

# How Great (Truly) is Democracy?

12/13/19

## **RESEARCH QUESTION:**

This project aimed to question this seemingly rigid notion of democracy being the most effective form of government. There are and have been plenty of forms of government throughout the development of human society. So, is Democracy truly the most effective and overall superior form of government?

## **BACKGROUND:**

The most recent generations in the United States never truly seem to question the effectiveness of Democracy. After an era of turmoil and struggle with the rise and fall of communist and fascist regimes, it now appears to be a pre-conceived notion that the form of government adopted by the country – democracy – **must** be the most effective. The twentieth century saw extreme conflicts amongst nations in which regime types played a large role (i.e. WWII, Cold War).

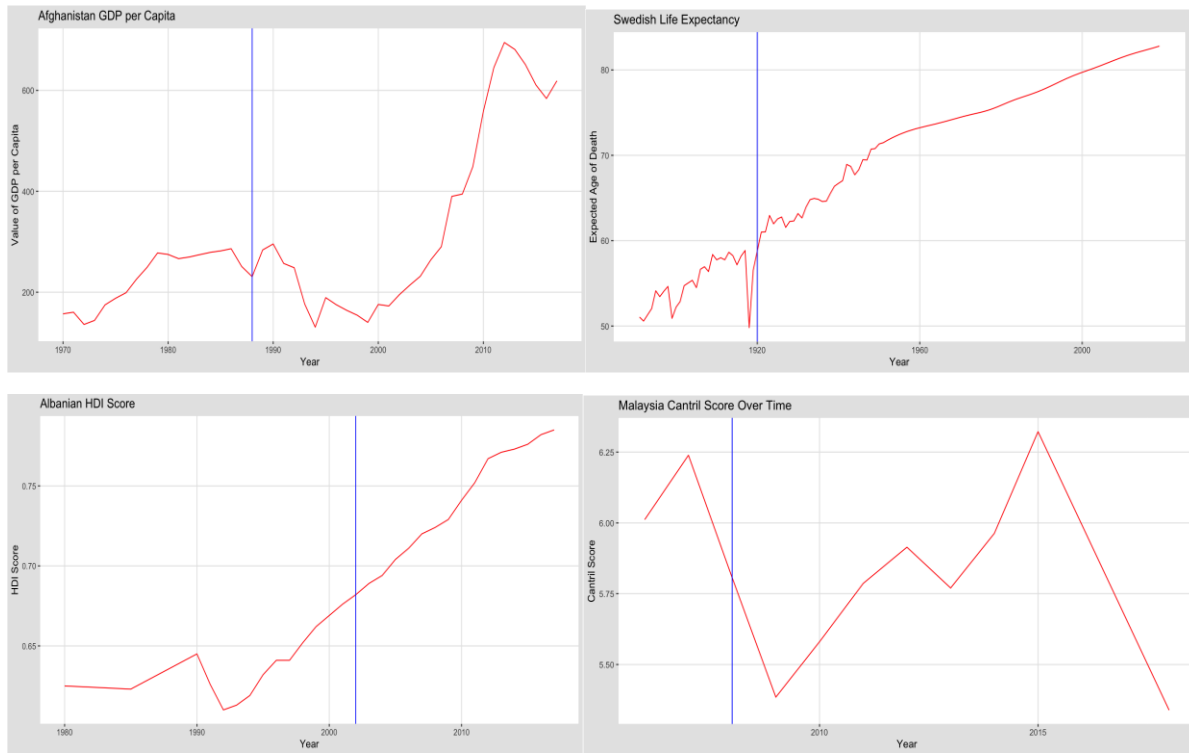
However, while the question, “What is the best form of government?” was central to the development of the human society for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this question is rarely asked today. This project revisits that question as it attempts to find the effects that democracy has on the societies it is implemented in.

## **METHODS:**

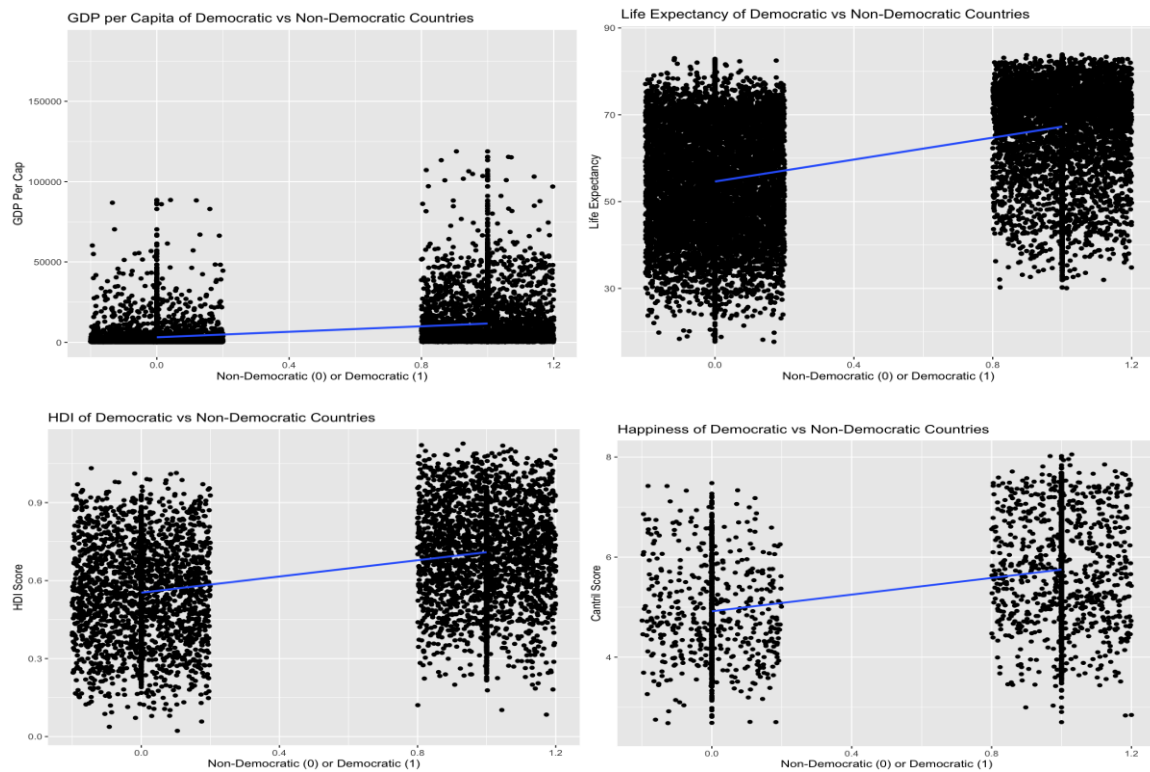
This project aimed to find if there was any positive relationship between a country being democratic and variables often attributed to the prosperity of societies. The variables analyzed were GDP per Capita, Life Expectancy, Human Development Index (HDI), Happiness, and Infant Mortality. The data used in this project can be found spread out on the website <https://ourworldindata.org> and the World Bank website. I cleaned the data and used the World Bank’s “Regime Type” data set to establish the standard of being “democratized” a point which was central to the project.

The first part of the project focused on specific countries in relation to each variable and observed the variable relationship before and after democracy was established in the country. (ex. GDP per cap in Sweden before and after democratizing). The second part of the visuals was a set of regressions for each variable yearly. The regression was between the given variable and whether countries were democratized or not. This analysis would potentially identify broader relationships at a larger scope between the variables we analyzed and democratization, as it used all countries for which we had data and not just one.

## INDIVIDUAL COUNTRY ANALYSIS: (Blue Line Represents Installation of Democracy)



## REGRESSION ANALYSIS USING ALL COUNTRIES BY YEAR: (2010 is Displayed)



### **ANALYSIS:**

It is clear from our regressions that in the larger picture, the presence of democracy does influence variables that we attribute to the prosperity of a society. However, our specific analyses of singular countries before and after they became democratic lead me to believe that the adoption of democracy itself is not the sole factor at play that affects these variables. Many of the countries that are not democratic simply never have been nor have they tried to be democratic. As a result, it can be suggested that perhaps the countries we analyzed already had systems in place that allowed democracy to be implemented. Perhaps these bettered conditions reflected in the regressions were not because of democracy, but maybe they were the conditions necessary for democracy to grow. This suggestion echoes theories such as that of Lipsett's theory of modernization where he claims that economic development is the breeding ground for democracy along with improved conditions of survival. That being said however, it must be acknowledged that democratic countries, based off of this analysis have overall better conditions of living, thus making them better and easier places to live. In relation to our original question for the project, our findings in the regression analysis suggest that democracy may in fact be a superior form of government