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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL GROWTH BETWEEN DEMOCRACY AND DICTATORSHIP: DEBATES ON POLITICAL REGIME AND DEVELOPMENT CONNECTION

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Abstract

The relationship between political regimes and economic prosperity is a complex and multifaceted issue that has been a topic of great interest in the field of social sciences for many years. Several scholars have attempted to study the impact of political democracy as well as authoritarianism on economic growth, but the results have been mixed and inconclusive. The relationship between regime type and economic performance is influenced by various factors, including institutions, policies, investment, human capital, and access to natural resources. Although non-democratic regimes may promote short-term economic growth, there is uncertainty surrounding their long-term sustainability due to their tendency to lack accountability, transparency, and adherence to the rule of law. On the other hand, democratic regimes provide a more stable environment for economic growth and development.

The relationship between dictatorship and economic growth is quite complex, with the literature presenting several conflicting views. While a dictatorship can facilitate quick decision-making and offer stability, it can also negatively impact human rights, political freedom, and economic growth.

The relationship between democracy and economic growth is also widely debated, with some studies finding a positive relationship, while others have reported a negative or a non-existent relationship. It is important to note that the correlation between democracy and economic growth does not necessarily imply causality, and there are many other factors that can affect both regime type and growth systematically.

The impact of regime transition on economic growth, specifically from a dictatorship to a democracy or from one democratic system to another, is also a subject of significant debate among scholars. While a regime transition to a democracy can lead to increased political and economic freedom, accountability, and improved economic policies, it can also cause instability, short-term economic contraction, and policy uncertainty.

Overall, the relationship between political regimes and economic growth remains a complex and multifaceted issue that requires further research and reflection. The relationship between regime type, the form of democracy, and the impact of regime transition on growth are all crucial factors in understanding the effect of political regimes on economic prosperity.

Key words: regimes , economy , democracy , dictatorships, effect

Regime and economic growth

Are political regimes drivers of economic growth?

By analyzing the change in the adoption of regimes by various countries – particularly whether they move toward a democratic style or a dictatorship – it can be stated that there seems to be a gradual and an uneven increase in the changing number of democratic countries from 1900 to 2020.

At the beginning of the 20th century, there were only a few democratic countries in the world, including the United States, France, and the United Kingdom. However, the number of democratic countries increased significantly following the end of World War II in 1945. This was largely attributed to the influence of the United States and its allies, who worked to promote democracy and human rights around the world.

During the Cold War era (1947-1991), the number of democratic countries continued to grow, but the pace of growth declined due to the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. The two superpowers often supported authoritarian regimes aligned with their interests, and thus, certain countries remained under an authoritarian rule despite the global trend gearing toward democracy.

After the end of the Cold War, the number of democratic countries increased rapidly, as many countries in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia embraced democratic reforms. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of communism in Europe also led to a wave of democratization in the region, while Latin American and Asian countries witnessed democratic movements and revolutions. At the beginning of the 21st century, the number of democratic countries continued to increase, although the pace of the growth seemed to slow down. A few countries that had made progress towards democracy, such as Hungary and Turkey, experienced setbacks in recent years, while others, such as Venezuela and Nicaragua, saw democratic backsliding.

In the last decade, there emerged a shift in this trend, with a decrease in the number of democratic countries. This may be attributed to the failure of democratic institutions to address societal concerns, increasing polarization, growing inequality, and the mismanagement of the COVID-19 pandemic by major democracies.

The years 2015-2020 were marked by several important events and trends that significantly impacted the state of democracy around the world. Here are some of the key developments:

The rise of populist and nationalist movements in many parts of the world and democratic backsliding in some countries. For example, Hungary and Poland have been criticized for their efforts to undermine judicial independence and press freedom, while Turkey has cracked down on civil liberties and political opposition. The world witnessed various protests and social movements which were driven by concerns about inequality, corruption, and political repression. Notable examples include the "umbrella revolution" in Hong Kong, the "Arab Spring" protests in the Middle East and North Africa, and the "Black Lives Matter" movement in the United States. There seemed to be a rise of authoritarianism and illiberal democracy. Finally, the international institutions that were created after World War II to promote democracy, human rights, and global cooperation encountered several challenges, and the United States, which has traditionally played a leadership role in many of these institutions, has become more isolationist under the Trump administration while rising powers such as China have sought to reshape the global order in their own image.

Overall, the years 2015-2020 were marked by significant challenges to the state of democracy around the world. While the trend towards democracy has been generally positive over the past century, recent events have demonstrated that democracy is not always guaranteed and must be actively defended and promoted by citizens and leaders alike.
Generally, the changes in the number of democratic countries over the past century were influenced by a range of factors, including global political trends, economic development, and social movements. While the trend towards democracy has been uneven and sometimes interrupted, its direction was generally positive, with more countries embracing democratic values and institutions over time (see Figure 1).

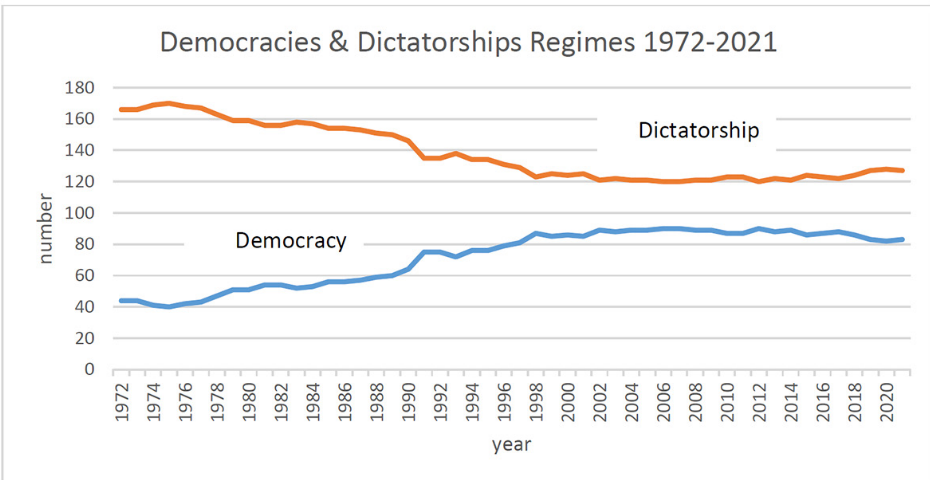

Figure 1[1]:The figure shows the division of the countries of the world into democracies and dictatorships from 1970-2021. Source Freedom House database.

In this paper, I present the reasons for and against countries adopting democratic regimes, primarily focusing on the economic aspect of this decision.

[1] Data obtained from Freedom House database: PR stands for Political Rights, CL stands for Civil Liberties are measured on a one-to-seven scale, with one representing the highest degree of Freedom and seven the lowest, between 1.0 and 2.5 were designated Free; between 3.0 and 5.5 Partly Free, and between 5.5 and 7.0 Not Free.

The correlation between political regimes and economic prosperity has been a topic of great interest in social sciences for many years, dating back to the first industrial revolution discussed by Adam Smith in 1776. Scholars have sought to understand the underlying reasons for growth and wealth creation and it remains one of the most fundamental questions in social sciences, according to Dani Rodrik (as cited in Przeworski et al., 2000) (Antic, 2004, p. 773). However, the complexity underlying the concepts of "regime" and "economic growth" makes it difficult to define and measure them conceptually and empirically (Kuntsen, 2006). This phenomenon has led to a change in perspective, wherein the perception of development as a prerequisite for democracy has been reassessed. Instead, there is now a reconsideration of the significance and objective of democracy in relation to economic growth, questioning whether it should be regarded as a a means to an end or an end in itself (Adejumobi, 2000, p. 3).

While the impact of the political environment on economic growth has been demonstrated, the relationship between democratic versus authoritarian regimes and economic growth remains inconclusive and a subject of ongoing discussion (Ulubasoglu, 2006, p. 3; Pinho, 2009, p. 472). Previous studies have attempted to examine the economic consequences of different political regimes and leveraged economic growth or national wealth to measure development. However, this approach has been criticized for not taking into account non-monetary aspects of human well-being, such as education and health (Liotti, 2018, p. 70).

Empirical evidence from recent years suggests that there is no general relationship between the political regime type – democracy or dictatorship – and economic outcomes, in case of both good and poor economic performance records, including economic growth (Knutsen, 2011, p. 3).

Recent events, such as the economic success of non-democratic regimes like China and the continued existence of such regimes, have reignited discourses comparing democratic and autocratic regimes. The failure of existing institutions to address societal concerns, increasing polarization, and growing inequality have led to widespread anger and uncertainty, and the mismanagement of the COVID-19 pandemic by major democracies has added fuel to the fire for those seeking to exploit disillusionment with democratic governance (Csaky, 2021, p. 1; Roller, 2013, pp. 35-36), and rekindled the age-old debate dating back to the age of Plato and Aristotle pertaining to the optimal political regime in terms of social and economic outcomes (Papaioannou, 2008, p. 1520).

By employing the Polity IV index[2] for regime classification, recent research has illustrated that the relationship between political regime type and economic outcomes is complex and multifaceted.

While some studies have found that democracies lead to faster development, others have concluded that dictatorships facilitate quicker growth, and some have found no significant difference between the two (Przeworski and Limongi, 1993, as cited in Antic 2004, p. 773).

For instance, Table 1 in Antic's work "Democracy versus Dictatorship: The influence of political regime on GDP per capita growth" presents data that demonstrate the superiority of democracies over dictatorships in terms of economic growth during the 1820-1950 period (Antic, 2004, p. 784).

Table 1

AVERAGE ANNUAL RATES OF GROWTH IN COUNTRIES THAT EXPERIENCED DEMOCRACY (1820-1950)

Country	Period(s) when country was dictatorship	GDP per capita growth (%) during dictatorship	GDP per capita growth (%) during democracy	Period(s) when country was democracy
Venezuela	1900-45,1948-	3.98	13.17	1945-8
Chile	1925-32	-3.30	2.14	1900-25,1932-
Austria	1820-1918,1934-45	0.18	4.46	1918-34,1945-
Greece	1913-26(29),1936-46	-0.63	3.49	1926(29)-36, 1946-
Italy	1820-1919,1922-46	0.79	3.90	1919-22,1946-
Brazil	1820-1946	0.62	3.46	1946-
Finland	1820-1919,1930-44	0.96	3.71	1919-30,1944-
Yugoslavia	1913-21,1929-	0.52	3.27	1921-29
Sweden	1820-1918	0.77	3.10	1918-
Germany	1820-1919,1933-49	0.81	2.93	1919-33,1949-
Bulgaria	1913-26,1934-	-0.04	1.42	1926-34
Norway	1820-84	0.59	1.87	1884-

(Antic, 2004, p. 784)

2 The Polity project is a widely used dataset that provides measures of democracy and autocracy for all countries from the year 1800 to the present. The project assigns countries a score from -10 to +10, where negative scores indicate an autocratic rule and positive scores indicate a democratic rule.

However, during the 1951-90 period, dictatorships recorded higher annual GDP growth rates than democracies, though the average annual growth of GDP per capita was higher in democracies than in dictatorships (Table 2), (Antic, 2004, pp. 784-5).

Table 2

GDP Per Capita Annual Growth (%) in countries that were Dictatorships during the entire 1820-1950 Period

Country	Periods for which data are available	GDP per capita average annual growth (%)
Russia	1820-1950	1.03
Hungary	1870-1950	0.84
Mexico	1820-1950	0.78
Turkey	1913-1950	0.77
Japan	1820-1950	0.76
Poland	1926(29)-1950	0.69
Thailand	1870-1950	0.21
China	1820-1950	0.12
Egypt	1900-1-50	0.03
Romania	1926-1950	-0.26
Average		0.5

(Antic, 2004, p. 786)

There is no absolute clarity regarding the political regime that reported better results during the 1970-2020 period. As illustrated in Table 3, if results are compared on the basis of simple average or median growth, democracies recorded a faster GDP per capita growth than dictatorships. On the other hand, if results are compared on the basis of weighted average (by population), dictatorships reported higher rates of GDP per capita growth than democracies. Antic (2004, p. 784) claims that the explanation is quite simple – small democratic countries experienced faster growth than small dictatorships, while more populous dictatorships demonstrated faster growth than populous democracies.

Table 3:
GDP Per Capita Growth during the 1970-2020 Period

	DICTATORSHIPS	DEMOCRACIES
Simple Average	2.29%	1.98%
Median	2.12%	1.9%
Weighted Average (Population)	2.24%	2.03%

Moreover, recent data shows that autocracies dominate both the top and bottom performers' lists for GDP growth (Table 4), leading to the conclusion that there is no clear pattern or relationship between political regime type and economic outcomes (Knutsen, 2021, p. 1512).

Table 4:
GDP Growth across different periods

1990s		2000s		2010-2020	
Top ten GDP pre capita Growth rate					
Equatorial Guinea	17.3	Azerbaijan	17.4	Ethiopea	9.3
Singapore	9.8	Turkmenistan	14.9	Guyana*	7.42
Ireland*	8.3	Angola	14.5	China	7.17
Kuwait	7.3	Equatorial Guinea	12.6	Nauru*	6.91
Qatar	7.1	Kazakhstan	12.0	Tajikistan	6.8
Malta*	6.7	Iraq	11.6	Mongolia*	6.79
Vietnam	6.5	Mongolia*	10.6	Tanzania	6.49
Lebanon	6.3	Jordan	10.5	Laos	6.46
South Korea*	6.1	Zambia	9.7	Bangladesh	6.32
Luxemburg*	6.1	Georgia	9.3	Myanmar	6.298
Bottom ten GDP pre capita Growth rate					
Russia	-7.3	Israel*	-0.2	Bahamas*	-1.15
Iraq	-8.0	Burkina Faso	-0.2	Barbados*	-1.26

Moldova	-8.3	Guinea-Bissau*	-0.2	Lebanon	-1.27
Ukraine	-8.4	Central African Republic*	-0.5	Puerto rico	-1.31
DR Congo	-9.5	Luxemborg*	-0.9	San Marino*	-1.89
Afghanistan	-9.5	Haiti	-1.6	Greece*	-2.7
Kyrgyzstan	-11.2	Burundi	-2.5	South Sudan	-3.33
Georgia	-11.5	Barbados*	-3.5	Equatorial Guinea	-3.39
Azerbaijan	-12.0	U.A.E.	-5.7	Yemen	-4.25
Tajikistan	-12.9	Zimbabwe	-6.2	Venezuela	-10

Note: Numbers indicate anuualized growth rates as averages across periods. Regime category is measured the first year (democratic countries are marked with *). Post-Soviet republics obtain the Soviet Union's 1990-autocracy coding.

Overall, the relationship between political regimes and economic growth is a complex and ongoing subject of study, with research findings showing the superiority of both democracies and dictatorships in economic growth depending on the time frame and the measures used to assess growth. Therefore, as Przeworski and Limongi, (1993, p. 66) stated in their paper Political Regimes and Economic Growth, "Clearly, the impact of political regimes on growth is wide open for reflection and research," is a sensible assumption (Pinho, 2009, p. 472).
Additional investigation is required in order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the intricate correlation between political regimes and economic growth.

Democracy & Economic Growth

Democracy has long been considered a form of government that allows citizens to freely participate in political life and is characterized by fair elections and political accountability and Abraham Lincoln has famously described it as a government of the people, by the people, and for the people (Ghardallou, 2020, p. 995).
The relationship between democracy and economic growth has been extensively

explored in numerous studies including small-scale comparative studies, case studies, and statistical studies and produced mixed results, with some establishing a positive relationship (Acemoglu et al. 2014; Madsen et al. 2015; Klaus and Tommy, 2016; Papaioannou and Siourounis, 2008; Saha and Zhang, 2017; Persson and Tabellini, 2006; Rodrik and Wazciarg, 2005; as cited in Baklouti, 2020, p. 189), and others reporting a negligible or a negative relationship (Sirowy and Sirowy, 1990; Przeworski and Limongi, 1993; Helliwell, 1994; Barro, 1996, p. 61; Tavares and Wacziarg, 2001 as cited in Pozuelo, 2017, p. 2).

Diamond (2008, p. 96) argues there is inadequate evidence supporting the hypothesis that democracy enhances economic development, while Tsebelis (2002, p. 70) has argued that it is highly surprising that there is no evidence of democracy positively impacting development (Knutsen, 2012, p. 2). Recent meta-analyses have also highlighted mixed results, with Doucouliagos and Ulubasoglu (2008, p. 63) concluding that there is no clear evidence of democracy negatively impacting economic growth and that there seems to be no direct effect on economic growth (De Haan, 2011, p. 95). Other studies have suggested that democracy indirectly affects growth through channels such as human capital accumulation (Baum and Lake, 2003; Tavares and Wacziarg, 2001) and by fostering political stability and economic freedoms (Knutsen, 2011, p. 25).

While the correlation between democracy and economic growth does not necessarily imply causality, studies from across the world have consistently shown a positive relationship between these two variables. However, other factors such as historical patterns, political-institutional variables, and geographical factors may systematically affect regime type and growth. It is also important to note that democratic regime type is not the sole determinant of economic growth, since the quality of institutions, government policies, investment, human capital, and access to natural resources also play critical roles. Nevertheless, it is widely recognized that non-democratic regimes tend to lack accountability, transparency, and the rule of law, leading to economic inefficiencies and a lack of trust in government institutions that can stifle economic growth (Csaky, 2021, p. 2).

The Emergence of the Degrowth Movement

During the early 21st century, a significant academic and social movement emerged, coinciding with the continuous progress of industrial society. The emergence of "Degrowth theory" was a response to the growing concerns about the unsustainable effects of excessive production and consumption, which had become characteristic of modern capitalist economies.

The origins of the degrowth movement can be traced back to the ideas put forth by ecological economists and post-development thinkers. These intellectuals, disenchanted by the constant drive for economic expansion at any expenses, expressed a daring and innovative concept for the structure of society. The degrowth movement fundamentally questions the dominant belief in unlimited economic growth, asserting that the sole focus on expanding Gross Domestic Product (GDP)[3] is not only harmful to the environment but also unneeded for improving human well-being (Hickel, 2019, pp. 56-57; Hickel, 2022).

The degrowth movement has three main goals: firstly, to decrease environmental degradation; secondly, to redistribute income and wealth at both local and global levels; and thirdly, to encourage a significant social shift away from the materialistic values of contemporary capitalism towards a more participatory culture (Cosme, 2017, p. 149).

The degrowth paradigm placed great importance on a fundamental rethinking of the economy. Instead of placing importance on constant accumulation and consumption, the concept of degrowth advocates for a restructuring of economic institutions that focuses on meeting human needs by reducing accumulation, dismantling enclosures, and decreasing commodification (Hickel, 2021, p. 2). This vision aimed to reverse the Lauderdale paradox[4], which refers to the idea of scarcity. Instead, it advocated for abundance by promoting a more equitable distribution of current resources and the increase of public goods (Hickel, 2019, p. 54).

[3] GDP accounts for the total value of all final goods and services newly produced within a country's physical borders throughout the year

[4] It refers to the idea, developed by the Earl of Lauderdale in 1804, according to which private riches – the sum-total of the exchangeable value of goods – and public wealth – the sum-total of the use value of goods – vary in opposite directions.

The degrowth ethos is centred around a fundamental critique of the current global economic order. Advocates contended that the ongoing pattern of continuous expansion was not only unviable but also highly unfair, as it maintained a system that prioritised the needs of a select few while disregarding the majority of the world's population. Furthermore, they argued that the current structure of the global economy is incapable of achieving substantial progress in the developing regions of the world referred as "Global South" (Hickel, 2023; Jung, 2023).

Jason Hickel and Vijay Prashad have highlighted the fundamental structural disparities of the capitalist system. They argue that genuine growth can only be attained by moving away from its exploitative processes (Hickel, 2016, p. 14; Vijay, 2012, p. 52; Vijay, 2007). Degrowth scholars advocates for rich nations referred as "Global North" to proactively reduce their consumption of the Earth's energy and resources, aiming to restore a harmonious and fair equilibrium between the economy and the natural environment.(Hickel 2023, p. 1; Hickel, 2022).

In the words of Jason Hickel, "Our addiction to economic growth is killing us."[5]. This statement captured the sense of importance and immediacy with which the degrowth movement aimed to question and disrupt the existing state of affairs. Dismissing the idea that every sector of the economy should always develop, advocates of degrowth advocate for a more logical approach to economic production. This approach emphasises sustainability, fairness, and the well-being of humans, rather than focusing just on monetary growth. Degrowth, also referred to as decolonization, is a concept that calls for a reduction in economic growth and a shift away from colonial practices (Hickel, 2023; Hickel, 2021, p. 1).

With the rise in popularity of the degrowth movement, its advocates have become more outspoken in their demands for fundamental transformation. They contended that substantial advancement could only be attained by tackling the fundamental reasons behind worldwide poverty and inequality, diverting attention from superficial political changes towards a comprehensive reorganisation of economic policies and structures, transitioning to a post-growth , post-capitalist economy. (Vijay 2007; Hickel 2016, pp. 13- 14; Hickel, 2022).

[5] On bbc interview 14th August 2017.

In summary, while the relationship between democracy and economic growth is complex and multifaceted, studies suggest that democracy can play a positive role in promoting sustained economic growth and development, although it may not be the only determinant of economic growth.

Theoretical Arguments in Favor of Democracy

In the 21st century, there seems to be a growing consensus that democracy is the preferred system of political thought for delivering economic success to citizens worldwide. This belief is supported by several arguments, including the role of democracy in promoting civil society and protecting property rights, limiting predatory behavior, promoting technological innovation, encouraging competition, maintaining the rule of law, and fostering human capital accumulation and political stability.

First, it is a common belief that democratic institutions can provide better protection of property rights, which is critical for economic development. Establishing clear and effective institutions that create a framework for protecting and enforcing property rights is considered a crucial factor in the development process. The protection of property rights, as is common under a democracy, is believed to increase investment incentives and positively impact physical capital accumulation (Ghardallou, 2020, pp. 986-988). The literature has found a positive relationship between democracy and property rights protection and human development. (Sirowy, 1990, p. 133; Shah, 2016, p. 657).

Second, democratic institutions provide better political stability, which can be attributed to their rare constitutional changes and transparent rules that ensure the alternation of power. When institutional constraints are in place that limit the power of decision-makers to confiscate property and violate contracts and ensure they operate within the framework of the law, it can secure property rights, reduce uncertainty, encourage investment, and provide mechanisms for resolving social conflicts and maintaining political and economic stability (Diamond, 2021, p. 3; Gerring, 2005, p. 334; Olson, 1993, p. 572; Wu, 2012, p. 367; Pinho, 2009, p. 472).

Third, it has been suggested that democracy may promote technological change and productivity growth (Ghardallou, 2020, p. 991).
Fourth, the higher levels of competition that are prevalent in a democratic system are believed to restrict politicians from exploiting their power for personal gain (Wu, 2012, p. 368).
Fifth, democratic systems effectively limit arbitrary rule, reduce corruption, and maintain established property rights (Antic, 2004, p. 775; Durham, 1999, p. 83).
Finally, democratic political regimes promote better growth by fostering human capital accumulation, which can lead to better education and health care. Furthermore, democracy enables the development of civil society by fostering the accumulation of human capital, including the provision of public services, which can play a crucial role in promoting economic growth by advocating for growth-oriented economic policies and providing crucial services like education and healthcare.
In conclusion, research has found that democratic regimes tend to experience higher levels of economic growth, social development, and human development than authoritarian regimes by enhancing political stability, improving the rule of law, and encouraging innovation. However, the relationship between democracy and development is not always straightforward, as economic development can sometimes lead to democratization, and other factors such as cultural, historical, and geographical factors can also play a role. Additionally, these factors may interact with each other and with other elements, such as economic policies, political stability, corruption, etc., which can impact the final outcomes. Nonetheless, it is widely recognized that democracy offers significant advantages for economic development and growth.

Theoretical Arguments against Democracy[6]

In recent times, the notion that democratic institutions have a detrimental effect on or are immaterial to economic growth has become prevalent in both academic and policy discussions. This trend can be attributed to the impressive

6 As defined in the Western world.

economic growth of non-democratic China, the failure of the Arab Spring, and the emergence of populist politics in Europe and the United States (Acemoglu, 2014, p. 1).

There are also several theoretical arguments that suggest that democracy can have a negative impact on economic growth. Firstly, in a democratic system, there is an increased pressure for immediate consumption and politicians may increase public spending to win votes, which may lead to consumption being favored over investments and result in high levels of government debt and inflation, which may consequently impede economic growth (Limongi, 1993, p. 51&54; Ulubasoglu, 2006, p. 3; Ghardallou, 2020, p. 993). Secondly, political instability in a democratic system can disrupt economic growth due to frequent changes in the government or a lack of cooperation between political parties (Baklouti, 2020, p. 191). Thirdly, populist policies implemented by politicians in a democratic system are usually constrained by due process, including legislative, judicial, and interest group constraints, which may not be economically robust and can negatively impact growth . Fourthly, politicians in a democratic system may prioritize winning the next election over implementing policies that promote long-term economic growth. This could lead them to implement policies that are focused on short-term benefits. Fifth, bureaucratic inefficiencies in a democratic system may slow down economic decision-making and complicate the operations of businesses. Sixth, in a democratic system, rent-seeking by interest groups can negatively impact overall economic growth by influencing government policies (Ghardallou, 2020, p. 992). Finally, the redistribution of income from the wealthy to the poor in a democratic system can lead to a deterioration in property rights and weaken incentives for investment, resulting in negative effects on growth (Ghardallou,, 2020, p. 993).

It is worth noting that these arguments are theoretical in nature, and the relationship between democracy and economic growth is not straightforward. Therefore, further research is necessary to provide more definitive empirical evidence on the impact of democracy on economic growth.

Dictatorship & Economic Growth

In 1992, Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew famously told an audience in the Philippines: "I believe that what a country needs to develop is discipline more than democracy. The exuberance of democracy leads to indiscipline and disorderly conduct, which are inimical to development" (Visal, 2019, p. 14) – Is that statement accurate?

The literature offers conflicting views on the relationship between dictatorship and economic growth. Some scholars argue that dictatorship can provide the stability, strong leadership, and quick decision-making necessary to promote economic growth (Dabus, 2021, p. 2), while others suggest that dictatorship can have negative impacts on economic growth, human rights, and political freedom, since this mode of leadership is often characterized by a lack of accountability, corruption, and misallocation of resources, which can harm the economy in the long term. Additionally, authoritarian regimes may be more prone to economic downturns as they are less responsive to citizens' economic demands (Ghardallou, 2020, p. 993; Visal, 2019, p. 14).

Glaeser et al. (2004) suggest that many countries that have achieved economic success have done so under a dictatorship and only later became democratized (Dixit, 2010, p. 5) (Baklouti, 2020, p. 189). Similarly, Dabus (2021, p. 2) argues that authoritarian regimes may be a necessary factor in promoting economic growth. In contrast, other authors, such as Khan (2016), suggest that dictatorship has an adverse effect on economic development, with a transition from extreme dictatorship to ideal democracy potentially increasing the Human Development Index (HDI) by 17 percent (Khan, 2016, p. 657).

In summary, the debate on the relationship between dictatorship and economic growth remains ongoing, and there are valid arguments supporting it and opposing it. While some authors suggest that dictatorship can promote economic growth through decisive leadership, make quick and efficient decisions, and enforce difficult but crucial policies, others highlight the negative impact that authoritarian regimes can have on economic growth, human rights, and political freedom.

Therefore, it can be concluded that each regime has advantages and disadvantages, and there is a need to further study the relationship between dictatorships and economic growth to better understand the mechanisms at play.

Theoretical Arguments in Favor of Dictatorship

Tom Friedman (2012), a renowned New York Times columnist, argues that when one-party non-democracies are led by an enlightened group of individuals, such as in China, it can positively impact the economy, since the single party's ability to impose difficult yet crucial policies required for societal advancement in the 21st century outweighs the drawbacks of dictatorship. Similarly, Barro (1996, p. 1&11) asserts that political rights have no effect on economic growth, which is a statement that some scholars consider bold (Acemoglu, 2014, p. 1).

There are several arguments underlying debates surrounding the relationship between dictatorship and economic growth. One prominent argument pervading the discourse is that dictatorships possess a superior capacity in terms of mobilizing resources for investment compared to democracies due to the lack of constraints associated with popularity and re-election, which is a crucial factor in the case of elected governments. It suggests that the autonomy of a dictator, free from such limitations, allows for the efficient implementation of potentially unpopular and challenging reforms (Ghardallou, 2020, p. 992).

Haggard (1990) argues that a dictatorship can force firms to invest and export, avoiding special interests for the unproductive utilization of resources. According to this argument, authoritarianism is necessary for "state autonomy," which favors growth. Since authoritarian governments are not held back by constraints, it allows them to respond more rapidly to crises and to prioritize long-term investments over immediate consumption (Antic, 2004, p. 774; Wu, 2012, p. 365). This point of view is supported by various authors, including Hewlett (1979), who argues that democracy encourages immediate consumption while reducing investment, thus hindering economic growth (Visal, 2019, p. 14).

Another argument notes that authoritarian regimes are often associated with achieving equal development, as they are perceived to be better equipped to protect the interests of lower sections of society (Visal, 2019, p. 14).

Proponents of Asian values argue that the interests of society as a whole are more important than the interests of an individual and that authoritarian regimes are, therefore, justified in sacrificing civil and political rights to promote the greater good, such as more rapid and equitable economic growth (Polterovich, 2012, p. 2;

Knutsen, 2021, p. 1506). However, Amartya Sen (1999) cautions against the idea that economic growth can be facilitated by denying political and civil rights (knutsen, 2021, p. 2)

Dictatorships can also provide policy stability and predictability, fostering an environment conducive to long-term investment. Military rule can be perceived as a progressive force in developing nations, as the military is unparalleled in its ability to combine modernization with stability and control (Sirowy, 1990, p. 131).

Dick (1974) further suggests that economic growth can only be facilitated through central planning or authoritarianism in underdeveloped countries (Dick, 1974, p. 817).

However, it is important to acknowledge that these arguments are highly debated due to their inconclusive nature and that the dictatorship's context, nature, and policies must also be considered when evaluating its impact on economic growth.

Theoretical Arguments against Dictatorship

Numerous scholars have put forward theoretical arguments against dictatorship and its potential impact on economic growth. Visal (2019, p. 15) argues that the capital-intensive growth promoted by authoritarian regimes is not only unbalanced but also harmful to society in the long run. (Shah, 2016, p. 657) posits that democratic governments are preferred over dictatorships as they are less associated with expropriation, which can discourage investment and innovation. Similarly, Olson (1993, p. 572) highlights that dictatorships can lead to a lack of stability and predictability, discouraging foreign investment and making it highly challenging for businesses to plan for the future. The absence of an independent power that can assure orderly legal succession also creates substantial uncertainty surrounding the future, which can negatively impact economic growth.

The negative impact of dictatorship on human rights, political freedom, and civil society can further deteriorate the overall well-being of the population and discourage foreign investment. Knutsen (a Professor at the Department of Political Science, University of Oslo) argues that dictators and their inner clique primarily leverage their powers to enrich themselves and secure their continuation in office, often spending excessive amounts of money on repressive apparatus instead of productive investments. Additionally, dictatorship can lead to a lack of political and economic freedom, stifling innovation and entrepreneurship. This could lead to brain drain, or talented individuals leaving the country, further decreasing economic growth. (Knutsen, 2011, p. 16).

Overall, these arguments suggest that dictatorship can negatively affect economic growth and development. However, it is crucial to consider other factors, such as the political and economic context and the policies of the dictatorship.

The influence of sub regimes[7] on economic growth

The impact of regime type on economic growth has been a topic of substantial debate in scholarly literature, and various arguments have been put forward by different studies. While some scholars argue that dictatorship can lead to unbalanced and harmful economic growth, others suggest that the relationship between democracy and economic growth is more complex and context-dependent. In particular, economic outcomes may also be influenced by the specific form of democracy, such as presidential or parliamentary.

In light of the previous discussion, I agree with Knutsen's (2012) conclusion that comparing the economic performance of a single democracy with a single dictatorship might prove to be inadequate when generalizing notions about the relationship between regime type and economic growth due to the wide variation in economic performance, particularly among dictatorships (Knutsen, 2012, pp. 8-9).

Persson (2005) found that the precise form of democracy also impacts policy design and economic outcomes. Thus, the inconsistent findings in the literature about the effect of democracy on growth and development may stem from the studies' failure to consider the different forms of democratic regimes and the nature of the electoral system in analyzing this relationship (Dixit, 2010, p. 6).

Sen (2017) argues that the type of autocracy is crucial in comprehending the effect of regime type on growth. In fact, evidence suggests that, on average, party-

[7] The division of democratic and dictatorial regimes into sub-regimes or different types/ categories

based autocracies are more likely to experience a higher magnitude of growth than military regimes, monarchies, and personalized autocracies (Sen & Selim, 2017, p. 29).

The figure below illustrates a scatter-plot of average annual GDP per capita growth and the average score on the Freedom House Index (FHI)[8] between 1970 and 2021 (Figure 2). It is apparent that there is a large variation in growth rates among regimes with similar average FHI scores, particularly among the most dictatorial regimes. Thus, it can be suggested that there is greater variance in growth rates among repressive autocracies than among democracies. The figure indicates a negative correlation between the FHI and economic growth over this 52-year period, implying a positive correlation between democracy and growth (Knutsen, 2011, p. 5).

This supports the claim above, and a reference to sub-regime is required to obtain reliable results regarding the effect of a regime on the economy.

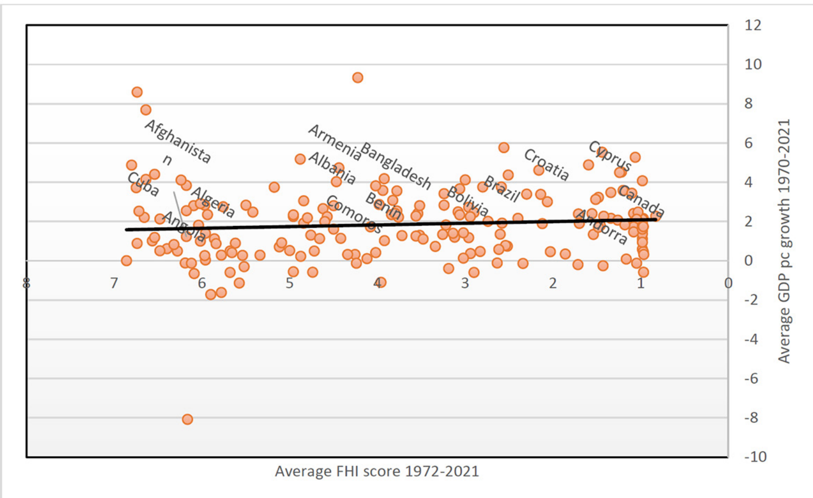

Figure 2: the figure illustrates the average annual GDP per capita growth (1970-2021) along the y-axis and the average FHI score (1972-2021) along the x-axis. Source: World Development Indicators

[8] The FHI, which is widely used in the literature studying the effect of democracy on growth, is a measure of the level of freedom in a country, incorporating political rights and civil liberties (Freedom House, 2010).

Sub regimes – definition & their influence on the economy

Researchers in the past decades have identified and defined several sub-regimes and broadly agreed upon 4 main sub-regimes: 2 democratic & 2 autocratic.
Presidential and parliamentary regimes are the two distinct types of governance in a democratic system, each with unique institutional arrangements and political dynamics. Presidential systems are characterized by a rigid separation of powers between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, while parliamentary systems have a flexible separation of powers, where the executive and legislative branches have mutual control over each other

The influence of presidential and parliamentary democratic regimes on economic growth is complex and depends on the particular context as well as the country's policies. While presidential systems may promote stability and predictability, the strict separation of powers can cause a gridlock and lead to a lack of cooperation between the executive and legislative branches, hindering economic growth. On the other hand, parliamentary systems may offer a more efficient and responsive government. However, frequent changes in government can lead to instability and uncertainty, discouraging investment and hampering economic growth (Ghardallou, 2020, pp. 994-5).

Military dictatorship and single-party dictatorship regimes are both forms of non-democratic governance that exhibit distinct institutional structures and political dynamics. Military dictatorship regimes are marked by the military's predominant role in both political and economic matters, while single-party dictatorship regimes are defined by the monopoly of power held by a single political party.

Military dictatorship regimes may promote stability and predictability, but they are often associated with poor human rights records, a lack of transparency and accountability, and an absence of economic expertise, leading to political instability and policy discontinuity. Single-party dictatorship regimes may lead to more efficient resource allocation and rapid economic development, but the aforementioned issues also apply to them (Chukwuemeka, 2020).

Both dictatorship regime types share the flaw of absence of accountability and transparency, which can result in corruption and misallocation of resources,

hindering economic growth. Moreover, the lack of political and civil rights can stifle innovation and entrepreneurship, as citizens are not free to express their opinions.
In conclusion, the influence of different regime types on economic growth is a complex issue that is dependent on various factors, including the specific policies and circumstances of the country in question. Thus, a nuanced and multifaceted approach is necessary to understand the relationship between regime type and economic growth.
Another glaring gap in previous research is the heterogeneity of the countries that were compared. Analyzing the economic behavior of several countries without taking into consideration their differences and their starting point in capability can distort the results, which raises the following question:

Which countries should be compared?

According to Knutsen (2012), conducting comparative studies without systematic case selection can hinder the process of drawing valid inferences. This can be attributed to the fact that various economic, social, cultural, historical, and other political factors can affect both regime type and economic growth. To overcome this issue, it is essential to exercise caution when selecting cases in small-n comparative studies. A thoughtful approach must be undertaken towards modeling and the inclusion of control variables in statistical studies.
One way to address this challenge is by conducting a controlled comparison of pre-and post-regime change growth rates in countries that have undergone democratization or democratic backsliding. This approach allows the regulation of country-specific factors and provides insight into the relationship between democratization and economic growth. However, it is crucial to note that there are several variables that can affect both regime type and economic growth, which must be taken into consideration and controlled for. Additionally, there is a need to address methodological issues, such as the endogeneity of regime type to economic outcomes.
Furthermore, Knutsen (2012) highlights that it may be equally informative to examine variations in economic outcomes within political regime categories as it is to analyze the general effect of regime type on growth (Knutsen, 2012, pp. 8-9).

Overall, it is essential to incorporate as much data as possible and control for various variables when attempting to generalize the effect of regime type on growth. Additionally, the scale of societies and their structure, such as population size, density, rural-urban composition, natural resources richness, and territory, may also affect development (Shah and Khan, 2016).
Based on these insights, I examined the variation in economic outcomes within sub-regimes, such as presidential and parliamentary systems under democratic regimes and military and single-party systems under dictatorship regimes, while controlling for variables that can affect the results beyond regime type, such as territory and population size and the richness of natural resources.

Beyond Regime – Other factors to affect economic growth

When analyzing the relationship between political regime and economic growth, it is necessary to consider variables other than regime type that may impact the relationship. As Wu (2012) noted, recent research has emphasized the importance of structural factors, such as natural resources, geography, ethnic divisions, and resource scarcity in determining a country's economic performance.
Additionally, it is also necessary to consider stability and change in values when exploring the relationship between political regime and economic growth.
Stability plays a critical role in the relationship between political regime and economic growth. According to Baklouti (2020), political stability is crucial in preventing uncertainty and political violence, since these factors can reduce the rate of economic growth. Studies conducted by Jong-A-Pin (2009), Gerring et al. (2005), and Persson and Tabellini (2009) found that on average, countries with stable political regimes grow faster than those without. Furthermore, de Haan (2011) found that growth accelerations were less likely the longer a political regime is in place, whether it is a democratic or an autocratic regime. This supports recent studies suggesting that a change in leadership or regime may be necessary for a country to transition into a period of economic growth (De Haan, 2011, p. 111).
The relationship between changes in values and economic growth is complex and multi-dimensional. Values can shape individuals' preferences and behavior,

thereby impacting economic outcomes (Huntington, 1991, p. 22). Inglehart (1971) found that cultural and social values, such as a culture of hard work and gender equality, can contribute to economic growth. Ethical and political values, such as environmental consciousness and political freedom, can also impact economic growth. However, changes in values can have both positive and negative impacts on economic growth, and to attain more accurate outcomes, it is important to consider the broader institutional and policy contexts that shape economic outcomes.

The effects of natural resources on economic growth are complex and context-dependent. While natural resources can contribute to revenue generation, foreign investment, employment creation, and infrastructure development, they can also lead to the "resource curse," environmental degradation, income inequality, and an overreliance on natural resources, which can in turn cause the "dutch disease," in which the currency appreciates, and other sectors of the economy are negatively impacted (Shah, 2016, p. 30). The impact of natural resources on economic growth is contingent on the unique circumstances and policies of the particular country in question.

Geography is another important factor that can impact economic growth. The physical attributes of a location, such as its climate, topography, and access to resources, can directly affect the region's production of goods and services and, thus, its economic growth. As noted by Ulubasoglu (2006,p. 5), the impact of geography on economic growth varies across regions.

Finally, heterogeneity can have both positive and negative impacts on economic growth. Diversity can drive innovation, foster entrepreneurship, enhance human capital, and promote social capital. On the other hand, heterogeneity can also lead to social and political instability, unfavorable policies, decreased trust in institutions and government, and discrimination against certain groups (Shah, 2016, p. 661; Baklouti, 2020, p. 190).

In conclusion, the relationship between political regime and economic growth is complex and multi-dimensional, with a range of variables beyond regime type that can impact economic outcomes. Future research could focus on understanding the interactions between these variables to develop more nuanced theories of economic growth.

Case study

After examining the socio-economic performance (HDI[9] & unemployment rate) of a set of four countries with different regime types[10] (table 5), sharing three characteristics – territory & population size and natural resources richness – we conclude the following:

Table 5:

Regime type		
Democracy	presidential	USA
	parliamentary	India
dictatorship	Single party	China
	Military	Egypt

Social variable – Annual Unemploymwnt Rate:

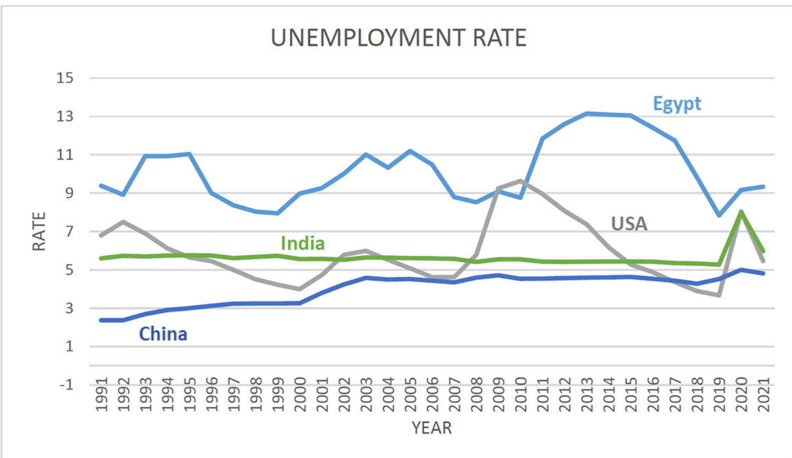

Figure 3: The figure shows the unemployment rate in four countries from 1991-2021. Source Our World in Data.

[9] The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite statistic that measures the achievements of a country in terms of its economic, social, and human development. The HDI is based on three dimensions: life expectancy, education, and income.

[10] Democracies: parliamentary & presidential; dictatorships: single party & military

The line graph in figure 3 illustrates that the unemployment rates in Egypt, the USA, India, and China have displayed varying trends over the last thirty years. Notably, China's unemployment rate has consistently remained lower than the other three countries. While the USA and India have witnessed a decline in the unemployment rate, Egypt and China have experienced a slight increase in the last decade.

Upon analyzing the data based on regime type, it may be observed that the democratic regimes of the USA and India demonstrate higher average unemployment rates than China's single-party authoritarian regime but lower than Egypt's military authoritarian regime. This might suggest that the political system can significantly impact the labor market. Both China and India's stable unemployment rates can be attributed to the predictability of their economic policies that are the result of their regime policies' stability. On the other hand, the high volatility in unemployment rates recorded in Egypt and the USA can be attributed to economic policies and various external factors.

The analysis further reveals that the USA and Egypt demonstrated fluctuating unemployment rates, which were significantly affected by crises such as the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. However, while the democratic regime in the USA has enabled the implementation of policies to address unemployment, subsequently decreasing the country's unemployment rate, the dictatorship regime in Egypt took more time to attain the same outcomes. China's communist regime, due to its autonomy, has been successful in creating and enforcing policies to maintain a consistently low unemployment rate.

In conclusion, the data suggest that in comparison to a regime type, a stable political system with predictable economic policies can contribute to a relatively stable unemployment rate. While external factors can significantly impact employment rates, a government's ability to implement effective policies can help mitigate any negative effects.

Human development index comparison[11]:

[11] The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite statistic that measures the achievements of a country in terms of its economic, social, and human development. The HDI is based on three dimensions: life expectancy, education, and income.

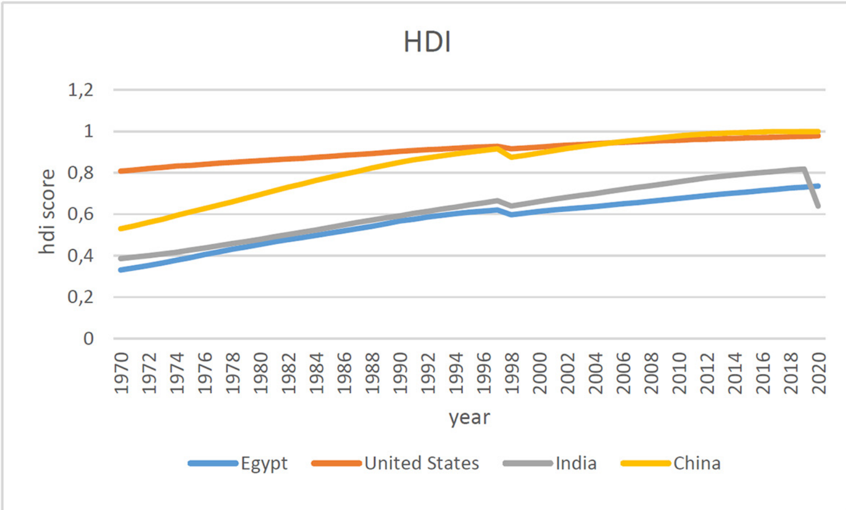

Figure 4: The figure shows the HDI SCORE in four countries from 1970-2020.
Source: Human development index.

The data represented in figure 4 indicates that the Human Development Index (HDI) of all four countries has substantially increased between 1970 and 2020, albeit at varying rates and levels. The USA recorded the highest HDI in 1970, which has continued to increase steadily and recorded a score of 0.978 in 2019. Egypt's HDI was the lowest in 1970. Although it has increased significantly, the value is still relatively low in comparison to the other countries. China's HDI has increased remarkably since the late 1970s due to economic reform policies, and India has experienced significant HDI growth since the 1970s.

The analysis indicates a complex and context-dependent relationship between regime type and HDI. The USA's stable democratic system may have contributed to its steady HDI growth, while China's one-party authoritarian system has facilitated rapid economic growth, albeit at the cost of political freedom. Egypt's mix of authoritarian and democratic rule may have contributed to a slower HDI growth, and India's democratic system continues to encounter challenges related to inequality, poverty, and social discrimination that may hinder its HDI growth. Investing in healthcare, education, and infrastructure is crucial to promoting human development. Addressing issues such as income inequality and corruption is also essential to ensure that every individual has access to opportunities required to reach their full potential. Despite the different regime types and unique challenges faced by the USA, Egypt, China, and India, all four countries have experienced HDI growth, demonstrating that factors beyond regime type probably played a significant role in determining a country's level of human development. Therefore, we can conclude that regime type does not affect countries' HDI differently.

Conclusion

Table 6

Country	Unemployment rate	HDI
China	↑	↑
USA	during crisis ↑ no crisis ↓	↑
Egypt	during crisis ↑ no crisis ↓	↑
India	No change	↑

Upon rigorous analysis of Table 6 and the corresponding summary of national conduct, along with a critical examination of the graphical representation of both variables, it is discernible that there is no direct correlation between the type of political regime—whether democratic or dictatorial—and either of the two variables. Nonetheless, a more intricate analysis encompassing the various subcategories of these regimes reveals an intriguing pattern, exemplified by the unique case of China: a single-party dictatorship that has demonstrated positive outcomes over the years.

The stabilizing influence of political continuity plays a critical role in equipping nations to navigate economic challenges. Interestingly, the influence of political regime types seems to be greater on social parameters over economic ones. However, this observation warrants a more sophisticated understanding of the interplay between regime type and economic growth — one that acknowledges the unique policies, circumstances, and governance structures prevalent in each country.

It is also crucial to conduct a holistic analysis of the variables that can potentially influence economic outcomes, extending beyond the confines of political regime type. Factors such as the country's natural resources, geographical location, societal stability, inherent values, and sociocultural heterogeneity must also be considered. The multidimensional nature of these variables underscores the need for more nuanced theories of economic growth that can contribute to the development of efficacious policy interventions and stimulate sustainable economic progress.

In conclusion, it is essential to incorporate a wider range of countries into future research efforts to fully unravel the convoluted relationship between political regime types and economic growth and elucidate the underlying mechanisms. This would allow for a comprehensive and profound understanding of the dynamics at play.

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