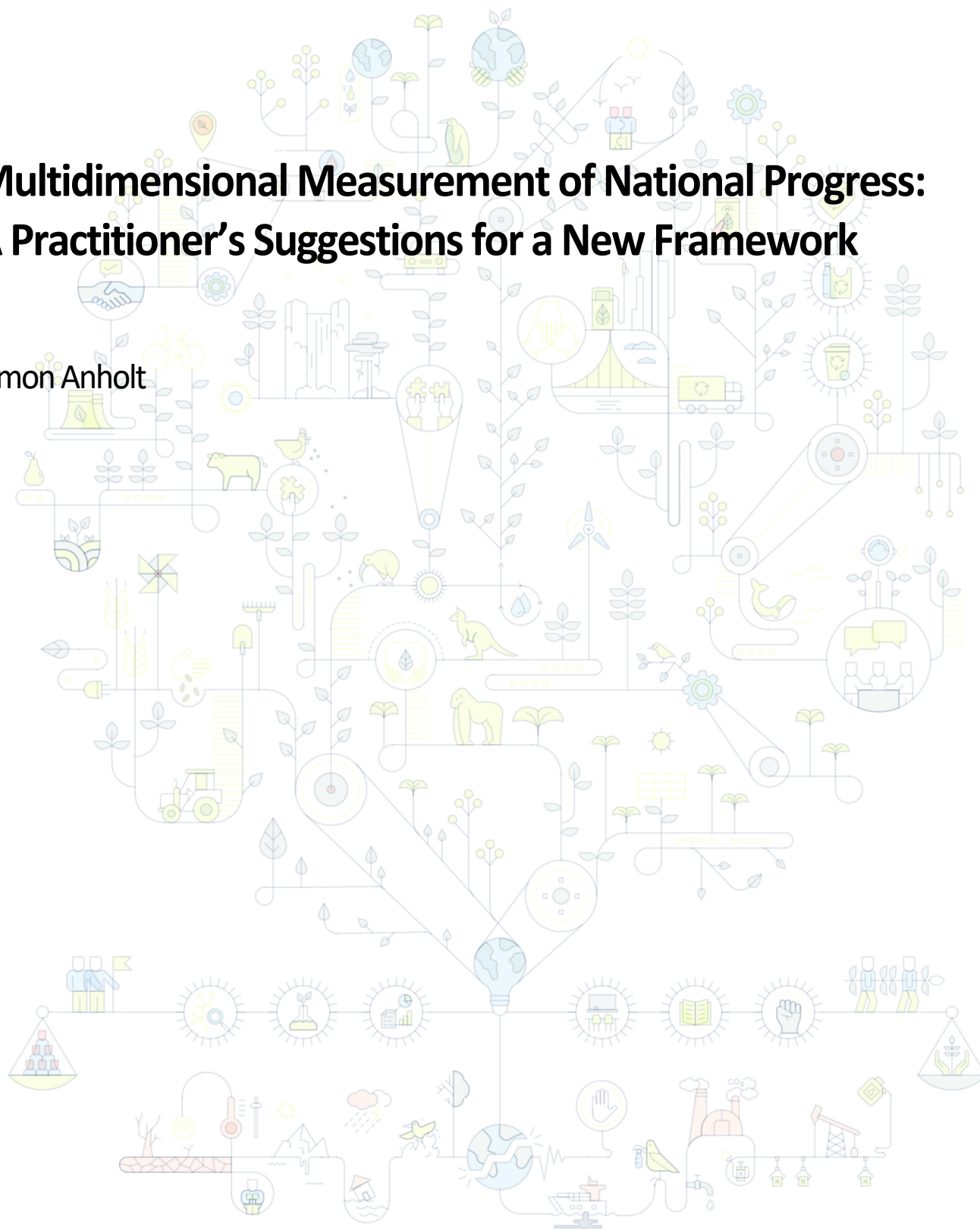


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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a new multidimensional approach to the measurement of national progress that combines three metrics: the level of human development of each country's own population (using the Human Development Index), the impact each country has on the world outside its own borders (using the author's Good Country Index) and the degree to which these factors are reflected in both elite and mass opinion worldwide. In an age of multiple global challenges, the external impacts of countries are as important as their domestic performance. Further, since none of the global challenges can be tackled without widespread behavioural change, public perceptions are a critical factor that cannot be left out of the equation. The paper includes some illustrative measurements of the gaps among domestic performance, international impact and international perceptions.

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Introduction

In this paper, I propose a new multidimensional approach to the measurement of national progress that combines what I consider to be three crucial metrics: the level of human development of each country's own population (using the Human Development Index or HDI); the impact each country has on the world outside its own borders (using the Good Country Index); and the degree to which these factors are reflected in both elite and mass opinion worldwide (using the Nation Brands Index as an illustration of the principle for the time being but later using customized opinion polling).

There are many ways to measure national progress, both in terms of themes to cover and ways in which they can be measured. Further, measures might be combined in an almost infinite number of ways. Any attempt at an overall evaluation of such measures is doomed to be incomplete. Instead, I suggest two options that could broaden and enrich our understanding of progress. Moreover, while measurement is the core of my proposal, I see such indexes as policy tools rather than as exercises in statistical analysis for purely academic ends. Consequently, this paper focuses as much on the principles and philosophies of human development and international relations, and on developing solutions to humanity's current problems, as it does on the technical approaches to measuring those problems. Understanding the 'grand challenges' and developing practical solutions for them is, for me, the inescapable *raison d'être* of measurement in the social sciences. The problems that humanity is facing today seem far too urgent for entirely abstract measurement of those problems to be an acceptable way of spending time, energy and brainpower.

One of the main problems we face in the twenty-first century, a problem that underpins and to some degree eclipses all the others, is the fact that the international community operates well below necessary levels of cooperation and collaboration. The solutions to our biggest problems are known, but we simply don't work together intelligently or consistently enough to implement them. To me, the Sustainable Development Goals have always looked like 16 doors and 1 key.

This has a good deal to do with the dominant culture of governance. In theory, most of the world operates today on the principles of liberal institutionalism but in practice it increasingly looks as if the realists are closer to the truth. If 'America First' were an atypical doctrine one might worry somewhat less about the future of multilateralism, but it is simply the default mode for most States, as it has been since the Treaty of Westphalia and long before. Most countries behave as selfishly as they think they can get away with, short of the international community singling them out for criticism too strongly or too frequently for comfort. At the moment, the 'envelope' of what countries are deemed able to get away with has been enormously stretched, thanks to a number of new examples. (The most egregious was the world's most powerful nation systematically undermining international institutions, one by one, under its last administration. Constructive criticism would

have been welcome and in some cases long overdue, but it is hard to know how to respond to willful vandalism.)

National responses to the current pandemic perfectly illustrate the resurgent tendency towards self-serving nationalism, with pockets of functioning multilateralism here and there just saving the system from complete catastrophe. Even the European Union, in more normal times a shining example of international cooperation and collaboration, has behaved far from impeccably.

All this is no basis on which to build a better future for the human race.

Things can only change when governments learn to harmonize their domestic and international responsibilities more effectively, when they realize that countries can cooperate and collaborate without losing competitiveness, and when they perceive even clearer and sufficiently short-term national advantages in doing so. Things will change when governments discover that thinking internationally is not a matter of altruism or national self-sacrifice. Nor is it an expensive luxury that only highly developed nations can afford. If it is done well, it produces better thinking, and that means better policies, with better development outcomes both at home and abroad. These are simple truths that are not well understood or even imagined by many governments. There is an urgent need for them to be explained and demonstrated.

In the past, governments and other people in positions of power and authority had only to live up to a single, simple mandate: They had to look after the interests of their own people and their own slice of territory. And if in doing so they harmed other people or territories, that was accepted or even admired because it showed a truly uncompromising commitment to their duty of leadership.

Today, this is not just unwise, it is disastrous. People in positions of power and responsibility must accept that in our interdependent and interconnected world they now have a dual mandate. They are responsible not only for their own people but also for every man, woman, child and animal on the planet, and not only for their own slice of territory but also for every square inch of the Earth's surface and the atmosphere above it. And if they don't like the sound of this, they should not be in a position of power or responsibility, not for their country, their city, their town or even their own family. This is surely the cardinal rule of leadership in our age.

If humanity is to progress, the culture of governance must change from fundamentally competitive to fundamentally collaborative. Our leaders need to cultivate minds that telescope, not minds that microscope, and to consider a truly global array of responsibilities, opportunities and inspiration. They must do this not only when dealing with foreign affairs but in every aspect of their work as there is no such thing as 'domestic' any longer.

For centuries, the basic rule has been competition among States with a little collaboration and cooperation sprinkled over it when this is absolutely unavoidable or very clearly in everybody's immediate interest. From now onwards, the basic rule must be collaboration and cooperation with competition sprinkled over it when it is clearly and universally beneficial or at least harmless to do so. This is perfectly possible as industry has been demonstrating for decades. The principle of 'co-opetition' in the public sector is an experiment that is decades overdue.

There's nothing inherently wrong with competition. It is a basic human instinct that has helped rescue billions from poverty. I doubt that country rankings would wield so much influence if they did not appeal to an almost universal spirit of nationalistic competitiveness. Competition only becomes a problem when it is the one altar at which we worship; that has been the status quo for 60 or 70 years.

The idea of shared global responsibility does challenge some aspects of conventional economic development thinking. Of course, countries with fewer economic resources are unable to contribute economically at the same levels as rich countries, and of course it is right that richer countries should continue to assist poorer countries, especially when it comes to disaster relief. One can appreciate the simple wisdom and humanity of Marx's dictum, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs," applied to the whole international community, without needing to be a Marxist or a socialist. But we need to be alert to the danger of unequal responsibility for the past being endlessly transmuted into unequal responsibility for the future. Unless we can conceive of a framework under which all countries take equal responsibility for the future commons, inequities will persist, and overall human development will be obstructed.

In our massively interconnected, interdependent and challenged modern world, I believe that two additional considerations mentioned earlier, and both reflected in the measurement tools I use, are indispensable. These are first, the degree to which a country or any human community contributes to the world *outside* its own borders, and second, the degree to which this is accurately perceived by public opinion at home and abroad, since this perception drives global behaviour patterns.

We live, increasingly, in a global society, albeit a fractured and fractious one. This means that the consequences of good or bad governance in any country are not restricted to that country. The actions of governments and citizens in every country, even if they are not directly felt outside that country's borders, have an international impact purely by virtue of being acknowledged outside those borders. The ability of good behaviour to spread its benefits is limited if it remains unknown; the impact of bad behaviour can be greatly increased if the world knows about it.

Globalization has created such a dense tangle of economic, social, political, technological, commercial, legal and cultural connections that every country, small or large, rich or poor, humble or ambitious, now affects and

is affected by every other country, near or far. If any country fails to control its waste or its emissions, it will harm the atmosphere and the oceans, which belong to all of us. If a country fails to make its proper contributions to the international system, others will have to contribute more. If it fails to maintain peace and stability, other countries will probably get involved. If it cannot offer its citizens good prospects, it will produce more migrants who will bring both benefits and stresses to the countries they move to. If country remains poor, other countries may need to help; if it becomes wealthy, it may use that wealth to help poorer countries. Any country's people, culture, cuisine, products and services may bring delight and variety to people in distant countries. People might visit as tourists or investors and contribute to an economy while enriching their own lives and experiences.

And of course, any country of any size or strength can produce a great leader and share that leader with the world when it comes to making the big collective decisions that affect all of us. Great leaders work for all of humanity. They benefit all of us with their wisdom, courage and imagination, not just their own voters. They know how important it is to be a good neighbour and a good ancestor.

Today a government's sphere of responsibility is far greater than its sphere of jurisdiction. Everyone who becomes the leader of a country, city or region has joined the team that runs the planet whether they like it or not. If by raising the living standards, life expectancy or knowledge of its own people a government shortens or worsens the lives of people in other countries, or damages the commons, its performance cannot be considered praiseworthy.

It is also, of course, not sustainable. But I would argue that the concept of sustainability has certain limitations. We will need to look beyond sustainability if we wish to provide a fuller account of the state of collective human development and, more importantly, steer a better course in the future.

A paradigm shift for the Human Development Index

The first HDI represented a paradigm shift in the way that national progress was measured. A second paradigm shift is now due. Even in the last century, the HDI was criticized for failing to incorporate sustainability indicators. For example:

So far, the HDI has neglected links to sustainability by failing to investigate the impact on the natural system of the activities that potentially contribute to national income—and hence to HDI. The question that needs to be asked is: human development, but at what cost? For example, the distribution of environmental performance of countries varies greatly—countries such as Brazil and Indonesia have improved their performance on the HDI in part by converting their natural capital to income. While the human development achievements of these countries may seem impressive, are they really sustainable? For the

HDI to capture the sustainability dimension of human development, it will need to incorporate some mechanism for accounting overexploitation of natural resources (Sagar and Najam 1997).

Accounting for the ecological and economic sustainability of a country's behaviours is essential. To omit this factor makes no more sense than gauging a person's wealth by the amount of money they spend or their health by the amount they eat.

A sustainability model based on the overuse or underuse of each country's natural resources, such as the Global Footprint Network's National Footprint Accounts¹ (one of the indicators in the Planet and Climate section of the Good Country Index), is one of the best examples of a simple but powerful sustainability measurement. The Social Progress Index,² as the name implies, paints an even broader picture of factors that comprise the well-being and opportunities of citizens in each country now and in the future. This is just one of many new indicators that propose more complete accounts of human progress than purely economic factors.

The HDI model could and should go further than a simple sustainability upgrade, however. Merely incorporating the concept of sustainability, far from offering the world a second paradigm shift, runs the risk of merely catching up with what the world has been saying for the last 30 years. A true paradigm shift would set the direction for the next 30.

It is worth taking a step back at this stage and asking why do we measure? What is ultimately the purpose of an index or ranking of countries?

Why do we measure?

At the most basic level, good policy is evidence- and data-based. If reliable data are lacking, they need to be supplied. To measure the performance of one country against other countries makes good sense as it clarifies and to some extent dramatizes the task ahead. Nobody really expects all countries to achieve equal levels of development or progress, so a ranking is a logical way of illustrating the global picture. Having said this, it is worth asking whether ranked indexes do in fact contribute to preserving these inequalities by repeatedly parading the image of a world where a handful of high-ranking, generally wealthy, healthy, highly successful countries occupies the top slots and a long tail of persistent 'underperformers' languishes perpetually at the bottom. Perhaps it would be useful instead to compare the speed at which countries are progressing towards

¹ See a comparison of countries by ecological footprint at: http://data.footprintnetwork.org/?_ga=2.117009922.506357952.1588157770-1719803215.1588157770#/compareCountries?cn=all&type=EFCpc&yr=2016.

² See an overview of the Social Progress Index at: <https://www.socialprogress.org/index/global>.

some modestly universal standard of justice, equality, prosperity, global responsibility and human development, rather than emphasizing how far most of them are from achieving it.

Country indexes have other purposes that are somewhat less obvious. As there is little effective hard power at the supra-sovereign level, rankings and indicators have evolved into important tools for guiding States and other actors towards what their creators believe are the most productive directions. One ideal outcome of producing a new ranking is that, over time, it establishes a new set of standards to which governments will aspire. It can reframe the agenda.

These are quintessential soft power instruments as they only work by attraction. If an index or ranking succeeds in establishing itself as one that governments *wish* to perform well on, this creates a virtuous circle. The more widely an indicator is accepted, the more governments will think it worthwhile to play by its rules and aspire to its standards. The more governments participate, the more people will respect the indicator. Successful indicators get a secondary boost from the fact that high-performing countries naturally tend to promote them and publicly emphasize their importance and credibility.

Rankings and other studies can also provide a useful vocabulary for the media, elites and general public to more readily discuss the issues that underpin them. New concepts will often need new language. My coining of the inelegant terms 'gooder' and 'goodest' was entirely necessary, for example, because without them you need a longish sentence to describe the attributes that produce a high or low ranking on the Good Country Index.

A successful index needs to be sufficiently rigorous to stand up to a certain level of academic scrutiny but at the same time produce results that are sufficiently clear, simple, dramatic and relevant to fuel conversations at many levels of expertise and education. It can be misleading to distinguish between indexes destined for specialized audiences and those targeted at broader public opinion, at least when one is dealing with existential global issues. A good index must interface usefully and powerfully with topical events so that it stays relevant to large numbers of people. It must also feel fair without being too predictable, such as by not having a cluster of Nordic countries at the top of the ranking, which is surprisingly difficult to avoid whatever you are measuring.

With a successful index, it is also a short step from observations and measurements to appropriate remedies. Ideally, the solutions in some sense need to be *built into* the basic architecture or at least into the philosophy that underpins the indicator and is articulated by it. Otherwise, one runs the risk of heightening public perceptions of risks and problems without offering any prospect of improving or reversing them. This would be an irresponsible use of soft power and may prove counterproductive in the longer term.

A question well worth debating is simply: What is the proper and productive relationship between measurement and remedial action? How can the two be linked in a way that motivates audiences to do more

than endlessly consume the depressing data that such indicators inevitably produce? A good indicator is also a call to action.

Country rankings may be as common as fleas but a good one still has the power to change minds. Typically, they influence the influencers, rather slowly but the effect can be profound. A much smaller number help shift international public opinion and conversation to some degree; the various happiness indicators are among the very few examples of this. The Nation Brands Index and the Good Country Index have also proved their ability to achieve this level of impact. Whether it is right, proper or possible for the HDI to realize the same aim is a longer conversation but one that is certainly worth having.

The Good Country Index

I originally devised the Good Country Index as a first small step towards the wide-scale cultural change that I defined earlier—to change the culture of governance worldwide, from fundamentally competitive to fundamentally collaborative. The idea was that a sufficiently compelling ranking might encourage people to change the way they discuss countries and their role in the world, and the way we measure their progress.

As I put it at the time, instead of endlessly discussing how *well* countries are doing, I wanted people to start discussing how *much* they were doing. On hundreds of occasions, people have accused me, sometimes aggressively, of placing the country they love too low in the index or the country they hate too high (on the apparent assumption that I personally choose where countries appear in the ranking, based on my ignorance and prejudice, in order to pursue some odious agenda of my own that I am perversely determined to promote and conceal at the same time). But in the end, I've been able to point out that even if my data do not correlate with their opinions at least we've been having a new kind of conversation about what countries are *for* in our age of advanced globalization. In that respect, the index is doing its job. It may not provide the right answers, but it at least prompts the right questions.

I knew from my experience with my earlier studies, the Nation Brands Index and City Brands Index, that the media and their readers find rankings irresistible, and that building an index does not have to cost much or take years as long as you're prepared to publish it in a 'beta' version, take the criticism, listen to people's suggestions, stick with it and gradually improve it. The comments and criticisms submitted on social media by members of the public are not always as courteous or well-informed as one might like but they are always freely given. I work on the assumption that each one may contain useful advice for a better index in the future.

The Good Country Index was the outcome of my thinking on the dual mandate defined earlier. As I saw it, there were already dozens of surveys and indexes that ranked the most 'successful' countries in isolation, in terms of the quality of life, prosperity, equality, education, freedom and happiness they offer their own citizens,

visitors, migrants or investors. But countries do not exist in isolation. Somehow, nobody had thought of measuring their contribution to the world around them, outside their own borders. Yet in this age defined by big, borderless challenges, each country must surely be able to show its balance sheet. How much of the world's wealth and goodwill has it spent, and how much has it saved or added? Which countries are simply free riders on the global system? The Good Country Index was designed to rank each country's impact on the rest of humanity, the planet and our shared resources.

In 2012, with the help of Dr. Robert Govers at the University of Leuven and Professor Richard Harvey at the University of East Anglia, I started work on designing and preparing the first edition of the Good Country Index. A composite index, it is based on 35 indicators produced by the United Nations and several other international agencies and non-governmental organizations. We had little choice when it came to selecting indicators as there are not many robust and reliable annual measurements of the behaviours of all or most countries. Relatively few organizations have the resources to conduct primary research at that scale (most are in the UN family). After excluding indicators that measure purely domestic performance, the remainder that capture distinctly external impacts are pretty much the same 35 we used to produce the Good Country Index.

We grouped the indicators, some positive and some negative, into seven subrankings. Each subranking contains five indicators. The subrankings and indicators used for edition 1.3 of the Good Country Index in 2018 were as follows:

Contributions to science and technology

1. Number of foreign students studying in the country (according to UNESCO) relative to the size of the economy
2. Exports of periodicals, scientific journals and newspapers (according to the ITC) relative to the size of the economy
3. Number of articles published in international journals (according to SCImago) relative to the size of the economy
4. Accumulated Nobel prizes (up to 2016) assigned to countries based on laureates' country of birth as well as country (countries) of institutional affiliation at the time of the award, relative to the size of the economy
5. Number of International Patent Cooperation Treaty applications (according to WIPO) relative to the size of the economy

Contributions to culture

6. Exports of creative goods (UNCTAD's *Creative Economy Report* categorization) relative to the size of the economy
7. Exports of creative services (according to the ITC's trade in services categories 10 and 11) relative to the size of the economy
8. UNESCO dues in arrears as percentage of contribution (negative indicator)
9. Freedom of movement, i.e., the number of countries and territories that citizens can enter without a visa (according to Henley & Partners)
10. Freedom of the press (based on the mean score from Reporters without Borders and the Freedom House index as a negative indicator)

Contributions to international peace and security

11. Number of peacekeeping troops sent overseas for UN missions relative to the size of the economy
12. Dues in arrears to financial contribution to UN peacekeeping missions as percentage of contribution (negative indicator)
13. Attributed number of casualties of international organized violence (number of casualties per conflict divided by the number of countries involved according to UCDP/PRIO) relative to the size of the economy (negative indicator)
14. Exports of weapons and ammunition (according to the ITC) relative to the size of the economy (negative indicator)
15. Internet freedom as measured in the Global Cybersecurity Index score (according to the ITU)

Contributions to world order

16. Percentage of population that gives to charity (according to the Charities Aid Foundation) as a proxy for a cosmopolitan attitude
17. Number of refugees hosted (according to UNHCR) relative to the size of the economy
18. Number of refugees overseas (according to UNHCR) relative to the size of the population (negative indicator)
19. Population birth rate (according to the World Bank as a negative indicator)
20. Number of UN treaties signed (up to 2016) as proxy for diplomatic action and peaceful conflict resolution

Contributions to planet and climate

21. National footprint accounts, ecological footprint (according to the Global Footprint Network) relative to the size of the economy (negative indicator)
22. Percentage compliance with multilateral environmental agreements on hazardous waste and chemicals in terms of meeting commitments and obligations to transmit information as required by each relevant agreement
23. Hazardous pesticides exports (according to UNEP's Environmental Data Explorer) relative to the size of the economy (negative indicator)
24. Renewable energy share in total final energy consumption
25. Consumption of all ozone-depleting substances (according to UNEP's Environmental Data Explorer) relative to the size of the economy (negative indicator)

Contributions to prosperity and equality

26. Trading across borders (open trading performance compared to best practice, i.e., the IFC distance to frontier)
27. Number of aid workers and volunteers sent overseas (according to UNV) relative to the size of the economy
28. Average transaction cost (percentage) of sending remittances from a specific country (a negative indicator according to the World Bank)
29. Foreign direct investment outflow (according to UNCTAD) relative to the size of the economy

30. Development cooperation contributions (aid according to Development Initiatives) relative to the size of the economy

Contributions to health and well-being

31. Food aid funding (according to WFP) relative to the size of the economy

32. Exports of pharmaceuticals (according to the ITC) relative to the size of the economy

33. Voluntary excess contributions to the WHO relative to the size of the economy

34. Humanitarian aid contributions (according to UNOCHA) relative to the size of the economy

35. Compliance with International Health Regulations (according to the WHO)

Countries receive scores on each indicator as a fractional rank relative to all countries for which data are available (after most data are corrected for gross domestic product or GDP). Normalizing by GDP is intended to ensure that smaller and poorer countries are not unduly penalized for any potentially limited ability to 'make a difference' in the world. In any case, only a small handful of the 35 indicators relate directly to expenditure, so the size of a country's economy shouldn't have an enormous impact—at least not a direct one—on its rankings. We also experimented with different normalization methods (including gross national income or GNI and population) but this made relatively little difference to the final ranking.

The actual simple ranks per category are based on the mean fractional ranks on the five indicators per category (subject to a maximum of two missing values per category). The overall rank is based on the average of the category ranks.

Clearly, some of the 35 behaviours included have more international impact than others. But we decided that we could not reflect this by weighting the indicators as it is largely personal opinion whether, for example, emitting carbon dioxide does more harm to humanity than turning away migrants or invading another country. For this reason, we decided to weight all data equally. People could then look at the individual indicators and decide for themselves which they thought were more important.

At some stage I would like to include a feature that allows people to input their own views on which global issues are most important, so that the Good Country Index website will produce a 'personalized' ranking based on those weightings. Alternatively, or additionally, one could apply weighting based on scientific consensus about which issues are the most significant and/or convene an expert panel to advise on this. Data on international public opinion about which global challenges are the most pressing are also available from the Nation Brands Index; questions on this topic are usually fielded alongside the basic questionnaire.

A quantitative ranking is ultimately inadequate for providing a full account of what countries contribute to humanity and the planet. Many significant impacts, both positive and negative, are neither measured nor measurable, even if they are certainly describable. Moreover, the tyranny of the ranked index means that accounting for any particularly important contribution on the part of any individual country results in unfairly penalizing all other countries simply because they did not happen to do the same thing in the same year. For these reasons, it has long been my intention to add some kind of non-comparative, qualitative, descriptive reporting for each country individually, alongside the index itself. A series of country-specific Good Country Reports would do this admirably but would involve primary research and need external funding, which the project does not have.

Many differences in country ranks on many of the indicators are structural. A conversation about the index that leaves out the historical antecedents of each country's present ranking is an incomplete conversation. The index itself cannot and does not claim to account for these historical factors. It would be impossible to do so objectively, but again, this sets the stage for an important debate and frames it in a way that is both unfamiliar and, I hope, productive. The very last thing the Good Country Index is intended to do is to close down discussions about the past, and I mean the whole of our human past, before eighteenth and nineteenth century colonialism and before the slave trade. I fail to see the logic or honesty of debates about historical guilt that have arbitrary cut-off points. Nor does it mean arguing against apology and reparation where apology and reparation are due. It certainly does not mean that aid should stop. But it does mean, as I suggested earlier, that the community of nations must find ways to move forward as a community of equals.

Of course, it is impossible not to notice the preponderance of Western and especially European countries at the top of the index. It is important to investigate and account for this. There are two possible explanations. One is that the index is deliberately or accidentally biased in their favour. The other is that they really do contribute more to the world than other countries.

I would rather it was the former because that could more easily be corrected. As I observed when I launched the Good Country Index, the fact that Kenya managed to rank in the top 30 in the first edition gave me more pleasure than any other result. It would send a powerful message if more Eastern, Southern and/or developing countries had put rich Western countries to shame for their greater contribution to humanity or the planet. But unfortunately, it just does not seem to be the case—at least not using data that are robust, reliable, relevant and available.

Most of the data are produced by big international agencies, which means that they are usually collected by the statistical offices of countries themselves. This does not mean that there is no bias in the UN system or its measurements—this is an institution with its own history after all—but at least the mechanisms exist for

countries to challenge the basis on which measurements are made and compared. This creates a constant and productive dialogue.

As an experiment, we even tried deliberately to rig the rankings in different ways by excluding certain data sets and changing some of the calculation methods, just to see how different we could make the results. We tried dividing the data by population and by GNI, but this did not substantially change the ranking. The final decision to divide the results by GDP was made purely to avoid penalizing poorer countries for their smaller economies and not the size of their populations.

Based on available data, we have to come to terms with the fact that Western countries do appear to contribute more to the international community at this point in history, even factoring out the size of their economies.

In the case of European Union member States, I believe that they dominate the top end of the scale because they have a long habit of international collaboration and cooperation that other countries simply do not have. To a limited extent, they've been attempting to practise what the Good Country Index preaches for the last 40 years. For the rest, maybe it is just down to the fact that the whole idea of the 'international community' and pulling your weight on global challenges is something that the West, for all its faults, has led from the start. With its dominance in technology and business, the West has driven globalization, both profited and suffered from it, and overall has made the greatest efforts to correct its risks and imbalances. Or at least it has done so in the case of financial, technological and organizational solutions. When it comes to simple humanity, such as accepting refugees, the West continues to play a highly inconsistent role and is frequently put to shame by some non-Western countries.

Countries in the South and East have tended to be more inwardly or regionally focused. Many have big domestic problems still to address. In some cases, this is due to the legacy of colonialism left by today's rich countries. Some are not only happy to be free riders on the planet but also feel it is their right. And there may be some rough justice in this but the kind of justice that punishes everybody, including the righteous, is primitive justice indeed. Perhaps others feel somehow excluded from the 'international community' despite the plethora of international institutions that all countries can belong to these days. They may lack the necessary self-confidence to participate actively in global issues.

Things are gradually changing. For example, some wealthy Middle Eastern countries are starting to contribute to poverty reduction in Africa and Asia. But somehow, we have to face these realities, however uncomfortable they are, and work out the consequences. It is too easy just to dismiss the data as biased, as many do, simply because the data do not produce results that correspond to a certain worldview. We cannot make progress on

these critical issues if we remain in denial about the fact that not enough countries do enough to make the world work better.

That includes Western countries, of course. Just because they rank higher on the index does not mean they are doing anything like enough for the world. Most do enormous amounts of harm to humanity and the planet as well as good. The fact that, for example, Sweden ranks so low in the 'peace and security' category, mainly because of the scale of its weapons exports, is inexcusable hypocrisy, no matter that it ranked first overall on version 1.1 of the Good Country Index. One can make similar criticisms of most Western countries.

Rightly or wrongly, the West cannot shoulder the burden of global challenges on its own. It seems right that it should contribute in proportion to the damage it has done and continues to do, and in proportion to its greater resources, but humanity will not begin to progress until we have reached a stage where these distinctions are set aside, and all countries see it as their equal responsibility to contribute to making a better, fairer and more stable future for all of us.

Having said all of this, even though the Good Country Index is at present a ranking, it is important that people understand that it is not attempting to pass any kind of judgment on countries, nor does it comment on the reasons behind any country's scores. It is certainly true that countries that need to focus on severe domestic challenges tend to be, quite understandably, more concerned about their own populations and their own stability than those of other countries. But this should not be allowed to turn into an argument that fighting global challenges is a luxury that only rich countries can afford to indulge in once they are able to satisfy the needs of their own populations. Experience suggests that no country ever judges that it has reached such a point. The received wisdom that domestic and international responsibility are mutually antagonistic is not only false but harmful. All countries must find productive and imaginative ways to harmonize their domestic and international responsibilities at all stages of their development journey. This is far from impossible.

No overall account of each country's impact on the rest of the planet had previously been attempted, but in certain specific areas such as pollution and development assistance some good composite indicators are available. The Campaign for Global Development's Commitment to Development Index³ is one good example of an external impact indicator. Unlike the Good Country Index, its focus is very decidedly on the impact of rich countries on poorer countries and on the voluntary assistance provided by the former to the latter. The publishers describe the Commitment to Development Index as ranking 27 of the world's richest countries on policies that affect more than 5 billion people in poorer nations. It goes beyond just foreign aid to cover seven policy areas: aid, finance, technology, environment, trade, security and migration.

³ See the index at: <https://www.cgdev.org/commitment-development-index-2018>.

Development is indeed about more than foreign aid. So many of the rich world's attempts to help the developing world are still based on a nineteenth century principle of philanthropy: a notion that the world is divided into two hemispheres by a line called the Equator, and that most of the world's problems can be summed up by the observation that there are too many dollars above the line and too few below it. If therefore we can simply transfer as many spare dollars as possible from above the line to below it, runs the logic, all the problems in the world would immediately be solved.

This model is the dominant fixation of North America and Western Europe, and it drives and distorts the whole conception of economic development worldwide. Only a civilization that worships money so devoutly could make the mistake of thinking that money plays such an exclusive and fundamental role in the way the world works.

I cannot help feeling that a more equal conception of the hierarchy of nations is an essential step forward in human development. The notion that rich countries have an obligation to help poor countries, especially since the rich countries are, in many cases, responsible for creating and even maintaining the wealth gap, is irrefutable. But at a level beyond the strictly economic, this system reinforces a world order that's based on economic competitiveness and so entrenches inequality as well as making the tragedy of the commons inevitable.

Since the survival of mankind hinges to a great extent on collaboration, at some level it is necessary for *all* countries, rich and poor, to accept their full and equal responsibility for the future of humanity and its home planet. Responsibility has been unequally shared in the past but to carry that inequality into the future is to accept and prolong the injustice. For the international community to treat developing countries with full respect and not patronize them forever as victims, it is necessary for them to accept their shared responsibility for the future of the planet.

What the Good Country Index showed

The initial edition of the Good Country Index produced some surprises, the first of which was that Ireland came first on the list. Relative to the size of its economy, its combined global contributions to science and technology, culture, international peace and security, world order, planet and climate, prosperity and equality, and the health and well-being of humanity outranked those of any other country. Considering that the data used to build the first edition came from 2010, the year in which Ireland's government debt was at its highest point, the fact that this country managed to remember its international responsibilities to a greater extent than any other country was a real credit both to its Government and its people.

The second surprise was that the African nation that contributed most to the global commons was Kenya. At twenty-sixth place in the overall ranking, it was the only African nation to break into the Top 30. This was a useful demonstration of the principle that it is by no means the exclusive province of rich 'first-world' nations to make a meaningful contribution to humanity.

I launched the first edition of the Good Country Index at a TED event in Berlin in 2014. The video of my talk unexpectedly went viral, and by the time it had passed a collective 10 million views on TED.com and YouTube five years later, I'd received nearly 20,000 messages from people in 180 countries telling me in many different ways that they too wanted to live in a good country and that this meant more to them than living in a country that was only successful by traditional measures.

It is very unusual for a TED talk on international politics or globalization to achieve these kinds of numbers. It is equally unusual for a country index to generate so much interest among a broad international public. Each new edition of the index is covered by dozens of national newspapers and their websites and reaches hundreds of millions of 'eyeballs' worldwide. The level of engagement has also been striking. On TED.com, the talk generated one of the highest ratios of comments per view of any TED talk published and was ranked by viewers as the fifth 'most inspiring' of all time.

The Good Country Index certainly seemed to have struck a chord. Informal psychometric analysis of the messages I received, later backed up by an in-depth qualitative survey of 1,595 Good Country Index followers from 175 countries, suggested that the majority of people who got in touch shared certain distinctive character traits: the feeling of belonging to the human race before belonging to a nation; a sense that global challenges are more urgent than domestic challenges and a subsequent loss of faith in domestic politics; a natural aversion to intolerance and prejudice of all kinds; a sense that the diversity of humanity is more of an asset than a liability; and, most powerful of all, the desire to feel part of a worldwide community of like-minded people.

Dr. Govers and I used the World Values Survey, which includes nine questions that tally well with these attitudes, to estimate the global size and distribution of this character type, which I call the 'Natural Cosmopolitans'. It turned out that under a very conservative estimate (i.e., 'agree' or 'definitely agree' with all nine statements) no less than 10 percent of the world's adult population, or more than 700 million people, holds these views very strongly.

Interestingly, the typology did not correlate significantly with income, education or gender, and the global distribution of the Natural Cosmopolitans contained some unexpected findings. The countries with the highest population shares of Natural Cosmopolitans turned out to be Andorra and Sweden, both with 60 percent. More than a third of the populations of Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay are Natural Cosmopolitans; in Burkina Faso

it is nearly a quarter; in Mali and Serbia more than a fifth. In many respects, being a Natural Cosmopolitan seems to be more of a character trait than a learned behaviour or a demographic attribute.

Plainly, this cohort is bigger than any party, movement, organization or NGO. It is a group the size of a nation. Indeed, if it were a nation, it would be the third biggest on earth after China and India. To engage with and mobilize such a large and diverse group of people, spread all over the world, united by a powerful set of common values, is clearly a task worth pursuing. This, surely, is a group with the power to change the way the world works.

I mention the yet unpublished research on Natural Cosmopolitans to emphasize how the philosophy that underpins the Good Country Index recognizes international public opinion as key. Without mass public engagement, sustainable development simply cannot happen.

At the most obvious level, it is highly unlikely that any governments will pursue policies that favour the high levels of consistent international cooperation and collaboration that will be necessary to level the global playing field and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals unless it is very evident that their populations consider this worthwhile. It would be a brave (or foolish) politician who continues to spend significant amounts of effort and public money on overseas development if the public mood has turned against it.

At a broader level, this has much to do with the need for a global *society* to emerge, alongside the global markets and global connections that have developed in the last century. It is not enough simply to 'develop fixes' using technology and innovation. We must develop ourselves as a human community.

The Good Country Index approach is rather different from traditional sustainability, which is fundamentally an economics-based observation, and tends to focus on questions of supply and demand rather than on human nature and human behaviour. We have made the mistake in the past of letting international policy be guided by purely economics-based accounts of the world and must take care not to repeat this.

The international organizations too have often treated the mass of humanity as little more than a secondary target for their deliberations and findings, seeing the rest of the human race as a 'PR and outreach' detail. They do their research and reach their conclusions, and then tack on an 'awareness campaign' at the end. No wonder they have also failed to see the connection between this error and their own challenges in staying relevant to public opinion, and truly participating in global conversations that matter.

All global problems that underpin the Sustainable Development Goals have one simple factor in common: They are all, without exception, caused by people. Over years, decades and centuries, the omissions and commissions of billions of people have delivered the particular set of challenges we face today.

Dealing with publics purely indirectly, via their political representatives, makes far too many assumptions for this to be a reliable approach: one, that their representatives truly represent their interests and their viewpoints, and two, that those representatives necessarily have a better idea of how to understand and act on behalf of those people than anyone else. We must also deal directly with publics via soft power and public diplomacy, yet the behaviour of the international system has been, and still is, primarily conducted by means of a respectful and highly trusting system of traditional diplomacy. It assumes that you have earned the right to be the official representative of your population so I will not ask if your voice is truly their voice.

This assumption might have made some sense in the early twentieth century when it was still the rule rather than the exception for politicians to be motivated primarily by a sense of public service rather than by greed, ambition or a lust for power. Yet in poll after poll today, all over the world, more and more people complain that politicians are *not* their true representatives, and that they feel more trust in and better representation of their interests by companies, brands, sports teams, their religion, their friends and family, celebrities and *themselves*. To fail to listen to this and not deal with people directly as well as indirectly is to be living in the wrong century.

The public is a player in this drama not the audience. Its power to achieve global change outweighs by orders of magnitude the ability of national governments, corporations and international organizations to do so. This is as true of non-democratic as democratic countries: Unelected leaders need to care as deeply about public opinion as elected leaders, since in almost all cases they only remain in power by the unspoken consent of their population.

I remain convinced that there is only one true superpower left on the planet: international public opinion. In our different ways we are all trying to do diplomacy with that superpower. Failing to account for public opinion can only present us with an incomplete and distorted picture of the world we live in, the world we are trying to change.

Introduction to the Nation Brands Index

For these reasons, the third factor I recommend including in the new measurement of development is *perceptions* of each country by people outside that country. This factor is critical because unless a country's contributions to the commons are widely recognized there is less chance that such behaviour will spread, and the country itself will gain no reputational benefits from doing so. Without such reputational benefits a country has no powerful incentive to continue behaviours that benefit other populations or other countries. I will explain this mechanism in more detail shortly.

As a 'place marker' for the measurement of perceptions in this essay, I have used the Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index, a study I originally developed as a tool for the advisory work I had been conducting for governments since the late 1990s. As no data were then available to track perceptions of countries, I created the Nation Brands Index in 2005 in partnership with Global Market Insite in Seattle, United States, to benchmark the progress of countries I was advising and ensure that my advice was evidence-based.

The original study, along with the Anholt-GMI City Brands Index, was conducted in 18 countries and measured public perceptions of 11 countries. In 2008, in a new partnership with GfK-Roper Public Affairs, the list of countries measured increased to 50. In 2019, GfK-Roper was acquired by Ipsos, the world's third largest market research company, which now manage the study on my behalf.

More than 40 governments have used the Nation Brands Index over the years to track international perceptions of their countries and plan their trade, tourism and investment promotion activities, identify new markets for their products and services, and shape their foreign policy and communications. Today, Nation Brands Index fieldwork is conducted in 20 major developed and developing countries that play important and diverse roles in international relations, trade and the flow of business, and cultural and tourism activities. Given the increasing global role played by developing countries, the survey strives to represent regional balance as well as a balance of high-income and middle-income countries. The core 20 'panel countries' where the research is carried out are:

Western Europe/North America: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States

Central and Eastern Europe: Poland, Russian Federation, Turkey

Asia-Pacific: Australia, China, India, Japan, Republic of Korea

Latin America: Argentina, Brazil, Mexico

Middle East/Africa: Egypt, South Africa

Each year, over 20,000 interviews are conducted with at least 1,000 interviews per country, a sample that represents some 70 percent of the world's population by number and more than 80 percent by spending power.

Adults aged 18 and over with Internet access are interviewed in each country. Using the most up-to-date online population parameters, the sample in each country is weighted to reflect key demographic characteristics such as age, gender and education, and thus to provide the most representative possible 'census sample' of the general population. Additionally, in Brazil, India, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States, race/ethnicity is used for sample balancing. Fieldwork is usually conducted in July and August. The

implementation of the Nation Brands Index follows practices endorsed by the American Association for Public Opinion Research and the Council of American Survey Research Organizations, which represent and set standards for the polling industry.

The list of 50 nations measured by the Nation Brands Index is based on the political and economic importance of nations in global geopolitics and the flow of trade, businesses, people and tourism activities. Regional representation and, to some extent, the diversity of political and economic systems are taken into consideration to make the study as global as possible. Nation Brands Index subscription members' interests are also reflected in the selection of the countries.

The list of 50 nations measured in 2019 is as follows, by region:

North America: Canada, Mexico, United States

Western Europe: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Ireland, Italy, Northern Ireland, Norway, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom

Central/Eastern Europe: Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine

Asia-Pacific: Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Taiwan Province of China, Thailand

South America: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru

Middle East/Africa: Botswana, Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, United Arab Emirates.

The list of countries measured in the Nation Brands Index will increase to 60 in 2021; the panel size will expand to 3,000 respondents in each country where the study is conducted.

The countries included change somewhat from year to year to include new subscribers or when for various reasons a particular country becomes the focus of international attention.

The questionnaire for all survey countries contains the following topics, based on the Nation Brands Hexagon, a model that made its first appearance as a pentagon (the 'people' dimension was added later) in my 2003 book *Brand New Justice*.⁴ The hexagon illustrates the six natural channels through which all nations, accidentally or deliberately, tend to form their international images: their exported products and services, governance, culture, people, tourism, and attraction of migrants and investors.

⁴ Anholt 2003.

The questionnaire features several ratings scale questions and a word association question in each of the six topic areas. For the ratings questions, seven-point Likert scales anchored by 'strongly agree' and 'strongly disagree', with the middle point anchored by 'neither agree nor disagree' (or other appropriate anchor words), are used. The statements to which respondents indicate how much they agree or disagree are as follows:

Exports

The 'country of origin' effect on products and services

Perceived contribution to innovation in science and technology

Perceptions of creativity, with cutting-edge ideas and new ways of thinking

Product/service categories most strongly associated with the country

Governance

Quality of perceived governance

Perceptions of respect for citizens' rights

Perceptions of responsible behaviour in international peace and security

Perceived environmental responsibility

Perceived contribution to global poverty reduction

Adjective choice describing government of the country

Culture

Perceived sporting excellence

Perceptions of cultural heritage

Perceptions of vibrant contemporary culture

Select cultural activities/products expected in the country

People

Willingness to be friends with someone from the country

Expectations of a warm welcome to visitors

Willingness to hire individuals from the country

Adjective choice describing people from the country

Tourism

Willingness to visit

Perceptions of natural beauty

Perceptions of built environment

Perceptions of city life

Adjective choice describing the experience of visiting the country

Immigration and investment

Willingness to live and work in the country

Perceptions of quality of life

Perceptions of education

Perceptions of investable businesses

Perceptions of equality in society

Adjective choice describing economic and business conditions

In addition, questions are asked to test for basic awareness of each nation, broad favourability, whether the respondent has visited the nation for vacation or business, whether s/he has purchased products or services from each country, whether s/he has visited websites from each country, the respondent's regional favourability and his/her personal values.

Finally, we ask a series of standard demographic questions, including age, gender, type of area lived in, education, employment status, profession and income, plus, where applicable, geographical region and race/ethnicity.

As I often joked, it soon became clear that I'd given birth to the most boring social survey in history. From one edition to the next the results changed astonishingly little. We were asking different people the same questions each time yet on average their answers never varied. It looked as if national images were more of a fixed asset than a liquid currency that ebbed and flowed according to the vicissitudes of public opinion. The more data we collected the more it looked as if people's perceptions of other countries were *rusted* into place.

Perhaps this wasn't so surprising. After all, there are around 200 countries in the world, and if we all reassessed our views about them every time they won or lost a football game, had an election or a recession or an earthquake, got embroiled in a scandal or welcomed some refugees, we would have no time left to do anything else. Our perceptions of most other countries, at least the ones we don't have some strong personal connection with or share a border with, are rigid, simplified, largely unchanging stereotypes that we keep in cold storage in the backs of our minds, and simply never question unless we are absolutely compelled to do so.

When a country does something that doesn't exactly chime with those perceptions, we will often disregard it. It is only if it keeps behaving in a strikingly different way for years, in a way that conforms to a new pattern we can easily understand, that we will eventually and reluctantly unpack our lifelong assumptions and replace them with a new set, which will probably be just as unfair, superficial and inaccurate as the previous set. In an important sense, the Nation Brands Index was also an index of ignorance. These views may be ill-informed but that does not mean they can be ignored.

This points to a key observation: People's perceptions of places form the context in which they evaluate what goes on in those places and how we behave towards them, their people, their institutions, and their products and services. This is one of the reasons why a powerful and positive international standing is such a precious asset for a city or nation. It's like a back-up generator that, in the event of a catastrophe, keeps the power on just long enough for you to do something about it.

These views of other countries are not simply opinions we pick up from day to day in the media; they are stories we begin learning from the moment we first acquire language, from our parents and teachers and friends and family, from the books we read and the products we use, the music we hear and the food we eat. National images are huge cultural constructs. The different ways in which people in the United States see Mexico are integral parts of United States culture, just as the ways that Mexicans see the United States are part of Mexican culture. The same is true for every country on earth. We imbibe these attitudes from the air, from the whole of society around us, and it is hardly surprising that we will go to such lengths to avoid having them challenged or changed.

For all these reasons, the good name of a country is one of its most valuable assets, adding measurable value to its goods, services and people. Measuring a country's prosperity or level of development without including

the greatest of its intangible assets, its soft power, is like a corporate balance sheet that ignores the goodwill implicit in the company's brands. Indeed, for two editions of the Nation Brands Index, I collaborated with Brand Finance, a firm that calculates the monetary value of intangible assets. Their calculations showed that Barack Obama added \$3 *trillion* worth of 'brand equity' to the United States simply by stepping into the White House.

The survey continues to produce thought-provoking results. It seems that a majority of Brazilians strongly dislike Singapore, ranking it below several nations that the majority of other nationalities see as virtual pariahs, a phenomenon that I have never been able to explain. On average, Muslims worldwide admire the United States more than any other self-declared religious group anywhere in the world admires any other country. Most people around the world started to regard the *landscape* in the United States as less beautiful during the second presidential term of George W. Bush (doubtless a sort of negative halo effect).

More controversially, the Nation Brands Index also showed that hosting the Olympic Games or the football World Cup is, statistically speaking, more likely to damage a country's image than to enhance it. Analysis of the Nation Brands Index data before and after numerous major events showed that they are far more effective at drawing attention to the host country's failings and defects and reinforcing negative stereotypes than promoting its image. Even highly successful events, like London's 2012 Olympics, do little more than 'pay the rent' on a highly respected country's image. In Brazil and South Africa, these hugely expensive events have set back both countries' images by many years.

One of the most disheartening Nation Brands Index results concerns Iran, a country that typically languishes in last position of the 50 countries measured. This is perhaps unsurprising since today the dominant association with Iran is trouble of one kind or another. But what seems tragic is that on the specific question about the importance of its cultural heritage, people around the world on average rank Iran, one of the cradles of human civilization, with 6,000 years of continuous cultural production, at thirty-eighth out of the 50 countries measured. Respondents from the United Kingdom and United States typically rank it forty-ninth or forty-eighth out of 50, placing its contribution to human culture 20 or more places below other countries whose populations were living in caves while Persian culture flourished.

Disapproving of a country's current direction or its leadership is one thing, but it is disturbing to witness to what extent this has the power to occlude or perhaps even cancel the memory of historical contributions, over millennia, to the rest of humanity. What this all proves is a matter for debate. Does it simply reveal our ignorance and prejudice? Does it prove that national standing is never something you own but something you rent, and the rent needs to continue to be paid? Does it suggest that cultural heritage just is not something that most humans particularly prize? Does it prove the old Arab adage that "a good reputation arrives on foot but departs on horseback?" Or does it show that once the label of 'rogue nation' has been slapped on a country no glimmer of the merit it has previously earned has the power to shine through?

One thing seems likely: Iran's negative national image restricts its ability to conduct productive exchanges with the international community just as effectively, and probably for far longer, than any number of sanctions.

Several years after the Nation Brands Index had been launched, I discovered that in 1955, UNESCO published a special issue of its house magazine, the *UNESCO Courier*, entitled "Twisted Images." It explored the popular images of nations, following an international study, "How Nations See Each Other," commissioned two years earlier.

The opening sentences of the editorial are worth quoting in full:

Nothing could be more evident than the fact explicit in the columns of every popular newspaper that if the peoples of the world are to learn to live together in peace they need to know one another better. As matters stand, each of us has oversimplified, stereotyped concepts of other peoples. These concepts are usually erroneous, out of date and, all too frequently, negative in character. This is not the kind of material with which to build mutual understanding and tolerance. If people are to get along together in peaceful co-operation, our stale, distorted images of others need to be replaced by more accurate views. Progress from national stereotypes to international understanding is one of the fundamental conditions of modern life. Children in particular need to be the focus of attention; their education and personal development should be free of prejudiced mis-information about their fellows in other parts of the world.⁵

Despite the human habit of stereotyping people by their nationality clearly underpinning many of the problems that UNESCO was set up to challenge, the organization does not appear to have conducted further systematic international research on this topic since then. Perhaps in 2023, 70 years after the publication of "How Nations See Each Other," it would be an opportune moment for UNESCO to revisit this fundamentally important challenge to human unity and human purpose.

The MARSS Model

In 2012, I conducted an informal analysis of the more than 1 billion data points that the Anholt-GfK Nation Brands Index (as it was then known) had accumulated. I called this the MARSS model. The model proposes that there are five main drivers of a country's reputation: **morality** (the extent to which a country is perceived as a force for good in the world), **aesthetics** (the perception that a country and its landscape, people or built environment are physically attractive), **relevance** (the perception that a country's behaviour might have an impact on one's own life), **strength** (in effect, the equivalent of Professor Joseph Nye's 'hard power': a big

⁵ Koffler 1955.

economy, territory, population or army⁶) and **sophistication** (the perception that a country is technologically advanced).

The analysis suggested that, by a wide margin, the countries that are most widely admired by international public opinion tend to be perceived as contributing most to the international community. In other words, not the most successful countries but the most responsible ones. This is not altogether surprising since most people do not think much about foreign countries. Feeling that a country is a benign presence in the international community means that it can be safely ignored; one does not need to worry about it.

Admiration of a country matters because a powerful and positive national image is associated with high levels of foreign direct investment, high-margin exports of goods and services, tourism, good cultural and diplomatic relations, and many other economic drivers. These are of course the key drivers of economic development, which is why national image is an issue of vital importance to less developed countries.

The implications are powerful indeed. It is corporate social responsibility at the level of the nation State. This provides a powerful incentive to governments to 'do the right thing' with and for the international community. Expecting nations and their governments to voluntarily self-sacrifice or even take the long view beyond their term in office in the broader interests of what they perceive as their competitors (i.e., other countries) is expecting too much. This is why it is such good news if we can demonstrate clear self-interest in the equation.

I was keen to discover to what extent the Good Country Index would tally with the Nation Brands Index, since a correlation between the two would add extra weight to the MARSS analysis, reinforcing the key notion that principled national behavior is indeed associated with a stronger national image (and, in turn, more productive engagements with other countries). Robert Govers' analysis⁷ found a correlation coefficient of 68 percent between the first Good Country Index, which was based on 2010 data, and the 2010 Nation Brands Index. The Good Country Index 1.1 was based on 2011 data and correlated not less than 84 percent with the 2011 Nation Brands Index. The Good Country Index 1.2 was based on 2014 data and correlated 80 percent with the 2014 Nation Brands Index.

In other words, this is statistically significant at less than a 0.05 percent chance (i.e., certainly not random) even with only 61 observations (the countries included in both the Nation Brands Index and Good Country Index). It is very unlikely that underlying factors and indicators explain more variation than the 80 percent or more overall correlation particularly because the set of indicators is such a mixed bag. We have tested this, and most factors correlate positively to the Nation Brands Index, but usually between 50 and 75 percent.

⁶ Nye 2004.

⁷ Govers 2018.

One can briefly summarize this argument, which I call the Good Country Equation, as follows:

Countries with strong images trade at a premium; countries with weak images trade at a discount. A good image drives trade, foreign investment, business and leisure tourism, exports, cultural and diplomatic relations, international event hosting and talent attraction.⁸

The most significant driver of a powerful and positive national image today is the perception that the country is a principled and consistent contributor to humanity and the planet.

This perception cannot be constructed. National image does *not* correlate with expenditure on self-promotion; it derives from consistent, relevant and noteworthy behaviour.⁹

Therefore, the better a country behaves, the better it performs.

This equation is the main theme of my most recent book, *The Good Country Equation*, published in 2020.¹⁰

Measuring the gap between development and perceptions of development, and between international contributions and perceptions of international contributions, is an important task. The HDI and the Good Country Index give us a glimpse of the truth; the Nation Brands Index (or an adaptation of it) gives us a glimpse of the truth as it is perceived and therefore provides an indication of mass behaviours and value changes that might stem from these perceptions, including the potential for increased trade flows.

In a broader sense, all routes to sustainability require changes in behaviour on the part of human society. These changes are unlikely to take place unless they are preceded by a change in attitude. Measuring perceptions is a necessary component of predicting, understanding and ultimately guiding them.

Hence, a thorough measurement of sustainable development should also consider the extent to which the mass of humanity is at least aware of the sustainability agenda and preferably participating in achieving it. After all, since the one thing all grand challenges have in common is that they are caused by the everyday commissions and omissions of human beings, it is unlikely that any can be reversed or substantially mitigated without similar levels of participation.

⁸ Much research has been conducted on this topic over recent decades, e.g.: on the effects of national image on export performance (Verlegh 2010), on the effects of national image on diplomacy (Van Ham 2008), on the effects of national image on attracting students (Cubillo, Sánchez and Cerviño 2006), on the effects of national image on attracting foreign direct investment (Hodgkinson and Nyland 2001), on the effects of national image on attracting tourists (Echtner and Ritchie 2003, Tapachai and Waryszak 2000) and on the effects of national image on attracting major sporting events (Rein and Shields 2007).

⁹In the Anholt Nation Brands Index 2005-2019, no correlation has ever been identified between national image and national image-boosting campaigns.

¹⁰ Anholt 2020.

When discussing international perceptions of countries and their behaviours, it is important to distinguish robustly between 'mass' and 'elite' opinion. The Nation Brands Index uses, as previously described, a general population sample, but experience suggests that in most cases, elite opinion (the views of expert audiences such as, for example, foreign investors and brokers, diplomats and government officials, travel industry professionals, researchers and academics, serious journalists and the staff of international organizations) is very different from public opinion.

Indeed, the opinions of foreign elites about any country with which it has dealings are often the opposite of public opinion. Such elite individuals are much better informed than the general public, they are *interested* in other countries while much of the public could not care less, and they tend to look to the future whereas public opinion is exclusively based on the past.

Moreover, such elites often have good reasons to flatter the governments of the countries they are dealing with. The consequence of this unbalanced worldview is that most governments are not only convinced their country is different and better than its neighbours but also that it is widely acknowledged as different and better. Of course, this is not always the case.

It is essential to measure and understand both elite perceptions and broad public opinion, and to measure both against reality. In this essay, I have focused on mass opinion (although the Nation Brands Index does capture people across the socioeconomic spectrum, and it is always illuminating to see what happens when we separate the views of the professional and non-professional segments of the panels). Elites are important audiences too, since their decisions can have an impact on the fortunes of countries—perhaps especially developing countries—and be just as direct and powerful as the decisions of general populations, in some cases more so.

With such refinements, what I'm tempted to call the 'development triangle' of domestic progress, external impact and international awareness could offer a more complete and multidimensional perspective on human progress than has so far been attempted.

The development triangle

Any comparison between the HDI, Good Country Index and Nation Brands Index must be made based on rankings rather than underlying scores. This is mainly because the Good Country Index is a composite index that compares a wide array of different data. Some of the 35 indicators are based on dollar values and some on numbers of people (migrants, for example), while others are based on quantities of matter (tons of carbon dioxide emissions, for example). Indicators count Nobel prizes, victims of conflict, tons of food aid and much more. This is the classic problem of comparing 'apples and pears'. With so much fruit in the bowl, the only

practical way of calculating the Good Country Index is to convert every indicator into a ranking at the very start and calculate everything based on rankings.

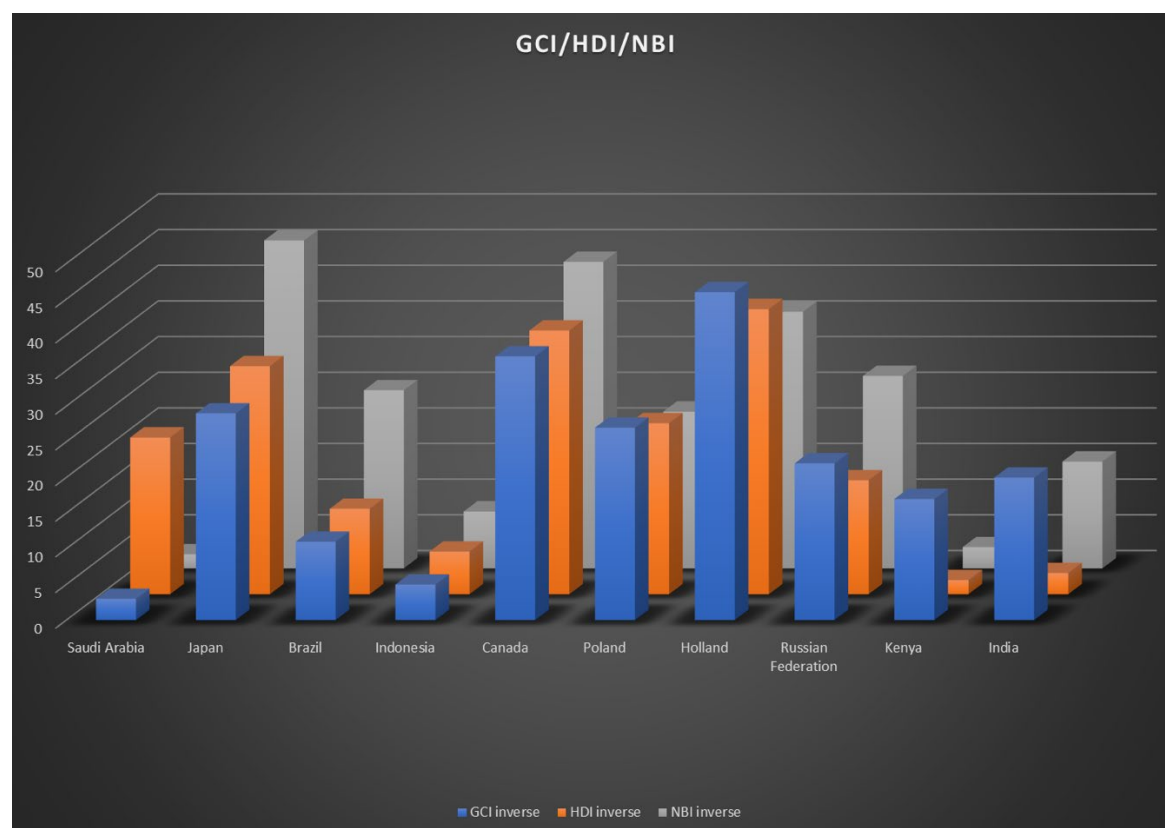
This makes simple comparisons between the three indexes relatively straightforward. But it constrains our ability to conduct more sophisticated analyses such as factor analysis and principal component analysis, for example. The latter is a technique for reducing the dimensionality of big data sets, increasing interpretability and minimizing information loss. Principal component analysis has been used for UNCTAD's Trade and Development Index¹¹ as well as numerous other applications in gender, poverty and other related fields. It may be that in future versions of the Good Country Index we can find a way of working with scores rather than ranks.

Another point worth bearing in mind is that the HDI and Good Country Index are both corrected for the size of the country, but the Nation Brands Index is not. In the Nation Brands Index, larger countries therefore have an awareness advantage (because they tend to have more interactions with more people in more countries). They get more reputational value than they 'deserve' for what they contribute since all their behaviours are noticed and discussed by more people. This of course cuts both ways, since the negative behaviours of bigger countries are also more likely to be observed and remembered than those of smaller and less well-known countries.

Figure 1 shows the relative HDI, Good Country Index and Nation Brands Index ranks of 10 countries selected because they are near the top, middle and bottom of all three indexes.

Figure 1: Comparing countries across three indexes

¹¹ See the index at: https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/tdr2019_en.pdf.



Brazil, Canada, Japan and the Russian Federation have more powerful images than their internal development or external positive impact would suggest. Only Saudi Arabia has an HDI rank significantly higher than either its Good Country Index or Nation Brands Index rank. India, Kenya and the Russian Federation all perform better on external impact than on domestic development.

There is a noticeable correlation among all three indexes, with some exceptions. The Good Country Index rankings of India and Kenya are considerably higher than their HDI rankings, and Saudi Arabia's Good Country Index rank is considerably lower. Both are relatively unusual occurrences. For most countries, domestic development and external impact rankings tend to be in the same region; the countries with higher levels tend to enjoy better images. Whether this correlation between progress and image is cause, effect or both remains to be investigated.

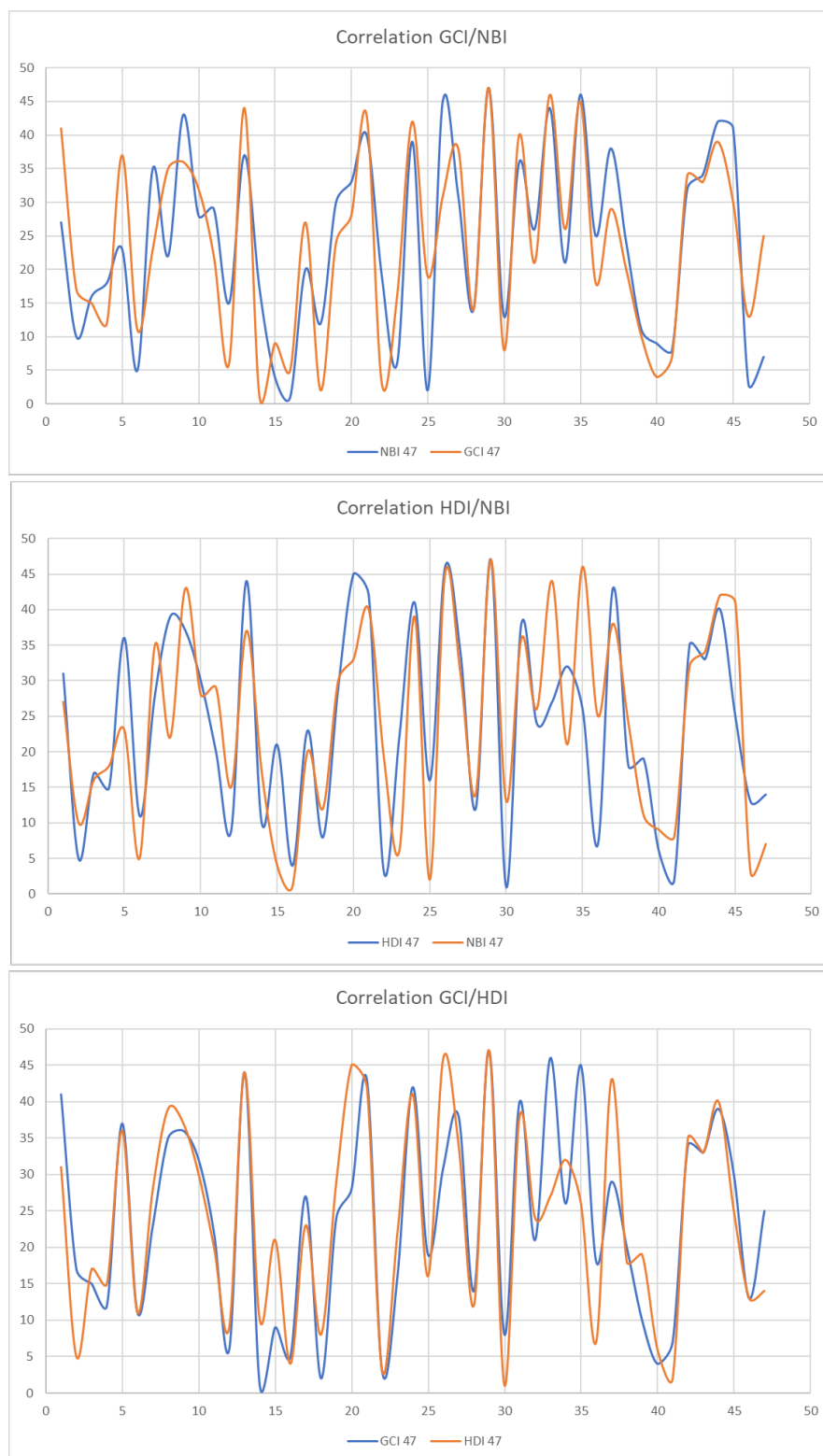
Does having a good image generate more progress? And does progress generate a better image? A degree of bidirectional causation between national image and national performance seems probable. Just as companies with the most attractive images tend to sell more products at higher margins, so are admired countries able to attract more tourists, talent, investment and consumers for their goods and services. At the same time, the countries that are most active and successful in engaging with investors, tourists, talent and consumers around the world are likely to earn the best reputations in doing so. The two factors are probably mutually reinforcing.

Underlying factors such as size, strength and most importantly time influence this relationship between the 'goodness' of countries and their reputation. Any undeniable causality is very hard to prove beyond doubt because we are dealing with objectively measurable reality on the one hand and subjective image in peoples' minds on the other.

The correlation between all three indexes is more clearly illustrated in the three charts of Figure 2. The charts plot the ranks of all 47 countries measured by all three indexes along the horizontal axis; their ranking out of 47 is plotted on the vertical axis. The first chart shows the correlation between the Nation Brands Index and the Good Country Index; the second between the HDI and the Nation Brands Index; and the third between the Good Country Index and the HDI.

Simply comparing data or measuring correlation is not the most interesting or useful exercise, however. It simply proves that countries at a higher stage of economic development tend, on average, to contribute more to the world outside their borders and to be more highly regarded by international public opinion.

Figure 2: Correlations between the three indexes



Measuring *gaps* between the three is likely to be more instructive. I propose a triple-gap analysis as follows.

The **GAP1 analysis**, based on the differential between the HDI and the Good Country Index, compares each country's contribution to the human development of its own citizens to its contribution to the development of humanity more broadly. For this gap, I compare the overall rankings of each country in the two indexes directly.

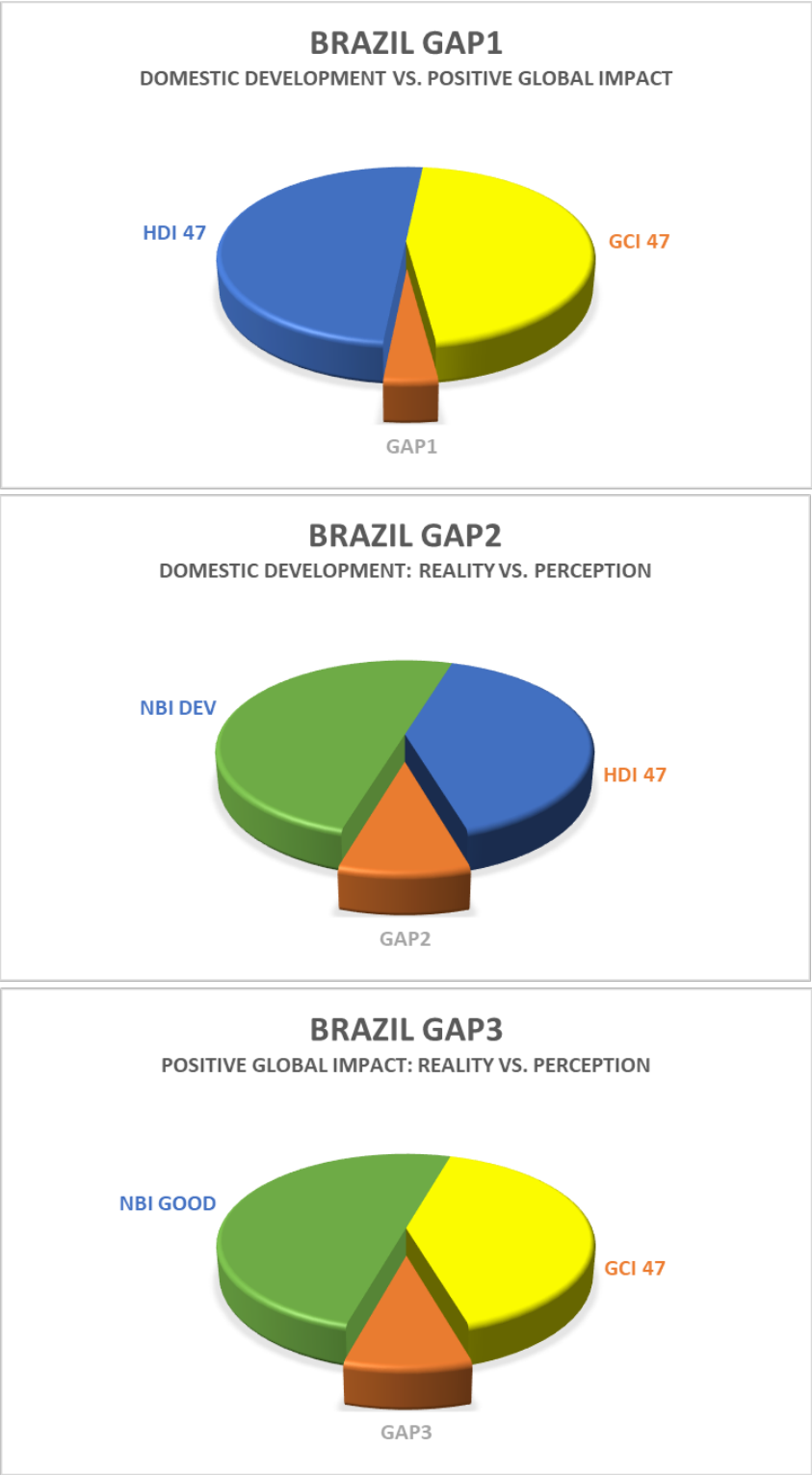
The **GAP2 analysis**, based on the differential between the HDI and the Nation Brands Index, measures how accurately people in other countries perceive each country's state of domestic development as measured by the HDI. To calculate this gap, I compared the overall HDI ranking against the average Nation Brands Index rankings across the three questions that most closely match the HDI's three components: life expectancy, education and per capita income (these Nation Brands Index questions explore the perception that the country is a place with a high quality of life; that it is a good place to study for educational qualifications; and the ranked average number of respondents who describe the country's citizens as 'rich').

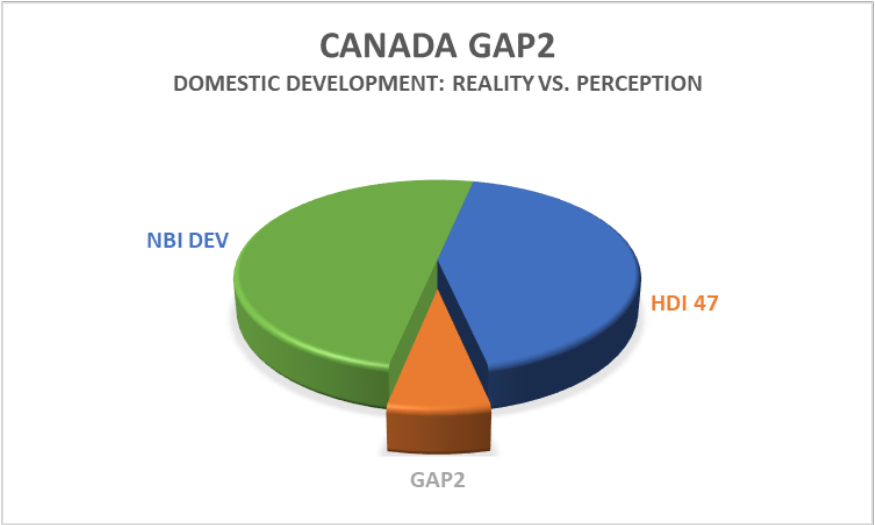
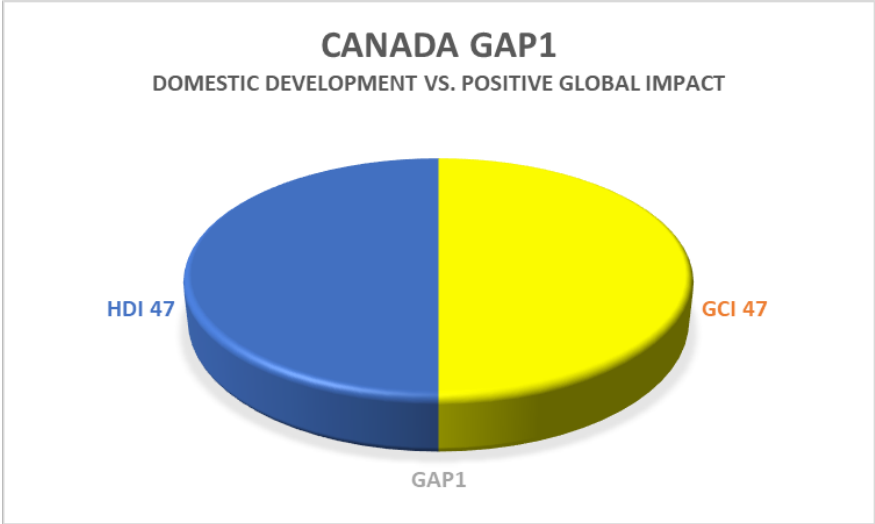
The **GAP3 analysis**, based on the differential between the Good Country Index and the Nation Brands Index, measures how accurately people in other countries perceive each country's contribution to the global commons as measured by the Good Country Index. For this gap, we compared the overall Good Country Index ranking against the average Nation Brands Index rankings across the three questions that best reflect the Good Country Index's overall theme of national contributions to resolving global challenges (these Nation Brands Index questions explore the perception that the country behaves responsibly in international peace and security, to protect the environment and to help reduce global poverty).

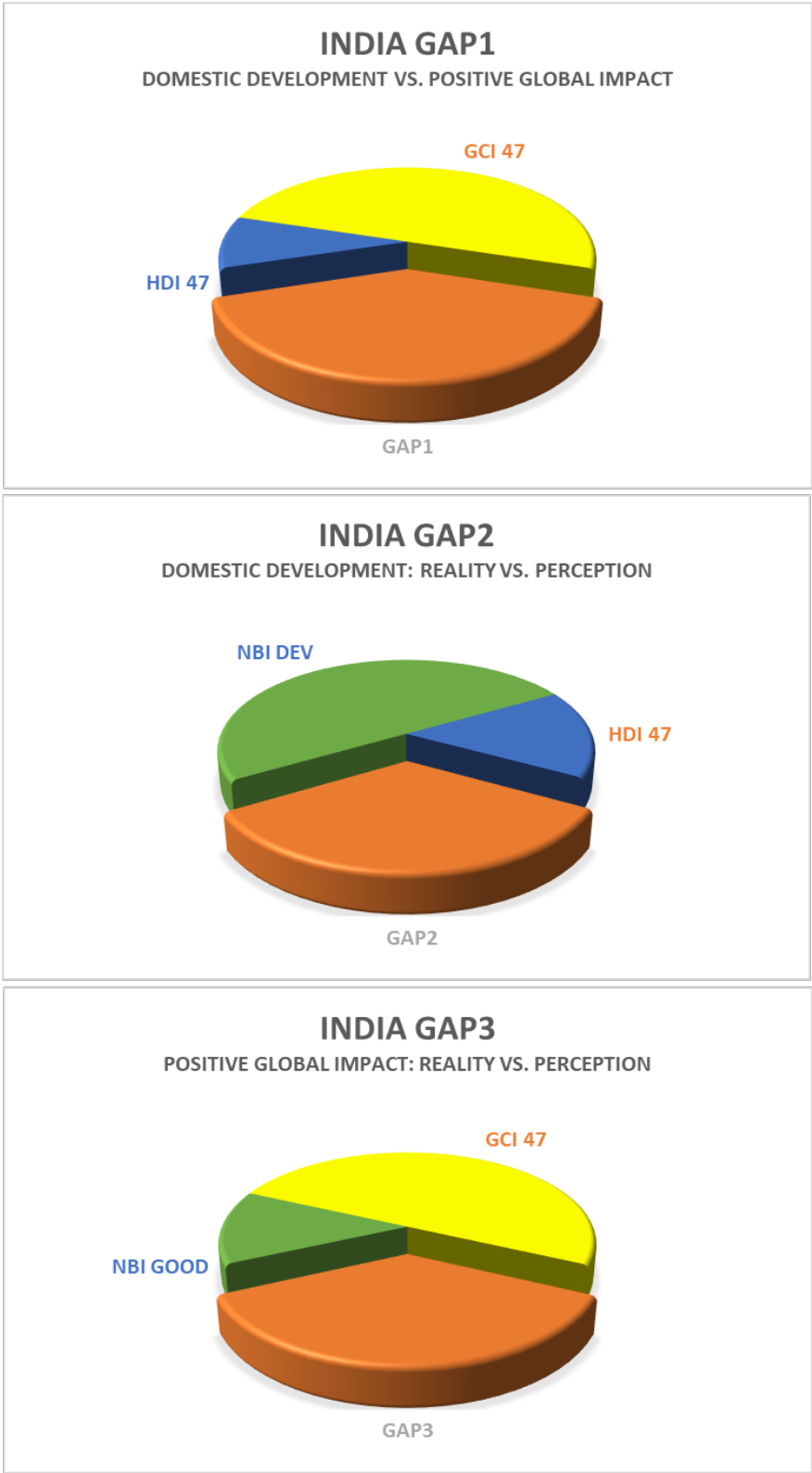
The GAP2 and GAP3 (reality/perception) analyses are only illustrations of the principle at this stage, for three reasons. First, the Nation Brands Index only measures 50 countries. Second, polling is only conducted in 20 countries. Third, because the questionnaire was designed for a somewhat different purpose, the questions selected do not perfectly mirror the relevant HDI and Good Country Index topics. As the Nation Brands Index is an annual omnibus survey, however, adding new questions and panel countries is simpler and cheaper than commissioning new primary research, so if the pilot produces promising results, it will be relatively straightforward to scale up and customize this part of the analysis.

Figure 3 illustrates the basic GAP1, GAP2 and GAP3 analyses of the same 10 countries from the top, middle and bottom of the three indexes.

Figure 3: A triple-gap analysis of 10 countries

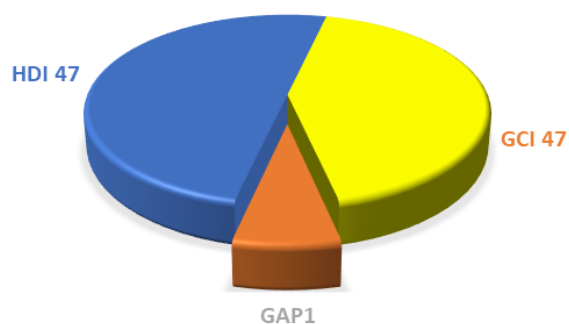






INDONESIA GAP1

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT VS. POSITIVE GLOBAL IMPACT



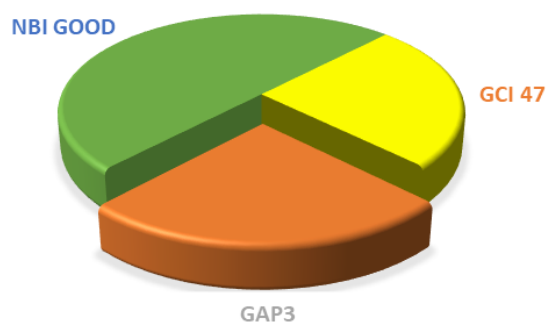
INDONESIA GAP2

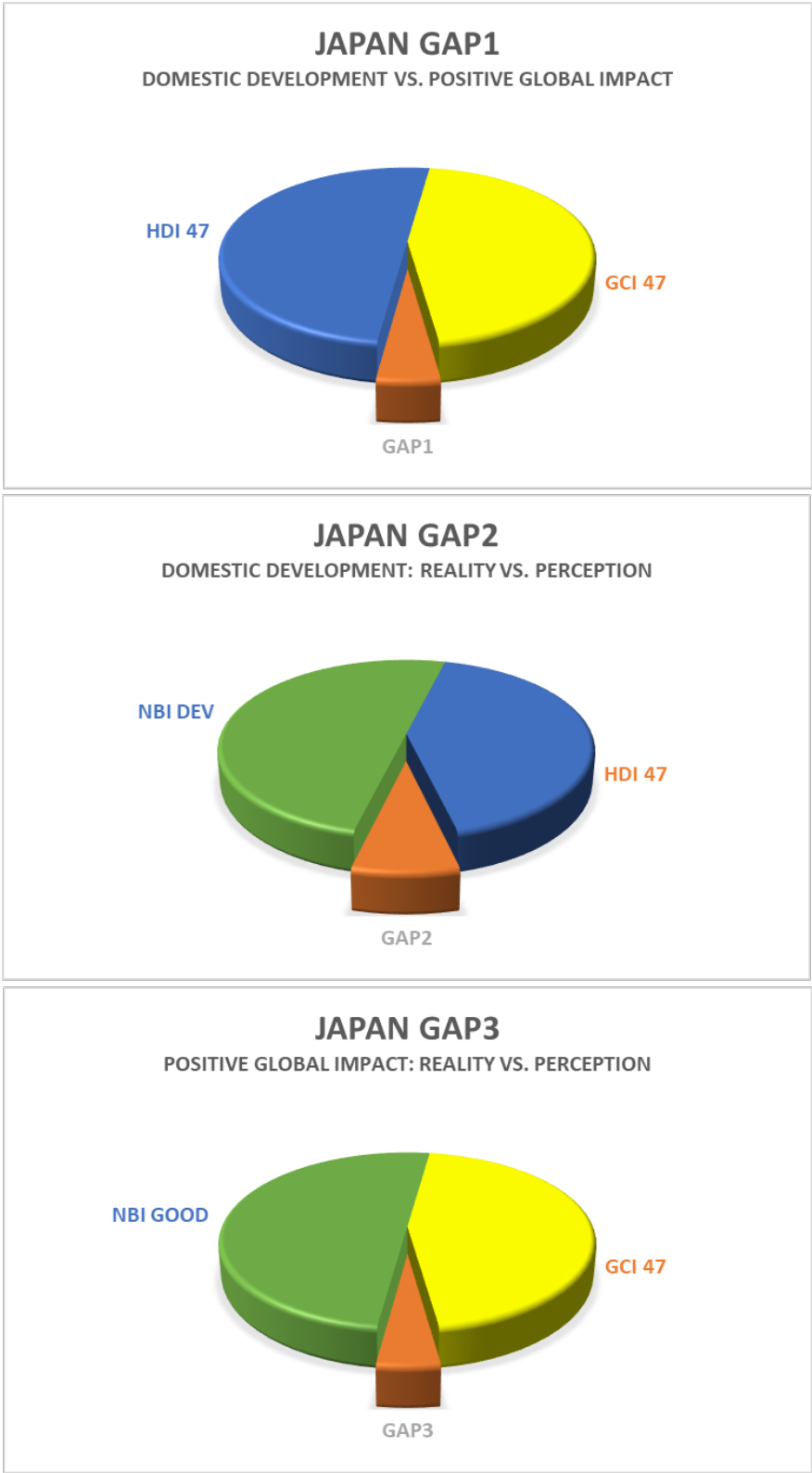
DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT: REALITY VS. PERCEPTION

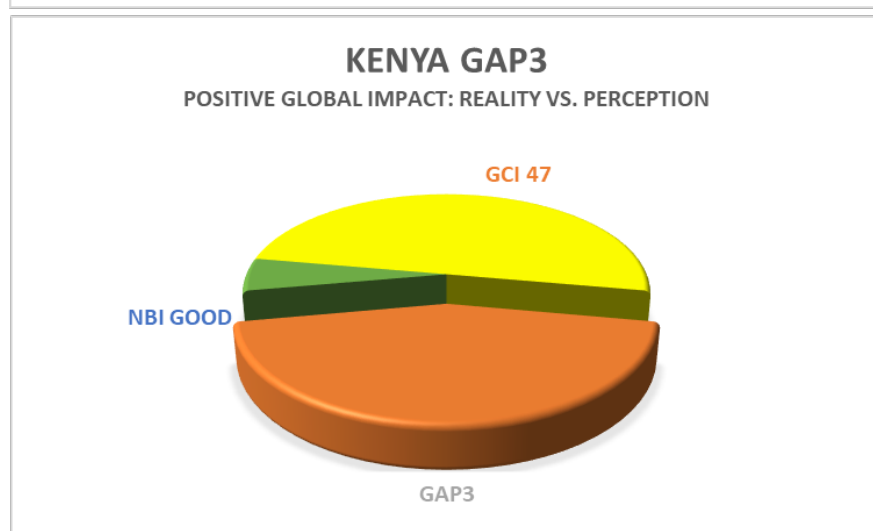
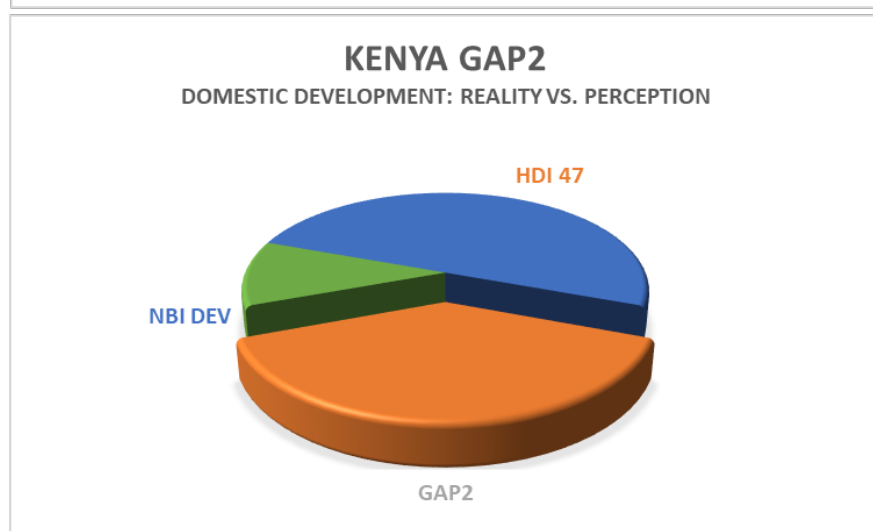
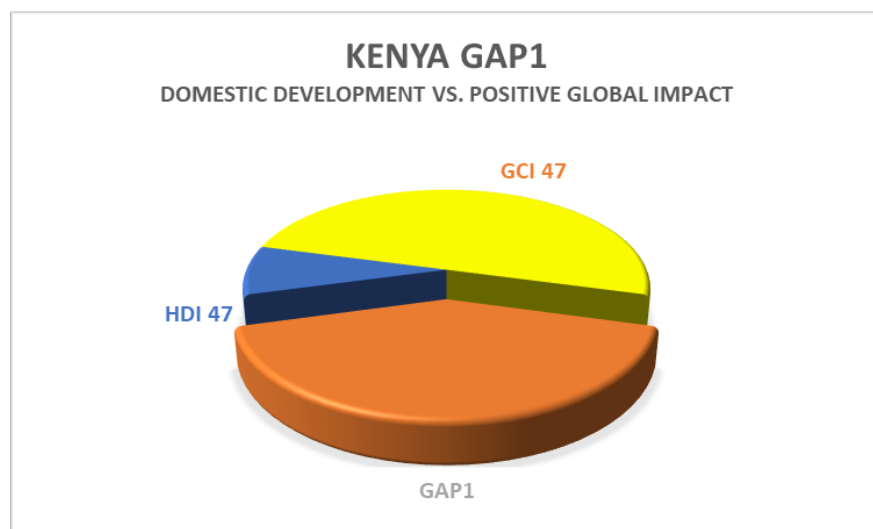


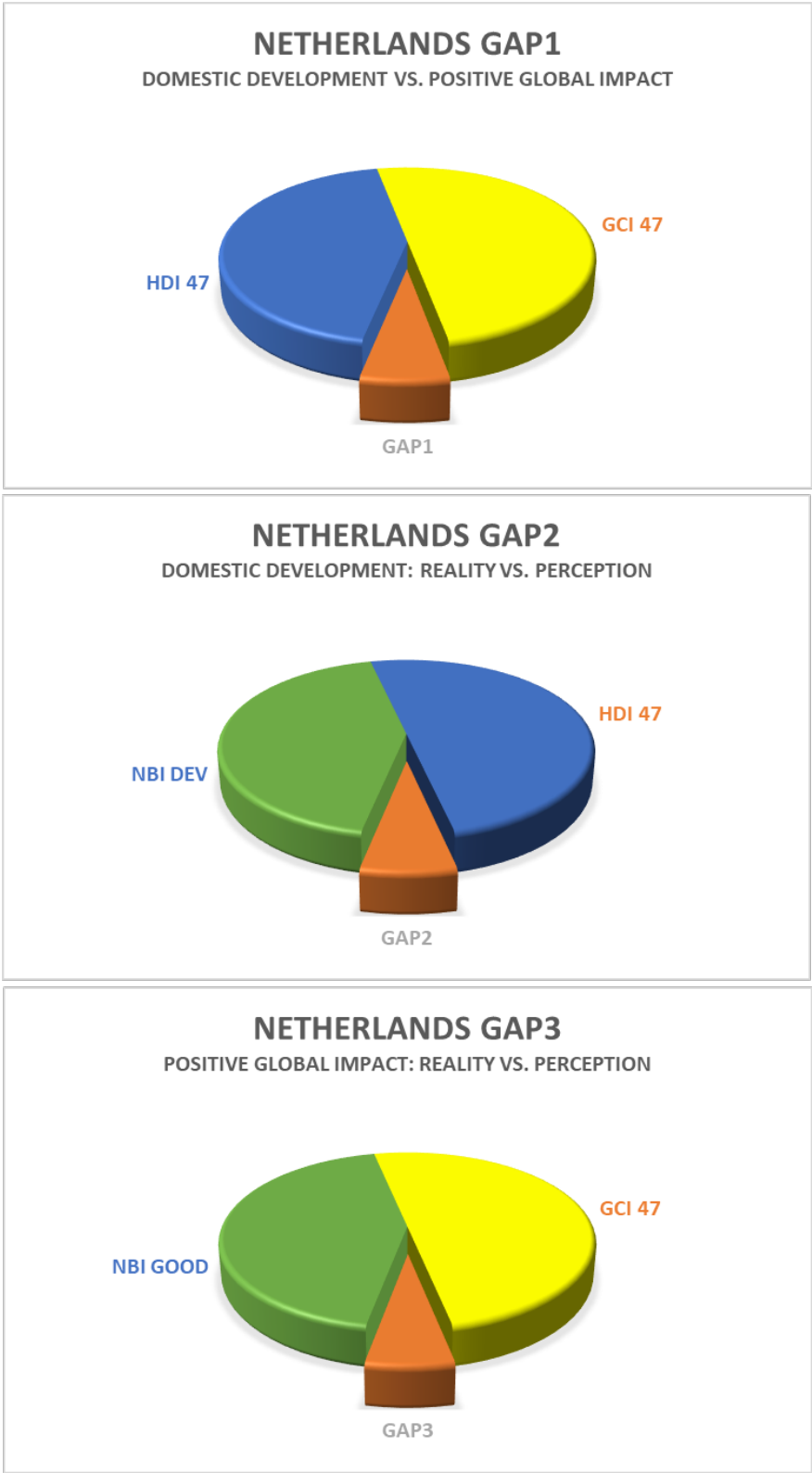
INDONESIA GAP3

POSITIVE GLOBAL IMPACT: REALITY VS. PERCEPTION



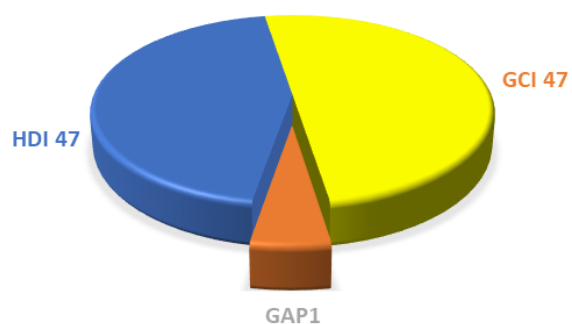






POLAND GAP1

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT VS. POSITIVE GLOBAL IMPACT



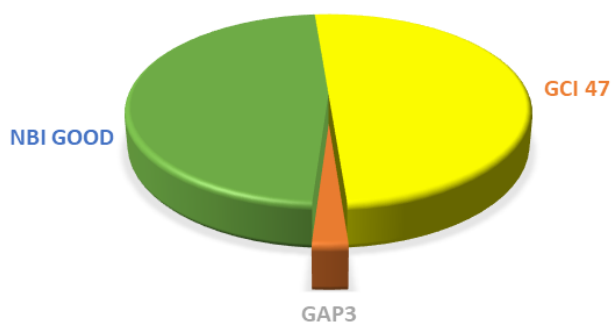
POLAND GAP2

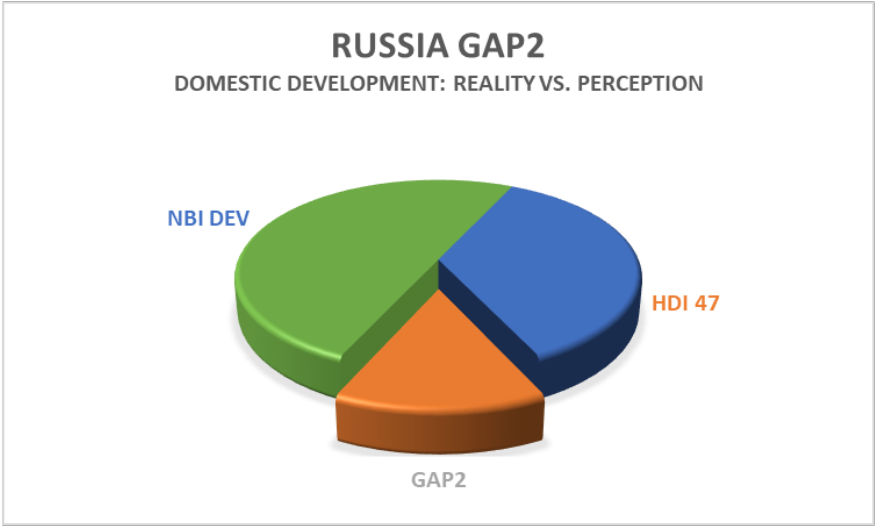
DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT: REALITY VS. PERCEPTION



POLAND GAP3

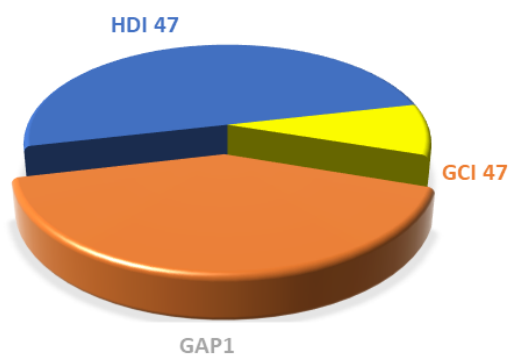
POSITIVE GLOBAL IMPACT: REALITY VS. PERCEPTION





SAUDI ARABIA GAP1

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT VS. POSITIVE GLOBAL IMPACT



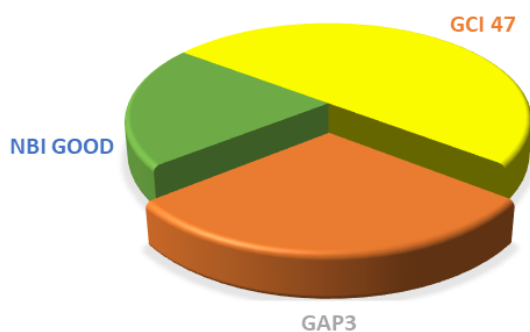
SAUDI ARABIA GAP2

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT: REALITY VS. PERCEPTION



SAUDI ARABIA GAP3

POSITIVE GLOBAL IMPACT: REALITY VS. PERCEPTION



I earlier wrote about the 'tyranny of the ranked index'. While nobody doubts the appeal and impact of placing countries in order of their assets and achievements, or the simple and brutal logic of casting certain countries as winners and others as losers, competitions of this sort are invidious. In a few cases, it might be no bad thing for the laggards to have their shortcomings paraded alongside and in front of all the other countries on earth, and there is no doubt that some countries are stimulated by poor rankings to redouble their efforts. But for the majority it must surely be a demoralizing or even humiliating experience—especially if, as it seems, the 'usual suspects' are always clustered at the bottom no matter what the indicator claims to be measuring. Being constantly told that you are a failure certainly does not do human beings any good and it seems likely that it does not do countries any good either. Of course, one should refrain from making superficial, pseudo-psychological analogies between countries and people, but countries are made of people and the parallels between mass and individual psychology are striking enough to give pause for thought.

The more one aims to engage with public as distinct from elite opinion with an index, the more important it becomes to weigh the consequences very carefully. Policymakers, one hopes, can regard their own countries with a certain detachment and not take international relations too personally, whereas national identity is for most people a natural extension of their own sense of personal identity. The sensation of belonging to a generally despised group has all kinds of unfortunate consequences for individuals and their mental health as well as their subsequent behaviour.

No doubt part of the reason we so often find the same countries at the top and bottom of most lists is that the criteria used to determine many rankings are culturally biased towards rich, Western democracies and the attributes of their success (i.e., material possessions and individual freedoms). No doubt it is partly also because the more stable, peaceful, well-run countries tend to do well in many or most areas of activity whereas the more troubled countries tend to do badly in most.

As has often been pointed out to me, there is a certain irony in the fact that the Good Country Index is a competitive ranking with an underlying philosophy that is critical of competitiveness. In truth, I am far from 'opposed' to competition or even from regretting the obvious fact that it is a fundamental component of human nature. The point is simply that competition always needs to be wisely harmonized with collaboration and cooperation if society is to function well.

As I prepared this paper, I was pleased to find that by far the simplest and most logical way of illustrating the various gaps between countries' internal and external progress, and between the reality of these and external perceptions, was using the pie charts in Figure 3, on a country-by-country basis. Ranking countries by the size of their gaps made no sense at all. Consequently, the gap charts offer no information about the *scale* of each country's HDI, Good Country Index or Nation Brands Index scores. They simply show the scale of the differences among them.

Conclusion

A good index measures important things well. It also changes the frame of debate about what it is measuring, provokes new discussions at all levels of society and provides new language to do so. A paradigm-shifting index identifies problems and articulates challenges we did not know we had, measures them and guides us towards their resolution.

The HDI has done these things before and can do them again.

There is a risk in betting the whole show on sustainability, however. This is in some ways a self-limiting concept that is not actively or naturally geared towards mass participation. It tends to reduce the discussion to economic models of supply and demand and puts so much emphasis on environmental issues that nearly a third of the Sustainable Development Goals are effectively excluded from the equation unless we stretch the word well beyond its natural definition.

All the world's problems, as mentioned, are caused by the behaviours of people and can only be understood or resolved by putting people at the heart of approaches for measuring and resolving those problems. True mass participation, well beyond the traditional tactics of 'advocacy' or 'campaigning'—which at best tend to instrumentalize people and at worst both exploit and disempower them—is the essential component of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The subtitle of a wise and influential book, E. F. Schumacher's 1973 *Small is Beautiful*, was "A Study of Economics As If People Mattered." At its birth, the HDI was a perfect illustration of the necessity of a people-centred approach that helped to create a true paradigm shift in economic development.

Forty years on, people matter more than ever, but the fact needs to be interpreted in a broader sense. What I am suggesting in this paper is 'a study of economic development as if people, planet and purpose mattered'. Today, we have to acknowledge that human progress involves all of humanity because all of humanity is interconnected and interdependent. Truly, we are all in this together. Our models must reflect this fact, and our solutions must take advantage of it.

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