THE BEST GOVERNMENT IS THAT WHICH GOVERNS LEAST



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Outline

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2. Cambodia is more authoritarian than its neighbour Thailand, which has a more progressive economic trajectory.
3. Under tough authoritarian, regime North Korea is less developed than South Korea which is a democratic country.
4. USSR disintegrated into fifteen fragments because of authoritarianism.
5. India exhibited better progress than Pakistan because of its inherent secularism.
6. Syria under the tight Assad regime was left far behind its neighbour Turkiye because the latter became more democratic.
7. France was more peaceful and economically well-off than it is today after imposing tough Islamophobic laws.
8. Afghanistan's backwardness under the Taliban's stringent Shari'ah laws is an open and shut case in point.
9. China emerged as the second largest economy only after Deng Xiaoping introduced 'Reform and Opening-up' policy.
10. Myanmar has been suffering from economic, social and political instability because of its authoritarian regimes.
11. Scandinavian and Nordic countries being the bastions of basic freedoms consistently top the World Happiness Index.
12. Conclusion

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ESSAY

While an organized state is indispensable for securing civil peace and enforcing the rule of law, historical and economic evidence demonstrates that human progress accelerates when state intervention is strictly circumscribed. Most of the nation states of the present era have by and large adopted democracy to govern the societies with the people's consent by devising and imposing necessary laws passed by the people's representative assemblies. Overall, the governments whether democratic, quasi-democratic or authoritarian are authorised to use powers to administer the state affairs. However, even a bird's eye view of the history of state shows that by functioning as an impartial umpire rather than an omnipotent planner, a minimal state preserves individual liberty, optimizes dispersed knowledge, and channels human ambition towards creative innovation rather than bureaucratic compliance. When a government ensures people's rights and guarantees their safety by sparing the rod, people live more happily and give their maximum to the state making it progress by leaps and bounds. Consequently, history affirms the classical liberal principle that the best government is that which governs the least—a thesis substantiated by examining how varying degrees of state intervention have shaped modern societies. [190 words]

Cambodia functions as a de facto one-party state dominated by the Cambodian People's Party (CPP), which has centralized power and systematically marginalized parties to keep the country under quasi-martial law. Civil society, journalists, and political opposition members face arbitrary detentions, treason charges, and intense state surveillance. The state can strip citizenship from anyone deemed to be acting against “national interests”. On the other hand, Cambodia’s next door neighbour, Thailand is a fairly democratic country though its democracy also has some inherent flaws. The elections are held regularly, and the elected governments fear public accountability. The citizens are promised basic freedoms and human rights. Resultantly, Thailand’s per capita GDP is significantly higher than Cambodia’s, making it roughly 2.8 to 3.1 times wealthier depending on whether you look at market exchange rates or adjust for local purchasing power. While both are in the same region, Thailand functions as an upper-middle-income nation and a major manufacturing hub, whereas Cambodia is classified as a lower-middle-income nation. This comparison evinces that the best government is that which governs least. [180 words]

The economic trajectories of North Korea and South Korea present one of the most definitive comparative studies in modern political economy. Following their post World War II division, the two states instituted fundamentally divergent socioeconomic systems. While North Korea established a rigid, self-isolated command economy subordinate to the total authority of the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK), South Korea integrated into

global markets through an export-oriented, capitalist framework anchored in private property rights and enterprise. In North Korea, centralized repression and the eradication of market incentives have crippled civilian agency, resulting in chronic poverty and an estimated GDP per capita of under $1,500, with annual foreign trade languishing below $3 billion. Conversely, South Korea's market participation and integration into global supply chains have elevated its GDP per capita above $36,000 and expanded its trade volume beyond $1.3 trillion. This profound divergence illustrates the perils of omnipotent state intervention: while state coercion stifles human enterprise and starves national capacity, safeguarding economic liberty and market mechanisms remains the primary engine of prosperity.

The post World War II divergence between West Germany and the Soviet Union offers compelling evidence that sustained societal and economic progress depends on political liberty and institutional restraint rather than centralized authoritarian command. In 1945, Germany lay in absolute ruin—its infrastructure pulverized, its institutions dismantled, and its territory partitioned—while the USSR emerged as a victorious superpower armed with vast natural reserves, immense manpower, and triumphant geopolitical prestige. Yet, by adopting a constitutional democracy anchored in the social market economy, West Germany strictly circumscribed sovereign intrusion, deregulated prices, guaranteed private property, and protected individual civil liberties. This decentralized framework unleashed grassroots entrepreneurial initiative, culminating in its ‘Economic Miracle’. In stark contrast, the lack of democratic freedoms and institutional adaptability made the authoritarian state of USSR unable to transition from extensive growth (adding more factories) to intensive growth (improving efficiency through innovation) leading to its economic stagnation and subsequent dismemberment in 1991. The economic stagnation and collapse of the Soviet Union—contrasted with a prosperous, democratic, and reunified Germany—demonstrates that the best government is that which governs least. [180 words]

The diverging developmental trajectories of India and Pakistan since their shared independence in August 1947 demonstrate how provision of democratic liberties fosters far greater socioeconomic resilience than undemocratic regimes and persistent sovereign intrusion. While both nations emerged from partition with similar colonial administrative legacies and impoverished agrarian economies, they adopted fundamentally different approaches to state power. India anchored its developmental framework in an uninterrupted secular democracy, constitutional supremacy, and periodic electoral transitions allowing civilian commerce, civil society, and legal protections to take root—culminating in sweeping 1991 market deregulations that unlocked private enterprise and turned the country into a global technological and export powerhouse. By contrast, Pakistan's political evolution was defined by recurrent military interventions, civilian

disenfranchisement and bureaucratic intrusion. This perpetual state intervention disincentivized long-term private capital investment, crowded out grassroots entrepreneurial innovation, and compromised civilian institutional capacity. The resulting contemporary divergence—marked by India's expanding middle class, robust foreign exchange reserves, and commanding global economic footprint compared to Pakistan's recurring balance-of-payments crises and reliance on external financial lifelines—substantiates the principle that lasting national progress is built upon restrained sovereign intrusion and least authoritarian interference.[190 words]

The historical contrast between modern Turkiye and Ba'athist Syria provides a stark regional case study in how political openness, civic liberty, and institutional restraint foster national development, while totalitarian state intrusion precipitates catastrophic socioeconomic collapse. In the latter half of the twentieth century, Turkiye—despite periodic military interruptions—maintained an institutionalized, secular constitutional framework that gradually opened its society, protected personal liberties, and adopted market deregulations in the 1980s, which dismantled bureaucratic monopolies and empowered an expansive, competitive private sector that modernized the Turkish economy. Across its southern border, the dynastic Assad regime subordinated Syrian society to an omnipresent security apparatus, nationalizing key industries, monopolizing commercial concessions through crony favouritism, and criminalizing dissent. By denying fundamental civil and economic freedoms, the regime severed public incentive, drove capital and talent abroad, and prioritized regime survival over civilian welfare—a pathological concentration of sovereign control that ultimately fractured the nation into civil war, institutional ruin, and economic insolvency. The diverging fates of these two neighbours affirm that the best government is that which governs least. [175 words]

The economic and institutional divergence between France and neighbouring Switzerland provides a compelling contemporary case study in how decentralized, restrained governance outperforms centralized state intervention. France has long operated under an expansive, top-down bureaucratic model characterized by dirigisme, an exhaustive labour code, and a public spending footprint exceeding 55% of its GDP—a dynamic that has produced chronic structural unemployment, staggering sovereign debt, and widespread public unrest over state mandates. In stark contrast, Switzerland exemplifies institutional minimalism through aggressive federalism, cantonal autonomy, and direct democracy. By maintaining a highly flexible labour market, competitive local tax structures, and public expenditures that rarely exceed a third of national output, the Swiss state acts primarily as an umpire rather than an economic director. This hands-off posture avoids the fiscal paralysis and social frictions of over-regulation, enabling Switzerland to boast one of the highest standards of living, lowest unemployment rates, and most sustainable develop. The contrast between

French dirigisme and Swiss laissez faire reinforces the argument that the best government is that which govern least.[175 words]

The contemporary crisis in Afghanistan under the Taliban offers an extreme manifestation of how ideological totalitarianism and unchecked state intrusion entirely extinguish socioeconomic development. The Taliban regime has deployed state power to micromanage the most intimate facets of human existence—mandating dress codes, censoring information, and systematically erasing women and girls from secondary education, higher academia, and formal workforce. By converting the state apparatus into an instrument of absolute moral policing, the regime has paralyzed more than half of its human capital, isolated the country from global financial and trade architectures, and triggered a devastating flight of skilled professionals and private capital. Deprived of individual liberties, market autonomy, and basic property assurances, the domestic economy has contracted drastically, plunging vast majorities of the population into acute poverty, malnutrition, and systemic dependency on humanitarian aid. Afghanistan stands as a harrowing testament to the destructive potential of maximum governance: when a regime claims total dominion over private thought, personal conduct, and civic association, it inevitably suffocates innovation, collapses productive enterprise, and leaves its people among the most impoverished and disenfranchised in the modern world. [180 words]

China provides one of the most dramatic experiments on how sovereign intrusion paralyzes human potential, whereas state restraint unleashes unprecedented prosperity. Under Mao Zedong's ideological absolutism, the state extended its tentacles into every facet of life—confiscating private land, abolishing commercial markets, and imposing disastrous top-down campaigns like the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. By overriding basic price mechanisms and stifling individual enterprise, Maoist central planning produced widespread economic stagnation, human rights catastrophes, and famines that claimed millions of lives. The trajectory reversed radically beginning in 1978 under Deng Xiaoping's "Reform and Opening-up" policy, which was defined by state retreat. By permitting private enterprise, welcoming foreign capital, and allowing market forces to set prices, the government stepped back from micromanaging economic activity. This deliberate relaxation of state control catalyzed the largest and fastest poverty-alleviation phenomenon in human history, lifting over 800 million people out of destitution and transforming China into the world's second-largest economy. China's shift from Maoist coercion to Dengist market liberalization proves that the best government is that which governs least. [180 words]

The stark divergence between Myanmar and its neighbour Malaysia presents a powerful illustration of how militarized state coercion cripples a nation, while socio-economic openness generates enduring prosperity. At the

midpoint of the twentieth century, Burma (now Myanmar) was widely regarded as one of Asia's most promising economies, endowed with fertile agricultural land, rich mineral deposits, and high literacy rates. However, decades of catastrophic military rule, persistent junta violence and systemic disenfranchisement, turned the state apparatus into an instrument of resource predation and civil subjugation. By nationalizing industries, replacing market incentives with military cronyism, and violently suppressing democratic expression, the junta drove away domestic and foreign investment, trapped the population in subsistence poverty, and turned the country into a fractured, fragile state. Just across the Andaman Sea, Malaysia charted the opposite trajectory: it maintained an open, market-driven economic framework, protected commercial contracts, and integrated into global supply chains. By allowing the private sector elbow room to expand, Malaysia transformed itself into an upper-middle-income nation with a GDP per capita surpassing $12,000, while Myanmar remains paralyzed at less than a tenth of that figure. This regional contrast reinforces the broader lesson that the best government is that which governs least. [200 words]

The Nordic nations are committed to regulatory minimalism and free-market capitalism. Beneath their high personal tax rates and generous welfare nets lies an economy where the state deliberately exercises extreme restraint: countries like Denmark, Sweden, and Finland maintain virtually no state-mandated minimum wage laws, boast exceptionally low corporate regulatory burdens, enforce flexible "flexicurity" labour markets that allow businesses to hire and fire with ease, and consistently rank among the top ten most open, pro-free-trade economies on the globe. Recognizing the disastrous stagnation caused by heavy state intrusion in the 1970s and 1980s, nations like Sweden aggressively deregulated key industries, and privatized public assets to revitalize growth. The Nordic experience demonstrates that even when a society chooses an extensive social safety net, that net can only be sustained if the state steps out of the way of the market—proving that the engine of wealth, innovation, and human welfare is not bureaucratic micromanagement, but a government that minimizes its interference in the productive gears of private enterprise. [170 words]

The preceding comparative analyses make clear that across continents, cultures, and ideological divides, the fundamental engine of human flourishing is not the coercive might of an overbearing sovereign, but the creative dynamism of free individuals operating under institutional restraint. From the industrial resurgence of postwar West Germany and the market dynamism of Dengist China to the contrasting fates of the Koreas, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, historical evidence consistently refutes the efficacy of omnipotent central planning. Where regimes have sought total dominion over the political, economic, or private spheres—whether through the dogmatic collectivism of the Soviet Union, the ideological absolutism of the Taliban, or the militarized predation of the Burmese junta—the result has

inevitably been capital flight, institutional paralysis, and widespread human destitution. Conversely, societies that circumscribed sovereign intrusion, enforced impartial rules of law, and entrusted market mechanisms and civic autonomy have unlocked unprecedented prosperity. The modern welfare achievements of the Nordic states or the high living standards of Switzerland confirm that social progress can only be sustained when a state leaves the productive gears of private enterprise unburdened by bureaucratic overregulation. Ultimately, while government remains an indispensable umpire to safeguard basic order and adjudicate justice, the best government is that which governs the least. [205 words]

Total words: 2200

