: Goede (2006)

Figure 3. How corporations rule

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### *Citizens*

The second dependent variable is the citizens or society.

### *The corporation*

The corporation is an independent variable. The corporation seems to have become the dominant force of our time and the future (Bakan, 2012; Hickel, 2016, p. 146).

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### *Professionals*

Professionals and science are intervening variables.

### *Media*

The next intervening variable is the media. Citizens travel and emigrate, but via the Internet, they stay involved in the country of origin and in many cases retain the right to vote.

Other factors altering democracy are ICT and media. The media as an important factor in politics was identified in the first televised political debate between Kennedy and Nixon. During the first campaign of Obama, the power of the Internet was identified.

### *Unions*

The unions emerged in the industrial age in the nineteenth century. In general, unions have lost much of their power. They appear to have been trapped by the social dialogue. A 100 years ago, they were enclosed in the International Labor, and their straitjacket is getting tighter all the time. The irony is that there is no real alternative.

The indices discussed here are a measurement for the variables presented.

In the following table, the selected countries are compared based on their ratings. Later, democracy in the countries will be further discussed (Table I).

### *Democratic index*

Democratic Index is a scale for politics and media, composed by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), measuring democracy in 167 countries. It provides an indication for elections, civil liberties, political freedoms, political culture, checks and balances, independent judiciary, and diverse and independent media.

There are four groups of countries:

- (1) Full democracies: nations with very limited problems in democratic functioning;
- (2) Flawed democracies: nations where elections are fair and basic civil liberties are honored, but there are issues such as media freedom infractions, poor political culture, low participation level and governance issues.
- (3) Hybrid regimes: nations with issues with fair elections. Government pressures political opponents and the media. These nations have more profound issues than flawed democracies.
- (4) Authoritarian regimes: nations where there is no political pluralism, absolute monarchy and dictatorship. There is no freedom of the press, and the judiciary is not independent.

### *Edelman trust barometer*

The Trust Index is an average of a country's citizens' trust in the institutions of government, business, media and NGOs. This a measurement of democracy in a broader sense

	Democratic Index	Edelman Trust Barometer	Press Freedom Index	GDP ranking IMF	GDP growth ranking	The Financial Secrecy Index	The ITUC Global Rights Index 2017/9	HDI ranking	Happiness ranking	Gini ranking	Corruption index	Quadrant
Denmark	5		9	36	145	61	1	5	2	137	2	1
Finland	9		4	44	114	71	1	23	1	156	3	1
The Netherlands	11	7	3	18	103	14	1	7	6	131	8	1
UK	14	24	40	5		23	3	16	19	116	8	1
USA	21	18	45	1	71	2	4	10	18	41	16	2
India	42	3	138	6	5	32	5	131	133	97	81	2
Suriname	50		21	158	182			97			77	2
Philippines	51		133	39	17	40	5	116	71	46	111	2
Colombia	53	11	130	40	150		5	95	37	10	96	2
Mexico	66	6	147	15	138	82	5	77	24	25	135	2
Singapore	69	5	151	37	121	5	2	5	34	37	6	2
Turkey	100	13	157	17	22	30	5	71	74	65	81	3
Nicaragua	105		90	123	47			124	41	27	151	3
Iraq	112		160	54	6		4	121	117		169	3
Venezuela	117		143	51	191	85	3	71	102	73	169	4
Egypt	130		161	45	55		5	111	122	128	117	4
Cuba	131		172	65				68			62	4
Russia	135	28	148	12	148	29	3	49	59	59	135	4
China	138	1	176	2	15	28	5	90	86	31	77	4
Curacao						84						

**Notes:** 1-19 full, 20-76 Flawed, 77-115 Hybrid, 116-167 Authoritarian

**Sources:** [En.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org) (2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d); [Ev](https://www.edelman.com/sites/default/files/2018-01/2018%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Executive%20Summary.pdf) (2018); <https://www.edelman.com/sites/default/files/2018-01/2018%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>; <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>; [www.financialsecrecyindex.com/](https://www.financialsecrecyindex.com/); [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2172rank.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2172rank.html); [www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/ituc-global-rights-index-map2018-en.pdf](http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/ituc-global-rights-index-map2018-en.pdf); [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2172rank.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2172rank.html)

**Table I.**  
Matrix of all selected indices

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(Edelman.com, 2018). It is conducted in 28 countries among opinion elites and focuses on trust in business (corporations), government (politics), media and NGOs.

There is no correlation between the Democratic Index and the Trust Index ( $r = -0.01812$ ). This means there is no relationship between high trust in institutions and democracy. In some democracies, there is also a distrust in institutions and in some authoritarian countries citizens trust institutions.

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### *Press freedom index*

The Press Freedom Index is presented annually by “Reporters without Borders” and ranks countries according to freedom of the press perceived the year before. It is about the level of freedom that journalists, news organizations and citizens have in each country, and the effort made by government and institutions to respect these freedoms.

In the Nordic countries, including the Netherlands, there is freedom. Around the rest of the globe, freedom of the press is under pressure.

There is the assumption that freedom of the press, vibrant democracy and limited corruption go hand in hand. In China and Singapore, severe censorship proves otherwise (The Economist, 2018b).

There is a strong correlation between the Democratic Index and Press Freedom Index ( $r = 0.817667699$ ). In other words, where there is democracy there is freedom of the press and vice versa. In authoritarian countries, there is no freedom of the press.

### *Gross domestic product ranking International Monetary Fund*

The index gross domestic product (GDP) is related to the variable citizens or society. It is an indication of what a country produces. The statistics are collected by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Gross domestic product is the value of all final goods and services from a nation in one year. This gives an indication of how rich a country is, how well the economy is doing and therefore how well corporations are doing. It does not indicate how well the citizens are doing.

There is no correlation between the Democratic Index and the GDP ranking IMF ( $r = 0.132809408$ ). In other words, not only democratic countries are doing well economically.

### *GDP growth ranking*

GDP growth ranking is a measurement for how rapidly the economy of the citizens or society is growing. It is a list of countries sorted by their real gross domestic product growth rate: the rate of growth of the value of all final goods and services produced within a state in a certain year. The statistics are collected from the IMF World Economic Outlook Database, with the vast majority of estimates corresponding to the 2017 calendar year. Values from other sources are referenced as such.

The GDP growth ranking dictates which country is growing the fastest. It indicates how well the economy is doing in a specific year.

There is no correlation between the Democratic Index and the GDP growth ranking ( $r = -0.209457241$ ). In other words, not only democratic countries are doing economically well.

### *The financial secrecy index*

The Financial Secrecy Index ranks jurisdictions according to their secrecy and the scale of their offshore financial activities. It is a tool for understanding global financial secrecy, tax havens or secrecy jurisdictions, and illicit financial flows or capital flight. The index was launched on January 30, 2018.

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There is no correlation between the Democratic Index and the Financial Secrecy Index ( $r = 0.078848359$ ).

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#### *The ITUC global rights index 2017*

The ITUC Global Rights Index 2017 ranks 139 countries against 97 internationally recognized indicators to measure where workers' rights are best protected by law and in practice.

There is a weak correlation between the Democratic Index and the ITUC Right Index ( $r = 0.490857234$ ). In more democratic countries, the workers are better protected by law.

#### *Human development index ranking*

The Human Development Index (HDI) is related to the variable citizens or society. It indicates the quality of life of the citizens. The HDI indicates how well the citizens are doing in terms of life expectancy, education and standard of living. It is an indication of inclusiveness of the economy. The HDI is a composite statistic (composite index) of life expectancy, education and per capita income indicators, which are used to rank countries into four tiers of human development. A country scores a higher HDI when the lifespan is higher, the education level is higher and the GDP per capita is higher.

There is a weak correlation between the Democratic Index and the HDI ( $r = 0.512012761$ ). It seems that in democratic countries the quality of life is better.

#### *Happiness ranking*

The happiness ranking is another measurement for the variable citizens or society. It is an indication of how happy the citizens are. The happiness report indicates how inclusive a country is, politically and economically.

There is a strong correlation between the Democratic Index and the happiness ranking ( $r = 0.755401419$ ). In democratic societies, citizens are happier.

#### *Gini ranking*

The Gini Index is also a measurement for the variables citizens, corporations and politics. It is part of the HDI. The Gini Index measures the degree of inequality in the distribution of family income in a country. The more nearly equal a country's income distribution, the lower its Gini Index, e.g. a Scandinavian country with an index of 25. The Gini index is an indication of how inclusive or extractive society is. The lower the index, the more the elite includes the citizens.

There is a very weak correlation between the Democratic Index and the Gini Index ( $r = -0.428560832$ ). This might indicate that inequality is lower in democratic countries.

#### *Corruption index*

The Corruption Index is a measurement for the relationship between the variables corporations, professionals, politics, media and even unions. The index ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and businesspeople and uses a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean.

The corruption index shows how the (corporate) elite operate vis-à-vis politicians, professions, media and unions. It is a measurement for extraction by the elite.

There is a weak correlation between the Democratic Index and the Corruption Index ( $r = 0.698178245$ ). There is an indication that the more democratic a country, the less corruption there is.

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**“Why nations fail” (WNF)**

The model of “Why Nations Fail” (WNF) offers an additional tool to illustrate where a country stands when it comes to democracy and success. WNF offers us a chessboard to illustrate where countries stand, and an explanation why, as well as an indication of what direction they are heading. Successful countries have inclusive political and economic institutions. The model is not a dichotomy but a scale. A country can be in a particular quadrant but being pushed and pulled in a certain direction, influenced by several factors. These factors or variables have been explained in the abovementioned framework ([Table II](#)).

WNF is an investigation into the relationships responsible for the success and failure of nations ([Figure 4](#)).

- *R1*: Inclusive political system encourages inclusive economy that creates prosperity and a prosperous society.
- *B2*: Prosperity leads to the emergence of a group fascinated by it that creates an extractive political system that corrupts the inclusive political system and if not controlled will abolish the inclusive political system. This will affect the inclusive economy and hence prosperity.
- *R3*: The extractive political system leads to an extractive economy that reinforces the concentration of wealth in the hands of the elite. A reinforcing loop R3 is formed: the rich get richer.
- *B4*: Besides the extractive political system undermining an inclusive political system having a negative impact on inclusive economy, the extractive political system encourages an extractive economy that has a negative impact on the inclusive economy, so it is impacted negatively at the same time from two directions.

The system appears to be basically corrupt. Isn't some explicit action required to avoid the unavoidable? What is the likelihood that correction will take place? Is there an alternative to total economic meltdown or revolution?

**The country cases; the rise of populism**

When combining the Democracy Index, the WNF and PEW Research Center, the following picture develops ([Table III](#)).

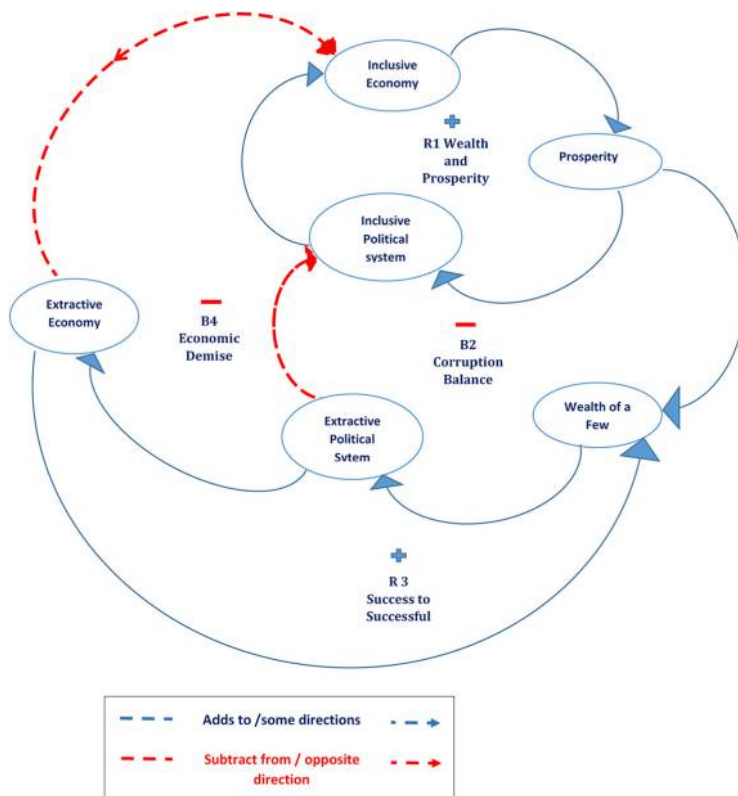
At first glance, the three (DI, WNF and PEW) fit in each other. Let us have a closer look. Based on the dogma that democracy is superior, we would expect non-democratic countries to score poorly on the HDI and the happiness report. This is not always the case.

In the following section, we look more closely at the countries, categorized in four quadrants.

	Inclusive political institutions		Exclusive political institutions	
Inclusive economics institutions	1.1	1.3	3.1	3.3
	1.2	1.4	3.2	3.4
Exclusive economics institutions	2.1	2.3	4.1	4.3
	2.2	2.4	4.2	4.4

**Table II.**  
WNF

**Sources:** [Acemoglu and Robinson \(2013\)](#); <https://macrothoughts.weebly.com/blog/modernization-theory-and-some-further-thoughts-on-why-nations-fail>



Source: <https://insightmaker.com/insight/36864/Why-Nations-Fail>

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Figure 4.  
WNF

### Quadrant 1: Successful countries

In Quadrant 1, there is no discussion about the position of the countries.

These countries have inclusive political as well as economic institutions. They score well on all the indices. One might expect Denmark and Finland to be ranked higher on the GDP ranking. Their relatively low ranking is an indication that GDP is not as important as one might think.

### The Nordic countries

The Nordic countries – Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden – are the most successful countries in the world. They are very inclusive in all aspects and their people are the happiest in the world.

*Norway.* An example of this is Norway. The Government Pension Fund Global, also known as the Oil Fund, was established in 1990 to invest the surplus revenues of the Norwegian petroleum sector. It has over US\$1 tn in assets, including 1.3 per cent of global stocks and shares, making it the world's largest sovereign wealth fund. In 2017, Norway's sovereign wealth fund, already the largest in the world, after surpassing \$1 tn in assets,

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	Inclusive political institutions	Exclusive political institutions
Inclusive economic institutions	Successful nations (Full democracy) Representative democracy; Direct democracy.	Modernization theory (Hybrid regimes) Rule by experts; Rule by a strong leader.
	Denmark Finland Netherlands UK	Turkey Nicaragua Iraq
Exclusive economic institutions	(Flawed democracy) Representative democracy; direct democracy; rule by experts; rule by a strong leader. USA	Unsuccessful nations (Authoritarian)  <i>Rule by a strong leader; rule by the military.</i>
	India Surinam Philippines Colombia Mexico Singapore Curacao	Venezuela Egypt Cuba Russia China

**Table III.**  
Model WNF

announced that it made an annual return of 1,028 bn kroner (\$131 billion), the largest amount in the fund's 20-year history ([World Economic Forum, 2018](#)).

*Denmark.* Denmark scores very high on the Democratic Index. The country scores positive on all the indices. There is freedom of the press, meaning that there are checks and balances. This is confirmed by the Number 2 position on the Corruption Index. Economic growth is not the number one priority. The unions have equal position and corporations do not have a dominant position. This results in number two position on the Happiness ranking.

*Finland.* Finland is Number 9 on the Democratic index. Finland is ranked Number 1 on the Happiness index. The workers are the best protected in the world. Their checks and balances institution works. This is indicated by the number three position on the Corruption index and number four on the Press Freedom index. Corporations do not have a dominant position, as indicated by the low ranking on the Financial Security index.

Finland was one of the first countries to start an experiment with universal basic income, providing unemployed with an income without obligation to work or seek a job. In 2018, this was terminated because there were concerns that looking for a job had become very unattractive ([Olli-Nilsson, 2018](#)).

*The Netherlands.* The Netherlands has the same characteristics as the Nordic countries: A high score on happiness, high score on the HD index, low corruption and great freedom of the press. A significant difference is the strong position of corporations ([Engelen, 2018](#)), and the rich are getting richer ([van Teutem, 2018](#)). The Netherlands, which like the Scandinavian countries was in Quadrant 1.1, slipped into 1.4 as corporations gained more and open access to political power. The PVV – a populist party – has a significant presence in Parliament.

According to a survey published in June 2018, 75 per cent of Dutch voters are in favor of reforms of the electoral system. The support for a directly elected prime minister, First Chamber and a binding referendum has increased ([Telegraaf.nl, 2018](#)). There is a report on

the matter of forwarding democracy, but no real steps in that direction have been undertaken ([Binnenlandsbestuur.nl](http://Binnenlandsbestuur.nl), 2018).

The Trust Index confirms that trust has remained high in the Netherlands. The Dutch are ranked Number 7.

### *United Kingdom, Brexit*

The UK is the last country in this research that is positioned in Quadrant 1. There are some noticeable differences. Economic growth is a very high priority. The press is much less free. Corporations are much stronger than unions. Still, corruption is relatively low.

On June 23, 2016, 51.9 per cent of the UK voted to leave the European Union: Brexit. They were influenced by populists. Those who voted to leave wanted the decisions affecting them to be made in Britain and not in Europe. They wanted to regain control over immigration and the borders of the UK.

The outcome of the referendum was influenced by the fact that only 64 per cent of the voters between the ages of 18 and 24 showed up and the older voters showed up in greater numbers.

It was also a victory of “order” over “openness”. This spectrum replaced the left-right spectrum. The deprived and lower educated voted to leave the EU. In general, the British people feel the least integrated in Europe. The result was much influenced by fake news on an industrial scale by those favoring “Leave.” The branding of “Leave” was stronger.

People who felt that they had lost out from globalization and immigration reasoned that they had nothing to lose and voted to leave.

The media in the UK has always been Europe-skeptic ([En.wikipedia.org](http://En.wikipedia.org), 2018e).

The outcome of Brexit is the reason for many corporations to move to, for example, the Netherlands.

In July 2018, there is political tension in the British government as Prime Minister May tries to cherry-pick. England will comply, except for accommodating migrants from the other European countries.

The UK is a democracy in Quadrant 1. The Brexit outcome was a move from 1.1. to 1.3 or 1.4. It was about excluding Europe in the political and economic senses. This might be reflected in the 24th position on the Trust Index of 2018, lower than the USA, leaving only Russia behind.

### *Quadrant 2: Flawed democracy*

The countries in Quadrant 3 have inclusive political institutions and exclusive economic institutions.

*USA.* The US is now considered a flawed democracy. Economic growth is priority number one. Corporations are very powerful, but workers are still protected by laws. The citizens are relatively happy, despite the gap between rich and poor.

In November 2016, President Trump was elected. Many voters regarded the alternative of Hillary Clinton as worse. They considered it a continuation of the Clinton–Obama era. According to them, Obama had created only minimum wage jobs and Obamacare was considered a failure. The voters wanted conservative laws, for example, regarding abortion. They wanted to safeguard the right to possess arms. They were afraid that Clinton would escalate the conflict in Syria and war against Russia would become unavoidable. They were concerned about immigration and terrorism. They considered that the media was anti-Trump, painting a grim picture if he got elected. Voters wanted the businessman Trump, who cared more about the people and would enable the USA to operate more efficiently and bring jobs back (Fishwick and Guardian readers, 2016).

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The election of President Trump in 2016 further discredited the democratic system. There was suspicion of collusion by the Russians, who favored Trump over Hillary Clinton. There was hacking and dissemination of fake news. Fake news is a term President Trump claims that he introduced (Borchers, 2018). The USA is no longer the beacon of democracy but an oligarchy (Janik, 2013). Traditionally, the US system is characterized by big donations by corporations and the elite, and politicians and political bodies heavily influenced by lobbyists.

Once in office President Trump considered military intervention in countries like Venezuela an option. It was presented as liberating the people of Venezuela (Borger, 2018).

The US was a democracy in Quadrant 1.2 and has shifted to 1.4. This statement is supported by the significant decline in trust in the USA as indicated on the Trust Index 2018 to position 18.

*India.* India is a flawed democracy. Economic growth is a priority. There is not much freedom of the press, and corruption is relatively high. The position of workers is weak. The citizens are not so happy. Despite this all India is ranked Number 3 on the Trust Index 2018!

India, like China, has made tremendous social and economic progress. Unlike China, however, it has always remained democratic. This is the reason why in the West India is often rated above China, as it is assumed that eventually China will have to democratize and that this process will slow or even throw China back.

*Suriname.* Suriname is a flawed democracy. There is relatively great freedom of the press. Corruption is high. Drug trafficking is significant. China has great influence on the country.

Suriname is a Small Island Development State that obtained its independence from The Netherlands in 1975.

Suriname has a market economy and has not been performing so well economically the last couple of years, despite the fact that this multicultural country might be one of the richest in the world based on the availability of natural resources. Suriname was an agricultural economy that became an economy dominated by mining, mainly bauxite (starting around 1916), and nowadays also gold and from the 1980s also oil. Suriname has a large informal economy, estimated between 35 per cent and 45 per cent, and a big public sector. Its infrastructure has improved over the course of the years. There is no robust private sector.

Suriname became independent in 1975. In 1980, Desi Bouterse seized power. In 1987, Suriname returned to democracy. In 2010, Bouterse became president after 10 years of presidency by Venetiaan. In 2015, Bouterse started a second term. The country is facing an economic crisis, increasing poverty, and is in the grip of corruption and a drugs economy. China seems to play an important role.

Suriname started in 1975 in Quadrant 1.3 and was hoping to one day get to 1.1. After the coup it ended in Quadrant 4. Currently, Suriname is Quadrant 4.1.

*Philippines.* The Philippines is a flawed democracy, with little freedom of the press, high corruption, and a considerable gap between rich and poor. The economy is growing, but the position of the workers is poor. Human development is low. Surprisingly, the citizens are relatively happy: Number 71 in the rankings.

On May 9, 2016 Rodrigo Duterte was elected president in the oldest democracy in Southeast Asia. The main issues of the campaign were the economy, crime and corruption. He announced constitutional reforms. He promised to eliminate thousands of criminals.

Duterte was perceived to be the anti-establishment candidate in a country frustrated by the slow pace of change and a small clique of the political elite in power for years (Holmes, 2016, p.?).

The Philippines are becoming less inclusive.

*Colombia.* Colombia is a flawed democracy: there is not much freedom of the press or inclusive economic institutions. The gap between rich and poor is enormous. Corruption is very high. Still, the citizens are relatively happy.

The country is still coping with the aftermath of the era of the drug cartels and the war with the FARC guerrilla. Presidential elections were held in Colombia on May 27, 2018. As no candidate received a majority of the vote, a second round was held on June 17. Incumbent President Juan Manuel Santos is ineligible for re-election, having already served two terms.

Democratic Center Senator Iván Duque won the presidential runoff on June 17, with 54 per cent of the votes over former Bogotá Mayor Gustavo Petro, who obtained 42 per cent. Duque's running mate, Marta Lucía Ramírez, became Colombia's first female vice president. The 2018 to 2022 Colombian Congress will face the task of establishing the legal framework for implementing outstanding parts of the 2016 peace agreement between the Juan Manuel Santos administration and the FARC. Duque and his mentor and party member, ex-President Álvaro Uribe, are both critics of the deal. Uribe won a second term as senator in March, and the Democratic Center party is now the largest in Congress. Presidential reelection was eliminated in 2015, so Duque will serve a single 4-year term. The inauguration was August 7, 2018.

It has recently become more and more apparent that the FARC has not dismantled itself and that the tensions are rising again. All this is reflected in a slight decline in trust on the Edelman Trust Barometer, but still Colombia holds the eleventh position.

*Mexico.* Mexico is a flawed democracy with extractive economic institutions. Corruption is high. Human development is relatively low, but happiness is relatively high. The country is struggling with drug cartels.

On July 1, 2018, López Obrador won the 2018 presidential election in a landslide. After 18 years, the establishment has now been taken over by a left-wing organization. From 1929 until 2000, the PAN ruled. The voters voted for change by electing the PAN candidate. Poverty and corruption remained pervasive. Half of the population lives below the poverty line. War against the drug cartels claimed more than a 100,000 lives. López Obrador, a populist and nationalist, is prepared to confront President Trump. He will have to solve the problems of corruption, violence and homicide, poverty and inequality in Mexico. Investors are concerned about the economy and comparisons with Chávez, the late president of Venezuela, are drawn; some link the new president with Russia. López Obrador will have to convince investors. He has stated that he will respect the independence of the central bank as well as the contracts regarding the exploration for and production of oil. He stated that he will finance his social programs by reducing corruption. The question is whether that will be enough (Ahmed and Semple, 2018).

Mexico is in Quadrant 2.2 and now wants to migrate to 2.1, an inclusive political system with an excluding economy. Notwithstanding this, Mexico is ranked Number 6 on the Trust Index 2018.

*Singapore.* Singapore is not a true democracy. There is no freedom of the press, but corruption is kept very low. Human development is comparatively high, despite the gap between the rich and the poor. The position of corporations is strong.

On March 23, 2015 the founding father of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, died at the age of 91. He led the nation-state from 1965 till 1990, but remained heavily involved in its government until his death (VPRO, 2009a; Rawlinson, 2015). He was followed by his son Lee Hsien Loong in 2004, after an "interim Pope," Goh Chok Tong. In practice, Singapore is a one-party state (People's Action Party). The governing party has ruled Singapore since its independence in 1965 and is therefore criticized for not being democratic. The press is



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restricted. State-owned corporations play a strategic role. What no one can deny is that the island-state has evolved from a poor fisher harbor to one of the richest countries of the first world (Yew, 2012).

It is debatable if Singapore is in Quadrant 3 or 2. Given the fact that it is actually ruled by one party, it is better placed in Quadrant 2. Singapore positioned itself in Quadrant 3 from the start, but still considers Quadrant 1 superior. There is some movement to position itself in Quadrant 3.1. The Trust Index indicates that despite this all Singapore is ranked Number 5; 70 per cent of the informed public trusts institutions.

*Quadrant 3: Modernization theory (hybrid regimes)*

The countries in Quadrant 3 have exclusive political institutions but have inclusive economic institutions.

*Turkey.* Turkey is 100th on the Democratic Index. Economic growth seems to be the focus. There is very little freedom of the press. The corporations are much stronger than the unions. Corruption is relatively high. The citizens are considerably less happy compared to the citizens of the countries in quadrant one.

In 2016 there was a coup in Turkey and President Erdogan became progressively less democratic.

In June 2018, President Erdogan won the elections in Turkey and had his constitutional reforms approved (Lyons *et al.*, 2018). In July 2018, he announced the appointment of his son-in-law as finance minister.

The political institutions in Turkey are becoming less inclusive. With these developments, it has moved toward Quadrant 3.4, and if the tendency continues, they might be on their way to Quadrant 4. Still, trust has increased, and Turkey is ranked Number 13 on the Trust Index, above the USA.

*Nicaragua.* Nicaragua is not so democratic. Freedom of the press is limited. There is a huge gap between rich and poor. Human development is relatively low, but until recently the people were relatively happy.

Dictator Somasa was toppled in 1979 by the Sandinistas National Liberation Front of Daniel Ortega. The contras, supported by the USA, gave the new government a hard time. Socialism did not bring economic progress, and a US-backed government came into office in 1990. In 2006, Ortega came back, and like Chaves in Venezuela, he manipulated the system to keep the opposition out, but life remained a struggle for the poor masses, despite the reforms that brought economic growth to the country: 5 per cent in 2011. Investments were made in healthcare education and social programs. In April 2018, the government increased social security payments and cut pensions. A popular uprising occurred when the unemployed youth, pensioners, unions and religious leaders took to the streets. The government suppressed the rebellion. The education and financial sectors shut down and paralyzed the country, requiring early elections. Ortega promised investigation of the deaths and reforms, but no early elections. The crisis is far from over. Some attribute the crisis effect to the Western media (Observer, 2018).

The comparison with Venezuela goes on:

Ortega's supporters, meanwhile, have staged counter-demonstrations, and the government and state media deny civilian killings while insisting that the protests are infiltrated by criminal gangs. Ortega and his unpopular wife, who serves as vice president, have called the police violence a "legitimate defense" against these groups. Ortega was democratically elected in 2006, but has since been accused of mounting repression and media censorship (Turak, 2018, p.?).

Nicaragua has moved from Quadrant 4 to 3, aiming to one day reach Quadrant one.

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*Quadrant 4: Unsuccessful nations (authoritarian)*

The countries in Quadrant 4 have exclusive political institutions and exclusive economic institutions.

In Quadrant 4, China is an issue, which one might expect in Quadrant 3.

*Venezuela.* Venezuela is an unsuccessful nation. Freedom of the press has declined to a very low level. Corruption is rampant. This has resulted in the collapse of the economy. The citizens are not happy.

By 2018, the Venezuelan people were hungry, weak and sick, seeking refuge in the region. On May 20, 2018, President Maduro won the election. The opposition was divided and boycotted the elections. Less than 50 per cent (46.1 per cent) of the voters showed up, and 67.7 per cent of these elected the president. The opposition claimed that there was fraud. Many governments did not recognize the results of the elections and called for a dialogue between the president and the opposition ([BBC News, 2018b](#); [Phillips, 2018](#)). In August 2018, President Maduro declared that after evaluation, he has concluded that his economic model has failed; production must increase.

How did Venezuela get in this shape? On May 27, 2015 the opposition won the majority in Venezuela's parliament. It was the first time that the Chávez movement lost the majority. Maduro sidestepped the parliament by creating a super body, the constituent assembly, and suppressing the opposition. In 2017, former attorney general Luisa Ortega Díaz, in exile, denounced Maduro for his involvement in the huge corruption scandal surrounding Brazilian firm Odebrecht ([Graham-Harrison and López, 2017](#)).

Venezuela under President Chávez started in Quadrant 2 but gradually ended up in Quadrant 4: an authoritarian government with a high degree of corruption.

*Arab spring.* The Arab world is 5 per cent of the global population but accounts for half of all terrorist attacks ([The Guardian, 2017](#)).

At a certain stage, the West was so convinced that democracy was universal and must be introduced that it was even forced upon other nations like Iraq (War, 2003–2011). It was an attempt to move Iraq into the domain of inclusive political institutions. Iraq was in Quadrant 4, Cell 4.3. In reality, the country did not even get to Cell 4.2 or 4.1. The result is that Iraq ended up in Cell 4.4.

The Arab spring (2010-2012) was celebrated in the West as a triumph of democracy.

The Arab Spring resulted in rulers being ousted in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen; civil uprisings in Bahrain and Syria; major protests in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco and Oman; and minor protests in Lebanon, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Western Sahara.

An important role was attributed to technology and social media like Twitter and Facebook. Not long thereafter, it became apparent that democracy was not that easily introduced.

The result of the spring was that after 6decades of autocracy, four Arab leaders were put out of power. In Egypt a counter-revolution has returned the military to power. Other states are in ruins and outside powers are principle actors. The sole democratic success is Tunisia. The factors that played a role in creating the "Arab spring" are falling oil prices, defective leadership creating crisis after crisis, fast-growing young and highly educated populations, concentrated in urban areas with high expectations, not enough jobs, poverty and marginalization. Dissidence was suppressed but the issues were not handled. The government spent too much on arms. Power was hereditary. Business was corrupt, wasting money that could have been spent creating jobs and improving basic services. There are still no democratic means of dealing with the discontent, and the West is not concerned with democracy in the Arab world.

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Their primary concern is corporations' ability to sell weapons in the region ([The Guardian, 2017](#)).

In general, the Arab countries are located in Quadrant 4, exclusive political and economic institutions. Spring was an attempt to move to Domain 2, but it was brief and was followed by a winter.

*Egypt.* Egypt is not a successful state. There is very little freedom of the press. Corruption is high, and the citizens are not happy.

Egypt ended dictatorship, but in 2013, it was glad to return to an authoritarian regime ([Guru-Murthy, 2013](#)). In 2011, Hosni Mubarak was ousted. But Egypt has worsened dramatically since the army overthrew a government led by Mohamed Morsi, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, in 2013, and named General Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi president after the coup.

*Cuba.* By many, Cuba is considered not successful. There is no freedom of the press. Human development is not as high as one might think, despite its achievements in healthcare and education. And corruption is higher than one might expect.

On March 11, 2018, for the first time in 6 decades, someone not from the Castro family ruled Cuba, as Miguel Diaz Canal became president. This was the outcome of the elections in the one-party state. The expectations – especially in Cuba – are that the political system will remain intact and that Raúl Castro will remain a political factor. The new leader is expected to implement market-oriented reforms without damaging the social policies of Cuba. Although Diaz Canal was born after the revolution and is not a military man, there are still political prisoners and criticizing the government is still not permitted ([Augustin, 2018](#)).

Under Diaz Canal reforms of the constitution dating to the Soviet era were announced. The most noticeable changes were the recognition of the market and private property. The position of prime minister was introduced, separating the head of the state from the head of the government. The president is head of the assembly, and the president is limited to two 5-year terms ([Reuters, 2018](#)). Also same-sex marriage has been announced but was later reversed.

It is questionable if Cuba is in Quadrant 4 or 3. We propose Cuba is moving from 3.3 to 3.1.

*Russia.* Russia is not democratic. There is no freedom of the press. Economic growth is a priority. Corporations are influential. Human development has improved in the last 20 years.

Shortly after the re-election of Xi Jinping in China in 2018, Putin was reelected for the fourth time on March 18, 2018 ([Hincks, 2018](#)). Putin is not exactly a democrat; he has turned away from Western liberal values and international norms and has had Russia in his grip since 1999 ([Wintour and Connolly, 2018](#)).

Russia has moved from Quadrant 3 to 1. It is in 1.4 and might be drifting toward Quadrant 3 or 4. This is also illustrated by the fact that Russia holds the last position on the Trust Index, although trust has risen 2 per cent in 2018.

*China.* China is a successful non-democratic country. There is very little freedom of the press. Its focus is on economic growth. State-owned corporations fulfil a strategic role. The system is called state capitalism. Corruption is higher than one might suspect.

On March 17, 2018 President Xi Jinping was elected president for life in this one-party system. Until then, the president was elected for a maximum of two 5-year terms, amounting to 10 years ([BBC News, 2018a](#); [Buckley and Bradsher, 2018](#)).

China is a non-democratic society. The state controls the media, including the Internet. When in the late 1980s, the youth – influenced by economic reforms – thought that more democracy was possible, this illusion was crushed at Tiananmen Square in 1989. The Chinese state considers the rise of President Trump as proof that democracy does not work and creates chaos ([Phillips, 2016](#)).

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Although China copies Singapore, there are differences, for example, when it comes to state-owned companies.

The gap reflects the government's use of SOEs to advance policy goals. As China's economy has slowed in recent years, private groups reduced investment in response to weak demand. But the government has deployed SOEs to plug the investment gap and ensure that overall growth does not fall too far (Wildau, 2018).

China has shifted from Quadrant 4 to Quadrant 3. They are consolidating their position in Quadrant 3.3. This means they keep working on economic growth and creating a middle class, although they are creating billionaires at a higher rate than everyone else. On the other hand, they just made the process of electing the president by the party less democratic.

Overall, China is Number 1 on the Trust Index 2018. This illustrates that trust is high in non-democratic societies, just like the case of Singapore, which is ranked Number 5.

*Curaçao.* The case of Small Island Developing State, Curaçao is presented separately because the country does not show up in many of the rankings.

In 2010, Curaçao became an autonomous country in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, after the Netherlands Antilles had been dissolved. At the same time, a new political bloc came to power after 16 years. The government was run by populists, who extensively used media for propaganda, and the big political parties were greatly influenced by financiers and infiltrated and even owned by organized crime. This led to the political murder of the politician who received the most votes on May 5, 2013. From that moment on, government coalitions have been formed and kept together at all cost, to block out other political parties, their politicians and the forces behind them.

Curaçao is in Quadrant 2.2 and the ideal is to one day get to 2.1. On paper, Curaçao has inclusive political institutions. There is no economic growth. Wealth is concentrated, excluding the majority of the population. Via financing, the elite have enslaved the political institutions, and so Curaçao is drifting toward Quadrant 4: an unsuccessful nation.

## Conclusions and discussion

In what direction is democracy heading? Based on our own research, we conclude that below the surface things are changing.

Democracy index is a measure of democratic performance introduced by the EIU. Statistical tests indicate that there are significant variations of democracy indices between countries, but no significant variations between years. This means that global democracy has become stagnant in the sense that no significant progress or regression has been observed. Democracy is a popular alternative to hybrid or authoritarian regimes, but the nations' recent democratic transitions have brought no improvements to life in society. Rulers of many developing countries are abusing this democratic identity and under this umbrella are doing all kinds of inhumane things to control their opponents, resulting in suffering for the ordinary people. In many multi-party democratic countries, only two main parties have been ruling the countries for decades or centuries. In some countries, both of these main parties are corrupt and people have no choice. It was proved that democracy does not bring peace in society. (Shafiqur Rahman, 2014, pp. 381-383)

Underground, there is movement toward less democratic forms of government. I agree with Madeleine Albright, who in her book *Fascism: A warning* posits the question, "Can it happen here?" She refers to the rise to power of fascism at the beginning of the twentieth century (Berman, 2018). So, in democracies, autocratic leaders emerge and systematically break down institutions to remain in power, regardless of their ideology (The Economist, 2018a). They position themselves in Quadrants 1.3 or 1.4.

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The Democratic Index states that 2017 was the worst year for democracy since 2010-2011, reflecting the global financial crisis of 2008, during which 89 countries declined in their score compared to the previous year, 2016. This is three times more than countries that have improved. Asia was the worst performing region. In China Xi Jinping further consolidated his power. Venezuela was downgraded to an authoritarian regime.

The next [Table IV](#) illustrates the number and percentage of countries and world population per each type of regime in 2017.

The problem seems to be neoliberalism. It is an extracting economic institution, leading to inequality, and this is a threat for democracy. This is in a nutshell part of the explanation why the USA has regressed from a full democracy to a flawed democracy. This is why the Netherlands is regressing slowly on the Democratic Index. It is neoliberalism that will prevent countries like Russia, Mexico and Colombia from progressing on their path toward full democracy ([Van Rossem, 2018](#)).

### What are the factors that are endangering representative democracy?

Let's have another look at the model and the some variables.

#### *The corporation (globalization: de-sovereignization and marginalization of community)*

The nation-state is getting weaker. By applying the shock doctrine ([Klein, 2007](#)), governments serving corporations implement measures that benefit the elite. Some state that the financial crisis of 2008 was a shock that was used to fortify capitalism ([Zizek, 2015](#)).

Neoconservative ideology has helped to dismantle state regulations and transfer wealth to the 1 per cent. Now, they are in a position to influence much of state legislation in their favor. They and their fortunes are protected by hosts of lawmakers, managers, accounting firms, lawyers, tax consultants, think tanks, radio stations, film studios, publishers, media outlets, researchers, ghostwriters, lobbyists, body guards and other lackeys in their service. As private property is the golden calf of capitalism, and unregulated capitalism has become the bible of the ruling class, they can even mobilize police forces and ultimately the military on their behalf. Here, the nation-state and its government remain important agencies, as they can easily be played off against each other (e.g., tax evasion). Still, the rich manage to be admired in public as the true heroes of society, the stars of success and the personification of what was once called the American Dream ([Polk, 2014](#)). This is the end of democracy as we knew it, and the definite takeover of plutocracy ([Hamm, 2015](#), p. 174).

The corporation, via donations to political parties, has caged politicians to serve the interest of the corporations ([Hickel, 2016](#)). This is not new. The role of the Military Industrial Complex has been documented since the 1960s ([Cox, 2014](#)). However, there are new strategies. Corporations and their owners use charity as a strategy to enforce their agenda. Countries like China and Venezuela use state-owned companies to intervene in other countries.

**Table IV.**

The number and percentage of countries and world population per each type of regime in 2017

Type of regime	Number of countries	% of countries	% of world population
Full democracies	19	11.4	4.4
Flawed democracies	57	34.1	44.3
Hybrid regimes	39	23.4	17.7
Authoritarian regimes	52	31.1	32.3

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During the 1970s, large loans were granted to countries, particularly in the Third World. This led to the debt crisis. Via institutions dominated by the West, like the IMF and The World Bank, via imposing Structural Adjustment Programs, Western institutions were imposed.

The end of  
democracy as  
we know it

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Structural adjustment represented a serious attack on democracy in the global South. It meant that key decisions over economic policy were made not by national parliaments, but rather by bankers and technocrats in Washington and New York (Hickel, 2016).

So:

Neoliberal reforms have undermined democratic sovereignty over the past 40 years, but they have also set off a popular backlash that is growing bold enough to make demands for new and more radical forms of democracy (Juris, 2008; Maeckelbergh, 2009). It is still too early to tell, but the end of democracy as we knew it might also mark the beginning of something else (Hickel, 2016, p. 151).

George Soros is a member of the global elite who bet on the liberal democracy. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, in 1989, he poured hundreds of millions of dollars into the former Soviet-bloc countries to promote civil society and liberal democracy. He created a philanthropic organization, then called the Open Society Fund, in 1979 and began sponsoring college scholarships for black South African students. But he soon turned his attention to Eastern Europe, where he started financing dissident groups (Steinberger, 2018).

It is not about who votes. It is about who decides who runs. It is what is called the green primary. Green refers to dollars. Only 0.02 per cent of the voters substantially finance the campaigns. The elected candidates serve the financiers. Democracy is no longer for the people (Lessig, 2015).

### *Professionals (science)*

Professionals like CEOs, managers, lawyers, accountants and consultants serve the corporations and the elite. Even scientists sell out to corporations. Neoliberalism has reduced all relationships to financial transactions and all has become about money and the accumulation of wealth. Professionals sell their advice and services for money. This has led to a moral erosion and corruption.

There are indications that Transnational Organized Crime has contaminated the democratic process and therefore the democratic society. The link might be tax evasion, among others. Panama, Paradise and other papers have taught us how criminals and terrorists manage fortunes and have also exposed that politicians all over the world have inexplicable wealth. It is not unlikely that the origin of this wealth is corruption (ICIJ, 2018). Some of the tax havens like Nevis are extremely secretive (Bullough, 2018). This indicates that politicians are self-serving and not working in the public interest (Goede, 2013). One in three people in Latin America are bribed (McVeigh, 2017). The corruption scandal Odebrecht in Latin America and the Caribbean illustrates how worldwide it is (Graham-Harrison, 2017).

The bottom line is that professionals are not independent and do not serve the general interest.

*Unions.* In general, unions have lost much of their power. It appears they have been trapped by the social dialogue. A 100 years ago they were enclosed in the International Labor Organization and their straitjacket is getting tighter all the time. The irony is that there is no real alternative.

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*Religion.* After discussion, there emerge other interesting factors. One of these is religion. There is a correlation between religion and economic development (Fahmy, 2018). The rich countries are not very religious. The countries in Quadrant 1 (the inclusive countries) score low on religion and countries in Quadrant 4 (the excluding countries) score high on religion. The USA is an exception. Although the USA is a rich country it is also very religious. Future research can include this factor in the model.

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### **What are the possible scenarios for democracy?**

The following scenarios of the future of democracy are possible. A mix of these scenarios is also an option: state capitalism, global governance, governance by algorithms, governance by populist and autocratic rulers, and takeover by plutocrats.

#### *The state capitalism*

China and Singapore, with state capitalism, represent a tempting theoretical alternative to democracy (Zizek, 2015). They rise on the Human Development Index. That is why some believe that the fate of democracy will be decided in Asia (Beller, 2018). China is in Quadrant 4, and the question is if they will ever move toward Quadrant 1. India is in Quadrant 2, and more people are coming out of extreme poverty. The question is if the economy of India will be more inclusive. Indications are that the rich will get richer and the poor will bear the burden (Corrigan and Di Battista, 2018).

#### *Global governance*

The future of governance is global governance, not only because the issues are global (pollution, climate change, migration and security) but also because the corporation and the elite are global. Events like the climate treaty of Paris and Agendas 21 and 2030 are indications of the direction we are heading concerning global governance.

According to Held (2015), the great problems will be global and require global governance. It is about climate change and security. The United Nations is a prelude to such governance. National and regional governance will remain relevant for implementing global policies. And cities will emerge as important entities to govern, as 75 per cent of the world population will be established in them.

A possible future scenario is the dystopian *Brave New World* or *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. We are already being watched via our own cameras. The movie "Idiocracy" is surprisingly realistic.

Strengthening local government and encouraging self-organization, enabled by ICT and social media, might restore the trust in democracy (Bula and Espejo, 2012).

#### *Technology and media (the fragmentation of public space)*

The media as an important factor in politics was identified in the first televised political debate between Kennedy and Nixon. During the first campaign of Obama, the power of the Internet was identified. Brexit was one the first events that clearly illustrated that something was very wrong with the use of media and democracy. The system was not perfect and could be manipulated by populists via the media (Heaven, 2018). The elections in the USA were also marked by the fact that data of 87 million Facebook users ended up with the firm Cambridge Analytica, who used the data to manipulate voters via social media (Vox, 2018).

ICT held a promise that it would better democracy. The early days of President Chávez in Venezuela illustrate this. Elections in Venezuela, applying electronic voting, were once

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celebrated as the most advanced elections by the Carter Foundation (Fiorini and Sabella, 2018).

Thanks to ICT, information would be available and the technology for electronic voting and direct democracy would be available.

Social media has created the illusion of transparency and appeared to be a platform for democracy but has become a weapon to attack democracy by abolishing privacy. People withdraw from the public place to protect their privacy, leaving the public sphere for populists and their followers (Goede and Neuwirth, 2014).

The interrelated factors of globalization and technology have created the challenges: migration and E-voting from abroad. The reality show serves as a metaphor for democracy. Politicians are cast. They perform and the viewers vote, also via the media, who has to leave the show (Goede, 2010).

In the domain of media, the phenomenon of fake news has manifested itself. By using fake news, perceptions of millions are influenced.

Investigative reporting, once an important pillar of democracy, seems to crumble. Investigative reporting seems to deliver evidence that that politicians are not to be trusted and so unintentionally plays into the hand of the populists, as the disillusioned voters are willing to consider the populists (Luyendijk, 2018).

Some think that elections and hence democracy in the future could and should be replaced or complemented by algorithms.

*The emergence of populist and autocratic leaders.* In this era of change, life is uncertain. Problems are complex. People live in fear. The populist offers easy-to-understand solutions for complex problems. Once the populist gains influence, the populist attacks the democratic institutions and further weakens the democratic state and hence its society.

All indications are that Big Brother as described in the Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has become a reality (Abbas, 2012). By applying technology the state is controlling the people, not only when voting, but all the time. This case was forwarded by Julian Assange and Edward Snowden.

In reality, the world is increasingly governed by the Deep State – also called the Secret Government (Moyers, 1987) or the Invisible Government (Bernays, 1928) – uncontrolled by democratic mechanisms, time and again discussed by some “conspiracy theorists,” with massive evidence only recently revealed by Wikileaks and Edward Snowden. (Hamm, 2015, p. 171)

Bureaucracy is relevant: it is used for patronage, appointing associates as a reward for their loyalty and as a way to control the executive arm of the state.

*The takeover of plutocracy.* Not everybody is equal. Hamm (2015, pp. 161-162), drawing on Mills' work, presents an ideal type of *The Power Elite*. They are a class of their own involved in the class struggle. It is about four concentric circles. The inner circle is the super-rich. The second circle is the CEOs of the big transnational corporations. The third circle is the international politicians. The fourth ring is composed of top academics, media moguls, lawyers and icons.

Piketty (2014) indicates that capitalism is not leading to a more just society, but that wealth is becoming more concentrated. In other words, the outcome of the democratic process is increasingly more undemocratic. The above was illustrated by the way the financial crisis of 2008 was handled. Bankers were bailed out by governments and the citizens were not taken care of. This strengthened distrust in democracy. It led to protests in New York, Athens, Rome and many other major cities (Abbas, 2012; *The Economist*, 2018a; *The Economist*, 2018c).

The end of  
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Young voters turned their backs on the democratic process and unintentionally helped the anti-democratic populists (Fry, 2018).

Baby boomers are a challenge. They are aging and exerting pressure on pension funds and medical insurance funds.

Due to the tsunami of disruptive technology, billions of jobs are destroyed, and many senseless jobs exist. This has changed the problem of unemployment and social welfare. The problem is aggravated by large numbers of immigrants. Universal basic income (UBI), whereby people receive a basic income with no obligations, looks unavoidable. The biggest advocates for UBI are the richest individuals on earth.

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