

Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité!

The Impact of Inequality on Support For Democracy



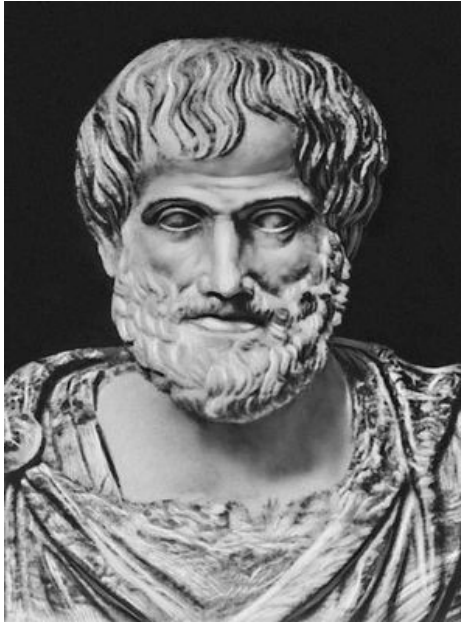
Yegor Lazarev

Affiliated Researcher

Research Question

How does inequality affect support for democracy?

Inequality and Democracy: Debate



Aristotle

Alexis de Tocqueville



Theoretical Perspective



Democracy is almost impossible in highly unequal societies.

Empirical Facts: Controversies

- Bollen and Jackman (1985) no statistically significant relationship
- Przeworski et al., (2000) in most cases the durability of dictatorships is unaffected by income distribution.

Inequality and Democratization

- Boix (2003)

The higher is inequality, the less likely is democratization

- Acemoglu and Robinson (2006)

Non-linear relationship between inequality and democratization

This is your preference!

$$x = \pm \int \frac{dy}{\sqrt{2 \int F(y) dy + C_1}} + C_2$$

Real Preferences Matter

Inglehart and Welzel (2005)

Principal role of ordinary citizens, their beliefs and values in democratization process

Aims of study

- Bridge political economy models of democratization and democracy with socio-cultural theory
- «Meet» *homo economicus* with *homo sociologicus*
- Provide empirical cross-national analysis

The Main Hypothesis

The higher is income inequality, the higher is support for democracy.

Core variables

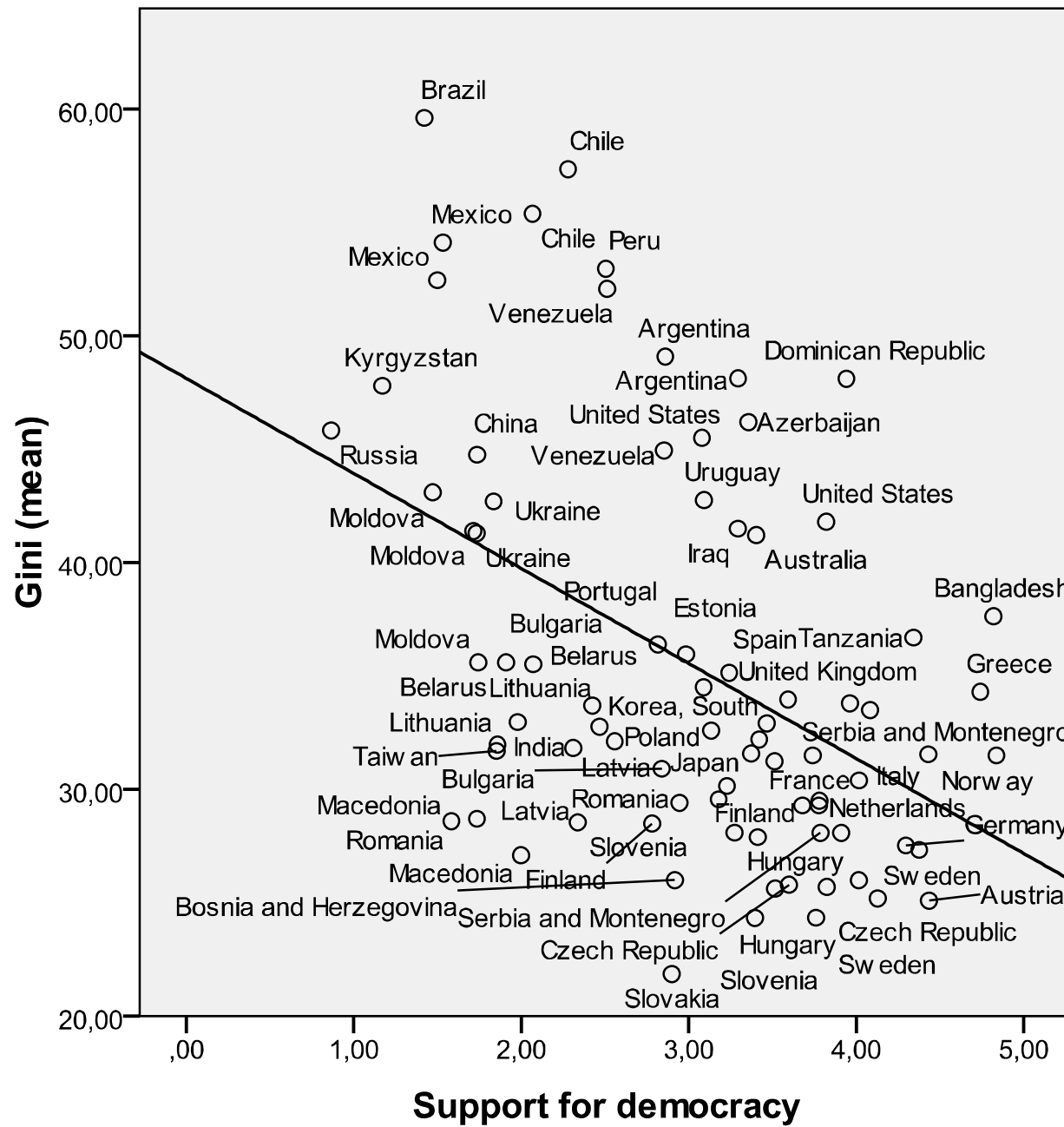
- Support for democracy *WVS*
- Inequality *GINI*
- Regime Type *Polity IV*
- Media Freedom *Freedom House*
- GDP per capita
- Ethnolinguistic Fractionalization
- Religiousness

What is support for democracy?

Aggregated index of several measures from WVS:

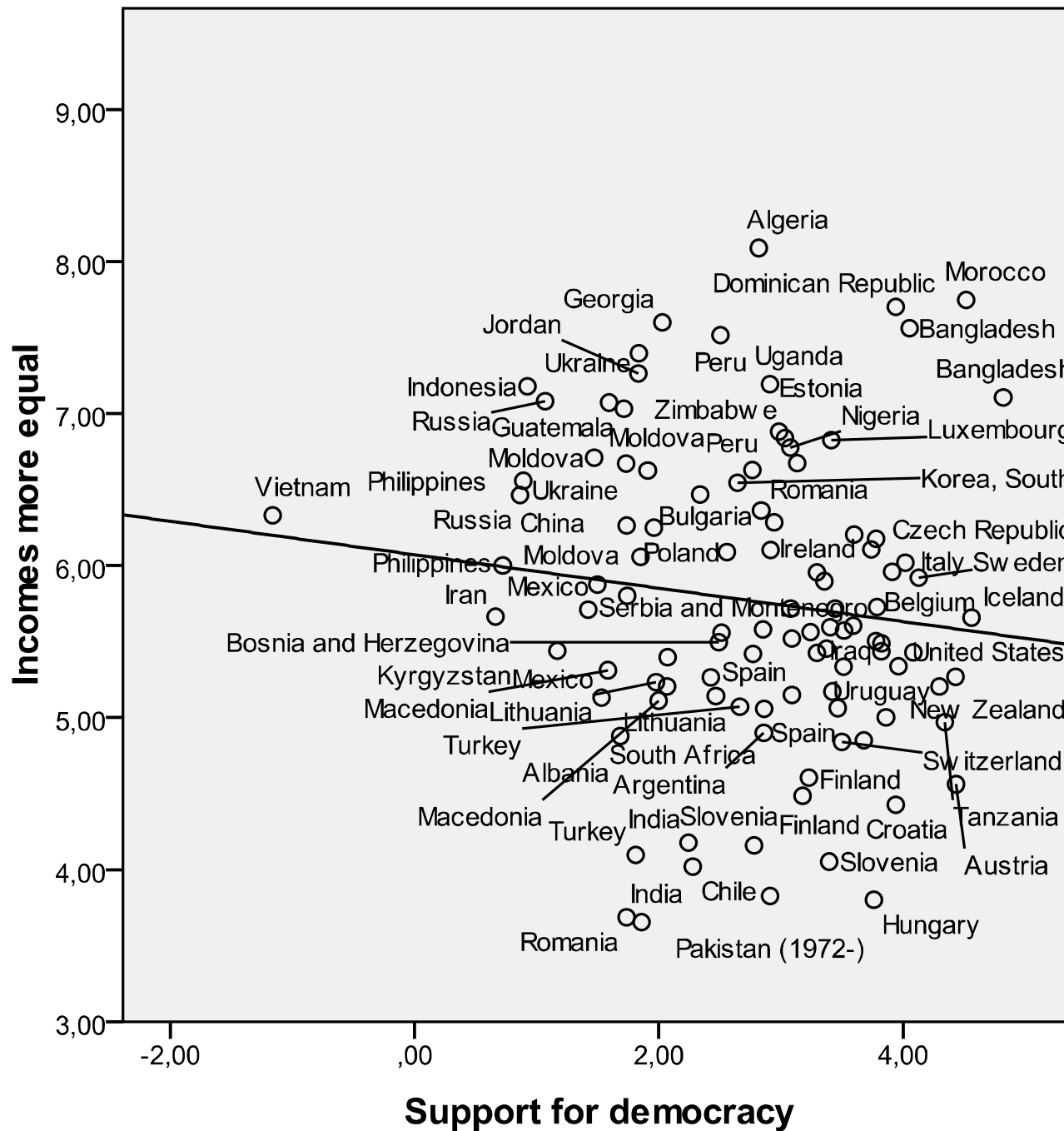
- *“Having a democratic political system”*
- *“Democracy may have problems, but is better”*

Empirical Analysis



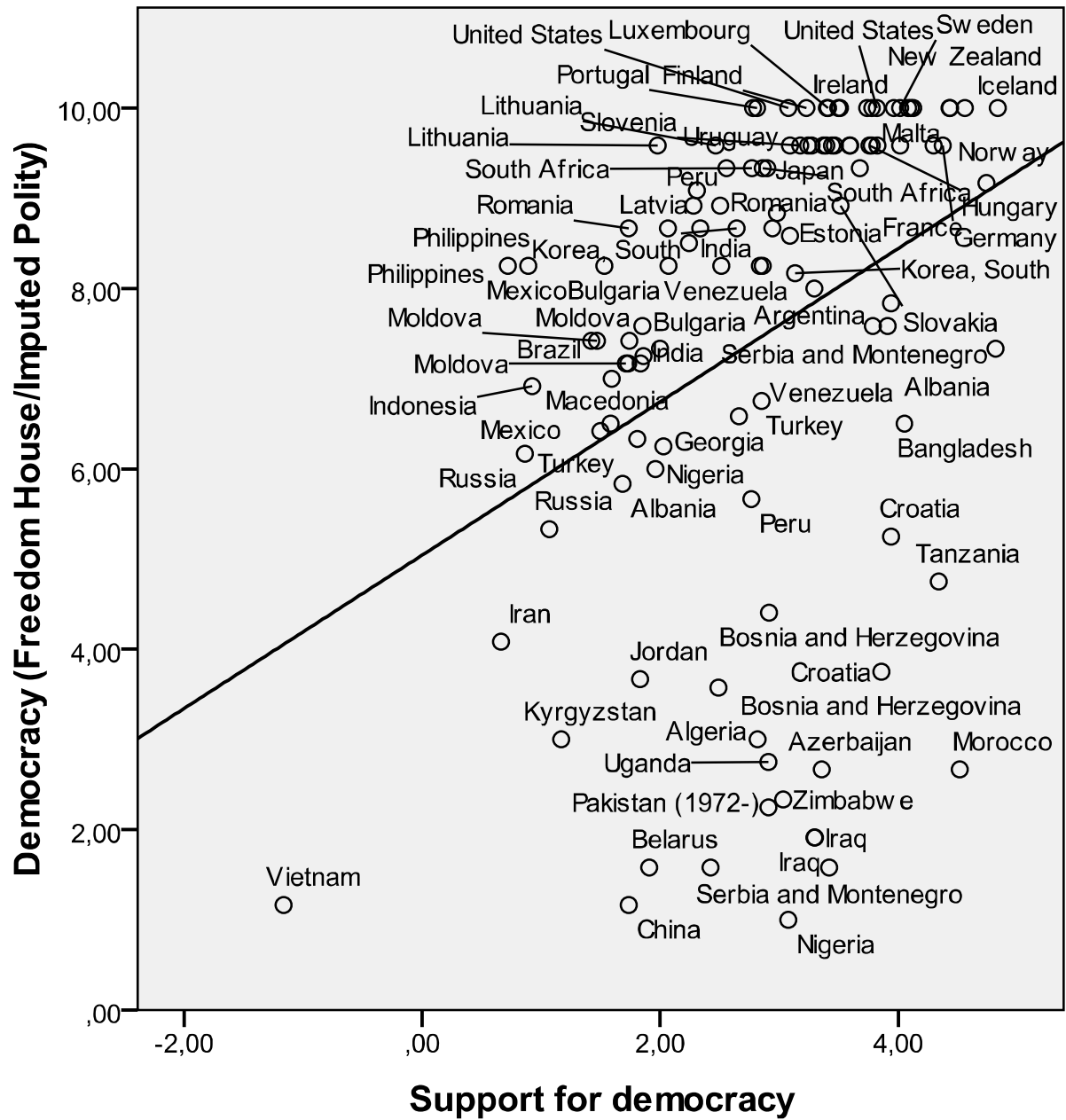
Линейная регрессия

R^2 Линейная регрессия = 0,202



Линейная регрессия

R² Линейная регрессия = 0,014



Линейная регрессия

R² Линейная регрессия = 0,117

The Model

Support for democracy = GINI + Delta
GINI + Support for redistribution + Support
for Government + GDP per capita +
Democracy + Democracy (1930-1995) +
Freedom of Press + Ethnolinguistic
fractionalization + Islam

Results

- Inequality – significant and have strong negative impact in all specifications
- Prosperity – significant and have strong positive impact in all specifications
- Freedom of the Press - significant and have strong positive impact in all specifications
- Democracy – insignificant

Surprise. Or Not?

Islam – significant and have quite strong positive impact in all specifications



Conclusions

- Income Inequality tends to decrease support for democracy
- In the modern world support for democracy is not instrumental, but motivated by demands for freedom itself