

A CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GDP PER CAPITA AND PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: A LOOK AT THE EUROPEAN UNION

Mesude DALAN, Department of Political Science, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada, m.kerensa@yahoo.ca

ABSTRACT

The measure of personal autonomy and individual rights is one of the measures of democracy. This study 1) examines the relationship between Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and personal freedoms in the member countries of the European Union (EU) and 2) compares the overall GDP and personal autonomy and individual freedoms in the EU pre and post the accession of several (mainly post communist) countries into the EU in 2005. The purpose of this paper is to show whether there is a causal relationship between GDP and personal autonomy and individual rights in the member states of the European Union and therefore a causal relationship between GDP and democracy. The independent variable is GDP per capita and the dependent variable is personal autonomy and individual rights. The thesis of this research is that the lower the country's GDP, the higher the probability of personal autonomy and individual rights problems and the lower the level of democracy.

Key Words: The measure of personal autonomy, Individual rights, The measures of democracy, The EU.

1. INTRODUCTION

Definitions of liberal democracy usually include aspects of both political and civil rights. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which has been adopted by most countries, includes individual rights that could be classified as civil, political and socioeconomic rights. Liberalists are likely to agree on civil-political rights as aspects of individual liberty but disagree about the inclusion of social equality. Arat (1991, p. 4) however argues that attention must also be given to socioeconomic rights in order for civil-political rights to succeed: "the stability of political democracy (liberal democracy) depends on the extent of balance between the two groups of human rights."

Research on democracy has tended to focus on political rights and specifically on electoral processes. Political rights in a democratic regime ideally include freedom in electoral processes, political pluralism, freedom of participation, and transparency in the functioning of government. Civil liberties as an important aspect of democracy have often been ignored. However, civil rights and freedoms are one of the defining characteristics of liberal democracy. Civil liberties include freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, independent rule of law, and personal autonomy and individual rights. Personal autonomy and individual rights include such rights as freedom of travel, residence, employment, property ownership, private business establishment, gender equality, marriage choice, family size, and opportunity without economic, mafia, black market, police, military, government or other exploitation (<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=372>).

Comprehensive measures of democracy should include all these aspects. This study focuses on the measure of personal autonomy and individual rights as one of the measures of democracy.

Inclusion of socioeconomic factors as rights in any definition of democracy is debatable. But studies consistently show a strong connection between socioeconomic factors and democracy. Wealthier countries rate higher on measures of democracy, especially when all aspects of electoral and liberal democracy are measured. Measures of wealth are based on economic criteria such as inflation ratio, development rate, monetary supplies, central bank monetary change, and gross domestic product. This study uses the measurement of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is the economic measure of a country's production. It refers to the net value of goods and services produced by taking the overall value of goods and services produced minus the value of goods and services used in their creation.

This paper looks at the relationship between GDP and personal freedoms in the member countries of the European Union (EU). Today there are twenty-seven independent states in the EU. In 2004 and 2007 twelve new states joined the EU (http://europa.eu/abc/european_countries/index_en.htm). Ten of these were former communist states. The EU has set human rights standards as one of its criteria for membership. Although the European Union is an advanced and modern community and Western European states have typically rated among the highest in the world on democracy scales, the evolving structure of the EU and the dramatic increase in applications for membership in recent years have led to increased debate over democratic ideology and practice in the EU. The newly admitted countries have lower GDPs per capita and lower levels of personal autonomy and individual rights than the more established members.

The purpose of this paper is twofold. The first objective is to show whether there is a causal relationship between GDP and personal autonomy and individual rights in the member states of the European Union. In this study, the independent variable is GDP per capita and the dependent variable is personal

autonomy and individual rights. The thesis of this research is that the lower the country's GDP, the higher the probability of personal autonomy and individual rights problems. In other words, the lower the GDP, the more likely the level of civil freedoms will also be low. In order to do this, a single measure of civil rights – personal autonomy and individual freedom, and a single measure of economic status – GDP per capita – were selected. The second objective of this research is to determine whether there is a difference between the overall GDP and personal autonomy and individual freedom in the EU pre and post 2004. Did the accession of several (mainly post communist) countries into the EU change the average GDP and average level of individual rights, and therefore the level of democracy? This study shows that the addition of these new member countries caused a reversal in the overall process of democratization in the EU. Specifically this essay shows that there has been a measurable decrease in the EU's overall ratings on personal autonomy and individual freedom as well as GDP since the acceptance of new members in 2004 and 2007.

This essay has six sections. Section one looks at the link between democracy and economy. It includes some background on the origins of democracy, the development of the concept, and some of the ideologies and beliefs about human nature that influence the working out of democracy. The second section briefly looks at the influence of GDP per capita, as a measure of a nation's economic status. The third section discusses personal autonomy and individual freedom as a measure of democracy. The fourth section explains the background, structure and function of the European Union and the place of the rights issue in the EU framework. The fifth section presents the method and data. The conclusion summarizes the important points of the research.

2. THE LINK BETWEEN DEMOCRACY AND ECONOMY

Political ideologies try to connect ideas and beliefs to action. Basic beliefs about human nature and freedom underlie the programs and policies that make up a political agenda. These beliefs shape the political ideology. A classical liberal usually sees humans as competitive and acquisitive whereas a communist is more likely to see humans as cooperative and generous (Ball 2006, p.10). The concept of democracy as a form of government is presently very popular. However, those who claim to be practising democracy often have quite different ideologies. The very fact that democracy is popular now leads people to try and fit their own ideologies to this category. Therefore usage of the term 'democracy' can be deceptive.

Ideas about democracy were originally developed by Plato and Aristotle in the 4th century BC. After their initial development, they remained dormant for centuries until about the end of the 15th century AD. The new Protestant Reformation emphasized the values of individual rights and of equality. At the same time, interest in human achievement grew in the Renaissance and led to the development of concepts of liberty, virtue and corruption. Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527) was one of the strongest writers on this topic. Machiavelli considered virtue, or seeking the common good, to be an essential

element of a republic. Later writers like De Tocqueville (1805-1859) saw democracy as a force to eliminate old class systems and free the common people to make their own decisions. De Tocqueville however warned that the ideology of equality could lead to strong pressure to conform. In spite of concerns by Tocqueville and others, social and economic developments of the Industrial Revolution led to a growth in interest in democracy.

The ideal of democracy remains attractive because of its implication that every citizen will be free and equal. But different political ideologies interpret these ideas of freedom and equality in their own way. Two main contemporary versions of democracy have been significant in the West—liberal democracy and social democracy. Liberal democracy, like liberalism, stresses individual rights and freedoms. Most EU democracies are liberal democracies. The key point in a liberal democracy is that the majority cannot govern in such a way as to restrict basic individual rights and freedoms. Several countries in the EU have had social democratic parties and governments. According to a social democratic perspective, the key concept is equality of power in society and government. They argue that since power is connected to wealth, issues of equality must take into consideration distribution of wealth that would allow fair competition for political office.

Aristotle was also the first to make a connection between active participation of citizens in politics (such as in a democracy) and wealth (Lipset 1959, p. 75). But Burkhart and Lewis-Beck (1994) claim that their study is the first to give strong evidence of a causal relationship between economics and democracy. According to their findings using the Granger test, “economic development ‘causes’ democracy, but democracy does not ‘cause’ economic development.” (Burkhart and Lewis-Beck 1994, p. 903) Lipset earlier argued that economic development and political legitimacy were social prerequisites of democracy. Lipset (1959, p. 75) suggests that, “perhaps the most widespread generalization linking political systems to other aspects of society has been that democracy is related to the state of economic development.” This link between economic development and democracy has been the subject of many studies and much statistical analysis over the past decades. Findings have consistently shown a strong connection between the two. There is however some question of the economic role in newer democracies. Evans and Whitefield (1995) examined political and economic factors in post-communist countries during their early transitions into democracy. They noted that even though most of the eight countries examined experienced an economic downturn as they moved into a more open market economy they moved ahead with their commitment to democratic reforms. They concluded that political experience had more weight than economic factors in individual commitment to democracy. Six of the eight countries included in Evans and Whitefield’s survey joined the EU ten years later and are therefore included in the sample used in this study. The fact that these states continue to be in transition, both economically and politically, has added to the debate about democracy in the EU.

Human rights studies tend to use the literature linking democracy to economic development (Burkhard & Lewisbeck 2004; Landman 2002, 2004; Lipset 1959). Studies generally show that more democratic, more developed and wealthier countries tend to have fewer violations of personal integrity rights. Recent studies demonstrate that protection of personal integrity rights increases even in the first year of democracy after transition from a more authoritarian regime (Zanger study cited in Landman 2002, p. 902). Several of the countries included in the sample for this research were formally communist regimes. They are examples of countries that have transitioned from more authoritarian to more democratic regimes. Although they have been in democratic transition for more than a decade, their levels of protection of personal integrity rights still lag behind older more established democracies.

Comparison between countries helps identify patterns that can be used to make general claims. Findings from empirical studies “provide support for important prescriptions for the international community to reduce the violation of personal integrity rights. These prescriptions include the promotion of economic development and democracy” (Landman 2002, p. 902). Studies consistently show a relationship between higher levels of economic development and democracy. Examination of the protection of human rights in different nations fits under the general area of comparative politics. Comparatives are interested in how theory relates to the real political world because they want to be able to understand current critical events. Contemporary comparative politics tries to join together theory and data in systematic comparisons. Research in comparative politics has particularly focused on domestic conflict, state-building, economic growth and democratization (Liebach & Zuckerman 1997, p. 3-5). Economic development is now more influenced by government decisions and less by market changes. This means that politics and economy are even more closely linked than before. Human rights contraventions and limitations of civil liberties increase with domestic conflict and are themselves an aspect of domestic conflict. Negative changes in economic status often lead to increases in domestic conflict which in turn lead to reverses in democratization. All three of these elements – economic status, domestic conflict and democratization – are addressed in this study.

Macroanalytical scholars in comparative politics have argued that large-scale processes such as market development and political and scientific revolution are the most significant influencers of human thought and behaviour (Liebach & Zuckerman 1997, p. 83, referring to studies by Daston 1988 and Hacking 1990). Western European studies have tended to be macrostructuralist. In the 1980s, a variant of this was called the “new social movement” approach (McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly 1997, p. 145). This constructionist approach led to a new emphasis on political culture. Social movements identified injustices and attributed them to the system or to hostile others. Constructionism also led to an emphasis on “framing.” Connections between mass culture and movement framing were particularly applied to “identity” movements that developed out of the 1960s (McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly 1997, p. 149). The civil rights movements of

the 1960s and 1970s were part of a mass culture movement that that has developed into an increasing interest in civil liberties and human rights. The proliferation of NGOs, the updating of UN and EU rights declarations, and the creation of such instruments as the Human Rights Information and Documentation System (1982) (Landman 2004; Held et al. 1999; Hague & Harrop 2004) are all manifestations of the movement framing of human rights issues. Many constructionists began to see social movements as both makers and carriers of meaning.

One of the main themes of political economy is the relationship between market and state. Both of these represent ways of organizing human effort. Political economy tends to be concerned with issues of power, with institutional structures behind market mechanisms, and the belief that economic concepts are in the end artificial constructs. They especially look at the role of politics in situations where it might appear as if the main factors are socioeconomic (Hall 1997, p. 174-175). A brief glance at the literature, however, seems to indicate that the direction of research tends to be more on the influence of politics on economics than vice versa. Hall confirms that there is little knowledge of “how the performance of the economy affects the development of social policy or vice versa” (Hall 1997, p. 196).

One of the goals of the state is to set social norms and impose conformity on social life (Migdal 1997). The state can enforce rights regulations but the supranational EU cannot— except through the European Court of Justice. However, one of the present transitions in the EU is the attempt to formulate common social norms and social policies (Streeck 1996). The concept of the state originated in Western Europe. It is now this same region that is struggling to determine power distribution between individual member states and the EU and to formulate concepts and a structure that is also new (Schmitter 1996). The disintegration of old states and the establishment of new ones, especially since the late 1980s, indicate that the state has not fulfilled the expectations that scholars had. The lofty writing about states has often hidden the failures of public institutions and policies. Political leaders and political science theorists thought that, “states could impose a uniform and universal law, induce economic development, deal with abuse of women and children, shape the everyday behaviour of those in society through public policies, and much, much more” (Migdal 1997, p. 210). But by setting such high standards on what states could and should do, leaders and scholars have helped create the gap between state objectives and state accomplishments. This gap provides the source of subjects for comparative political scientists. The state is finding it more difficult to achieve conformity and obedience. New studies and theories need to look at the limitations of states.

Things like global economic and information systems and supranational organizations like the EU have affected the relationship between states and their people. Through its practices, the state claims to be above other social institutions and to mould the nation’s identity. But now supranational

organizations like the EU and legal instruments like the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights are more and more assuming the role of setting and enforcing social norms, such as standards of individual rights. The old state boundaries are becoming more blurred as the EU is taking on more functions. It is trying to create European societal boundaries by creating a common sense of European culture and identity. New EU institutions and symbols are being constructed. As the EU is becoming more open in its political aspirations, it is struggling to draw a new map of EU political and societal boundaries. Personal autonomy and individual rights, as aspects of civil liberties, represent areas of behaviour where the EU is trying to set common standards and policies.

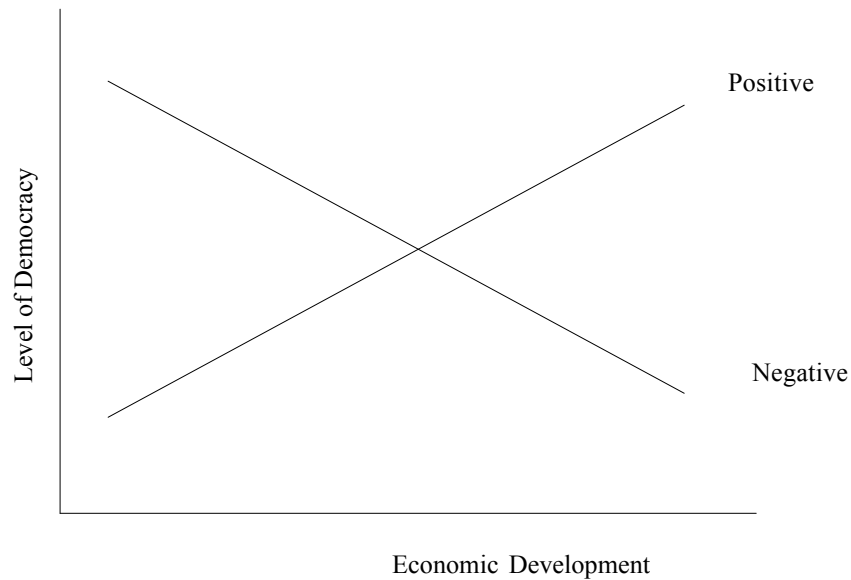
2. INFLUENCE OF GDP PER CAPITA

A country's per capita GDP is the standard measure of economic development used in the economic development and democracy literature. One of the limitations of this measure is that it does not indicate the range of income, which would add another perspective to the measurement of a country's economic position. This could be helpful, especially since inequalities of wealth and income have been widening in most industrialized nations since the late 1970s.

Perception of the impact of economic factors and even the use of per capita GDP as tool of measurement is affected by the priming effect. As Blidook (unpublished paper, p. 4) notes "priming makes particular cues assessable while inhibiting access to other issues that might also be worthy of attention" and that framing "may lead to a particular interpretation of the state of the issue or how the issue should be approached." Since Lipset's 1959 influential study, economic factors have been considered to be significant in the development of democracy. Per capita GDP has typically been used as the measure of economic development criteria. The combined influence of priming and framing have the effect of increasing the tendency to study the relationship between economics and democracy from this perspective and meant that not much attention has been given to other possible factors or issues.

GDP is commonly used as a measure of economic development but other measures like energy consumption (Arat 1991), per capita income, as well as ratios of motor vehicles, doctors, radios telephones and newspaper to the population (Lipset 1959) have all been used as indices of wealth. Lipset (1959), in his foundational study, found a consistent relationship between per capita income and democracy, with lower per capita income countries being less democratic and higher income ones being more democratic. The following graph shows an idealized linear relationship between level of democracy and economic development.

Figure 1: Liner Relationship between levels of democracy and economic development



Source: Arat 1991

When the levels of both economic development and democracy increase, this means that there is a positive correlation between economy level and democracy level.

3. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

Changes in international law have placed certain limits on the state that have had the effect of qualifying state sovereignty. Inherent in some of these legal instruments is the idea that a legitimate state is a democratic state. Such states must accept certain common values, one of the important values being human rights (Held & McGrew 2007, p. 65). There are, however, often conflicts between international and national standards of human rights. Traditional views of state sovereignty believe that the state has control over its own population and the right to resist intervention by any external agent (Hall 1997, p. 196). This means that there is often resistance to international rights agencies monitoring or regulating observance of rights in particular countries. These issues are part of the tension between democratic theory and its outworking in and between national and supranational levels. They also make it more difficult to collect accurate data on civil and human rights issues.

The first major global statement on human rights was the 1948 UN Declaration of Human Rights. The International Bill of Human Rights had several additions.

It now consists of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966 but effective in 1976) and its two Optional Protocols (individual right to address complaints and abolition of the death penalty). The earlier declaration and later covenants have had a significant effect on individual and state thought and policies all over the world (www.unhchr.ch). These documents have spawned many studies in numerous academic fields. Political science tends to look at the relationship between human rights and democracy. The fact that ideal and legal standards have been set by international human rights organizations facilitates empirical research on human rights issues (Landman 2004).

Definitions of democracy generally include both electoral or political aspects and civil or individual rights aspects. Freedom House has broken democracy into political rights and civil liberties. Freedom House's sub-categories of political rights are political pluralism and participation, functioning of government and its sub-categories of civil liberties are freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, personal autonomy and individual rights. Personal autonomy and individual rights includes such rights as freedom of travel, residence, employment, property ownership, private business establishment, gender equality, marriage choice, family size, and opportunity. Freedom means that people can make these choices in their lives without economic, mafia, black market, police, military, government, or other kinds of exploitation (<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=372>).

4. THE EU

Theda Skocpol (cited in Katznelson 1997, p. 91) argues that the important question is not whether or not there is a connection between politics and market or economics but "who controls the political mechanisms and how they are organized" (*Italics in original*). This section looks at the organization of the political mechanisms in the EU. The European Union could be considered to be in the macroprocess of state-like creation and development. Skocpol tried to move the focus of comparative politics beyond nation-state boundaries and argued that modernization involves structural changes to both economic and integrative political institutions (Katznelson 1997). Tension between negative and positive integration that results from the tension between the (enforceable) decisions of the European Court of Justice and the (unenforceable) intergovernmental agreements of the Council of Ministers is an increasing issue in EU problem solving (Scharpf 1996). These tensions are leading to the structural changes that Skocpol has identified as being integral to modernization. The result is that the political economies of the capitalist democracies of Western Europe are "being changed in a fundamental way" (Scharpf 1996, p. 15).

The goal of the EU is to increase political, economic and social co-operation between its member countries. The EU was founded on 1 November 1993, built

upon the previous entities of the European Community (EC) or European Economic Community (EEC). Pre-2004 member states included Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain, and Northern Ireland. Those who have been accepted in recent years as full members so far include Bulgaria in 2007 and Cyprus (the Greek Cypriot part), Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia, all in 2004 (Hague & Harrop 2004, p. 29).

Although the EU was originally set up as an economic community, the underlying goal has always been political integration (Schmitter 1996). The reason this example was chosen for this paper is because the EU is one of the most specific examples of how economic and political factors are interconnected. Although the originally stated purpose was to create a common market and not a political entity, over time it has become clear that market and politics are intricately connected. Initial structures were set up with the economic objective of building a common market. With the shift to include political objective, new structures are in the process of being formed.

The Treaty of Maastricht, signed on 7 February 1992, has five main goals of strengthening democracy, improving institutional effectiveness, building economic and monetary union, establishing common social policies, and developing common foreign policies (http://europa.eu/scadplus/treaties/maastricht_en.htm). The Maastricht Treaty was significant in that it extended the areas of European Community member state cooperation to monetary union and political cooperation (Schmitter 1996). In keeping with its new objectives, it chose a new name—the European Union. The Treaty on European Unity entered into effect on 1 November 1993. Although these changes were partly the result of internal developments, the collapse of communism in 1989 and the discussions regarding possible reunification of East and West Germany were significant external developments that helped precipitate the new focus. The EU wanted to establish its international position (http://europa.eu/scadplus/treaties/maastricht_en.htm).

Europe has several legal instruments that monitor human rights and adjudicate abuses: the European Commissioner for Human Rights, the European Court of Human Rights and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The UN has no legal rights to enforce its standards of human rights. It can only hope to act as a deterrent. In contrast, the 1950 European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms allows enforcement of certain rights. It also allows individuals and states to initiate proceedings (Held & McGrew 2007, p.67; Landman 2002, p. 895).

The EU reiterated its commitment to the protection of human rights on the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights on 10 December 1998. They followed this up with a Charter of Fundamental Rights, presented in December 2000. The main legal instrument for the protection of human rights in

Europe has been the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The EU has not joined the ECHR as a unit but each member state has separately agreed to it. The Court of Justice has made a number of rulings on fundamental human rights since 1974. These include the different elements of personal autonomy and individual rights such as the principle of equality; freedom of religion, of occupation, of trade, of property ownership, of competition, of opinion; protection of private life; economic freedom; respect for the family and inviolability of the home. The Treaty of European Union does not list fundamental rights but formally agreed to respect the rights defined in the European Convention on Human Rights. EU law does not allow it as a community to accede to the Convention. But the EU has agreed that the Court of Justice has the right to ensure that these principles are respected by the EU institutions. In addition, it can sanction member states for violations. The EU does not have the power to promote or enforce fundamental rights and freedoms proclaimed in the Charter. In September 2002, an independent network of fundamental rights experts was set up to evaluate the effect of the rights named in the Charter. The first Report (for 2002) on fundamental rights in the European Union was given on 31 March 2003. It summarizes the reports for each member state (http://europa.eu/scadplus/treaties/maastricht_en.htm).

There has been a renewed emphasis on human rights in EU member states since the late 1990s. While protection of rights has existed in theory for over fifty years, the last decade has seen an increase in attempts to monitor and even enforce the practice of protection. The timing of the presentation of the first Report on fundamental rights in the EU is just one year before the accession of numerous new states in 2004. It is yet to be seen what effect the increased importance given to rights issues will have on the levels of personal autonomy and individual rights in these new member states.

5. DATA AND METHOD

The research question determines the choice of method. The size of the sample is fixed and values for the independent variable of GDP are standard. This study only compares a few countries because the sample is limited to the 27 member countries of the EU. Because it is comparing states within the EU, it does not attempt to include data from other regions. GDP per capita values were taken from Eurostat Index 2007, an official statistic database of the EU.

The continuing debate about democracy is reflected in the different instruments available to measure democracy. One such measurement tool was developed by Raymond D. Gastil and later taken over by Freedom House (www.freedomhouse.org). The Gastil or Freedom House index ranks each nation on protection of political and civil liberties according to 7-point scales (Burkhart & Lewis-Beck 1994, p. 908). This database is commonly used in social science research. One of the aspects of civil liberties that it measures is personal autonomy and individual rights.

Personal autonomy and individual rights values used in this research were taken from Freedom House's 2007 index. Several authors have questioned the ideological basis of Freedom House's methods of scoring (Burkhart & Lewis-Beck 1994; Landman 2002, 2004). But Burkhart and Lewis-Beck (1994) concluded that the Gastil index, which later became known as the Freedom House index, actually does a very good job of measuring the democracy variable. Burkhart and Lewis-Beck's study of the economic development thesis confirms the conclusion of many studies demonstrating a strong link between economic development and democracy but they identify specific problems with testing the economic development thesis. Sometimes studies have chosen to exclude certain nations, for example communist nations (Burkhart & Lewis-Beck 1994). This study therefore explicitly examines the status of personal rights before and after the accession of former communist nations into the EU. Another problem Burkhart and Lewis-Beck identified is that most studies are cross sectional not time series in design. This study therefore makes a simple time analysis. The table below shows each of the EU countries and their Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights (PAIR) and GDP per capita values.

Analysis was conducted using the Freedom House values for personal autonomy and individual rights. The values for the 27 EU countries were between 12 and 16, with an average of 14.

Dependent variables (PAIR problems) lower than 14 are considered 'low' and coded 0. Dependent variables (PAIR problems) equal to 14 are considered 'medium' and coded 1. Dependent variables (PAIR problems) higher than 14 are considered 'high' and coded 2. The independent variable of GDP per capita when higher than 9,715 Euro is considered 'high' and coded 0, and when lower than 9,715 Euro considered 'low' and coded 2. According to these values, a cross tabulation table was made and is shown below.

Figure 2: Cross Tabulation Table

Count of Country (EU)	GDP per Capita		Grand Total
	High	Low	
Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights Problems			
Low	13	3	16
	92.86%	23.08%	59.26%
Medium	0	5	5
	0	38.46%	18.52%
High	1	5	6
	7.14%	38.46%	22.22%
Grand Total	14	13	27

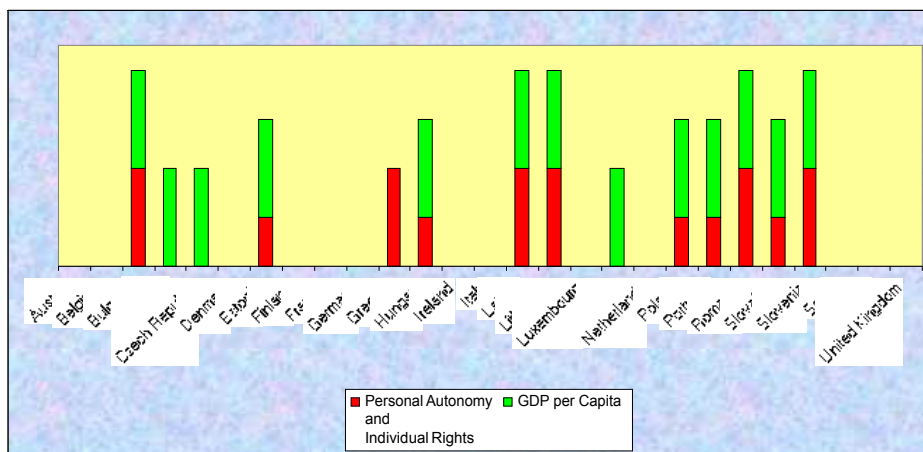
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The results clearly indicate that the EU countries with the lower GDP have higher levels of PAIR problems. This pattern is only broken by one country which, although it has a high GDP, it also has high levels of PAIR problems. The gamma measure of statistical significance was one. This clearly confirms a strong correlation between GDP per capita and personal autonomy and individual rights.

Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovenia have the highest PAIR problems and the lowest GDP per capita in the EU. Estonia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia have medium PAIR problems and low GDP per capita. Many of these were formerly communist countries in Eastern. Greece and Portugal are longer term members of the EU but have either GDP or PAIR levels that do not fit the pattern of the rest of the older EU member states. Those who have been accepted in recent years as full members so far include: Bulgaria (since 2007-01-01), Cyprus (the Greek Cypriot part) (since 2004-05-01), Czech Republic (since 2004-05-01), Estonia (since 2004-05-01), Hungary (since 2004-05-01), Latvia (since 2004-05-01) Lithuania (since 2004-05-01), Malta (since 2004-05-01), Poland (since 2004-05-01), Romania (since 2007-01-01), Slovakia (since 2004-05-01), and Slovenia (since 2004-05-01).

Studies of civil liberties and of human rights are more often conducted in developing countries. In addition they are not usually carried out in what are considered established democracies—in other words not in Western democracies. They usually look at regimes that are a mixture of democracy and authoritarianism, or at authoritarian regimes. No studies were found looking specifically at either human rights or democracy in the EU countries.

Figure 3: Relationship Between GDP Per Capita and Individual Rights in The EU Member States



In Figure 3, red represents personal autonomy and individual rights; green represents GDP per capita. As seen in this table, Greece has the highest level of problems with personal autonomy and individual rights. Cyprus, Czech Republic and Malta display the greatest economic problems. The table shows that the remaining countries have a more balanced relationship between personal autonomy and individual rights and GDP per capita.

5. CONCLUSION

Definitions of liberal democracy basically include 2 aspects—electoral freedom and civil liberties. Each of these aspects can be divided into different areas. One area of civil liberty is personal autonomy and individual rights. This study examines measures of personal autonomy and individual rights against Gross Domestic Product (or GDP) in the European Union. Studies generally show that wealthy countries have higher levels of democracy. In order to test this relationship, this study looked at GDP as a measure of each country's wealth and at personal autonomy and individual rights as one measure of democracy. The results confirm that there is a relation between each country's wealth and its freedoms.

Today there are twenty-seven states in The European Union (EU). The EU seeks to improve political, economic and social co-operation between its member states. Issues of human rights and freedoms touch on each of these aspects. After the end of the Cold War, many states applied to join the EU. All of the countries accepted since 2004 used to be communist except Southern Cyprus and Malta. The new members have lower GDPs and lower levels of freedom than all of the older members of the EU (except Greece). This study therefore also compared the EU overall level of GDP and personal freedom before and after 2004.

This study found that there is a strong causal relationship between GDP and personal autonomy and individual rights. The independent variable was GDP per capita. The dependent variable was personal autonomy and individual rights. This research confirms that as GDP increases then personal freedoms also increase. In other words, human rights and personal freedom issues are connected to a country's economic position. This study shows that the addition of these new member countries caused an overall decrease in this measure of democracy in the EU after 2004.

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