

FREEDOM AND HAPPINESS: DOES FREEDOM MAKE PEOPLE HAPPY?

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Abstract

The article analyzes the relationship between freedom and happiness, in particular whether freedom makes people happy. The problem of freedom and happiness in the modern world affects the life of every person. Utilitarians argue that freedom, understood as the absence of constraints, increases people's happiness, as J. S. Mill argued in *On Liberty*. More recently there have been a number of empirical studies examining whether happiness levels are higher in societies that have more liberty. These studies are critically examined and some of the difficulties of establishing whether it is liberty or some other closely-related phenomena, such as democracy or development that cause happiness are discussed. The article presents data from Freedom House and the Happy Planet Index to attempt to determine the effect of liberty on happiness. This enables us to determine the place of freedom in the hierarchy of values and understand its place in society and its significance for the individual.

Keywords: Freedom, Happiness, Liberty, political prisoner, tradition, value, Utilitarianism, Freedom House, Happy Planet Index, World Values Survey

Introduction

One of the deepest problems in political theory is the justification of individual freedom. Freedom or liberty (I use the terms interchangeably), as understood here, refers to the classical liberal conception of negative freedom, the absence of external constraints¹. A person is free to the extent that he or she is not prevented from thinking, acting, moving, assembling, working, speaking, reading, viewing, associating with others, and so on, whether the restrictions come from government or from private individuals or groups. Freedom is an important issue in the world today, as illustrated by just a few examples of how it is restricted in different countries²:

People in many nations are not free to express their political views; political prisoners are held in Burma, China, North Korea, and Syria.

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¹ For extensive discussions of this and other conceptions of freedom, see Carter, Kramer, and Steiner (2007).

² These cases are taken from Freedom House's Freedom in the World survey: Freedom House 2022. "Freedom in the World." Last modified April 17, 2022. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/>.

Homosexuality is illegal in countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, Cameroon, and Uganda.

People are not free to criticize or leave the prevailing official religion in nations such as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, or Iran.

Workers in many countries are prevented from joining or starting labour unions, as in Burma, Belarus, and Eritrea.

In almost all countries except for a few, people are not free to choose the timing and manner of their own death, even if they are suffering from a painful and terminal disease and even if their doctor is willing to help them to die.

People have always believed in liberty, have sought it, and have sometimes fought and died for it. But does the desire for freedom have a rational foundation? One way of justifying it is the argument of utilitarianism, which holds that happiness will be higher in a society in which people have a greater degree of freedom. Restricting liberty reduces happiness by blocking options that would be conducive to greater happiness, thereby frustrating people's pursuit of happiness. And on top of this, the restrictions are themselves a source of displeasure – people feel frustrated at having restrictions and threats directed at them. The utilitarian argument is not the only justification for freedom. Alternative justifications appeal to the intrinsic value of liberty, to goods other than happiness such as virtue or development, or to other foundations such as social contract or natural rights. But the utilitarian argument is a major argument for freedom in the history of political thought. As noted by some commentators, 'the utilitarian tradition has played an important part in the development of liberalism and the promotion of individual freedom and diversity' (Carter, Kramer, and Steiner 2007, 385). The argument is usually discussed from a philosophical point of view, as in John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* (1859), assessing the conceptual connection between liberty and happiness. This article however examines the empirical evidence and tries to relate such evidence to the philosophical argument to see whether the theoretical arguments are borne out by the evidence.

In section 1 I summarise the utilitarian argument for liberty more fully. Section 2 critically examines some of the empirical studies that have been done on happiness and freedom. In section 3 I present some findings of my own and conclude that the empirical findings provide qualified support for the utilitarian justification for freedom.

The Utilitarian Justification for Liberty

Utilitarianism is a moral and political theory according to which the right decision (whether for an act, policy, or institution) is that which promotes the most overall happiness. Any decision may affect people in different ways, promoting the happiness of some but decreasing that of others. Utilitarianism holds that we should assess how the utility of each and every person will be affected by some act, aggregate people's utility levels into an overall measure, counting each person's utility equally, and choose the act

which increases the overall sum the most³. A useful illustration of utilitarianism is the practice of capital punishment. Should murderers be executed by the state? Utilitarianism will answer by weighing the effects on people's happiness: the happiness of the criminals and their families will decrease of course, but the gain to society in terms of deterring crimes and thereby increasing everybody else's happiness may make it justified. Or the utilitarian calculation may come out against capital punishment: perhaps the deterrence effects are minimal and the likelihood of mistakenly executing innocent people means that happiness would be decreased by having capital punishment. Whichever way the calculation comes out, utilitarianism provides an influential standard by which moral and political questions are to be decided.

With regard to freedom, utilitarianism would seem to imply deciding on a case-by-case basis. Whether people should be free to say what they want or to criticise the government, etc., should turn upon calculating the harms to people's happiness from free speech and comparing those harms to the gains from restrictions - and similarly with other freedoms and liberties. But some utilitarians have argued that an overall system of liberty - a society in which each person has as much freedom as possible to do what they want, compatible with the same liberty for all - will be one in which overall happiness is higher. The classic utilitarian defense of liberty is John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*, published in 1859. Mill argued that people should be free to do whatever they choose so long as they do not cause harm to others, because happiness is higher when individuality is developed - when each person is able to work out and pursue their own plan of life, one suited to their unique set of talents and abilities - and individuality requires freedom from interference from others. The less liberty people have, the less they will be able to exercise their individuality and thereby secure their happiness (Mill 1859).

Mill's argument has been subjected to criticisms for over a century and a half (Gray and Smith 1991; Dworkin 1997; Ten 2009). One set of criticisms concerns the concept of individuality. Some allege that the idea is vague or incoherent; others that the concept presupposes the value of liberty, making Mill's argument question-begging. Another set of criticisms focus on the alleged connection between happiness and liberty. People are sometimes mistaken, so these criticisms say, and when free to choose, make mistakes which hamper their lives and their happiness. Utilitarian defenders of liberty have replies to these criticisms and there are other utilitarian defences of liberty, but there is no space here to examine these arguments, and nor is it my focus here to do so. Rather, in the following sections I examine whether the philosophical argument may be complemented with empirical findings. Although the question 'Does freedom make people happy?' has been addressed in political theory from a philosophical and conceptual standpoint, it is an empirical question and we should look at the empirical evidence to see whether people actually are happier when they live under conditions of liberty. This evidence may either help support the utilitarian argument or cast doubt upon it.

³ For more on utilitarianism, see Bentham (1789), Mill (1863), Smart and Williams (1973), Glover (1990), and the many resources on the Utilitarianism website: Utilitarianism.net. 2022. "Utilitarian Thinkers." Last modified April 17, 2022. <https://www.utilitarianism.net/>.

Existing Studies

Several empirical studies have been carried out to find out whether freedom increases happiness. In this section, I summarise and critically assess some of these studies.

A. Layard

Richard Layard claims that personal freedom is one of the ‘big seven’ determinants of happiness, along with family relationships, financial situation, work, community and friends, health, and personal values (Layard 2005, 62-63). He argues that increased personal freedom raises happiness based on a study comparing happiness levels in Hungary and Belarus in 1995. Hungary had more rule of law, stability, and freedom of expression than Belarus at the time, and people in the former had an average of 5 points’ higher happiness on a scale of 10 to 100 when the other big seven factors were controlled for (Layard 2005, 64, 69-70).

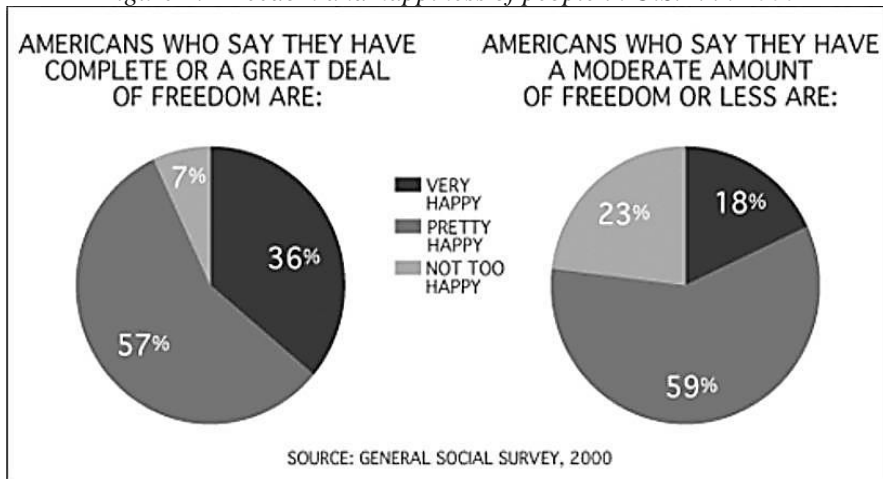
Layard’s findings give us some evidence for thinking freedom increases happiness, but there are two difficulties with drawing a general conclusion from his study. Firstly, it was limited to a comparison of Hungary and Belarus and it would be worthwhile to examine data from a wider range of countries. Perhaps the experiences in those two countries are not the same for the rest of the world. Secondly and relatedly, while the study did control for several other factors, it is still possible that some factor other than liberty, one not controlled for, caused the higher level of happiness in Hungary compared to Belarus. I am interested in the connection between negative liberty (freedom of expression, movement, association, and so on) and happiness. Layard’s measure of freedom included elements of this but also included other factors such as the type of political regime, provision of government services, the level of corruption, and efficiency of government regulation. While these other factors may indeed affect happiness and should be studied, I wish to set them aside to find whether freedom alone has an effect.

B. Brooks

Harvard University professor Albert C. Brooks has made a study of the correlation between freedom and happiness, using data from the General Social Survey of the U.S.A. done by the National Opinion Research Center. The survey asked people how happy they were (‘very happy’, ‘pretty happy’ or ‘not too happy’) and also how much freedom they believed they had (‘completely free’, ‘very free’, ‘moderately free’, ‘not much’ or ‘none’). Putting these findings together (and holding other factors constant such as income, sex, education, race, religion, politics, and family status), Brooks found that people who said that they felt completely or very free were twice as likely to say that they were very happy about their lives as those who felt only a moderate degree of freedom, not much, or none at all (Brooks 2008).

Figure 1 below (taken from Brooks’s article) shows the findings. 36% who said they had complete or a great deal of freedom were very happy compared to 18% of those who said they had a moderate or less amount of freedom.

Figure 1. Freedom and happiness of people in U.S.A. in 2000



Brooks concludes from this that freedom and happiness are highly correlated. However, it should be noted that although twice as many who are more free were very happy, and although much less of those who are more free were not too happy (7% compared to 23%), the proportion of those who are 'pretty happy' stays roughly the same in the two categories of freedom, and it is a large proportion. The majority of people were pretty happy whether or not they said they were free, and freedom made a difference only to the very happy and the not too happy.

Moreover, there are two reasons why Brooks's study does not let us draw a general conclusion for whether freedom causes happiness. First, the study is of people in the U.S.A. only and to get more general universal findings, other countries should be included too. Second, Brooks's measure of freedom is a subjective one, asking people how free they believe they are. Although this may be a useful indicator of freedom, a more objective measure – one that measures how free people actually are, not how free they believe themselves to be – is needed. This is important because it is possible that people may *believe* they are free without *actually* being free. Imagine that a freedom-restricting society manages to convince people, through propaganda and brainwashing, that they enjoy freedom when actually they do not. Finding a connection to belief in freedom to happiness in this society would not give us relevant results. Hence we need to use an objective measure of freedom and compare it to happiness.

Brooks also has further findings on the correlation of economic freedom in particular - the freedom to buy and sell in the market without government regulation, to keep earnings, and to own property - and happiness, finding a positive correlation between the two⁴. But here I am concerned with non-economic freedom - expressed in civil liberties such as freedom of speech, religion, association, and movement - rather than economic freedom. So again, we should look elsewhere for a study of the connection between freedom and happiness.

⁴ For other studies of happiness and economic freedom, see Gropper, Lawson, and Thorne Jr. 2001 and, for a more philosophical approach, Freiman 2016.

C. Veenhoven

A study that uses a more objective measure of freedom and that examines evidence from many countries was done by Ruut Veenhoven, a researcher at Erasmus University Rotterdam (Veenhoven 2000). The study correlated measures of freedom with measures of happiness levels in 46 countries in the early 1990s. It used an expansive understanding of freedom, defining it as both the opportunity to choose, meaning the absence of restrictions in economic, political, and personal life, and the capability to choose, understood as information about alternatives and the inclination to make decisions. Happiness was measured by people's overall satisfaction with life as reported in surveys. Veenhoven found that there was an overall positive correlation between freedom and happiness but when the countries were divided into rich and poor categories, the positive correlation remained for the rich countries but there was no correlation in poor countries (except with regard to economic freedom only; for that, the positive correlation remained intact even in poor countries).

One complicating factor of Veenhoven's study is the expansive understanding of freedom that it uses. Since here I am focusing only on negative freedom, it would be useful to put the capability part of freedom that the study uses and look at only the opportunity part, since the latter is closer to negative freedom. Opportunity to choose comprises economic freedom, political freedom, and personal freedom (sometimes labelled 'private freedom' by Veenhoven), which are conceptualised by Veenhoven in the following way:

Economic - security of money, freedom to produce and consume freedom to keep earnings, freedom of exchange.

Political - respect for political and civil rights.

Personal - freedom of religion, travel, marriage, procreation, sexuality, euthanasia.

Veenhoven provides measures for opportunity to choose for 34 countries, and these are given as z-scores, which indicate how many standard deviations a country is from the mean. He does not compare these to the countries' happiness levels, so I here attempt to. We can compare these to each country's corresponding measure of happiness, also provided by Veenhoven, measured on a scale of 1 to 4. In Table 1 below I have listed the data.

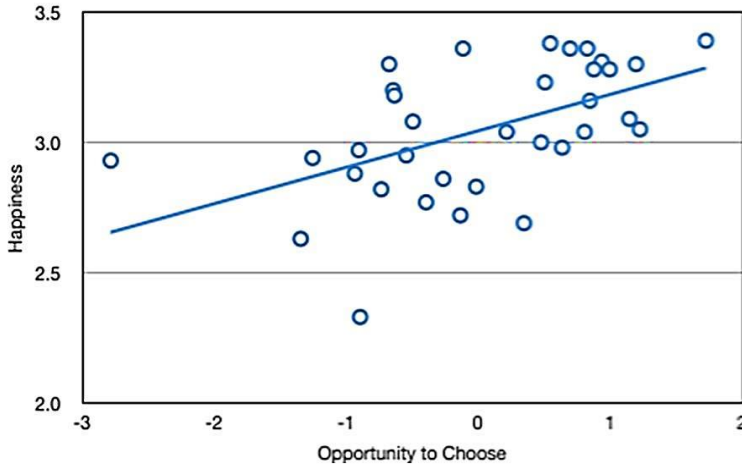
Table 1. Happiness and opportunity to choose (economic, political, and personal freedom). Source: Data derived from Veenhoven 2000.

Country	Freedom	Happiness
Australia	-0.68	3.30
Austria	-0.65	3.20
Belgium	0.93	3.31
Brazil	-1.26	2.94
Britain	0.87	3.28
Bulgaria	-0.90	2.33
Canada	1.22	3.05
Czechoslovakia	0.34	2.69

Country	Freedom	Happiness
Denmark	0.82	3.36
Finland	1.14	3.09
France	0.84	3.16
Germany, W.	0.80	3.04
Greece	-0.40	2.77
Hungary	-0.14	2.72
Iceland	0.54	3.38
Ireland	-0.12	3.36
Israel	-0.94	2.88
Italy	0.63	2.98
Japan	0.47	3.00
Mexico	-0.55	2.95
New Zealand	-0.64	3.18
Netherlands	1.72	3.39
Nigeria	-2.79	2.93
Norway	0.50	3.23
Philippines	-0.50	3.08
Poland	-0.91	2.97
Portugal	-0.02	2.83
Romania	-1.35	2.63
South Africa	-0.74	2.82
South Korea	-0.27	2.86
Spain	0.21	3.04
Sweden	0.69	3.36
Switzerland	1.19	3.30
USA	0.99	3.28

In Figure 2 below, I have constructed a scatter graph along with a linear trendline showing the same data.

Figure 2. *Freedom and Happiness in 34 countries in the 1990s.*
 Source: derived from Veenhoven, 2000.



The data yields a statistically significant positive correlation between freedom and happiness. There are exceptions to the positive correlation: three nations ranked low in terms of opportunity to choose were moderately high in happiness, while two other nations had the lowest levels of happiness despite moderate amounts of freedom. But the overall trend is positive.

Does Veenhoven's study prove that freedom makes people happier? Not quite, because there is a problem in that there is some double-counting in his measures. Data for the political freedom component of opportunity to choose is taken from Freedom House's 'Freedom in the World' survey, which includes political rights and civil liberties where the latter include freedom of belief, expression, association, and movement. Veenhoven's data for personal freedom are taken from independent measures of freedom of movement, travel, marriage, procreation, sexuality, and suicide (Veenhoven 2000, 5-6, 32-3). Some of these factors are the same as the factors in Freedom House's civil liberties component of political freedom. So they are being counted twice in the overall opportunity to choose measure: once in the political freedom component and again in the personal freedom component.

For this reason, it would be revealing to use only the measure of personal freedom and compare them to happiness. Unfortunately, Veenhoven does not provide separate data for the components of opportunity to choose. He does, however, give correlation values for the separate components. For personal freedom, the correlation with happiness is +0.39 which is statistically significant. For opportunity to choose more generally (economic + political + personal), the correlation is +0.67).

As mentioned previously, Veenhoven's study found that once countries' wealth was taken into account, the correlation between overall freedom and happiness remains for rich countries but not for poor. But the same is not true for the narrower personal freedom. The correlation between happiness and personal freedom when wealth of nation is controlled for, according to Veenhoven, is not statistically significant, neither for rich nor for poor countries (Veenhoven 2000, 24, 28).

Veenhoven also provides some data that controls for another factor, namely the measure of a nation's capability to choose (which consists of the nations' personal characteristics of awareness of alternatives, inclination to choose, and courage to choose). For 20 low capability countries there is, somewhat surprisingly, a *negative* correlation between personal freedom and happiness of -0.21 (-0.10 for wealth-controlled) and for 25 high capability countries there is a correlation of +0.58 (+0.37 for wealth-controlled).

The conclusion to be drawn from the Veenhoven study is that while there is a positive correlation between overall freedom and happiness in general, it holds in rich countries but not poor but with regard to personal freedom more particularly there is no clear correlation.

D. Inglehart and Klingemann Study

Another study of the relation between freedom and happiness occurs in a discussion by Ronald Inglehart and Hans-Dieter Klingemann of the roles that genetics and environment play in determining personal happiness (Inglehart and Klingemann 2000). One part of the study uses data of happiness from the World Values Survey and data of freedom from Freedom House 1981-8. Their findings show a strong correlation of 0.78 between freedom and happiness. Figure 3 shows their resulting graph.

Figure 3. Freedom and Happiness in 62 countries in 1980s

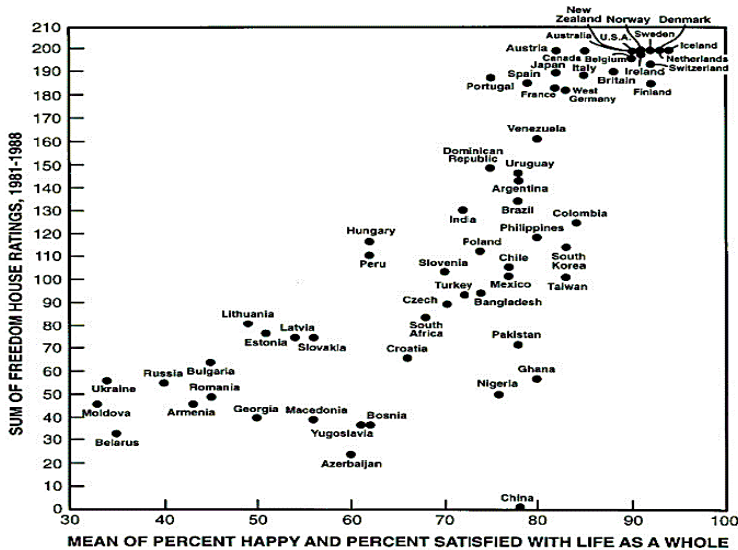


Figure 7.5

Subjective well-being and democratic institutions ($r = 0.78$, $N = 62$, $p = 0.0000$). The vertical axis shows the sum of the Freedom House ratings for civil liberties and political rights. Since these ratings give high scores for low levels of democracy, we reversed polarity by subtracting these sums from 236 (China, which had the maximum score of 235, has a score of 1 after this transformation). The horizontal axis reflects each public's mean factor score on happiness and overall life satisfaction and subjective well-being. Source: Freedom House surveys reported in successive editions of *Freedom in the World*; survey data from the 1990 and 1995 World Values Surveys.

Source: Inglehart and Klingemann 2000, p. 178.

Whilst the positive correlation is interesting, the study uses Freedom House's measure of freedom which includes both civil liberties and political rights. Political rights (rights to vote, to stand for office, etc) is more a measure of the level of democracy in a society and so is winder than my focus in this article, that of negative liberty, which is more accurately captured by civil liberties alone.

As a side-note, Inglehart and Klingemann argue against the idea that freedom causes happiness, giving several counter-examples: people in Weimar Germany had political rights and civil liberties but were desperately unhappy; Russia and other post-Soviet states after the fall of communism had low happiness levels despite democratic elections; and China has a low amount of freedom but reasonably high happiness. The first two counter-examples seem unconvincing to me: Weimar Germany was an unusual case because there were too many other factors, such as the loss of the First World War, and rampant hyper-inflation, that have to be taken into account; and the post-Soviet states may have held elections but they are far from being fully democratised and people there have not enjoyed civil liberties. Again, China is one case but one case only and we need more general findings.

Inglehart and Klingemann perform a statistical analysis comparing the contribution that freedom makes to happiness with other factors. They find that while freedom 'is not the decisive factor, it does contribute to well-being' (Inglehart and Klingemann 2000, 181). Other factors, according to them, play a larger role: GNP per capita; the proportion of the population employed in the industrial sector (the higher this proportion, the less happiness); and whether and for how many years a country has experienced communist rule. One issue with this last factor that Inglehart and Klingemann do not acknowledge is that it includes a freedom effect. People in communist societies did not enjoy personal liberty and so the fact that former communist rule correlates with lower happiness may show that a history of unfreedom correlates with lower happiness. The fact that people in those societies had greater freedom at the time the data was gathered does not matter; they had not yet had the time to enjoy their greater freedom. So Inglehart and Klingemann may have understated the effect of freedom on happiness.

Understood in this way, the best measure of the freedom that a person has is the extent that his or her civil liberties such as freedom of speech, association, and movement are respected.

A New Examination

Let me now try to offer some of my own findings on the connection between freedom and happiness. Based on my criticisms of the previous studies, we need to use a measure of freedom that focuses on civil liberties such as liberties of speech, association, and movement. 'Freedom in the World' is a yearly survey by the US-based organisation Freedom House that has measured the degree of freedom in each nation since the 1970s⁵. The survey has two parts: political rights and civil liberties. Political rights cover such matters as the right to vote and compete for office. These are really a measure of

⁵ Freedom House 2022. "Freedom in the World." Last modified April 17, 2022. <http://www.freedomhouse.org>.

democracy rather than liberty so I will set them aside since my concern is with negative freedom which is best measured by the civil liberties component of Freedom House's survey. The civil liberties component covers four areas:

- freedom of belief and expression,
- associational and organisational rights,
- the rule of law,
- freedom of movement and the right to hold property.

Countries are rated on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the most free and 7 the least free.

For a measure of happiness, I used the Happy Planet Index (HPI), an international survey by UK-based think-tank the New Economics Foundation, of different nations' levels of well-being and environmental impact⁶. The HPI is made up of three components: life-satisfaction, life-expectancy, and environmental impact. For present purposes I set aside the latter two and focus on life-satisfaction as a measure of happiness. In the survey, people were asked how satisfied they were, on a scale of 0 to 10, with their life as a whole. The HPI's data is gathered from a Gallup World Poll and the World Values Survey⁷.

Let us now put the measures of freedom and happiness together. Of the 194 countries in the Freedom in the World survey and the 143 countries in the Happy Planet Index, there are 141 countries for which both measures are available⁸. (The two countries in the HPI missing a freedom measure are Hong Kong and Palestine.) In Figure 4 I have plotted all the countries in their respective category of freedom. The horizontal axis shows the different categories of freedom (civil liberties), where 1 is the highest amount of liberty and 7 is the lowest. The vertical axis shows the happiness (life-satisfaction) levels of different countries that fall into each freedom category. So the happiness levels of countries that fall in category 1 range from 5.6 to 8.5 - and so on for each of the seven categories of freedom.

⁶ The Happy Planet Index. 2022. "Explore the data." Last modified April 17, 2022. <https://happyplanetindex.org/countries/>.

⁷ World Values Survey Association. 2022. "Data & Documentation." Last modified April 17, 2022. <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp>.

⁸ All data is available from the author upon request: s.r.clarke100@gmail.com.

Figure 4. Happiness levels of countries in each category of freedom

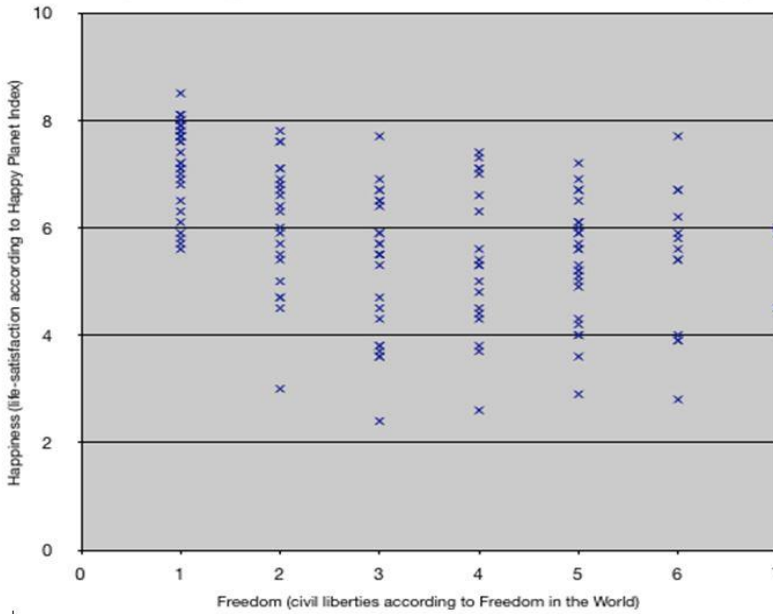


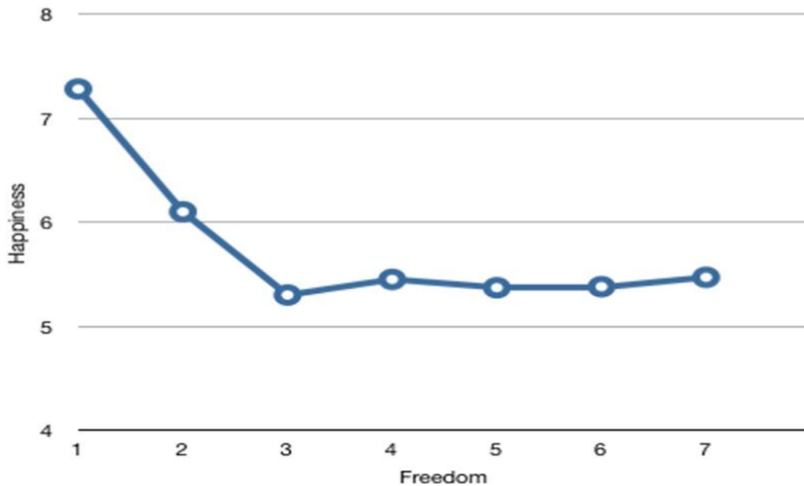
Figure 4 seems to show a trend: the more free countries are slightly higher on the happiness scale, at least for freedom categories 1-4. The countries in category 1 of freedom (most free) are generally higher in happiness than those in category 2, and 2 higher than 3, although at that point it seems to even out. To see this more clearly, Table 2 shows the average happiness for countries in each category of freedom (that is, the average level of happiness for countries in category 1 of freedom, the average of countries in category 2, and so on). Of the 49 nations that scored the highest category for civil liberties, the average level of happiness is 7.28 (out of 10). Of the 24 nations that scored in the lowest category of freedom (a rating of 7), the average level of happiness was 5.47.

Table 2. Average happiness of countries in each category of freedom

Freedom category	Average Happiness
1	7.28
2	6.1
3	5.3
4	5.45
5	5.37
6	5.38
7	5.47

Figure 5 gives the same data graphically. As can be seen, the average is high for the top two categories, and then flattens out for categories 3 to 7. The evidence shows that greater freedom correlates with more happiness at the higher freedom range of the scale but then makes no difference in the less free countries.

Figure 5. Average happiness in each category of freedom



There are some striking exceptions to the general tendency (in the data for 2011). Some nations have high levels of happiness but a low degree of freedom; Saudi Arabia reports happiness of 7.7 while a ranking of 6 on freedoms, while two other countries (China and Cuba) each score 6.7 on happiness and also score 6 on freedoms. (Remember happiness is from 0 to 10, the higher the happier; while freedom's scale is 1 (most free) to 7 (least free)). Several other countries that score only 4 or 5 for freedom have happiness levels above 7. Looking at the issue from the other direction, several countries endure low levels of happiness despite reasonably high amounts of freedom. Several countries in the top category of freedom have happiness levels between 5 and 6. One nation (Benin) that scores a 2 for freedom has a dismal 3.0 for happiness. The least happy country - Tanzania - scores only 2.4 despite enjoying a freedom score of 3 and the people of Togo are almost as miserable (2.6) but are in the freedom category of 4. Two other nations (Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone) in category 3 for freedom both score only 3.6 for happiness⁹.

Factors other than freedom must affect happiness and it would be useful if we could isolate the effect of freedom from these other factors. I do not attempt this for all other factors, but an attempt can be made for wealth. Wealth is another cause of happiness, so to try to control for its influence we can separate high income from low income nations. I divided the countries into two groups, rich and poor, using the World Bank's

⁹ All these figures can be verified by examining the data at the websites given above. Simply look up each nation's rating in Freedom in the World for 2011 and compare it to its life-satisfaction measure in the second Happy Planet Index.

classification, based on gross national income per capita¹⁰. Figures 6 and 7 below show the resulting trends.

Figure 6. Average happiness in poor countries

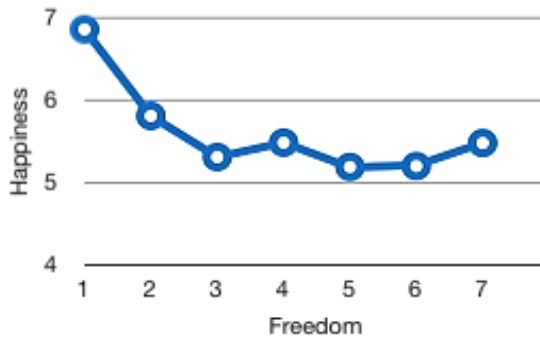
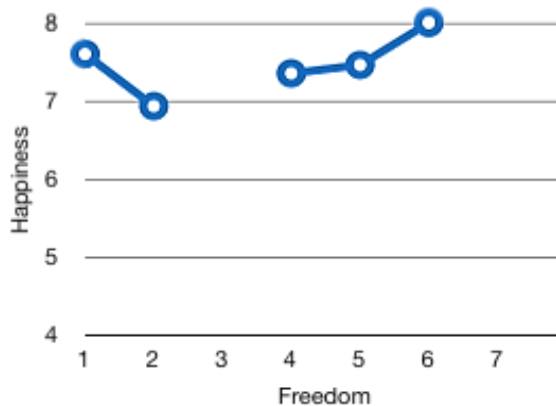


Figure 7. Average happiness in rich countries



When this division is made, the correlation between freedom and happiness remains similar for poor countries as it did for all countries in general. For poor countries, as freedom decreases from 1 to 3, happiness also declines, but when freedom decreases from 3 to 7, happiness flattens out. For rich countries, the result is unclear. As freedom decreases from 1 to 2 there is a decrease in happiness. There is a gap at freedom level 3 because there were no rich countries in that category. As freedom decreases from 4 to 5 there is a slight *increase* in happiness and as freedom decreases from 5 to 6 there is an even bigger increase in happiness. There is another gap at freedom level 7 because there were no rich countries in that category.

¹⁰ The World Bank Group. 2022. "World Bank Country and Lending Groups: Country Classification." Last modified April 17, 2022. <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519>.

The overall result of this data seems in keeping with Veenhoven's study. With regard to rich countries, there is a positive correlation between freedom and happiness such that the more freedom a society has, the happier its people are; and conversely, the less freedom society has the less happy people are. With regard to poor countries, there does not seem to be any correlation; freedom does not make people happier and may even make them less happy.

Conclusion and discussion

Drawing together the findings of the previous studies, particularly the Veenhoven study, along with my own which was given in the previous section, the conclusion to be drawn is that freedom does make people happier in societies that have achieved a degree of wealth and that in those societies, the more freedom people have the happier they are, but that in poorer societies freedom does not make people happy. The likely explanation of this is reasonably straightforward: with more wealth it is easier for people to take advantage of greater freedom to pursue their needs, desires, and goals, which make them happy, and the more wealth one has, the more one can take advantage of freedom. Conversely, without wealth, it is difficult to use freedom to achieve the things that make people happy.

That the utilitarian argument for liberty is supported empirically when a society has wealth is in keeping with Mill's view in *On Liberty*. He states that his doctrine of liberty, the doctrine that liberty must be protected because it furthers people's utility, applies only to societies that have achieved a certain level of development. It does not apply to 'those backward states of society' (Mill 1859, chapter 1) in which people do not have the capability to use freedom to achieve happiness. Unfortunately, Mill uses some ugly colonial language to express this idea, referring to 'barbarians' and suggesting it is their lack of civilization that prevents them from benefiting from liberty. We need not, however, let Mill's unfortunate phrasing prevent us from appreciating some truth in his position, namely that freedom causes happiness especially or only when people enjoy a certain level of material wealth. (We also need not follow Mill in holding that severe restrictions of freedom and even despotism are justified towards people in less developed societies. Even if happiness does not provide a justification for liberty in such societies, there may be other justifications, ones that Mill, as a thorough-going utilitarian, ignores).

Further empirical research on the connection between liberty and happiness is needed, particularly research that controls for other factors such as health, family and community connections, development, and democracy. But the evidence so far indicates that freedom does indeed make people happy.

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REVIEW BY: ASHOT YENGOYAN  AND LUSINE HARUTYUNYAN *

The relevance of the main directions of research in this book is determined both by the general significance of the problem of transforming the political process of society for political science, and by the peculiarity of its state in the context of sociocultural dynamics in the member states of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The importance of a comparative analysis of social and cultural value bases in the political process and the dynamics of this phenomenon is due to increased attention to the consideration of the nature, essence and characteristics of value orientations in the era of globalization, changes and complication of the evolution of the political system, on the basis of which the development of society in the political environment is carried out. The immediate stability and effectiveness of the political process directly depends on the value components in the public mind. This aspect is of particular importance in the face of the challenges of the surrounding world, when a transformational society is faced with a choice of political alternatives. In this regard, it becomes important to study the problem of the regulatory role of social, cultural and value factors in the transformation of the political process in the OSCE member states.

In theoretical terms, the problem of transformation and development, the regulatory role of value categories in the public consciousness is the object of research in interdisciplinary sciences. Being one of the central issues in the study of political systems, this issue also finds its place in political science. This is significant both from a theoretical and methodological aspect, and from the point of view of the formation of effective approaches to further consideration of the practical implementation of political strategies at the present stage. The presence of the latter will make it possible to assess the merits and demerits of the ongoing transformations in the political process and the prospects for creating variable solutions to existing problems.

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The world experience in the implementation of studies of social and cultural influences on the transformation of public consciousness in general and value components in particular are controversial, which gives rise to many disputes and discourses. This is characteristic of recent political science, when new patterns and phenomena are discovered. With regard to the post-Soviet OSCE member states, the problem of transforming the political process through value regulators is actualized and takes on a special meaning during periods of depreciation of traditions, the destruction of the ideological foundations of society, and the usual way of life. The question is raised not only about the situation of the crisis, but also about the exhaustion of options in its management and overcoming. At the same time, the specificity of this crisis lies in its large-scale nature and allows us to speak about the illegality of limiting it exclusively to the framework of the political process. It is necessary to evaluate this state as a multidimensional factor of political security, social and cultural dynamics, influencing the transformation of the latter.

This book covers the following areas:

- Values and Transformation in Central Asia;
- Civil Society as a Phenomenon of Post-Soviet Political Life: A Threat or a Guarantor of National Security;
- Security Risk Analysis Perspectives on Central Asia Dynamics;
- China's Development Objectives and Its Belt and Road Initiative in the OSCE Region;
- OSCE and Civil Society in the Western Balkans: The Road to Reconciliation;
- Central Asia in Transition: Social Contract Transformation in Nazarbayev and Post-Nazarbayev Kazakhstan;
- The Interplay Between Formal and Informal in Conflict Prevention, Mediation and Community Security Provision in Kyrgyzstan;
- What Happened to the Foundations of Eurasian Health Governance? Research Initiatives for Health Security Capacity Building;
- Transitional Justice Research in Post-Totalitarian Societies in the OSCE Region.

The historical period from the beginning of the formation of the post-Soviet OSCE member states to the present is characterized by a huge number of events of a different nature. The political transformations inherent in large-scale transitional states are rightfully considered the most difficult. Obviously, the models of political management in the modern social process should be improved and adjusted, taking into account new empirical facts and modern trends in social transformation. The former system has lost its power and is unable to meet the realities of the present. This position is quite natural and indicates not only the evolution of social consciousness as a factor of continuous development, but also represents a social and cultural value transformation as a natural phenomenon in the dynamics of culture.

At the same time, the emphasis in political research should be shifted to the search for features of economic, social, cultural and other factors of the political process that affect the success of the development and implementation of strategies in the field of its transformation, as well as public consciousness in the processes of both domestic and foreign policy perspectives. In this regard, it seems relevant to design promising

strategies and options for the modernization development of the post-Soviet OSCE member states as recommendations for politicians in strategic planning. The issue of social and cultural value principles in society requires close attention, their consideration in the course of developing a political strategy in the post-Soviet OSCE member states, and they deserve this due to their importance as a regulatory component of the political process. In a comparative study of the degree of scientific development of the problem, the authors of this study identified key dimensions of political security, values and political culture.

In these studies, the authors examine the relationship between political values and political institutions, the influence of political values on behavior, the transformation of political values, the change in political consciousness, in the context of changes taking place in the country and the world. Almost half of this book is devoted to the issues of value and transformation in Central Asia, civil society as a phenomenon of post-Soviet political life, political consciousness and political values of young people, that is, a direct product of the reproduction of political culture as a system for performing the function of producing latent samples in the political system.

In general, the results of many studies confirm the recognition by modern researchers of the active role of political values as a factor in changing political consciousness in the post-Soviet OSCE member states. Articles devoted to their active role consider either their influence on certain aspects, such as electoral behavior, political orientations, or their role in social transformation rather than in the political process. At the same time, in one of the works, the active influence of political values on the nature of the ongoing transformations, as well as their influence on political consciousness, their impact on the course of the political process as such, became the direct subject of the study. Analysis of the article indicates that valuable material has been accumulated, scientific approaches and methods have been identified. These works contain many aspects of social and cultural issues. However, the question of the regulatory function of social and cultural foundations has not been adequately reflected. The problem of the influence of social and cultural grounds on the political process as a regulatory component also requires further research. Referring to the role of social and cultural value bases in the post-Soviet OSCE member states as a regulatory component of the transformation of the political process, the authors of various articles sought to touch upon all the problems identified above and not fully considered, through an analysis of the regulatory role of value bases in their impact on political consciousness, the nature of the ongoing political transformations and developments in the OSCE countries.

In this sense, the state political strategy requires, on the one hand, solving the problems of adaptation in the post-Soviet OSCE member states, on the other hand, the preservation of value bases that are significant for it. This means that the strategic goals of the OSCE countries cannot include the destruction of sustainable value bases.

The result of the analysis of scenarios for future development, based on the dynamics of the influence of social and cultural value orientations on public consciousness, was the presence of a radical transformation, manifested in the formation of new forms of civic participation in political life, in the context of the complication of the process of interaction between the political system and civil society, which together causes the need to revise and rethink issues related to the nature and content of the system of socio-

cultural value orientations, classification and creation of a new hierarchy of political values, as well as the direction of periodically recurring assessments of values. The purposeful influence of the OSCE state on the nature of the transformation of these regulators is possible only in the case of a differentiated policy that can simultaneously meet the requirements of basic, stable regulators and flexibly reformat the peripheral regulatory zone, increasing its adaptability to existing challenges. This means that the main parameters that determine the format of a nationwide strategy should be: the preservation of the 'core' of the value bases of Russian society; careful modification of the 'periphery' of these value bases, without creating the danger of its break with the 'core'; ensuring targeted impact on political reality and the surrounding world, ensuring its adaptation to the value core of the post-Soviet OSCE member states.