

## Compulsory voting instead of suffrage - How an economist wants to save democracy

With her development aid criticism "Dead Aid" Dambisa Moyo became a bestselling author. In her new book she presents provocative theses on the future of liberal democracies.



Nicole Bastian



**Dambisa Moyo**

The economist studied in Washington and Harvard, earned his doctorate in Oxford.

*(Photo: Robert Tjalondo for Handelsblatt)*

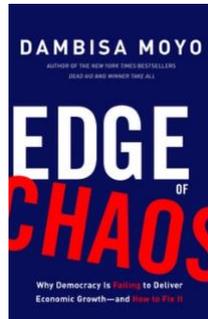
**The Hague** When Dambisa Moyo was one year old, her parents were among the first black graduates from the University of Zambia. That was in 1970. And it almost sounds like a globalization tale that today Moyo sits on the boards of three major corporations in New York and London, selling millions of books. Who is this exceptional woman?

Almost ten years ago, Moyo's **relentless criticism of Western development**aid in her first book "Dead Aid" created a worldwide discussion. "It is time we stopped pretending that the current resource-based development model will generate sustainable economic growth in the world's poorest countries. It will not," she wrote.

Such phrases got a special power from the pen of a black African woman, who had just spent seven years with the investment bank **Goldman Sachs** . The book sold seven digits, was translated into many languages and quoted by heads of state again and again.

Moyo could have turned that role into her brand essence: as an eloquent African voice in the West. But that's not what she wanted and wanted. She is reluctant to be reduced to **the topic of Africa** in lectures or interviews , sees herself as a global thinker and lateral thinker.

"I spend most of my time trying to identify critical risks - risks that we'll beat in a few years' time and say, 'Man, how did I overlook that?'," She says as a guest speaker at International Pension Summit ", a conference of the finance industry in The Hague. She talks about rising income differentials, over-indebtedness and an unemployed sub-class in times of new technologies like artificial intelligence and quantum computing.



*Dambisa Moyo: Edge of Chaos*  
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All topics that Moyo is not the only one to occupy. And yet the managers and managers of billionaire pension funds listen to their deep, clear voice almost devoutly. In the meantime, British bank **Barclays** is relying on Moyo's assessments, such as US energy giant **Chevron** and technology company 3M. She is a member of the Supervisory Board in all three companies.

Moyo, who studied in Washington and Harvard, earned his doctorate in Oxford. Worked at the World Bank and at Goldman Sachs. She has now published four books - China and the global commodity markets, she has treated in the second and third. **Economic contexts** , bold theses, logical, relentless conclusions and a clear, sometimes rousing narrative are the recipe for success of the 49-year-olds.

## **The threat of liberal democratic systems**

In her latest book, *Edge of Chaos*, published in 2018, she addresses the threat to liberal democratic systems worldwide. Threatened by the rise of autocratic counter-models like China, but also by homemade political, economic and social problems in the **US** and Europe.

For example, Moyo describes how and why US voter turnout has dropped ten percentage points over the past 50 years. As **increasing income inequality**, discrimination and corruption, poor educational opportunities and infrastructure undermine public acceptance of the system. "Many of today's challenges are a product of short-term action in politics and business," she says. "We set the wrong incentives."

The West is also receptive to giving up its values, according to the author. The latest example in her eyes is the restrained reaction of many Western governments, especially the US, to the murder of the dissident Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in early October.



***Dambisa Moyo in conversation with HB editor Nicole Bastian***

"If the economy grows, no matter where, that solves many problems."

*(Photo: Robert Tjalondo for Handelsblatt)*

Therefore, the West does not stand to point with its finger to other countries from a seemingly morally superior position, says Moyo. "The best advertisement for liberal democracy and market economy is when our systems work and perform. We should first work on their improvement. "In the marathon, the passionate runner, one should not look to the left or to the right.

For example, governments in Europe would have to take back some of their social promises, given the high level of debt and demographic developments. Dambisa Moyo loves numbers and has a quick number sequence: 7-25-50. Europe accounts for seven percent of the world's population, 25 percent of economic output and 50 percent of social benefits.

### **Differentiated opinion about Donald Trump**

It quickly becomes clear that as a liberal market economist, the economist is skeptical of high social costs. The models for an unconditional basic income, which are currently much debated in Europe, see them as critically as aid to Africa. Such transfers are not long-term solutions.

To strengthen liberal democracies, the author is waiting in her new book with ten proposals. Some of them - business model lateral thinker - quite provocative. How about making voting in elections compulsory? Or the other way round: the right to vote, to establish minimum standards in education? Or to give more weight to the voice of better informed citizens? And what about asking politicians for a professional experience outside the political world as an entry-level requirement? Or to pay better and measured by their performance? Moyo, a passionate traveler, will find examples from around the world for each of these proposals.

It takes a lot of self-confidence to venture so far on ever new topics. His strength has "Edge of Chaos" in surprising comparisons: for example, that the incomes in China today are just as equal or unevenly distributed as in the US. Overall, however, Moyo's latest book does not match the intensity of Dead Aid. On each side of this first work it was noted how close Moyo is to the fate of her African homeland.

Moyo has lived in New York for seven years now. Your verdict on US President Donald Trump is very differentiated. Trump has so well felt and addressed people's social fears and frustrations over globalization as hardly anyone has done before. With the tax reform or the infrastructure initiative, he has made possible the currently high US economic growth.

And, as the economist points out, economic growth and prosperity are prerequisites for the existence of liberal democracies. "If the economy grows, no matter where, that solves many problems."

Internationally, too, a lone combatant like Trump may be needed to initiate discussions about burden-sharing in **NATO** or about reforms in the international trading system. "Maybe we needed a shock for the system. Even if we do not like the nature of the ambassador. "For Trump's implementation style is" hard to swallow "for many people, including herself.

## **A wrong picture of Africa**

Above all, Moyo experiences the immigration debate of Trump from a special - as she puts it: emotional - position: "I was an immigrant in Europe, now I'm an immigrant in the USA." She knew what it meant, his family, his friends and to leave everything one knows, "to live in a place where one is very often considered a second-class citizen."

That is why Moyo, despite all the thematic emancipation of Africa, bothers her when people say that she is "not really African". "Of course I'm African," says Moyo. "I was born in Zambia, spent my formative years there."

Her mother, who lives further in Zambia, recently said to her: "Today, states want you to take their citizenship. But if you had come by boat across the Mediterranean, they would not want that." Moyo nods in confirmation and says, "She's right. "Millions of Africans are well-qualified, but would quickly be convicted.

But she also understands the host countries, which said that they do not have the resources to absorb an unlimited number of immigrants, especially illegal immigrants. Again, she has a number ready: 50 percent. According to estimates by the United Nations in 2075, Africa's share of world population will be so high.