



# Beyond democracy

Why democracy does  
not lead to solidarity,  
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tyrannical government.

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## About the authors

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## Introduction

### **Democracy – the last taboo**

“If there are any ills that democracy is suffering from today, they can only be cured by more democracy.” This old quotation from an American politician shows in a nutshell how our democratic political system is generally viewed. People are prepared to agree that democracy may have its problems – they may even agree that many western parliamentary democracies, including the one in the US, may be on the brink of collapse – but they cannot conceive of an alternative. The only cure they can think of is, indeed, *more* democracy.

That our parliamentary democracy system is in crisis few would deny. Everywhere citizens in democratic countries are dissatisfied and deeply divided. Politicians complain that voters behave like spoiled children, citizens complain that politicians are deaf to their wishes. Voters have become notoriously fickle. They routinely switch their allegiance from one political party to another. They also feel increasingly attracted to radical and populist parties. Everywhere the political landscape is fragmenting, making it more and more difficult to overcome differences and form workable governments.

The existing political parties do not have an answer to these challenges. They are unable to develop real alternatives. They are trapped in rigid party structures, their ideals hijacked by special interest groups and lobbyists. Virtually no democratic government has been able to control its spending. Most democratic countries have been borrowing, spending and taxing so extensively that it resulted in a financial crisis that brought various countries on the brink of bankruptcy. And on the rare occasions when circumstances force governments to reduce their expenditures at least temporarily, the electorate rises up in protest at what they believe is an assault on their entitlements, making any kind of real cutbacks impossible.

Despite their spending sprees, almost all democratic countries suffer from permanently high unemployment rates. Large groups of people remain on the sidelines. Virtually no democratic country has made adequate provisions for their aging populations.

Typically all democratic societies suffer from an excess of bureaucracy and regulatory zeal. The tentacles of the State reach into everyone's lives. There are rules and regulations for everything under the sun. And every problem is addressed through more rules and regulations rather than genuine solutions.

At the same time democratic governments do a bad job carrying out what many people would consider their most important task –

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maintaining law and order. Crime and vandalism are rampant. Police and the justice system are unreliable, incompetent and often downright corrupt. Harmless behavior is criminalized. As a percentage of its population, the US has the largest number of people in prison in the world. Many of these people are in jail for perfectly innocuous behavior, simply because their habits are considered offensive by the majority.

People's confidence in their democratically elected politicians has reached all-time lows according to various studies. There is a deep-rooted distrust of governments, political rulers, elites and international agencies who seem to have put themselves above the law. Many people have become pessimistic about the future. They fear that their children will be worse off than they are. They fear the invasion of immigrants, are worried that their own culture is under threat and long for times gone by.

## **The democratic faith**

Although the crisis of democracy is widely acknowledged, there is virtually no criticism of the democratic system itself. There is virtually no one who blames democracy as such for the problems we are experiencing. Invariably political leaders – whether left, right or in-between – promise to tackle our problems with more democracy, not less. They promise they will listen to the people and put the public interest above private interests. They promise they will cut down on bureaucracy, become more transparent, deliver

better services – make the system work again. But they never call the desirability of the democratic system itself into question. They'd much sooner argue that our problems are caused by too much freedom than too much democracy. The only difference between progressives and conservatives is that the former are likely to complain about too much economic freedom, and the latter about too much social freedom. This at a time when there have never been so many laws and taxes have never been so high!

In fact, criticism of the democratic idea is more or less taboo in western societies. You are allowed to criticize how democracy is being put into practice, or to castigate the current political leaders or parties – but criticizing the democratic ideal as such is 'not done'.

It is no exaggeration to say that democracy has become a religion – a modern, secular religion. You could call it the largest faith on earth. All but eleven countries – Myanmar, Swaziland, the Vatican and some Arab nations – claim to be democracies, even if only in name. This belief in the God of democracy is closely linked to the worship of the national democratic state that arose in the course of the 19th century. God and the Church were replaced with the State as society's Holy Father. Democratic elections are the ritual by which we pray to the State for employment, shelter, health, security, education. We have absolute faith in this Democratic State. We believe He can take care of everything. He is the rewarder, the judge, the all-knowing, the almighty. We even expect Him to solve all our personal and social problems.

The beauty of the Democratic God is that He provides His good works completely selflessly. As God, the State has no self-interest. He is the pure guardian of the public interest. He also doesn't cost anything. He freely deals out bread, fish and other favors.

At least, that's how it seems to people. Most people tend to see only the benefits the government delivers, not the costs. One reason for this is that the government collects taxes in many roundabout and indirect ways – by letting businesses collect sales taxes for example, or by letting employers collect social security taxes, or by borrowing money in the financial markets (which will someday have to be paid

back by taxpayers) or by inflating the money supply – so that people don't realize how much of their income is actually confiscated by the government. Another reason is that the results of government actions are visible and tangible, but all the things that could and would have been done if the government had not confiscated people's money in the first place, remain invisible. The war planes that get built are there for all to see, all the things that don't get done because the public's money was spent on war planes, remain invisible.

The democratic faith has become so deeply ingrained that democracy for most people is synonymous with everything that is (politically) right and moral. Democracy means freedom (everyone is allowed to vote), equality (each vote counts equally), fairness (everyone is equal), unity (we all decide together), peace (democracies never start unjust wars). In this way of thinking the only alternative to democracy is dictatorship. And dictatorship, of course, represents everything that is bad: lack of freedom, inequality, war, injustice.

In his famous 1989 essay 'The End of History?', the neo-conservative thinker Francis Fukuyama went as far as to declare that the modern western democratic system is the climax of mankind's political evolution. Or, as he put it, today we are witnessing 'the universalization of Western liberal democracy as *the final form of human government*'. Obviously only very evil minds (terrorists, fundamentalists, fascists) would dare speak out against such a sacred notion.

## **Democracy = collectivism**

Yet this is precisely what we will do in this book: speak out against the God of democracy, especially national parliamentary democracy. The democratic decision-making model is useful in some contexts, in small communities or within associations. But a national parliamentary democracy, which almost all western countries have, has far more drawbacks than advantages. Parliamentary democracy, we argue, is unjust, leads to bureaucracy and stagnation, undermines freedom, independence and enterprise,

and inevitably leads to antagonism, meddling, lethargy and overspending. And not because certain politicians fail in their job – or because the wrong party is in charge – but because that’s how the system works.

The hallmark of democracy is that ‘the people’ decide how society should be organized. In other words, all of us ‘together’ decide on everything that concerns us. How high

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taxes should be, how much money needs to be spent on child care and on the elderly, at what age people are allowed to drink alcoholic beverages, how much employers must pay for the pensions of their employees, what should be put on a product label, what children must learn at school, how much money should be spent on development aid or on renewable energy or on sports education or on orchestras, how a bar owner should run his bar and whether his guests are allowed to smoke, how a house should be built, how high interest rates should be, how much money needs to circulate in the economy, whether banks should be rescued with taxpayers’ money if they threaten to go bankrupt, who is allowed to call himself a physician, who is allowed to start a hospital, whether people are allowed to die when they are tired of life, and if and when the nation is at war. In a democracy, ‘the people’ are expected to decide on all these matters - and thousands of others.

Thus, democracy is by definition a *collectivist* system. It’s socialism through the backdoor. The basic idea behind it is that it is desirable and right that all important decisions about the physical, social and economic organization of society are taken by the collective, the people. And the people authorize their representatives in parliament – in other words, the State – to take these decisions for them. In other words, in a democracy the whole fabric of society is geared towards the State.

Clearly then it is misleading to claim that democracy is, somehow, the inevitable climax of the political evolution of mankind. That's just propaganda to disguise that democracy represents a very specific political orientation. For which there are indeed plenty of reasonable alternatives.

One of those alternatives is called: freedom. Or liberalism – in the classical sense of the word (which has an entirely different meaning from liberalism as the word is used today in the US). That freedom is not the same as democracy is not hard to see. Consider this: do we decide democratically how much money everyone should spend on clothes? Or what supermarket we go to? Clearly not. Everyone decides that for themselves. And this freedom of choice works fine. So why does it work better if all other things that affect us – from our workplace, health care and pensions to our pubs and clubs – are decided upon democratically?

In fact, couldn't it be the case that this very fact – that we decide on everything democratically, that virtually all economic and social issues are controlled by or through the State – is the underlying cause of the many things that are wrong in our society? That bureaucracy, government meddling, parasitism, crime, corruption, unemployment, inflation, low educational standards, et cetera, are not due to a *lack* of democracy, but rather are *caused* by democracy? That they go with democracy like empty shops and Trabant cars went with communism?

That is what we hope to show you in this book.

This book is divided into three parts. In the first part we discuss our faith in the God of parliamentary democracy. Like any religion, democracy has a set of beliefs – dogmas that everyone accepts as indisputable truths. We present these in the form of 13 popular myths about democracy.

In the second part we describe the practical consequences of the democratic system. We try to show why democracy inevitably leads to stagnation and what makes it inefficient and unjust.



In the third section we outline an alternative to democracy, namely a political system based on self-determination of the individual, which is characterized by decentralization, local governance and diversity.

Despite our criticism of the current national-democratic system, we are optimistic about the future. One reason why many people are pessimistic is that they feel that the current system is going nowhere, but they can't imagine an attractive alternative. They know that government to a large extent controls their lives but they can't control government. The only alternatives they can imagine are forms of dictatorship, such as the 'Chinese model' or some form of nationalism or fundamentalism.

But that's where they are mistaken. Democracy does not mean freedom. It is just as much a form of dictatorship – the dictatorship of the majority and the State. Nor is it synonymous with justice, equality, solidarity, or peace.

Democracy is a system that was introduced about 150 years ago in most western countries, for various reasons, for one thing to achieve socialist ideas within liberal societies. Whatever the reasons at the time, there are no good reasons now to retain the national parliamentary democracy. It doesn't work anymore. It is time for a new political ideal, in which productivity and solidarity are not organized on the basis of democratic dictatorship, but are the result of voluntary relationships between people. We hope to convince our readers that the possibility of realizing such an ideal is greater than many people today may imagine - and worth the effort of pursuing.