

Authoritarian Oppportunism

Never Waste a Disaster!

Presenter: Dallas Elvery

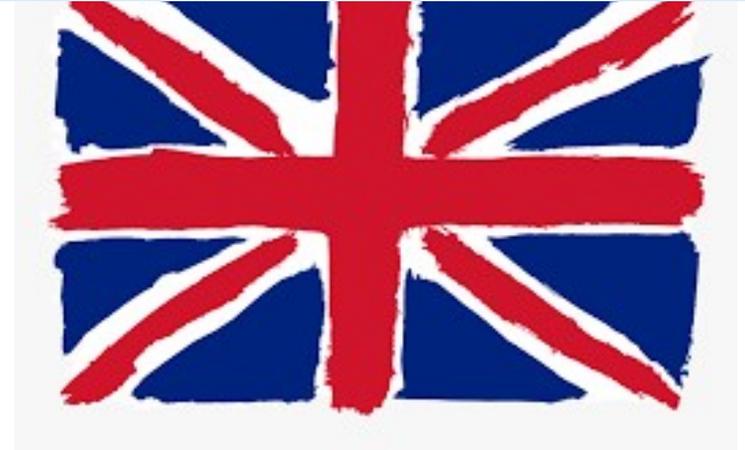
Outline

- Introduction – A few choice examples
- How are the local lads doing?
- Differentiating authoritarianism from its close allies
- What's democracy ever done for us?

Disruption Opportunism

Not a moment to lose:

On September the 11th 2001,
not half an hour after the second plane smashed into the twin towers,
a ministerial adviser in the UK sent an email saying,
"it's now a very good day
to get out anything we want to bury".



<https://www.climatechangenews.com/2020/06/09/final-blow-aviation-climate-plan-eu-agrees-weaken-rules/>

Disruption Opportunism

The Airline Industry

In the wake of the global coronavirus pandemic, the International Air Transport Association (IATA), called on the UN body responsible for aviation to ease airlines' obligations to offset their emissions growth



<https://www.climatechangenews.com/2020/06/09/final-blow-aviation-climate-plan-eu-agrees-weaken-rules/>

Disruption Opportunism

Edu-Tech expansionism

It is possible that under the cover of this virus, almost every school student in Australia has been signed up to one or another private and opaque digital platform (without much in the way of informed consent).

It would be an understatement to say that the **private vision for public education** just got a few extra runs on the board.

Anna Krien

<https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2020/june/1590933600/anna-krien/screens-ate-school#mtr>

Disruption Opportunism

Turn away from the vulnerable

Fr Sosa (Head of the Jesuit Order) said

“ ... many governments are using the pandemic as an excuse to restrict or end their assistance to migrants and refugees, which is a great mistake”

“Democracy can be one of the victims of the pandemic if we do not take care with our political condition,”



https://cathnews.com/cathnews/38681-jesuit-head-warns-pandemic-a-threat-to-democracy?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=CathNews%20--%20Priest%20asks%20for%20prayers%20after%20Beirut%20explosions%20%20Activists%20condemn%20plan%20to%20reopen%20detention%20centre%20%20Revised%20JobKeeper%20puts%20charity%20workers%20at%20risk&utm_content=CathNews%20--%20Priest%20asks%20for%20prayers%20after%20Beirut%20explosions%20%20Activists%20condemn%20plan%20to%20reopen%20detention%20centre%20%20Revised%20JobKeeper%20puts%20charity%20workers%20at%20risk+CID_055f861d4d04e0479bda72b79b999c04&utm_source=Cathnews%20Newsletter&utm_term=Jesuit%20head%20warns%20pandemic%20a%20threat%20to%20democracy

Disruption Opportunism

Putin Power Play

In Russia,
the plan was pretty straightforward:
consolidate power.

Russian authorities granted the government

- increased powers
- and stealthily deployed a face monitoring network.

<https://www.zmescience.com/other/pieces/the-four-countries-hardest-hit-by-the-coronavirus-are-all-led-by-authoritarian-leaders/>

Disruption Opportunism

Hun Sen, Cambodian-style

The COVID-19 crisis creates a

- pretext for Hun Sen to seek **unlimited powers**,
- and **go after** critics.

“Law on Governing the Country in a State of Emergency,”

- Passed by the ‘Council of Ministers’
- Introduced during Covid-19, but will be permanent law.

PM gets to define when an ‘Emergency ‘ exists, and for how long.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/02/cambodia-emergency-bill-recipe-dictatorship>

Disruption Opportunism

Trump & the Environment

A double whammy to the environment

During the pandemic:

- By executive order from Trump, new projects won't need to go through as many environmental reviews;
- In addition, the EPA changed its rules to limit air quality controls.

Agencies can now waive some of the required environmental reviews of infrastructure projects to be built during the pandemic.

<https://www.zmescience.com/science/trump-weakens-envir-regulation-0623634/>

Disruption Opportunism

China and Hong Kong

With world focus on a pandemic that started in China, the Chinese leadership chose to introduce a **security law** for Hong Kong.

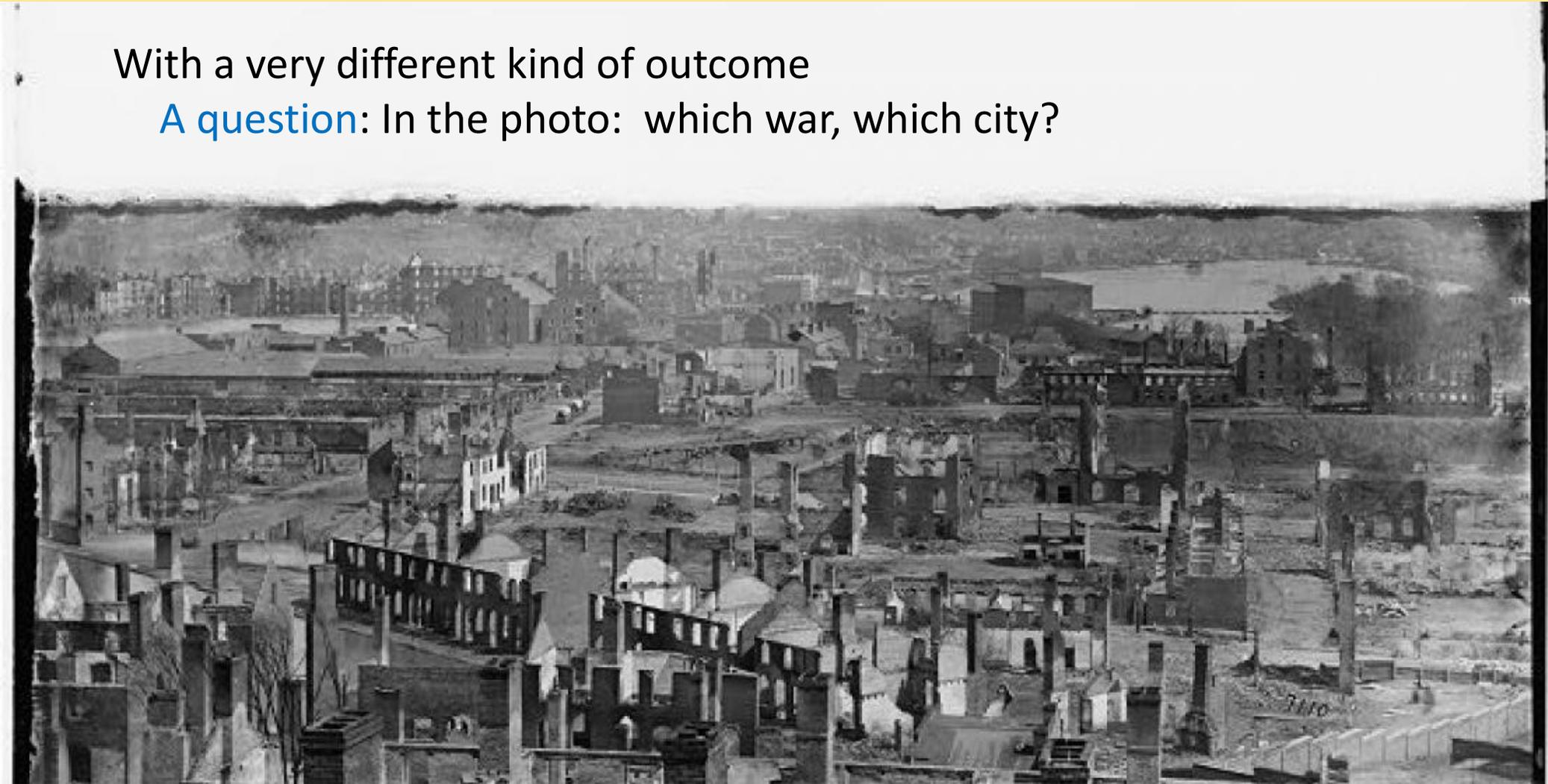


<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-52765838#:~:text=The%20new%20law's%20key%20provisions,sentence%20of%20life%20in%20prison&text=In%20addition%2C%20Hong%20Kong%20will,with%20a%20Beijing%2Dappointed%20adviser>

Sometimes it works the other way

With a very different kind of outcome

A question: In the photo: which war, which city?



Richmond Virginia,
Apr 2. 1865

Richmond had been the
capital of the
Confederate States.



The Confederate forces surrendered on ***April 9, 1865.***

Was Lincoln an Authoritarian?

In early 1865, in America,
The Confederate army had
been severely weakened,
and the Confederate Government
tentatively wanted to negotiate.



Lincoln did not commence negotiations with Confederates
to bring an end to the war

until,

after the passing of the Constitutional Amendment
that outlawed slavery throughout the USA.

How competitive is Australia at this opportunism thingy?

Australia is considered by some to be the land of opportunity,

Surely, we Ozzy's can be ultra competitive in this race.

Australia: Land of Opportunity

It's much simpler without Parliament

Serious questions of transparency and process surround the **replacement** of COAG with the **National Cabinet**, and the cancelling of parliamentary sittings.

Our biggest global corporations went online to continue their operations,

but the Federal parliament was closed down for months.

https://www.themonthly.com.au/today/paddy-manning/2020/10/2020/1591767993/corona-smug?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=The%20Monthly%20Today%20-%20Wednesday%2010%20June%202020&utm_content=The%20Monthly%20Today%20-%20Wednesday%2010%20June%202020+CID_0e886cec68f8c9c6dc7e706332477403&utm_source=EDM&utm_term=Read%20on

Australia: Land of Opportunity

Jobkeeper

JobKeeper has been used as a blunt political instrument to reward favoured sectors of the economy and punish others. (Arts, Higher Ed for example)

<https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2020/august/1596204000/richard-cooke/unitary-theory-cuts#mtr>

Australia: Land of farmers

Farming out

The Covid -19 Coordination Commission is riddled with conflicts of interest.

High level Government functions have been farmed out to hastily convened groups, completely bypassing parliament.

Australia: Land of convenient delays

Welcome Delays

The Coalition says
the coronavirus crisis has forced it to delay plans
for a **federal integrity commission**,

despite critics warning of huge **corruption risks** posed
by Australia's multibillion-dollar pandemic response.

https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/may/22/federal-integrity-commission-delayed-again-amid-warnings-of-coronavirus-response-corruption-risk?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

Australia: Land of Vendettas

Higher Ed and the Arts - get special treatment:

- No Access to JobKeeper
- No support for students from various backgrounds caused hardship
- No support for the Arts (but big helping hand to sport).

Then the Higher Ed restructure:

- Extra places with no extra funding – effective reduction in funds / place
- Direct attack on the humanities.

All without due process or adequate explanation.

Australia: Land of the bypass

Scrutiny bypass

Most government Covid-19 measures have been implemented by **delegated legislation**, rather than by full legislation.

‘Delegated Legislation’ does not go through parliament.

Parliament’s influence over delegated legislation is limited to **disallowing**.

Of the 137 new laws made this way since the pandemic was declared, 32 are **exempt** from disallowance entirely.

https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/may/22/federal-integrity-commission-delayed-again-amid-warnings-of-coronavirus-response-corruption-risk?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

Australia: Land of Opportunity

Scrutiny bypass

Covid-19 legislation exempted from disallowance include:

- increases to the government's borrowing capacity,
- changes to visa arrangements,
- restricted access to remote communities,
- laws covering the COVIDSafe tracing app,
- deferral of public service pay rises.
- Commonwealth bureaucrats can be temporarily redeployed – to other departments, and to other organisations.

https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/may/22/federal-integrity-commission-delayed-again-amid-warnings-of-coronavirus-response-corruption-risk?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

Australia: Land of endless

And there are more, many more

Including:

- Undermining environment protections
 - Industrial Relations
 - Attempts to ram through some mandatory sentencing provisions.

All without due process

All without scrutiny

Australia: Land of unfinished business

Government response to 'Black Lives Matter' protests

Emphasis on obeying regulation:

A disingenuous appeal to public safety
being used to **entrench** inactivity on real issues.

Resulting in a **tragic loss**

of a golden opportunity,
to seize this moment,
to begin a substantial process
to **shift** entrenched prejudice.

https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/may/22/federal-integrity-commission-delayed-again-amid-warnings-of-coronavirus-response-corruption-risk?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

Australia: Under Covid

Taken together, this is a formidable list

A large yellow triangle pointing downwards, with a smaller yellow diamond overlapping its bottom-left corner.

Discussion

Since we are in a pandemic,
... is there a problem with all this unilateral
action?

What are the ongoing consequences likely to be?



Sorting the Insults

Of all the incidents mentioned, how much of it is actually **Authoritarianism**?

A quick look at some related concepts:

- **Popularism**
- **Neo-liberalism**
- **Oligarchy / Plutocracy.**

Popularem

Populist governments, are **united** by two fundamental **claims**:

- **Elites** and “outsiders” work against the interests of the “true people,” and
- since populists are the voice of the “**true people**,” nothing should stand in their way.

There have been Left-wing Populists,
there have been Right-wing Populists,
and there have been Populists with no particular ideological bent,

More often than not, populists of any stripe tend to diminish democracy.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/12/hard-data-populism-bolsonaro-trump/578878/>

Popularism is popular, very 'now'

The four **most populous democracies** in the world are ruled by **right-wing populists**:

Narendra Modi in **India**,
Donald Trump in the **USA**,
Joko Widodo in **Indonesia**,
Jair Bolsonaro in **Brazil**.

Note: The word 'Populist' has been around a long time – Its current usage is somewhat different to the original.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/12/hard-data-populism-bolsonaro-trump/578878/>

See also: Work by Thomas Frank on Popularism

Neo-liberalism

Neo-liberalism refers to an economic system in which the “free” **market** is extended to **every part** of our public and personal worlds.

The transformation of the State,

From: a **provider** of public welfare

To: a **promoter** of markets and competition.

Neo-liberalism

Characterised by:

- free market trade,
- deregulation of financial markets,
- individualisation,
- shift away from state welfare provision.

Theoretical development

1890s – 1950s

<https://theconversation.com/what-exactly-is-neoliberalism-84755>

Neo-liberalism

Wide variety of Neo-liberal Regimes, with a very wide range of outcomes

Chile under Augusto Pinochet

Great Britain under Margaret Thatcher.

New Zealand under David Lange.

The USA under Ronald Reagan.

Australia under Bob Hawke and Paul Keating.

“... And, you know, there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families.” (M Thatcher)

Plutocracy / Oligarchs

Oligarchy: Government by the **few**, especially despotic power exercised by a small and privileged group for corrupt or selfish purposes.

Plutocracy: Oligarchies in which members of the ruling group are wealthy,
or **exercise their power through their wealth.**

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/oligarchy>

Authoritarianism – pretty much the opposite of democracy

- Individuals:** Blind submission to authority, no individual freedom.
- Power:** Concentrated in the hands of a few.
- Leadership:** Not responsible to the people.
- Law:** Leaders often exercise power arbitrarily and without regard to existing bodies of law.
- Elections:** Leaders are not chosen freely by citizens from among various competitors in elections.
- Opposition:** There is limited (or no) freedom to create opposition political parties.

Authoritarianism

Some examples of Authoritarian administrations:

- North Korea
- Syria
- Saudi Arabia
- China
- Myanmar

Potent combinations

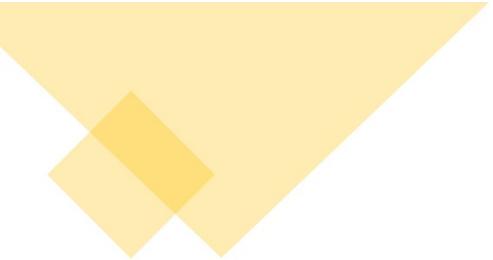
Politicians like:

- Marine Le Pen in France,
- Viktor Orbán in Hungary,
- and Donald Trump in the US,

Combine

- **Populism,**
- with [anti-immigrant] **nativism**
- and **authoritarianism.**

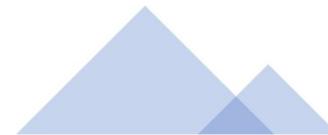
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-43301423>

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Discussion

Given the above,
do we Australians live under an Authoritarian
administration?

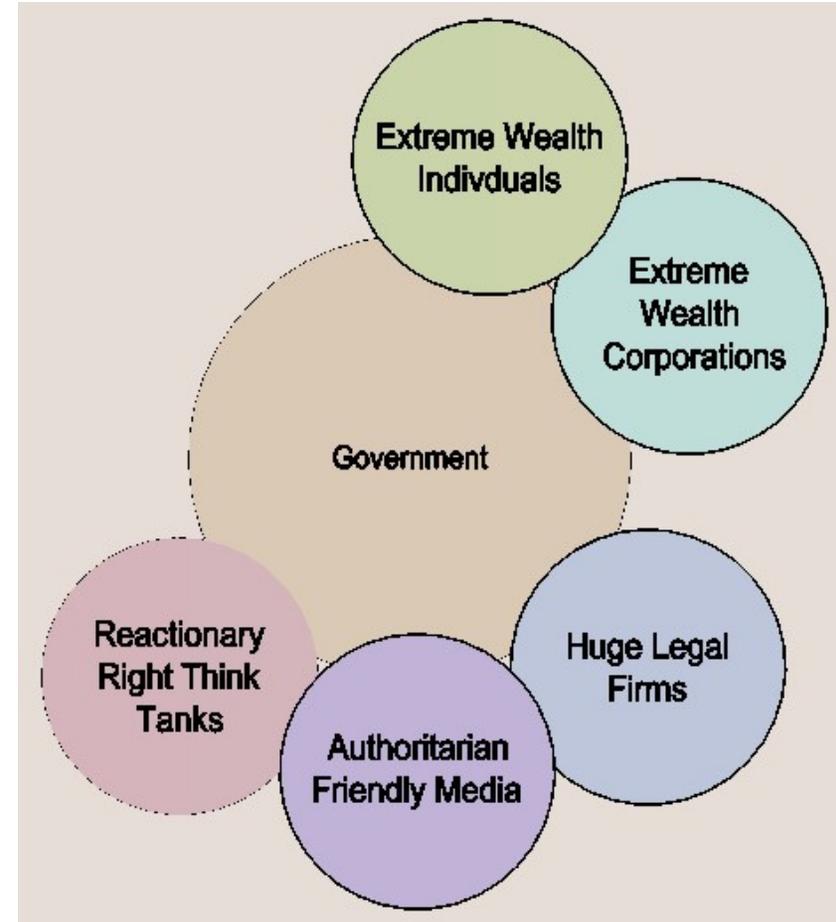
Out of the world's approx. **200** countries, where
would you **rank** Australia on a **Democracy –
Authoritarian** scale?



Government Operating Ethos

All democratic governments exist in an complex milieu that includes:

- Unrelenting active influencing
 - & Constant schmoozing
- by numerous vested interests

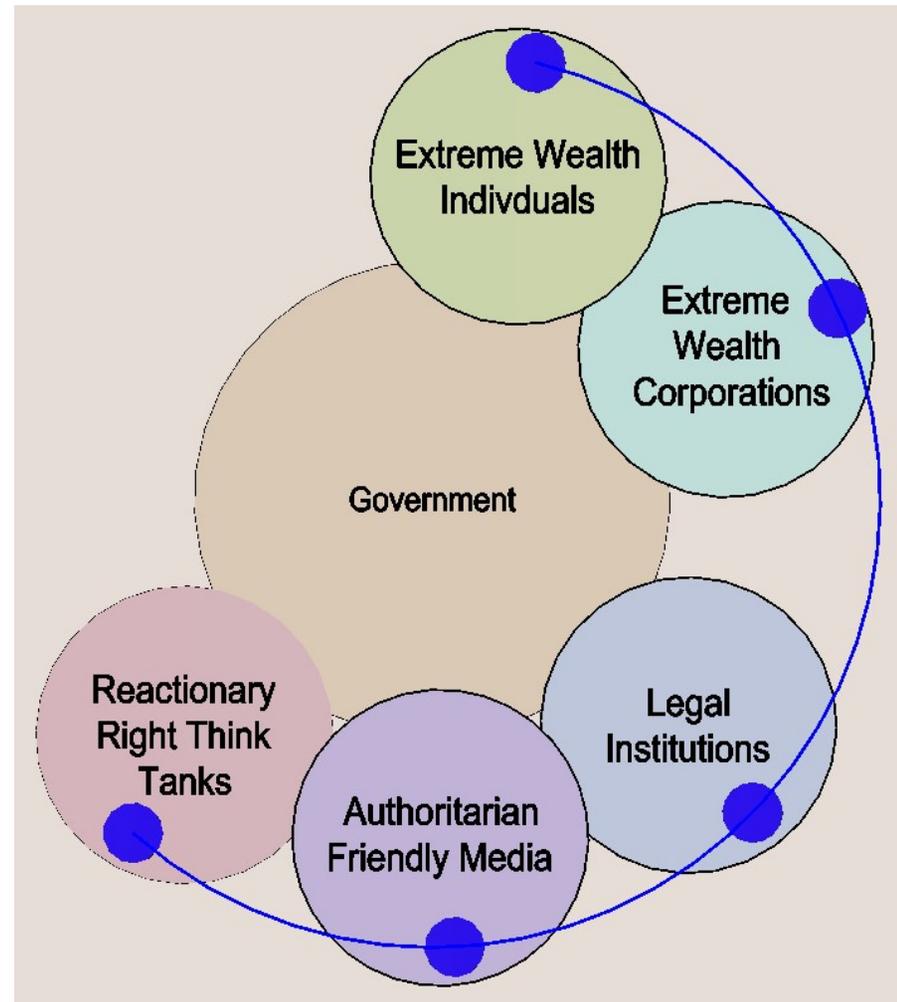


Government Operating Ethos

They operate against a backdrop of

- constant public-message-distortion and bias
- Lobbying vested Interests with interlinked **interests** and **ideology**.

Powerful individuals and organisations that are intimately aware of the value of a major disruption in furthering their aims.

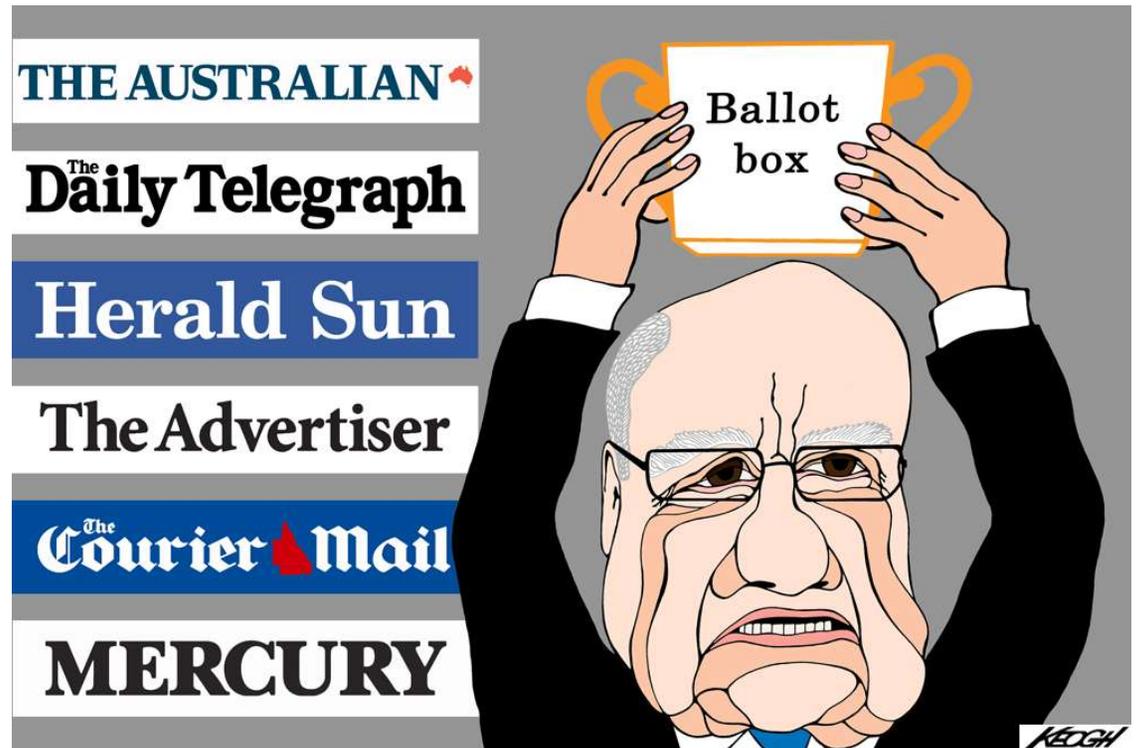


Government Operating Ethos

Government is just so much easier if you go with the flow

Particularly when you share their ideology

And you want to win.



Democracy and Authoritarianism

The Economist magazine, creates a '**Democracy Index**'.

Countries are rated on 5 criteria:

- Electoral Process
- Functioning of Government
- Political Participation
- Political Culture
- Civil Liberties.

This scoring system creates a rank for each country ...

Democracy and Authoritarianism

There are **167** countries in the Index

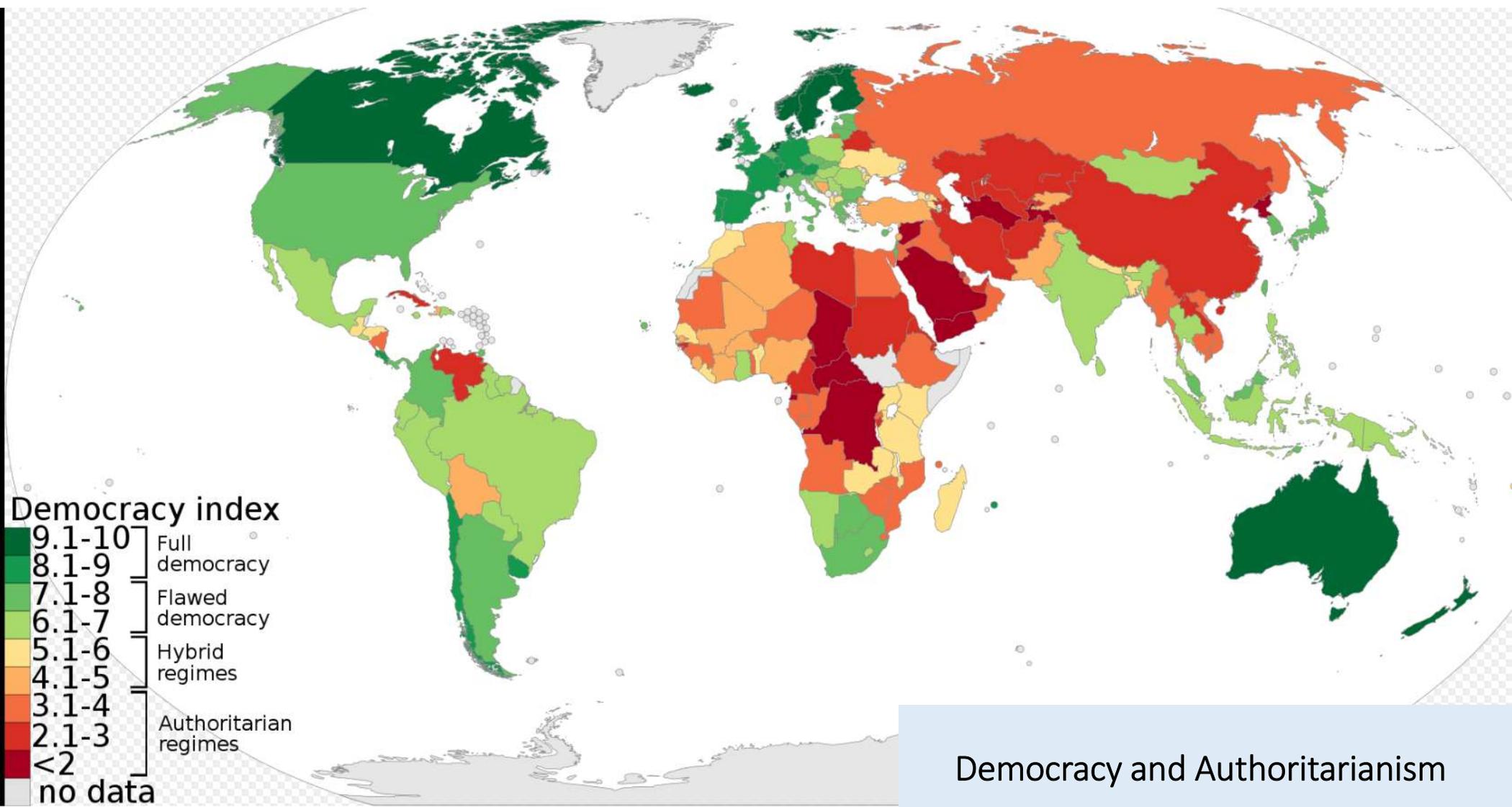
- Norway is No. 1
- North Korea is No. 167

22 Countries are 'Full Democracies'

54 Countries are 'Authoritarian'

Democracy Index - Economist Magazine 2019 Index

Rank	Country	Score	Regime type
1	Norway	9.87	Full democracy
4	New Zealand	9.26	Full democracy
7	Canada	9.22	Full democracy
9	Australia	9.09	Full democracy
14	United Kingdom	8.52	Full democracy
25	United States	7.96	Flawed democracy
48	Argentina	7.02	Flawed democracy
51	India	6.90	Flawed democracy
55	Hungary	6.63	Flawed democracy
81	Fiji	5.85	Hybrid regime
108	Pakistan	4.25	Hybrid regime
122	Myanmar	3.55	Authoritarian
124	Cambodia	3.53	Authoritarian
153	China	2.26	Authoritarian
167	North Korea	1.08	Authoritarian



Democracy and Authoritarianism

The Globe in a nutshell

Shown are all countries deemed 'full democracies'.

Only **6** of the **22** 'full democracies' have **populations > 20 million**.

All have a **population < 100 million**

Rank	Country	Popl'n (Million)
1	Norway	5.4
2	Iceland	0.3
3	Sweden	10.1
4	New Zealand	4.8
5	Finland	5.5
6	Ireland	4.9
7	Canada	37.7
7	Denmark	5.8
9	Australia	25.5
10	Switzerland	8.7
11	Netherlands	17.1
12	Luxembourg	0.6
13	Germany	83.8
14	United Kingdom	67.9
15	Uruguay	3.5
16	Austria	9.0
16	Spain	46.8
18	Mauritius	1.3
19	Costa Rica	5.1
20	France	65.3
21	Chile	19.1
22	Portugal	10.2

The Globe in a nutshell

Only **5%** of the world's population live in countries considered to be '**Fully Democratic**'

Achieving good government, and maintaining it, is not common.

	No. of Countries	% of total	% of world Population
Full democracy	22	13%	5%
Flawed democracy	54	32%	
Hybrid regime	37	22%	
Authoritarian	54	32%	
Total	167		

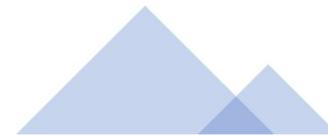
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Discussion

Lets contemplate that for a moment.

What are your responses?

What aspects of societies correlate with high democracy scores?



Do democracies lead to good things?

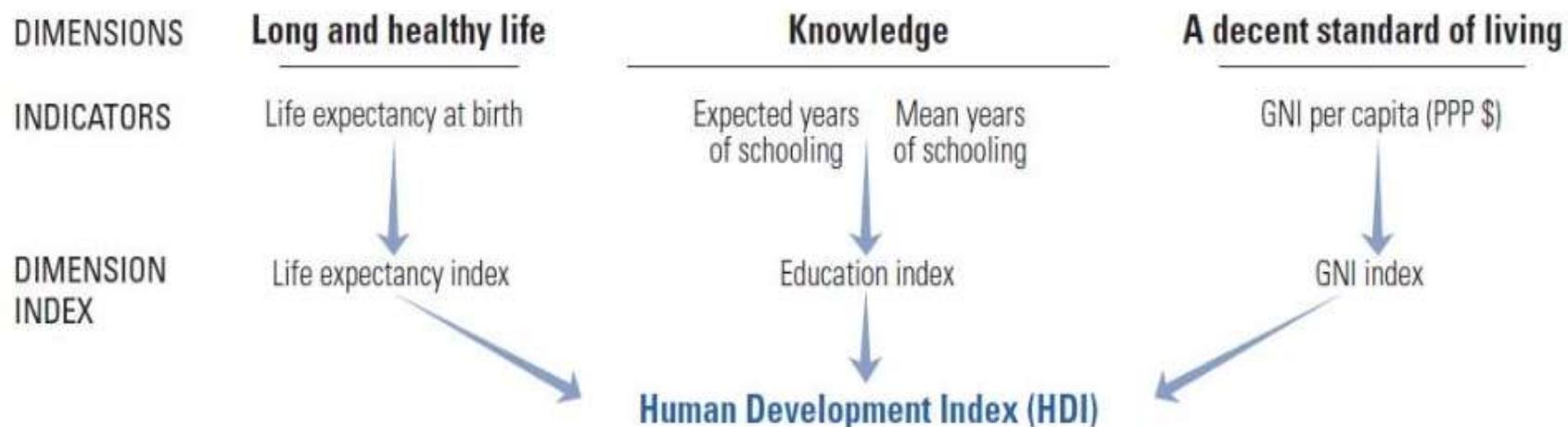
If so, then the following types of things will be found in them:

- Freedom
- Well being
- Equality
- High workplace standards
- Well ordered society
- Social safety net
- Higher environmental protection standards.

Human Development Index

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP),
Creates the **‘Human Development Index’**

It measures performance on:



Human Development Index (HDI)

Democracy Index - Economist Magazine

2019 Index

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UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Human development index (HDI) - 2018

Rank	Country	2018
1	Norway	0.954
6	Australia	0.938
13	Canada	0.922
14	New Zealand	0.921
15	United Kingdom	0.920
15	United States	0.920
43	Hungary	0.845
48	Argentina	0.830
85	China	0.758
98	Fiji	0.724
129	India	0.647
145	Myanmar	0.584
146	Cambodia	0.581
152	Pakistan	0.560
N.A.	North Korea	N.A.

<http://hdr.undp.org/en/2018-update>

Happiness

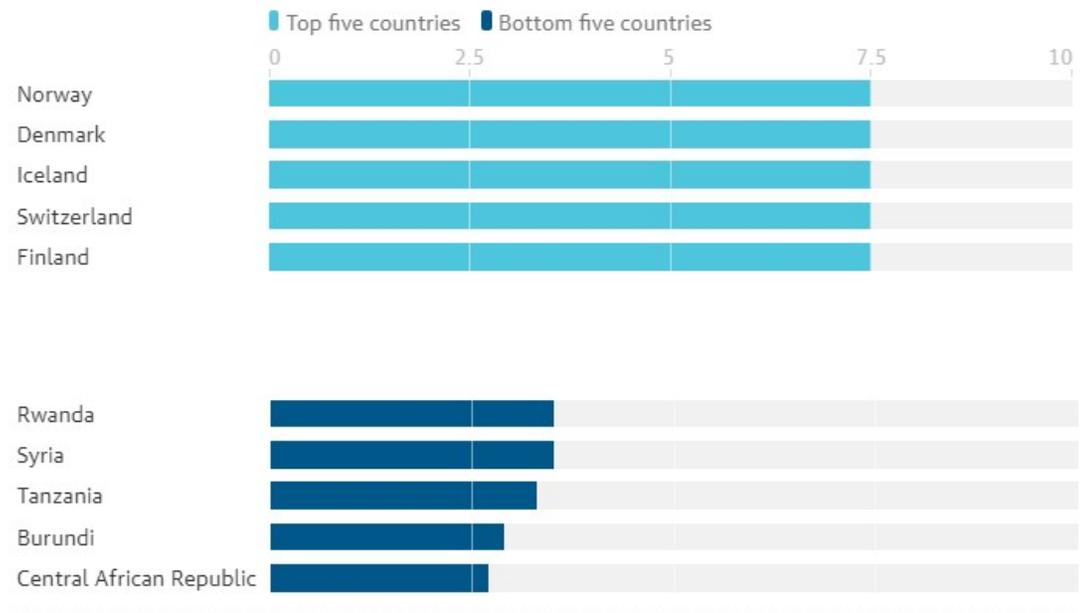
Democracy Index - Economist Magazine

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2	Iceland	9.58	Full democracy
5	Finland	9.25	Full democracy
7	Denmark	9.22	Full democracy
10	Switzerland	9.03	Full democracy

95	Tanzania	5.16	Hybrid regime
129	Rwanda	3.16	Authoritarian
154	Burundi	2.15	Authoritarian
164	Syria	1.43	Authoritarian
165	Central African Republic	1.32	Authoritarian

Top and bottom ranked countries from the World Happiness Report 2017



Guardian Graphic | Source: World Happiness Report 2017

<https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/datablog/2017/apr/26/inequality-index-where-are-the-worlds-most-unequal-countries>

Freedom House Index – political rights & civil liberties

Using the same countries shown earlier:

Democracy Index - Economist Magazine

2019 Index

Rank	Country	Score	Regime type
1	Norway	9.87	Full democracy
4	New Zealand	9.26	Full democracy
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Freedom House: National Rankings - 2019

Political Rights (40%) & Civil Liberties (60%)

Country	Rank	Score	Status
Norway	1	100	Free
Canada	3	98	Free
New Zealand	4	97	Free
Australia	4	97	Free
United Kingdom	7	94	Free
United States	14	86	Free
Argentina	15	85	Free
India	28	71	Free
Hungary	29	70	Partly Free
Fiji	36	60	Partly Free
Pakistan	53	38	Partly Free
Myanmar	59	30	Not Free
Cambodia	63	25	Not Free
China	77	10	Not Free
North Korea	84	3	Not Free

<https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores>

So, in summary,
if you want these

- Freedom
 - Well being
 - Equality
 - High workplace standards
 - Well ordered society
 - Social safety net
 - Higher environmental protection standards
- and
- substantial ongoing reform

You will need to look after these

- Electoral Process
- Functioning of Government
- Political Participation
- Political Culture
- Civil Liberties.

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So, do
democracies lead
to good things?

A large blue triangle pointing downwards, with a smaller blue diamond overlapping its bottom-left corner.

Over to you,
time for reflections on all this material.

How important is the current
widespread authoritarian opportunism
in the whole scheme of things?

