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# DEVELOPING NEW CRITERIA FOR HIGHER QUALITY POLITICAL LEADERSHIP: A CHECKLIST FOR ALL ASPIRING POLITICIANS

IT'S TIME WE TALKED ABOUT THE  
NEXT STAGE OF OUR COLLECTIVE  
EVOLUTION TOWARDS A BETTER  
GOVERNED HUMANITY

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The first paper in this new publication series from Oneness World proposed the creation of a *Digital People's Assembly* that would be facilitated by global voting systems using Smartphones.<sup>1</sup> We proposed that such a system be developed slowly and incrementally and that it begin with the equivalent functions and authority of global opinion polls on pressing international matters that leaders of the world could use to guide and improve decision-making matching the true will of all of the world's people. This Digital People's Assembly would form the eventual foundation for expanding voter participation across the world, in turn bringing us ever closer to a more unified global political system in a 'beyond nation-State' world. Once *de facto* global opinion polls evolve into voting systems electing global leaders, and recognising that we have some way to travel before those proposals become reality, (even though the technology for doing so exists already), the question then becomes just who could people vote for? Wouldn't a new global voting system make no difference at all if the real and aspiring global politicians seeking election and the holding of power remain the same type of people that govern us today?

We live in a world where just about anyone who is old enough and who wishes to do so is entitled to become a politician, and even to become the leader of a country. But is the current system really the best system we can imagine? Does this largely criteria-free approach to governance really assist in improving democracy and nudge us towards our next stage of collective political evolution? Does our current system truly encourage the emergence of the best our communities have to offer, or does it actually facilitate the emergence of the mediocre or the worst of what we collectively have to offer? We believe some serious changes are needed to get all of us the political leaders and politicians we deserve, and several criteria for achieving this aim are outlined throughout the remainder of this essay.

Beyond anecdotal data that anyone, anywhere who follows politics can point to, there is far too much empirical evidence now available to show that serious changes need to come about within the world of politics. The recent release of a report by International IDEA in late-2021, for instance, revealed that for the fifth year in a row the number of countries heading towards authoritarianism outnumbered those experiencing growing democratisation.<sup>2</sup> The report identified 98 countries classified as democratic, 20 hybrid governments (countries slipping away from democracy and towards dictatorship), and 47 outright authoritarian regimes. The latter two categories constitute a staggering 70% of the world's population, some 5.6 billion people. The new book by Barbara F. Walter *How Civil Wars Start: And How to Stop Them* provides an extremely worrying perspective that asserts that even the so called bastion of democracy - the United States - is no longer a democracy and is now a

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<sup>1</sup> See: [www.onenessworld.org](http://www.onenessworld.org).

<sup>2</sup> International IDEA, *The Global State of Democracy Report 2021 - Building Resilience in a Pandemic Era*, November 2021.

country that faces the very real threat of civil war in the absence of major reforms within the country. Similarly, the release in October 2021 of what are called the *Pandora Papers* reinforce the view, and prove if any proof was really needed, that our world is governed by far too many corrupt, dictatorial and greedy men whose personal quests for ever more money, ever more power and ever more lengthy stays in office are all driving the world in increasingly dangerous directions, and at the same time building a world governed more by what can be described as 'paper democracies' rather than legitimate governments based on the collective will of the people.<sup>3</sup>

These incredible revelations show that leaders from a wide spectrum of countries in all of the world's regions continue to use and exploit international tax havens and banking secrecy rules to hide ill-gotten gains, and in the process purchasing real estate, land, yachts and so much more in some of the world's most desirable locations. Even with recent decisions guided by the OECD to impose a globally relevant minimum corporate tax of 15%, as positive of an advancement as this is, will do little to ensure that the secret billions held by corrupt politicians will ever be subject to the tax it should be.<sup>4</sup> Combining this sad state of affairs with the extremely lackluster performance of most of those world leaders who participated in the recent Glasgow COP26 climate change talks (not to mention the far too many leaders who didn't even bother showing up to at least try to address the world's most serious crisis), the ongoing decimation of the global environment, ever-worsening inequality within and between nations, the ever-present threat of renewed armed conflict and the constant presence of far too many nuclear weapons leads us to a place where even the most trusting among us has to wonder if we don't deserve better political leadership than what we have in the world today.<sup>5</sup>

Things are clearly not going well in the political structures of the world and billions upon billions of people are getting a raw deal as a result, living less than full and prosperous lives, and all too often living in fear that they could be arrested or even tortured or killed for opposing these undemocratic regimes. And not only this, but non-democratic and dictatorial regimes have dreadful economic track records, with median net worth statistics at staggeringly low levels in dictatorships across the world, a fact that should put to rest any sort of perception that a new social contract exists in these non-democratic societies

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3 See: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2021/oct/03/pandora-papers-biggest-ever-leak-of-offshore-data-exposes-financial-secrets-of-rich-and-powerful> *Pandora papers*. These 11.9 million shocking documents expose hundreds of current and former politicians who have used and continue to use offshore tax havens and secret bank accounts. According to the Guardian article cited here: "The Pandora papers reveal the inner workings of what is a shadow financial world, providing a rare window into the hidden operations of a global offshore economy that enables some of the world's richest people to hide their wealth and in some cases pay little or no tax."

4 See: <https://www.oecd.org/tax/international-community-strikes-a-ground-breaking-tax-deal-for-the-digital-age.htm>.

5 See: <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/cop26>.



between citizens who 'accept' a strong leader in exchange for stability and the creation of wealth for all. If we look at any of the regimes classified as non-democratic today, median levels of net worth are exceedingly low, forcing millions into lives of poverty with little or no hope of any sort of economic improvement. The median net worth (all assets minus all liabilities) in Syria is a dismal USD 807. In Myanmar/Burma USD 2,458. In Cambodia, USD 2,031, in Zimbabwe some USD 2,356 and in Russia only USD 5,431.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, dictatorship is neither good for society nor individual citizens, and far too many of us deserve politicians and political structures far better than those governing us today.

In poll after poll and in country after country very few groups in society are trusted or respected less than politicians. Whether left wing, centrist or right wing (or worse!), politicians are increasingly seen as self-interested, not all too clever zealots and *not* the highly educated, dispassionate, socially-minded and skilled technicians that the world needs to actually solve the serious and simultaneous crises that confront all of us. Clearly we need a new approach in selecting and accrediting our political leaders in our democracies and more and better tools to prevent the emergence of dictators where democracy is failing or does not exist.

This rather sad state of affairs raises the question as to why there are so few politicians that seem to live, feel, think and behave like most of us ordinary citizens do? Are we really best served by a system of agreed political rules that allows just about anyone above a certain age to run for office or to otherwise assume political control with or without free and fair elections? When was the last time you watched the leader of your country or state and thought "Gee, I'd really like to hang out with them, they could be my friend." We fear, that if you are anything like we are, that these feelings do come up from time to time, but not nearly enough. How is it that in a world of so many truly wonderful, kind, generous, thoughtful and caring people, that so many obviously narcissistic and corrupt serial liars, cheaters and abusers succeed in becoming our political leaders, sometimes as elected officials, in theory representing us and our interests, but in practice doing anything but? Why is it that we get the leaders we get in such huge numbers? It is often said that people get the leaders they deserve, but is this really true? Why do we really even need leaders at all if so many of them are so unpopular, so despised and trusted so little? Does the very system of the nation state which governs us all and that has largely governed our lives since the mid-1600's have a structural design flaw that enables the worst among us rather than the best to lead our countries? We will turn to these questions in future reports, but for the moment let us consider why it is that so few leaders today resemble the philosopher kings of eras past,

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.credit-suisse.com/about-us/en/reports-research/global-wealth-report.html>.

true people of the people, or even just painfully boring but incredibly competent political technocrats that got the job done in the best interests of all?

As in any study of human behavior the answer to these queries is rather straightforward: the problem lies in the *rules of the game* as we have come collectively to define and accept them. It is about both the nature of power and how it is established and then entrenched. It is about the use of law and sometimes the threat or use of violence that enables political leaders to get into, keep and then seek to prolong the acquisition of power by the very people who should not have it. As Joseph E. Stiglitz reminds us “A political system that amplifies the voice of the wealthy provides ample opportunity for laws and regulations - and the administration of them - to be designed in ways that not only fail to protect the ordinary citizens against the wealthy but also further enrich the wealthy at the expense of the rest of society”.<sup>7</sup> And it is not only in the traditional realm of ‘democratic’ politics that this occurs. Within various armed guerrilla groups, for instance, it is not uncommon for those connected to organised crime and who are technologically savvy to have achieved the control of ‘revolutionary’ organizations, resulting in well-intentioned radicals being ‘left’ aside and powerless within these once progressive groups. Similarly in nations with fair and transparent electoral systems in place, power is commonly amassed or acquired by high net worth and ultra high net worth individuals - as they are officially labeled by the world’s capital friendly classes - who turn out to be clinically diagnosed psychopaths and sociopaths in processes that have nothing to do with the qualifications required to successfully manage the numerous responsibilities of effective and good governance in the interests of the people who they are supposed to represent.<sup>8</sup> Stiglitz again reminds us that “Real democracy is more than the right to vote once every two or four years. The choices have to be meaningful.

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7 Joseph E. Stiglitz, *The Prince of Inequality*, Allen Lane, 2012, xix.

8 See, for instance: Jacques Chauli, *How to Get Rid of Psychopaths in Politics - And of Others Medically Unfit*, Booklocker.com, 2021. The Amazon.com overview of this book is instructive: For ages, around the world, too often people have been ruled by politicians, either psychopaths or affected by another mental or physical illness, rendering them inapt to assume, in the public interest, the powers and duties of office. This book exposes the historical background that led to the current situation. Politicians have framed the Constitution in order to be exempted from any compulsory and binding medical examination by independent medical experts, and they prohibited citizens from directly amending the Constitution in order, among other things, to precisely make said medical examinations compulsory and binding for all politicians. It provides several examples of detrimental effects to the common good from such a situation, both at the national level, in terms of public safety, and at an international level, for example with the illegal invasion of Iraq ordered by an unhinged commander in chief, George W. Bush, with no fear of condemnation by the United-Nations Security Council, since the US hold a veto power against any potential condemnation. That war led to catastrophic consequences worldwide, like the birth of the Islamic State. This book also highlights the fact that political parties don't prevent medically unfit candidates from running for the primaries, let alone from running for the presidency. While it is common practice for applicants looking for a job to have to undergo such medical examination, especially for military personnel handling nuclear weapons, it is just unbelievable that the commander in chief, enjoying the power of deciding the use of nuclear weapons, is not subject to a compulsory mental health examination by independent medical experts. In Western countries, too many citizens are not cooperating enough for the common good. They are defiant from each other. They believe that human nature is bad, that virtue in politics is just impossible. As a result, either they focus on their own self-interests, or they go to the streets for violent protests against a political system they see corrupt. To the contrary, recent scientific discoveries show that healthy human beings are prone to altruism, that they are far from being only a few out of the general population, and that a change in the political system could enable them to enter in politics for the common good. [https://www.amazon.com/How-Get-Rid-Psychopaths-Politics/dp/2957783401/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=psychopaths+in+politics&qid=1639366610&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/How-Get-Rid-Psychopaths-Politics/dp/2957783401/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=psychopaths+in+politics&qid=1639366610&sr=8-1)

The politicians have to listen to the voices of the citizens. But increasingly, and especially in the United States, it seems that the political system is more akin to “one dollar one vote” than to “one person one vote.” Rather than correcting the market’s failures, the political system was reinforcing them”.<sup>9</sup> *Something has to change.*

## Age Limits Are Not Enough!

We believe that it is time that a new global system is put in place to apply universal criteria that citizens should mandatorily comply with in order to become elected officials. Other than age limits, politicians do not generally have to be accredited by a professional body into order to enter into politics. There is no real training required, no educational level of attainment, degree or certificate mandated or any other requirements that an aspiring politician must achieve before running for office. In contrast to virtually all professional fields, remarkably other than certain age requirements and term-limits where they exist, there are no agreed rules and qualifications that a potential political leader has to meet in order to become elected or otherwise take power in their respective countries. If one wishes to become a doctor, one needs to get good grades in school, get a series of university degrees, do specialised post-graduate study and practical work, and then and only then will they receive the official license or recognition needed to become a doctor and able to heal people from whatever illness ailed them. The same applies to just about every profession which may have an impact upon the lives of those they deal with on a regular basis, whether lawyers, cooks, financial advisors, pilots, drivers, skilled factory workers and so many more. Usually some form of education is required, some sort of certificate or diploma is awarded and if not, some form of oversight and training is given to make sure that people do their work correctly, and at the very, very least that they do no harm. But politicians largely get off the hook.

There are powers of impeachment or removal by other elected organs of government such as assemblies or senates if executive powers are abused, but little in the way of preliminary selection criteria that must be met by aspiring politicians. Scandals may bring down a leader once they are in power, but there is little in the way of achievement that is mandatory to get into power in the first place other than being clever enough to have gotten elected or to have otherwise acquired power unlawfully. We all very happily accept that other professions must satisfy certain requirements, so why not politicians whose actions can have a substantial impact on our lives, and indeed who routinely make decisions on matters of life and death? It is true that the minimum career and qualificational requirements on politicians - *the rules of the game* - are grounded in the right of any one of us to access power through free and fair

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<sup>9</sup> Supra, note 6, xix.

elections, and on the face of it this is an ideal reflection of the one person one vote principle that we should be governed by our peers subject to the freedom to vote and majority rule. But under this system other than being alive just about anyone can become a politician and thus exercise direct power and control over other fellow citizens and residents in their countries. The result of this artificial openness and the lack of criteria which candidates must meet in order to run for office and get elected, results more and more, at least in those countries that have the privilege to have electoral systems, in only those with money and media manipulation skills are able to effectively compete and win elections. Stiglitz again: "It's one thing to win in a "fair" game. It's quite another to be able to write the *rules of the game* - and to write them in ways that enhance one's prospects of winning."<sup>10</sup> Whatever the specific orientation of the relevant political leader, only a small minority of former candidates who won elections and now govern or recently governed, generally in small countries of the world, can be considered political leaders that are genuinely reflective of the true will and interests of the people and those who voted for them. These few examples include popular leaders such as Mette Frederiksen in Denmark, Sanna Marin in Finland, Jacinda Ardern in New Zealand, until recently Angela Merkel in Germany and Luis Lacalle Pou in Uruguay, who may each be imperfect in many ways as anyone would be occupying such difficult positions, but who do clearly believe in and embrace democracy and the rule of law and the need to represent all sectors of society in their efforts at governance, notwithstanding where they fall on the political spectrum.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, most of these are women! These respected leaders may not have had to satisfy any criteria such as we are suggesting here in order to get elected and assume office, but if criteria did exist it is highly likely they would meet and probably exceed them. And one thing politicians such as these and others with similar values have in common but which no dictator ever does is their willingness to apologise for doing things that were either unjust, illegal, or merely unwise. The recent public apology by Sanna Marin in Finland after she was filmed dancing in a club late one night when she should have been isolating because of her exposure to a positive COVID case earlier in the day is a case in point. Compared to murdering political opponents, arresting members of the opposition, carrying out illegal military coups d'état, fomenting insurrection or sedition and so many of the other heinous crimes associated with dictators and those seeking to join this dismal club, her mis-steps pale in comparison, but at least she had the integrity, the honesty and the self-respect to public accept responsibility for doing the wrong thing. Dictators don't say sorry.

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<sup>10</sup> Id., 47.



We cannot let politics simply revert to a system premised on raw violence against opponents, the relentless pursuit of power and the threat of force and military prowess. For our humanity to continue to prosper and evolve we need a new and better politics not based on testosterone or big bank balances, but systems built on universally relevant criteria that are designed to make the world a better place for all of us, grounded in the understanding of just how fragile and finite our planet is, and how precious and irreplaceable the people who live there are. As is far too well known, some of the world's worst killers have occupied positions of political leadership. The millions killed by Tamerlane, Genghis Khan, Mao Zedong, Josef Stalin, Ismail Enver Pasha, Vlad the Impaler, King Leopold II, Andrew Jackson, Adolf Hitler, Kim Il Sung, George Bush, Saddam Hussein, Harry Truman, Hideki Tojo, Benito Mussolini, Moammar Gaddafi, Idi Amin, Attila the Hun, Mobutu Sese Seko, Pol Pot, Ne Win and so many more, all male, deserved a lot better than the leadership that led to and resulted in their deaths. And dictatorship, and potential dictatorship, is far from something of the past. As we noted at the outset, 70% of the world's population today in late 2021 are led by dictators or those seeking this undemocratic status. This is nothing less than a sad indictment of failings of contemporary politics.

So the questions become: Can we change the *rules of the game* without undermining democratic principles and everyone's basic human right to vote but also to be elected? What if certain key decisions people make in life that resulted in certain outcomes were to determine whether or not they were able to secure a position of political leadership? What if certain other requirements were also universally required whereby one's net worth, one's criminal history, one's income, perhaps even one's willingness to travel, to learn other languages, to meditate, to volunteer in a slum, even to explore the potential powers of psychedelic medicines and many more were the things on which people everywhere could base their decisions on who would be entitled to occupy positions of political leadership?

And, what if there was a way to end dictatorships, tyranny and oligarchy? What if there was an agreed approach to ensuring that skilled but otherwise ordinary citizens were actually the 'peers' we all agreed to give the opportunity of leadership? What if these were taught to every student at every school in the world from age 3 onwards? What would such a world look like? How could this be achieved efficiently and without violating basic human liberties, but in fact by expanding them?

## Can We Change the Rules of the Game?

It is clear that a whole series of material decisions and changes are needed to change the *rules of the game*, and if there was ever an uphill battle, this would surely be a major one. While we could identify perhaps hundreds of changes we would like to see instituted across the world to move us away from what is effectively a law of the jungle created by the most wealthy and powerful to benefit them first and foremost, based on the survival of the fittest modalities in the world of politics, we believe we could start with five practical changes that could be instituted immediately and which together could make a huge difference in improving the quality of political leaders that emerge. None are perfect, but each in their own way will assist in making a difference and bring our collective political evolution just that much closer. In the following section we will build on these and suggest a series of particular criteria that could be considered to improve the quality of the political class:

### 1. Alternating female-male leadership

Of all the world's heads of state, approximately 200 individuals, the vast majority are men. Only 26 heads of state are women, which leaves us with 174 men. That's 13% women and 87% men. The last we looked, the world was comprised of 51% women and 49% men, so we remain woefully short of any sort of parity thus far in our ongoing struggle for equality. More than 25% of the world's heads of states, or 50 of these fellow humans, are outright dictators. And all of them are men.<sup>11</sup> Let's say that again: Every single one of them is a male, and clearly many share malignant narcissistic disorders that result in some seriously awful decision making.

59 nations have already implemented gender quotas at the level of their legislatures, leading to the legislatures in these countries now being comprised of 28% women.<sup>12</sup> This is good, but still not enough; it falls 22% short of parity in these countries, and does little to address the lack of quotas in the nearly 140 other countries which have failed thus far to structurally attempt to bring more women into political structures so that these bodies better reflect the composition of society. In those that have acted thus far, though, it is noteworthy that several of these now have more than 40% of their legislatures comprised of women. These are: Argentina, Belgium, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Nicaragua, North Macedonia, Peru, Portugal,

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11 Not all female leaders are necessarily free from allegations of misbehavior, and none more so than Aung San Suu Kyi who, although currently under house arrest by the military dictatorship which ended democracy in Burma in February 2021, went in person to the International Court of Justice in a dismal attempt to justify the genocidal actions of her government and military against the Rohingya people in the western parts of Burma. As a result, virtually every institution that ever awarded her with human rights awards during her long fight against the military have been retroactively retracted.

12 See: <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/legislative-overview>.

Senegal and Spain. While we applaud the 59 countries that have instituted quotas, it is clear that more needs to be done.

If more than half of the world is comprised of females, and women continue to face so much structural discrimination in so many parts of the world, why shouldn't the achievement of real democracy provide not only for additional countries to institute gender quotas, but to do even more by mandating an alternating system of female and male heads of state whereby one term is to be held by a woman, then one term by a man, then one term by a woman and so on? This would be a simple process to implement, and does not in any way negatively affect political freedoms because all political parties and ideological groups are free to propose a candidate to be elected and implement their policies.

The German Alliance 90/Green Party provides a potential model for other political parties whereby party leadership is always shared by two people, one a woman and one a man. To those who believe such an approach would be unworkable or too interventionary, have a look at who is now Vice Chancellor, Foreign Minister and Minister of Climate Change and Finance in one of the world's wealthiest and most powerful nations. Yes, leaders of the Green Party.<sup>13</sup>

## 2. One Term and One Term Only

In line with above, we believe the people of every country in the world will be best served if heads of state can legally only serve one term in office. Success of political systems is never achieved when a nation finds the right person to govern forever, but when it finds the right system that results in different persons governing the life of the nation. The vast majority of States maintain two-term limits or none at all, but a handful do have the single term rule already in place. All countries should explore this very practical and easy to regulate rule to protect and enhance democracy.<sup>14</sup>

## 3. Remove Private Money From Politics - All Of It!

The third deep, structural change we believe is needed to improve governance, is the urgent imperative of removing private money from politics. We need to create levels of political competition that do not require candidates to spend private money or be able to receive contributions from any private person, company or other source. The outrageous decision in the United States, commonly known as the *Citizens United* case by the US Supreme Court, effectively treated financial donations as 'freedom of speech' and thus ensured that the US

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.gruene.de>.

<sup>14</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_political\\_term\\_limits](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_political_term_limits).



political system - which is now so unstable and under such serious threat of democratic erosion - is now totally reliant on private money. This has had horrendous consequences in this country and all others where there are no limits on financial contributions to aspiring and current politicians. More than half of the members of both the US House of Representatives and Senate are millionaires.<sup>15</sup> The median net worth of US Republican Senators is now USD 1.4 million, while Democrats come in at USD 946,000.<sup>16</sup> The median net worth in the United States as a whole is USD 121,000.<sup>17</sup> Disaggregated by race, White families in the United States have a median net worth of USD 188,000, while Black families have a median net worth of only USD 24,000.<sup>18</sup>

Because income and net worth variations are so huge and growing, both within and between countries, removing private money from the political process is a fundamentally important way to enable citizens to fairly participate in and win elections based on ideas and skills, rather than vested interests and political *quid pro quos*. Sometimes people with low or median levels of wealth do win elections, but overall money still determines election outcomes far too often. With today's widespread use of social media and the advances in artificial intelligence (AI) it would be easy to distribute information throughout any society about the different candidates without the need (or even the possibility) of any of the candidates using private money to give them the unfair advantages they have become so used to. If it is prohibited to use money to buy a law degree or PhD, why would it violate any human right to prohibit the use of money on political campaigns? Of course, some flexibility may be given in the context of short political campaigns, all publically funded, but the proposition of no private money in politics is rather convincing.

#### 4. Explore and Test the Idea of Revolving Political Leadership or Rule by Council

An old joke asks 'What is a camel?' The punch line is: 'A horse designed by committee'. This may or may not be an apt reflection of the general inability of humans to make flawless collective decisions, even in a grouping as small as seven people as was the case during Uruguay's attempt at governing by Council that was in place from 1952-1967 as a concrete measure to prevent the emergence of a new dictator.<sup>19</sup> Switzerland has had better luck and has relied on a rotating presidency for many years whereby the President changes every

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15 <https://www.opensecrets.org/news/2020/04/majority-of-lawmakers-millionaires/>.

16 <https://www.rollcall.com/2018/02/27/wealth-of-congress-richer-than-ever-but-mostly-at-the-very-top/>.

17 <https://www.cnbc.com/select/average-net-worth-by-age/>.

18 <https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/notes/feds-notes/disparities-in-wealth-by-race-and-ethnicity-in-the-2019-survey-of-consumer-finances-20200928.htm>.

19 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National\\_Council\\_of\\_Government\\_\(Uruguay\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Council_of_Government_(Uruguay)).

year, without a peep of concern by society at large.<sup>20</sup> This system is so well accepted that many people in Switzerland are unaware of who is President at any given time.

What if more and more countries developed electoral systems whereby voters voted on members of a seven or nine-person presidency or head of state, which would rotate annually thus almost forcing the president in charge at any time to be a skilled manager, without the funds or time needed to become a despot? A presidential council would act more like a coordination council that could play only an oversight or controller roll, acting more like a conductor of an orchestra than an all-powerful general.

Extrapolating from this system, thought could also be given to the idea that politicians should never really run for office as an individual, but rather perform the functions of government only after getting elected and then being randomly selected from a pool of other qualified candidates who were elected on a party basis alone and not on any advantages incurred by personal wealth or even charisma. This would be similar to those legal systems that entrust juries with deciding the fate of people on trial for alleged crimes they may or may not have committed. The jury system may have its flaws and be subject to more abuse than is commonly thought, but might a similar, largely random system yield fairer and ultimately better governance than systems of elections that are often reduced to choosing simply the lesser of two evils, rather than the very best - and objectively with little or no vested interests - person in that society to coordinate the effective functions of government? Such a system would be based on the principle all too often absent in countries across the world today that anyone who wants power probably shouldn't be able to have it. Indeed, what if more power was given to those who didn't want it, rather than those who do want it?

## 5. Make Ministerial Appointments on the Basis of Recognised Expertise, Not Political Connections

Finally, before we turn to the core aspects of this report, what if governments reconsidered why and how certain politicians and members of political parties can become Line Ministers within governments? In Parliamentary systems, government ministers are appointed from within the ranks of the parliamentarians of the ruling party, with opposition parliamentarians usually developing a shadow cabinet in preparation for taking power with the next election. Ministerial choices are largely at the discretion of the Prime Minister within such systems. In countries like the United States, government ministers, referred to there as 'Secretary' are appointed by the President and are not subject to election at all, a truth that shocks

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20 <https://www.houseofswitzerland.org/swissstories/society/everything-you-need-know-about-swiss-presidency>.

many people, particularly those living in parliamentary democracies where all ministers are elected. In dictatorships, of course, family members, friends, business cronies, fellow generals and others are the types of people hand-picked by these despots to run ministries and everything else.

We believe governments should seriously reconsider who can become a government minister and that instead of the immense amount of personal discretion given by prime ministers, presidents and dictators, all ministers should not only be subject to election by the people, but also run for office on the basis of the ministerial portfolio they hope to lead. Their positions as ministers should be based on their expertise within the area over which they will oversee and have a proven track record in working within the areas of their ministerial competencies.





As we noted at the outset, these are just five of numerous proposed changes we would like to see within all states, and which are designed to spur greater democratic participation by people within constantly improving and evolving systems of governance. Humans are, of course, fallible, imperfect and far too often overly selfish and mean-spirited, but we believe just about everyone thinks that the politics of today as a system is ripe for renewal, reform and betterment. If all of us at least think about, debate and discuss these five concrete ways to make the political structures of the world more responsive to people's needs, more fair and equitable and ultimately, more appropriate to the needs of the eight billion people who share this solitary planet, we will all benefit sooner than later. But changes to these systems we have become so used to will be only the first steps in a much longer and even more refined journey that gives all of us not just the leaders that we want, but the leaders that we need in a new system where - at last - politicians, like professionals in virtually every other profession that can have a direct bearing on the lives of people, have to meet a number of criteria before even thinking about entering politics.

## A Checklist for All Aspiring Politicians

Some will say that the only legitimate criteria for political leadership in our world is to be of a certain age, and win a fair and free election in those countries where such processes exist. Others still believe that pure power, domination, violence and the use of force are sufficient grounds for holding power. But beyond our obvious rejection of dictatorship as a form of governing, and aside from the fact that free and fair electoral systems are in place in far too small a number of countries, defining what a 'free and fair' election actually means in countries that maintain democratic principles in practice is heavily skewed given the increasingly unfair role of money and other forms of influence within election processes. Those who care about effective political leadership will probably all agree that getting elected in an electoral process where money plays no role, other than publically-funded election campaigns, would form the basis for getting better leadership, and giving low-income people and billionaires the same chances of election, something which is very much not the case today. We believe that the time has come for a universally agreed list of criteria that must be met before people can officially register themselves to participate in political campaigns leading to possible election.

Certain criteria such as ethnicity, race, gender, political opinion, marital status, sexual orientation, number of children, religion, cultural background, food and musical preferences and many other things are now and always should be entirely irrelevant when it comes to effective democratic governance, but there are other criteria politicians striving for power should meet which all of us should discuss, and that may well result in better leadership

than what we have been forced to get used to over the years. The people of the world deserve so much better than what they are getting when it comes to political leaders and a quick glance at the leaders of the world today, as well as those of the past, reveal that this rather motley crew comes nowhere near the ancient refrains of the 'best and the brightest', and as a result our global inequality has never been worse, our climate crisis has never been worse, the threat of war and nuclear annihilation is always present, and our fragile economy and the natural environment on which it depends are never as secure or stable as we may like. Some of this may somehow be inevitable, but as much as we may wish otherwise, surely it is leadership that determines much of the shape of a world and as a result we are not getting the leaders the people of the world deserve. We need better leadership carried out by better leaders. We need a system of reliable, sensible and credible criteria that aspiring politicians must satisfy if they are to be permitted to seek election and possibly win democratic elections. We need to fundamentally change our system of selecting politicians if our political systems are to survive and positively evolve.

While we could collectively come up with additional hundreds of steps that could be put in place to make our world better, more fair, more sustainable, and more democratic, we have selected nine distinct criteria for effective political leadership that we believe should be met in order for all us to get the leaders we deserve. Were each of these to be implemented in full and become a systemic part of all political processes in all countries, we are certain our world as a whole would look a great deal better than it does today:

## The candidate has:

1. **Never committed or been convicted of committing an internationally recognised war crime, crime against humanity or human rights violation as defined under the Rome Statute to the International Criminal Court and prevailing international human rights treaties**

No one who has committed any international crimes should be allowed to run for political office. If they have been convicted, this should result in an automatic lifetime ban on entering politics at any level. If investigations are pending or cases already under consideration, such persons should not be allowed to run for or hold political office until the legal process has been completed. If persuasive evidence exists that a person has committed or encouraged

the violation of internationally recognised human rights of any sort, they too should be prohibited from entering politics and participating in any election.

## **2. Never been impeached or otherwise legally removed while holding public office, nor convicted of fomenting insurrection, treason, or sedition**

Any aspiring politician who has previously been impeached for a non-politically motivated crime while in office or implicated in attempts, whether successful or not, of overthrowing a democratically elected government or otherwise overturning a free and fair election, through real or attempted coup, they should not be entitled to run for public office or be able to be elected to high public office. People illegitimately charged with crimes based on political views or beliefs would, of course, be exempted from having to comply with this criterion.

## **3. Provided all tax returns for the past 10 years**

Any person seeking public office must provide at least 10 years of taxation records proving both their compliance with taxation requirements and to show the true state of their finances, any experiences they may have had with bankruptcy, their personal debts and liabilities, net worth and other financial interests. The provision of all tax returns from age 18 onwards should be encouraged.

## **4. Disclosed all beneficial interests in any business, company, investment or other asset**

Everyone who wishes to assume public office through election must disclose all beneficial interests they may have in any business, company, investment or other asset as a means to ensuring the non-use of tax havens, secret bank accounts, non-reported forms of income and other efforts, now so commonplace, to hide assets offshore and away from the eyes and hands of the relevant national tax authorities. A global registry for all beneficial interests has been proposed repeatedly and should form a core aspect of this criteria, thus requiring every aspiring politician to fully disclose all financial interests within this registry prior to being entitled to enter politics.



## **5. Never been convicted of major criminal offenses including, inter alia, homicide, assault, sexual crimes, or trafficking in persons or drugs**

No one who has ever been convicted of any major crime or felony should be permitted to hold elected office or position of political leadership. They should be entitled to vote and participate within the political system, but not hold governing powers over otherwise law-abiding citizens.

## **6. Signed a binding pledge of good governance including the commitment to govern for one term and one term only**

Every country should develop a pledge of good governance that every aspiring politician would be required to sign prior to seeking election. A global pledge of this nature should also be developed by the United Nations, which could be used as a model for countries without them.

## **7. Never served in the armed forces of their country in any position as officer or above**

Based on the current system of national borders and nation states enjoying national sovereignty, every country by their very nature has legitimate security concerns and the right to self-defence in the event of attack. This has resulted in virtually every country in the world maintaining armed forces, Costa Rica being the most well-known country without a national military. Not discounting the importance of militaries within the constitutional framework of democratic countries, and applauding the approach of Costa Rica, we believe that anyone who serves in or who has served in leadership positions within the military at officer level or above should be excluded from positions of political leadership. Not only are far too many countries under non-democratic military rule but also the track record of generals who have subsequently taken political power or positions of political leadership has been chequered at best.

## **8. No familial relationship - through blood, adoption or marriage - to any previous political leader within the past 30 years**

Political nepotism and familial political dynasties need to be relegated to past history. Countries run by non-democratically elected leaders and their families, usually with the support of business cronies and sycophants whose own incomes and livelihoods are tied to their devotion to their leaders have been shown time and time again to have performed poorly by virtually every measure, whether in economic terms, justice terms, rule of law terms or political terms. Aspiring politicians should never be immediate family members

(wife, husband, son, daughter) of current or past politicians (at least after the passage of 30 years) and be able to prove that there are no familial connections of this sort present. Families should stick to being families and not seek to dominate the rest of society by seizing positions of political power. We all deserve a world where sons or daughters of leaders do not automatically follow their fathers or mothers or other family members into power. Politics should be a one-time, one-term deal, not something that lasts a lifetime, and certainly not generations.

## 9. A net worth less than 20 million USD

Finally, we believe that people's lives and governments should not be governed or controlled by billionaires - ever. No matter where we live, we should all be governed by our peers, and for most people - 99.99% of people - billionaires are not our peers. Billionaires do not share the same familial, economic or vested interests as most people. They do not feel as compelled to follow the law as ordinary wage earners and all too often feel a level of special entitlement which greatly undermines the very democratic foundations of the countries which enabled them to amass such obscene amounts of wealth. We are well aware of arguments that billionaires generate innovation, jobs, prosperity and scientific and other advancements, and to a degree this is certainly true. But does their success in business - which universally has a cost to society often far higher than most people grasp - entitle them to become political leaders? Indeed, when billionaires have served as heads of state, the track record is generally poor and often utterly horrible. Even though there are some 51 million millionaires in the world, we must not forget that the median net worth of the human race in 2021 is USD 7,500-, meaning that half of the world is richer than that and half of the world is poorer. This means, for instance, that the world's poorest billionaire with just one billion dollars in wealth is a staggering 133,333 times richer than the median human being's net worth. Elon Musk, the world's richest man, would be 32 million times richer than the median. What kind of world have we allowed to emerge when we both enable and allow the emergence of such appalling levels of inequality amongst humans who share so many more attributes than they do not? Among many others, French economist Thomas Piketty famously proposed a new global wealth tax in his 2014 book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* as the most effective means of tackling inequality and the inverse relationship between investment gains on capital versus increases in wealth drawn solely from income through work. While there is much to recommend in such a tax, even though wealth taxes in a world of tax havens and secret bank accounts will always have limited effectiveness, this could assist in reducing the potential for mass capital accumulation and be a positive element in a broader process to bring levels of inequality down. In the meantime, and in the

interests of upholding and strengthening democracy and democratic principles, a USD 20 million cut-off would exclude that portion of humanity from holding positions of political power. Only several million people throughout the world hold more than USD 20 million in assets, so well under 0.1% of the human race would be prevented from controlling the reins of government under this criteria. What possible justification is there for the wealthy governing the rest of us? We need a much fairer world than the one we have today and limiting the role of wealth in government makes a lot of sense. An immediate prohibition on this group of people should be instituted that prevents them from serving as heads of state. Just as the church should be separated from the state, as systems of government should have in place structures that ensure a system of checks and balances between the most powerful parts of a state, and just as citizens must be both free and hold responsibilities to society at large, we do not believe that billionaires and all that they stand for should be part of a political process that has shown a high likelihood to enact laws and policies that benefit the already wealthy at the expense of the lower and middle classes. We are not saying people should not be able to create wealth and become rich. Indeed, far from it. We just want everyone, everywhere to be able to create wealth and become rich, not just a select few. If this was the motivation of politicians everywhere, we believe we would have a very different world indeed.





Many more criteria could be proposed to improve our democracies and to assist in building more democracy in countries currently without it. But for the moment, we have suggested these nine and hope that you will give some thought to these, share them with your friends and family and if you agree, try to get them implemented in part or in full in your country. It might be interesting to consider what would happen if you were to apply these criteria to today's 200 heads of state, including yours? Would the leader of your country pass the test? Would government ministers pass? How about members of your parliament or congress?

If we are to have a new politics emerge from our current highly imperfect political model grounded as it is so deeply in the reductionist parameters of the nation state, we need to have new and innovative ideas ready and well-tested prior to attempting to implement them in the context of global voting which we proposed in our earlier essay about the creation of a Digital People's Assembly<sup>21</sup> and even more so when it comes to the possibility of a world parliament, world ministers and a revolving world presidency or whatever form of eventual political modelling is chosen to more effectively run our world based on our shared humanity rather than on our nationalities or nation states. We need a set of new rules and qualifications required for anyone who wishes to be elected as world leaders in a world comprised of world citizens. Shouldn't political leadership be contingent upon a series of life choices, life decisions, that could make or break one's legitimacy to becoming the leader of a county, a region, a state, a nation or an international organization, rather than just the successful pursuit of power?

Einstein famously quipped that "imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world". We need to imagine the world as not just what we want it to be, but something that all of us deserve in order to live a full, peaceful, prosperous and joyous life. We believe that everyone deserves the very best leadership any society can provide them and that this leadership should be based on far more criteria than simply one's age under law and political and economic connections. A political leader should be like the talented conductors of the world's best orchestras; able to proficiently themselves play all or just about all of the instruments he or she conducts as a unified whole to create music that overwhelms the crowd. The successful conductor doesn't dominate, they do not dictate. Rather they guide and promote the flow, they bring out the best in all of the players, with the result being music perfectly played bringing joy and wonder to those lucky enough to hear it. Our political leaders should be like that and we should all have the right to have leaders who are selected from the best among us and not the worst as is so often the case

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21 See: [www.onenessworld.org](http://www.onenessworld.org).

today. In far too many countries, it is the most ruthless and rule breaking fighters, the most corrupt, the most traumatised, the most psychopathic, the most feared and the most cruel who claw their way to the top and in too many places seek to stay there as long as possible and in many instances for the remainder of their lives serving themselves and their cronies far more than the millions of people under their control. Haven't we had enough of this deeply flawed system that allows such loathsome people to govern and in so doing undermine democracy and the important principles that underpin it? Doesn't the world's population deserve to have political leaders who need to comply with a whole series of requirements before they can have the privilege to govern us, just as we expect from doctors, lawyers, engineers and so many others in society in whom we place our trust and whose decisions concerning all of us can very easily become matters of life and death?

There is nothing inherently left-wing or right-wing about these proposals and we encourage readers not to dismissively label them as such. We need to transcend and look beyond traditional political labels and place markers on the political spectrum, or more aptly, the political circle where if one goes far enough left-wing they end up right wing and where someone who goes too far right before too long becomes a little too far left.

We hope with this essay we have provoked our readers to think big, indeed, much bigger than ever before. The problems our world faces, all eight billion of us, are large and growing. Yes, we have certainly made immense progress, both measured in terms of recent years and centuries, but we believe we have reached the crossroads and need to collectively start thinking about the next macro-level phase of our shared global political evolution which accurately reflects the point to which we have come as a species.

Those of us lucky enough to have travelled far and wide across the world, which includes the two of us writing this article, and who have been fortunate enough to have worked with, partied with, dined with and become close, lifelong friends with, it has never been more clear that we are all the same. Yes, some religious beliefs may differ, some cultural attributes may diverge and some preferences in politics, in food, in music and so much else may be reflected in different ways in different places, but what we share as humans is so much deeper, so much more significant, so much more important than the comparatively small differences between us, and indeed, it is those differences that make life worth living. We are woven like threads into a single tapestry, a mosaic of beautiful colours, lovely accents, extraordinary dance steps, and the ability to laugh and cry and smile and frown, all tying us through our similarities into a unified whole, one species sharing one planet and one ecosystem on which we all rely. When one country gets a great leader we celebrate with



them and when a country turns away from democracy or becomes a dictatorship we mourn with the people who will have to suffer through what will surely be a horrible period of time.

We are far from naive and, of course, know all too well the grotesque differences in levels of wealth, of income inequality, of cruel and ruthless discrimination against so many different groups and so many other less than desirable facts of a world where so much can still be improved.

But knowing these problems first-hand only gives us the hope and inspiration to want to change them, to bring about a better world governed by better leaders, and as time rolls on it is our hope, and we hope yours as well, that all of us no matter where we live will be governed by leaders who not only comply with the proposed new criteria for political leadership we have proposed above but even more than that that we are universally governed by people, half men and half women, who actually loathe power, who don't want to control anyone, but people who see themselves in all of us as we see ourselves in them, and who govern not in the interests of personal enrichment or ego gratification, but who work like highly skilled car mechanics repairing our damaged motors and making the engines of society purr as efficiently as possible and enabling the larger machine of our civilisation to roll on smoothly for centuries and centuries to come. If we get better people to become better politicians we will have better policies, better laws and, in the end, a better planet for all of us.



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