The End of History?
Predicting Future Political Regimes

S&DS 425, Final Project Proposal

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1   Description

In his 1992 book, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Francis Fukuyama famously predicted that with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the world was reaching an equilibrium in which Western liberal democracy would become the dominant—and final—form of government across the world. Since then, however, trends have been more complicated; for example, the Arab Spring saw a movement toward liberal values in the Middle East, yet many previously Soviet states have declined back toward autocracy. Thus, while liberal democracy remains attractive to the masses, it is an open question whether it will indeed become—and whether it has been—ascendant. This is, of course, an extremely important question, as it lies at the heart of the freedom of humanity across the world; the analysis could be useful to global organizations that fight against authoritarianism.

In my project, I aim to statistically evaluate this thesis on the basis of data collected on the growth and decline of liberal political regimes over the past thirty years. I will train a multinomial logistic regression model (likely weighted, to account for population size) that predicts changes in political regime on the basis of internal factors, both objective (e.g. poverty rate) and subjective (e.g. self-reported life satisfaction), that were present in the years leading up to the regime change (or lack of change).

2   Data Source

Data will be collected from Our World in Data, a trusted source of global data and trends in global civilization, based on published scholarship. The website contains this data in CSV form, along with free visualizations. As the dependent/output variable, I will use their Political Regime data, which records the freedom of political regimes from the past 200 years on a categorical scale of -10 to 10. I will make use of the following sources as predictors (and possibly more):

- Freedom of the Press – categorical data, on a scale of "Not free" to "Free"

- Average years of schooling – Numeric data

- Income inequality, following the Gini Index – Numeric data

- Poverty rate – Numeric data

- Self-reported life satisfaction – Numeric data; subjective

These predictors have been chosen because they are commonly thought to be the backbone of a fair democracy; freedom of the press, for example, is the foundation of the people's ability to criticize and reform their government. Meanwhile, income inequality and poverty inevitably lead to dissatisfaction with society.

3   Data Wrangling

Much of the data is already in a usable CSV format, and the disparate data sets simply need to be aligned and compiled. The alignment of the data sets will require staggering the predictor data so that, rather than using data from each year to predict the political regime of that year, previous years' data will be used as the corresponding predictors.

There are two key issues with the data that must be worked around. The first is that the data sets cover different time spans; for example, while the Political Regime data spans from 1816 to 2015, the Freedom of the Press Data only extends back to 1979. Additionally, multiple countries in each of the data sets are missing at certain points in time—most noticeably, there is absolutely no data on the political regime of the Soviet Union (1923-1991). Working around these issues will require ongoing thought; nevertheless, even the most conservative position (aligning all data to remove all countries that have no data for any amount of time, and restricting time span to the past 15 years) would still provide over 1000 data points.