

Well-Being in Central Asia and the Caucasus

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Abstract

This paper deals with four countries that, like Rwanda, suffered economic and social collapse in the early 1990s. It develops a sociologically informed understanding of what influences the well-being of people living in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (Central Asian Republics) and Armenia and Georgia (the Caucasus), four of the successor states of the Soviet Union. The focus is influences on the experience of well-being and what makes a society liveable for all. The Social Quality approach is used to derive indicators with which to model what makes for a liveable or at least tolerable society, with subjective satisfaction - how people feel about life in general - as the ultimate outcome indicator of individual well-being. Parallels are drawn with the experience of Rwanda and differences pointed out.

Keywords: *Social Quality Model; Satisfaction with Life; Central Asia; Caucasus; Empowerment*

Introduction

It is well established that the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 has had a negative impact on the health, wealth and well-being of the population. The social transformation and structural change, backed and fuelled by economic collapse, led to a breakdown of the normative structure and predictability of the social order – what Durkheim referred to as ‘anomie’ (Durkheim, 1952; Genov, 1998; Abbott & Beck, 2003; Krisosheyev, 2004). Research on subjective well-being in Europe and Eurasia has focused mainly on the European Union. With the notable exception of the Russian Federation much less attention has been paid to the former Soviet Union (FSU) and virtually none to the Central Asian Republics and the countries of the Caucasus. However, the developmental trajectories of the countries of Eastern and Central Europe have been very different from those in these countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Most of the former had entered on a ‘virtuous’ path of economic, political and civic development by the start of the 21st Century, with reported levels of subjective well-being improving (Wallace & Haerpfer, 2002; Abbott & Wallace, 2009 a, b, c). The length and depth of the economic recession was much greater and recovery much slower in the successor states to the Soviet Union, and the future was more uncertain. There has not been the same movement towards the establishment of regulated market economies, democratic government and the development of civil society that is found in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe (Haerpfer, 2009).

Much of the research on the Russian Federation has demonstrated that the changes have had a dramatically negative impact on the welfare of the societies and the population (see Burawoy, 1997, 2000, 2001; Burawoy, et al., 2000; Abbott & Sapsford, 2006; Abbott, 2007; Abbott & Wallace, 2007, 2009a; Sevchenko, 2009; Rose, 2009; Wallace & Abbott 2009). Much less is known about the impact of the transformation on the well-being of those who have survived in other CIS countries, although the very limited research suggests that the impact has been negative (Abbott, 2002; Namazie & Sanfrey, 2002; Nazpary, 2002; Cockerham, et al., 2004; Richardson, et al., 2008; Abbott & Wallace, 2009; De la Sablonniere, et al., 2009; Wallace & Abbott, 2009).

The “shock therapy” that resulted in system disintegration of the political and economic structures in the FSU was unprecedented in modern times. It resulted not only in systems disintegration but also in social disintegration, with people having to negotiate between old familiar practices and the new realities of their daily lives. People experienced the transformation as living in a permanent state of chaos/crisis (Nazpary, 2002; Shevohanko, 2009) with no known outcome. The transformation involved four interdependent processes:

- the emergence of new state formations and related institutions;
- a shift from planned and administered co-ordination of markets to economic markets and private property;
- the move from the hegemony of the Communist Party to authoritarian regimes; and
- a realignment of states in the arena of international relations.

All aspects of social, economic and political life changed at once, and it was a painful process for the majority of the population. New states emerged that lacked the institutional mechanisms for social integration and social stability (Walder, 1994; Fligstein, 2001). New class relationships were unleashed, and there was an intense struggle to secure access to and control over resources. The transition from a bureaucratic-redistributive order to an imperfect market order was accompanied by a dramatic decline in GDP, a decline in state spending on health, education and social security benefits both in absolute and real terms, an increase in unemployment and under-employment, the non- and late payment of wages, a decline in the influence of the trade unions, an increase in inequalities, poverty and mal-nutrition and a growth in informal economic activity (Abbott, 2002). The vast majority of the population were losers (Haerpfer & Zeilhofer, 1994; Rose, 2009) with survival for many depending on participating in informal economies in place of, or as well as, the formal economy. Those with know-how - the “winners” - were able to exploit this situation, but the majority of the population were left unable to participate (Rose, 2009).

The transformation inflicted considerable stress on the population (Wallace & Abbott, 2009) with the breakdown of social order evidenced by an increase in lawlessness, a dramatic growth in social inequalities and the inability of the

public powers to regulate the emerging market economy or to exercise good governance, to win the people's trust or to take care of the losers (Ledeneva 2006; Sapsford & Abbott, 2006; Rose, 2009). With a loss of trust in the impersonal institutions necessary for the effective working of parties, business and civil society, - many retreated into defensive anti-modern modes of survival, relying on informal economic activity and on kinship (Rose, 1995, 2009; Burawoy 2000; Abbott & Wallace, 2009). The basis for citizenship was destroyed and the security of the lives of the majority of the population was shattered (Rose, 1995; Abbott & Wallace, 2007, 2009). The dislocation in the social structure resulted in a breakdown in the normative patterns that define the expectation of actors, in the patterns of social relationships between actors and in the embodied perceptions, habits and skills by which people produce and reproduce institutional and related structures. The structural change meant not only that people's life chances have been transformed (and, for many, for the worse) but that their understandings of how to make life choices and their ability actually to do so changed as well. Culturally shared templates are no longer appropriate for guiding behaviours in the changed socio-economic and cultural contexts (Sztompka, 2002; Wallace & Abbott, 2009).

Table 1: Adjusted Real GDP 1990 and 2001 (PPPUS\$) and Incidence of Poverty 1999-2000
CIS

Country	Armenia	Georgia	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan
GDP (PPPUS\$)				
1990	4741	4572	4716	3114
2001	2650	2560	6500	1927
Incidence of Poverty in 2001				
US\$2	43.5	18.9	15.7	49.1
US4\$	86.2	54.2	31.6	88.0

Source: United Nations Human Development Reports, 1993 and 2003; Abbott, 2002

Answer to question: *How satisfied are you, all things considered with your life as a whole these days*, 1 = definitely satisfied, 2 = quite satisfied, 3 = rather dissatisfied, 4 = definitely dissatisfied. Variable recoded so 1 = definitely dissatisfied and 4 = definitely satisfied for this table

Central and Eastern Europe

Country	Mean on 10 point scale	Conversion to %
Bulgaria	4.42	44
Czech Repub	6.41	64
Estonia	5.81	58
Hungary	5.89	59
Latvia	5.48	55
Lithuania	5.33	53
Poland	6.18	62
Romania	6.11	61
Slovakia	5.59	56
Slovenia	7.01	70
Mean FCC	5.77	58
Mean EU 15	7.4	74

Source: Abbott and Wallace, 2009 b, c

Answer to question: *All things considered how satisfied would you say you are with your life these days? Please tell me on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means very dissatisfied and 10 means very satisfied*

The four countries under consideration in this paper declared their independence from the former Soviet Union, in December 1991 and joined the loosely CIS at that time. Kyrgyzstan, Georgia and Armenia are three of the poorest CIS countries and are highly dependent on their agricultural sector, whilst Kazakhstan has more developed industrial and service sectors mainly based on the exploitation of its natural resources, including oil (Abbott, 2002; EastAgri, 2009). All four have become authoritarian regimes (Haerpfer, 2009). All the countries experienced hyperinflation and an economic collapse in the 1990s, but by 2001 inflation was generally under control and there were some signs of economic recovery. In Kazakhstan the adjusted real GDP exceed that of 1990 by 2001, but in the other three countries it was still significantly below the 1990 level. All the countries experienced significant growth in income inequalities over the 1990s (Abbott, 2002) and poverty levels were high in 2001 (Table 1 above). There was a reliance on informal economic activity, with households often relying on a portfolio of incomes, especially in Armenia, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan (Abbott, 2002; Abbott & Wallace, 2009a). The health of the population was generally poor, although, with the notable exception of Kazakhstan, they did not experience the same sharp increase in mortality amongst men in mid-life that was experienced in the CIS countries of Eastern European and Russia (Abbott, 2002; Cockerham, et al., 2004; Wallace & Abbott, 2009).

Quality of Life

There are multiple definitions of quality of life, based on both objective and subjective criteria, and a multiplicity of ways in which people assess their own quality of life or subjective well-being. However, an individual's quality of life depends not only on what they do but also on what happens in the wider society and the impact this has on people in different places in the societal opportunity structure.

Objective and subjective indicators of well-being correlate highly (Veenhoven, 2009) but objective indicators do not tell us what makes a society liveable or tolerable. It is now widely recognised, however, that people are good judges of their own circumstances and that reported subjective well-being (e.g. general satisfaction) reflects people's lived experience and is meaningful (Kahneman & Krueger, 2006; Land, et al., 2006).

General Satisfaction in the CIS and Europe

There are wide differences in social and individual well-being across Europe and the former Soviet Union. Generally the pattern is a North-South, West-East gradient, with the countries of Western Europe having the high levels of social well-being and the most satisfied and happy citizens and those of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union being the least happy and satisfied (Veenhoven, 2001; Delahey, 2004; Bohnke, 2005; Abbott & Sapsford, 2006; Abbott, 2007; Abbott & Wallace, 2009 b, c; Andren & Martinsson, 2009). In 2003 the mean level of subjective general satisfaction in the EU15 was 74 per cent, varying from a low of 59 per cent in Portugal to a high of 84 per cent in Denmark. For the new member states and candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe the mean was 58 per cent, varying from a low of 44 per cent in Bulgaria to a high of 70 per cent in Slovenia. The means for the three new member states that had formed part of the FSU until 1991 were: Estonia 58 per cent, Latvia 55 per cent, and Lithuania 53 per cent. In 2001 the average level of general satisfaction in the CIS was 59 per cent, varying from a low of 40 per cent in Georgia (notably lower than any of the other countries) to a high of 67 per cent in Kyrgyzstan (Table 2). This suggests that levels of general subjective satisfaction are similar across the former communist countries of Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Table 2: General Satisfaction CIS in 2001 and Central and Eastern Europe 2003

Country	Mean on 4 point scale	Conversion to %
Armenia	2.28	57
Byelorussia	2.54	64
Georgia	1.58	40
Kazakhstan	2.57	64
Kyrgyzstan	2.69	67
Moldova	2.28	57
Russia	2.55	64
Ukraine	2.26	57
Average	2.37	59

Source: Living Conditions, Lifestyle and Health Survey Data, authors' own calculations

Explaining General Satisfaction in the CIS and Europe

Material circumstances tend to be the main predictor of subjective well-being, with age and gender making little difference, at least in Europe and the CIS (Delhey, 2004 Bohnke, 2005; Abbott & Wallace, 2009 b, c; Anren & Martinson 2009). However, the perceived quality of the society also has an independent influence, especially on life satisfaction (Bohnke, 2005, 2008), as does social support, which generally becomes more important the higher the level of

prosperity of the country, with family support being more important in poorer countries and friends in more affluent countries. The general pattern is that the lower the level of the GDP of a country, the lower the level of satisfaction throughout the population, with a greater variance in general satisfaction in poorer countries than in more affluent ones. Within countries, material circumstances are generally the main or a major factor, although they tend to be less important in more affluent countries. A number of other factors, objective and subjective, have also been shown to influence subjective satisfaction fairly consistently. In the CIS - in addition to economic circumstances - trust, social support (having friends and family to rely on), social inclusion (e.g. being in employment, being married, belonging to a civil society organisation), good health and feeling in control of one's life have been shown to contribute to explaining general satisfaction (Namazie & Sanfrey, 2002; Abbott, 2006; Abbott & Sapsford, 2006). Age, gender, education and employment status generally have only a small impact.

Using a sociologically informed approach and selecting indicators based on the Social Quality model, Abbott and Wallace (2009 b, c) found that the main factors influencing subjective satisfaction across the EU 27 in 2003 and 2007 were: having an income adequate for a decent standard of living, trusting other people and trusting government, having close support and feeling socially integrated, and being healthy and feeling in control of one's life. They also found that economic factors were more important in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe than in the EU 15, with some indication that as the economies of the former recovered, so the importance of economic factors declined somewhat, with social support and feeling in control of one's life becoming more important. Age, gender education made little contribution to explaining differences.

Developing a Sociological Model of Subjective Satisfaction

To define the type of society and social policies that enable people to have a liveable life, or at least a tolerable one, we have to consider the articulation between the quality of society and the subjective quality of individuals' lives within it (Bohnke, 2005; Abbott & Sapsford, 2006; Phillips, 2006; Abbott, 2007; Abbott & Wallace, 2007; Veenhoven, 2008). We need to go beyond a description of objective living conditions to take account of citizens' understanding of their life situation and the extent to which they feel able to make the necessary choices in order to act to secure their well-being – to choose a style of life they value (Phillips 2006; Abbott and Wallace 2009 b, c; Wallace and Abbott 2009). Subjective satisfaction has to be seen as the ultimate validating measure, on the argument that people should be more satisfied in a tolerable than an intolerable society.

To relate agency and structure, therefore, we need to go beyond considering people's general satisfaction with their life, to consider the relationship between objective conditions and the subjective evaluation of them and the impact this has on people's ability to take control over their lives (Phillips, 2006; Wallace & Abbott, 2009). The Social Quality approach, which focuses on the individual as an active subject living in developing social conditions, enables us to theorise the ways in which social and system integration impact on well-being. It measures the extent to which the quality of daily life provides for an acceptable standard of living, taking account of the structural features of societies and their institutions as assessed by reference to their impact on citizens. It is the social context within which individuals have the opportunity to develop the capabilities to enable them to attain valued outcomes (Sen, 1993). It identifies four domains or areas – *economic security* (necessary material resources), *social cohesion* (necessary accepted norms and values in place), *social inclusion* (access to necessary institutional and infrastructural context) and *conditions for empowerment* (the extent to which people feel they have control over their own lives and the capacity for meaningful agency). Each of the four aspects has been shown to make an independent contribution to explaining social satisfaction in other CIS countries (Abbott & Sapsford, 2006; Abbott, 2007) and the European Union (Abbott & Wallace 2009 a, b).

We build on these insights to consider what range of factors influences well-being in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and Georgia, in order to cast further light on the differential impact of the transition on post-Soviet citizens. We consider the influences on general satisfaction, which is seen for the most part as a relatively stable cognitive evaluation of material circumstances (Meadow, et al., 1992).

Methods

This paper draws on a survey carried out in 2001 as part of The *Living Conditions, Lifestyles and Health* Project. Samples of 2,000 were selected in each country using multi-stage sampling with stratification by region and area. Within each primary sampling unit households were selected using standardized random route procedures, except in Armenia, where systematic random sampling from a list was used. The response rates were 82 per cent in Kazakhstan, 71 per cent in Kyrgyzstan and 88 per cent in both Armenia and Georgia.

Given the need to consider the multiple influences on the dependent variables a series of OLS regressions were carried out, for each quadrant of the social quality model and then for all the significant indicators, with the dependent variable being general satisfaction - the responses to the question *How satisfied are you, all things considered, with your life as a whole these days?*

The independent variables were selected from a rich data source as indicators (approximate measures) of the elements of our model: Economic Circumstances, Social Cohesion, Social integration and Conditions for Social Empowerment. We also control for age and gender. When the countries were entered as dummy variables with Kazakhstan as reference the adjusted R^2 increased significantly and the country Betas were strong, suggesting that the model may not be entirely a general one but conceal some degree of difference between countries. Given this, the regression analysis was re-run for each country separately.

Nine of the independent variables were scales/indices computed for use in the analysis (social resource, personal support, trust in government, trust in institutions, personal control, malaise, freedom, fear of crime and political influence). The scales were constructed using factor analysis with varimax rotation and all had acceptable Cronbach alpha values.

Findings

General Satisfaction

It is perhaps not surprising that the citizens of the four countries report relatively low levels of general satisfaction: only 12.3 per cent in Georgia, 41.5 per cent in Armenia, 57.5 per cent in Kazakhstan and 61.1 per cent in Kyrgyzstan said they were definitely satisfied or fairly satisfied. On a four point scale the means were: Georgia 1.6, Armenia, 2.3, Kazakhstan 2.6 and Kyrgyzstan 2.7 (Table 2 above). What is perhaps surprising is that the highest levels of general satisfaction are found in Kyrgyzstan, the poorest country, and a much lower level of general satisfaction in Georgia compared with the other three countries. We return to this in the discussion below.

Economic Circumstances

As we have already shown (Table 1 above) there is clear evidence of the negative impact of the transformation on the living conditions of the populations of the four countries. A majority of respondents to our survey interpreted the post-1991 changes as having had a negative impact on their society and their own lives; 70 per cent of respondents in Kazakhstan, over 80 per cent in Kyrgyzstan, 91 per cent in Georgia and 96 per cent in Armenian. Whilst a substantial majority rated the economy as having been sound in the past (72.9% in Kazakhstan, 90 % in Kyrgyzstan, 91.8% in Armenia, 92.2% in Georgia), few thought it was sound in 2001 (15.9% in Kazakhstan, 9.55% in Kyrgyzstan, 3.6% in Armenia, 1.1% in Georgia). The majority of respondents were dissatisfied with the material situation of their family: 58.4 per cent in Kyrgyzstan, 73.8 per cent in Kazakhstan, 83.3 per cent in Armenia and 91.8 per cent in Georgia. Satisfaction with financial situation has been shown to correlate highly with general satisfaction, and this was also the case amongst our respondents, with the correlation being 0.48 in Armenia, 0.59 in Kazakhstan, 0.66 in Kirgizstan and 0.72 in Georgia. Only three and a half per cent in Armenia and two and a

half per cent in Georgia reported the economic circumstances of their households as good, though around a fifth of those in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan did so. Over three quarters of informants in Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, two thirds in Georgia and just under a half in Kazakhstan said that they are unable or only just able to afford to purchase necessary food. Indeed, over a third of respondents in Armenia and Kyrgyzstan said that they could never afford essential food, and a tenth in Georgia and Kazakhstan. This suggests high levels of relative and absolute poverty in the four countries, with higher levels of poverty in Armenia and Kyrgyzstan and with Kazakhstan having the lowest levels of poverty. It is worth noting that despite the high levels of reported poverty in Kyrgyzstan the levels of dissatisfaction with economic circumstances was lower than in the other three countries, and we shall return to this.

Table 3: Economic circumstances

	Armenia %	Georgia %	Kazakhstan %	Kyrgyzstan %
Material circumstances very good/good	3.5	2.5	16.3	20.7
Not able to purchase essential food	35.4	8.8	12.1	33.1
Have a decent standard of living	3.2	8.4	23.6	15.8
Increase in Gini 1990 - 2001 ¹	12.3	19.6	6.2	20.4

Source: UNU-WIDER, 2008

We have selected three indicators of the economic situation of our respondents:

1. The economic situation of the household, ranging from very good to very bad on a five point scale. This measures where individuals place their household's economic situation compared to others – a relative measure.
2. The ability of the household to purchase a range of goods and services ranging from basic household items to major consumer goods such as a car. This provides a material living-conditions/ deprivation scale and is comparable across the countries.
3. The ability to afford essential food most of the time, coded 0 or 1. This is a measure of absolute poverty.

The three selected economic indicators together explain 23.6 per cent of the variance in general satisfaction (Table 7 below). The variables that make a significant contribution are the economic situation of the family and material living conditions, suggesting that general satisfaction increases as material circumstances increase.

Social Cohesion

Social cohesion is the extent to which a society is integrated and there are shared norms and values. One of the best indicators of social integration is trust (Phillips, 2006), which tends to be highest amongst those who think there are few social conflicts, where people feel safe and there are strong informal

networks. Levels of trust in this sample are generally low (Table 4, and see Sapsford & Abbott, 2006). Overall levels of trust are highest in Kyrgyzstan, followed by Kazakhstan and Armenia, with Georgia having on average the lowest levels of trust.

We selected four indicators as measures of social cohesion:

1. The answer to a question about the extent to which people can be trusted, coded from 1 high trust to 4 low trust;
2. A scale computed from the answers to a range of questions asking about trust in Government, President of country, national parliament, regional government, political parties), each coded from 1, high to 4 low trust;
3. A scale computed from the answers to a number of questions on trust in formal organisations (courts, police, army, trade unions), each coded from 1 high to 4 low;
4. A scale computed from a number of questions concerning fear of crime (theft from home, harassed or threatened, street robbery) coded from 1 'not worried' to 4 'very worried'.

The four indicators together explained 19.5% of the variance, with all of them making a significant contribution. Trust in government had the strongest Beta value and trust in institutions also had a relatively large Beta. Trust in other people and fear of crime made much smaller contributions to the variance explained (see Table 7 below).

Table 4: Social Cohesion

Variable	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Armenia	Georgia
	%	%	%	%
TRUST PEOPLE IN GENERAL	59.7	73.7	48.2	40.4
Trust president of country	75.0	67.2	47.6	38.4
Trust national government	54.5	60.5	30.6	5.1
Trust national parliament	43.5	52.7	24.2	5.4
Trust regional government	60.2	55.6	35.6	15.6
Trust political Parties	19.1	38.1	18.7	7.7
Trust the courts	34.9	46.8	31.4	12.6
Trust the police	33.6	50.1	35.2	8.2
Trust the army	69.4	75.7	85.3	32.2
Trust the trade unions	32.4	45.0	25.1	10.3
Fear of burglary	62.8	57.6	26.2	51.6
Fear of robbery on street	55.6	59.6	23.1	46.6
Fear of attack on street	55.1	60.4	24.4	46.1

Table 5: Social Integration

Variable	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Armenia	Georgia
	%	%	%	%
Friends to confide in	76.8	82.8	77.3	79.7
Help when depressed	62.8	73.3	56.8	61.7
Help to find job	49.0	58.8	43.2	31.3
Help to pay urgent bill	75.8	69.7	58.5	55.3
Someone to listen	90.8	93.4	90.9	92.4
Someone to help in crisis	87.4	90.1	85.7	91.3
Someone to be self with	86.0	88.3	75.0	91.0
Someone who appreciates you	84.4	93.5	94.0	93.6
Someone to comfort if upset	90.8	93.2	91.6	91.3
Active in organisation	5.7	7.5	4.9	1.9
Married/live with partner	68.1	67.9	64.7	68.8
Per cent employed	22.8	53.2	43.7	36.1

Social Integration

In terms of social integration there is evidence of high levels of personal support from family and friends but lower levels of integration into the wider society (Table 5). For example, over 90 per cent of respondents in the four countries said that they had someone to listen to them, and over 85 per cent in Armenia and Kazakhstan and around 90 per cent in the other two countries that there was someone who would help them in a crisis, but only a tiny proportion, ranging from 1.9 per cent in Georgia to 7.5 per cent in Kyrgyzstan, said they were active members of any organisation. The extent to which people could call upon help from relatives and friends in times of need (social resource) varied between the four countries but was generally lower than for personal support. For example, the number of respondents who could call on support for getting a job varied from less than a third in Georgia to just fewer than 60 per cent in Kyrgyzstan. Overall, respondents in Kyrgyzstan reported the highest levels of support and those in Armenia the lowest, but the differences are not large and the general pattern of social integration is the same across the four countries.

We selected seven indicators of social integration to represent the various ways individuals can be socially integrated:

1. Active membership of an organisation, coded 0 no, 1 yes;
2. Identifying with the dominant ethnic group, coded 0 no, 1 yes;
3. Married or living with someone as a couple, coded 0 no, 1 yes;
4. Employed, coded 0 not in paid employment, 1 in paid employment;
5. Having a close friend to discuss matters with, coded 1 yes, 2 no;

6. A Social Resource Scale computed from the answers to a range of questions about having someone to rely on outside the household (feeling depressed, help in finding a job, need to borrow money), each coded 1 yes, 2 no;
7. A Personal Support Scale computed from the answers to a range of questions on the availability of personal support (someone to listen, help in a crisis, be yourself with, appreciate you as a person, comfort you when upset), each coded 1 yes, 2 no.

The social control variables in combination explained 9.92 per cent of the variance in general satisfaction. The strongest contribution was made by the social resource scale, with being an active member of an organisation, identifying with the dominant ethnic group, having a close friend and being married all making a noticeable contribution. Being employed was significant only at the 95 per cent level and the personal support scale did not make a significant contribution (see Table 7 below).

Conditions for Empowerment

Levels of perceived personal control are also low, especially in Armenia (Table 6) with, for example, over two-thirds of Armenians and nearly 50 per cent in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, although less than a quarter of Georgians, saying that they were unable to enjoy normal daily activities. Over 50 per cent (varying from 51.1% in Armenia to 74.8 % in Georgia) said that life was too complicated. Over a third of respondents, rising to over two-thirds in Armenia, said that they felt under constant strain. Only a minority thought they could influence the national government (9.6% in Armenia, 12.0% in Georgia, 9.3% in Kazakhstan, 23% in Kyrgyzstan) or even take an interest in politics (28.9% in Armenia, 21.5% in Georgia, 34.4% in Kazakhstan, 37.4% in Kyrgyzstan). Over a third of respondents, rising to over 50 per cent in Georgia, said they were afraid of illegal arrest. Only around a third of respondents in Armenia and a half in Georgia thought they were free to join any religion they wanted, although the proportions were somewhat higher in Kazakhstan (74.8%) and Kyrgyzstan (62.7%). A majority of respondents, varying from 62 per cent in Georgia to 79 per cent in Kyrgyzstan, said they were free to join any organisation, and over two-thirds said they were free to travel. Levels of perceived freedoms are quite high but perceived control over life and influence on society are much lower.

Health is a resource that enables people to participate in socially valued activities, and lack of good health can be a barrier to participation. Levels of self-reported poor health are comparatively high, especially in Armenia, and noticeably higher for women than men. Psychosocial health was also reported as poor, with women experiencing on average more malaise symptoms than men and with the Armenians having the poorest psychosocial health, followed by the Kyrgyz and the Kazaks, with the Georgians having the best. Education is also a

resource that enables people to take more control over their lives, including their health (Mirowsky & Ross, 2003 a, b). Around forty per cent of respondents in Georgia have had at least some higher education, and around a quarter in the other three countries.

We selected seven indicators of conditions for empowerment:

1. Political influence , a scale computed from answers to questions about the extent of influence on national and regional government coded from 1 high to 4 low;

Table 6: Conditions for Empowerment

	Armenia	Georgia	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan
	%	%	%	%
Unable to concentrate	55	11.4	21.7	46.9
Insomnia	62.7	30.8	38.3	46.5
Feel under constant strain	67.2	33.1	33.2	33.4
Losing confidence in self	29.6	13.2	12.6	18.3
Often shaking and trembling	39.8	9.6	16.7	22.3
Frightening thoughts	42.3	16.7	32.4	42.4
Spells of exhaustion / fatigue	35.7	28.9	44.0	53.7
Feeling of stress	39.2	18.4	25.0	25.3
Can't overcome difficulties	53.7	16.7	21.2	34.4
Unable to enjoy normal day-to-day activities	66.6	23.1	45.1	48.1
Dissatisfied with work	68.2	32.4	36.8	43.5
Life is too complicated	50.1	74.8	58.9	58.6
Impossible to influence things	68.3	15.6	36.6	23.1
Feeling lonely	36.4	15.6	24.2	26.6
Right to say what I think	82.5	87.0	80.9	89.1
Free to join any religion	35.2	48.6	74.8	62.7
Free to travel	82.5	67.3	72.7	81.2
Free to join any organisation	67.3	62.0	75.4	79.1
Afraid illegal arrest	57.5	52.2	43.0	35.1
Can take an interest in politics	28.9	21.5	34.4	37.4
Influence national government	9.6	7.6	8.3	23.0
Influence regional government	16.1	8.9	12.5	27.6
Some higher education	25.5	40.0	27.6	27.0
High Level of Freedom and choice (4/5 out5)	58.4	55.3	55.7	67.4

Self Reported Health

Variable	Kazakhstan		Kyrgyzstan		Armenia		Georgia	
	Women %	Men %	Women %	Men %	Women %	Men %	Women %	Men %
Self reported Health Good	68.2	81.6	77.2	89.6	56.0	61.9	61.2	81.0

The Male/Female difference is significant (p< 0.001)

Table 7: Influences on Subjective Quality of Life Survey Respondents, Dependent Variable subjective General Satisfaction Material Security

Total adjusted R ²	0.236		
Variable	B	Beta	SE
Constant	4.380		.039
Economic situation of family	.461	.375***	.016
Evaluation Material living conditions	.217	.145***	.020
Basic Food	-.028	-.020	.015

Social Cohesion

Total adjusted R ²	0.193		
Variable	B	Beta	SE
Constant	1.453		.074
Most people can be trusted	.096	.100***	.013
Trust government scale	.068	.248***	.005
Trust institutions scale	.047	.178***	.005
Fear of crime scale	.009	.031**	.004

Social Integration

Total adjusted R ²	0.992		
Variable	B	Beta	SE
Constant	3.038		.077
Active member of organisation	-.186	-.086***	.026
Nationality	-.199	-.085***	.030
Social resource scale	.172	.200***	.012
Personal Support scale	.018	-.023	.011
Married	-.104	-.047***	.028
Employed	-.055	-.026*	.027
Friend Discuss Important Matters with	.180	.072***	.034

Conditions for empowerment

Total adjusted R ²	0.129		
Variable	B	Beta	SE
Constant	2.817		.105
Political Influence	.084	.202***	.006
Basic Freedoms	-.003	-.008	.006
Malaise	-.038	-.092***	.008
Freedom of choice and control	.119	.131***	.013
Self reported health	.138	.125***	.017
Control	-.119	-.192***	.011
Education	.010	.013	.010

Significance: * ** P<0.01 ** P<0.01 * P<0.01

2. A Basic Freedoms Scale computed from the answers to questions on freedom of expression, to travel or to join an organisation, coded from 1 definitely free to 4 definitely not free;
3. The answer to a question on the extent to which the respondent had free choice and control over their life, coded on a five point scale from a great deal of freedom and choice to none at all;
4. Evaluation of health on a four point scale from very good to very bad;
5. A Malaise Scale measuring a general state of psychological distress (anxiety and depression), a state of misery rather than a symptom of disease (Mirowsky & Ross, 2003 b) computed from reporting a number of symptoms (unable to concentrate, loss of confidence, often shaking and trembling, frightening thoughts, spells of exhaustion, feelings of stress): for each, code 1 has the symptom, 2 does not;
6. A Personal Control Scale computed from reporting a number of symptoms (cannot overcome difficulties, unable to enjoy normal day-to-day activities, dissatisfied with work, life is too complicated, impossible to influence things/activities, feeling lonely) - for each, code 1 has the symptom, 2 does not;
7. Education - highest level: primary, secondary, tertiary.

The variables in total explained 12.9 per cent of the variance in general satisfaction, with political influence and social control making the strongest contributions and freedom and choice, self report health and malaise all making noticeable contributions. Education and political freedom were not significant (Table 7).

Influences on General Satisfaction

In order to determine which factors have the greatest explanatory power we took all the variables that were significant in the regressions for each quadrant of our model and entered them in a regression, controlling for age and gender.

Table 8 (Model 1) shows the results with general satisfaction as the dependent variable. The total variance explained by the full model was 33.3 per cent, more than any of the variables in each of the individual quadrants explained.

Economic circumstances continued to make a strong contribution (economic situation and material circumstances), with social cohesion (general trust, trust in government, trust in institutions, fear of crime), social inclusion (social resource, ethnicity and being married) and empowerment (personal control, freedom and control, subjective health, malaise and political influence) all continuing to make significant contribution. Age made a significant contribution, suggesting that older people are less satisfied than younger ones, but the Beta value was low.

Table 8: Factors Explaining General Satisfaction

Variables	Model 1			Model 2 – controlling for Country		
	B	Beta	SE	B	Beta	SE
Constant	2.860		.171	3.473		.174
Age	.003	.051**	.001	.001	.017	.001
Gender	.025	.012	.031	.009	.004	.030
Economic						
Economic situation	.282	.225***	.025	.216	.172***	.024
Material	-.132	-.089***	.028	-.141	-.095***	.027
Social cohesion						
General trust in people	.041	.043**	.015	.039	.040**	
Trust government	.040	.135***	.007	.033	.111***	.006
Trust institutions	.044	.143***	.007	.015	.048*	.007
Crime	.020	.068***	.004	.016	.054***	.004
Social Integration						
Friend	.044	.018	.039	.079	.031*	.038
Social resource	.043	.050**	.014	.027	.031*	.013
Active organization	-.047	-.024	.030	-.033	-.017*	.029
Nationality	-.072	-.031*	.034	-.004	-.002	.034
Married	-.081	-.036**	.033	-.071	-.031*	.032
Employed	.036	.017	.032	-.032	-.015	.031
Empowerment						
Malaise	-.023	-.055**	.009	-.004	-.009	-.008
Personal control	-.071	-.116***	.012	-.100	-.164***	.012
Health	.045	.041**	.019	.077	.070***	.019
Political Influence	.017	.042**	.006	.014	.036*	.006
Freedom	.058	.065***	.013	.061	.069***	.013
Country						
Armenia				-.151	-.066***	.046
Georgia				.678	.264***	.051
Kyrgyzstan				-.087	-.037*	.042
Adjusted R²	0.333			0.361		

Significance: *p< 0.05 ** p< 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Country Differences in General Satisfaction

Given the differences we noted above in the four countries we tested the overall model to see if it was a general one that applied to all four countries or if we needed separate models for each country. When we added the countries as dummy variables with Kazakhstan as the control country the amount of variance explained increased by for general satisfaction by just under 3 per cent and the three countries entered as dummies all varied significantly from the reference country, Kazakhstan, suggesting that people in Armenia and Kyrgyzstan are more satisfied than would be predicted by the model and those in Georgia less satisfied (Table 8, Model 2). Given this, we ran the complete model for each country separately. The amount of variance explained by the model varied between the countries. The variance explained was 29.7 per cent for Armenia, 29.1 per cent for Kazakhstan, 25.2 per cent for Kyrgyzstan and 38.7 per cent for Georgia.

Economic variables made a strong and significant contribution in each country. Economic situation made the largest contribution to the variance explained in Armenia and Kyrgyzstan and was also significant in Kazakhstan. In Georgia and Kazakhstan material circumstances made the largest contribution and also contributed in Kyrgyzstan. Social cohesion also made a significant contribution to the variance explained in all four countries (general trust in people and fear of crime in Kyrgyzstan, trust in government in Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and trust in institutions in Georgia). Of the social integration variables, having people to call upon for help in time of need and having a close friend made a significant contribution in Kazakhstan, and being married in Armenia and Kazakhstan. Of the empowerment variables, personal control made a contribution in all the countries, health in Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, freedom in Armenia, Georgia and Kazakhstan, malaise in Armenia and political influence in Georgia. Age made a significant but low contribution in Armenia and Georgia, with younger people being more satisfied.

Conclusions

The main conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis are:

Firstly, levels of general satisfaction are general low in the four countries and comparable with those found in other CIS countries and the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It is perhaps surprising that levels of satisfaction are much the same in these four countries as the CEE ones, given the sharp differences in their trajectories of change during the 1990s and the situation they were in at the turn of the 21st century. The former communist countries that have now become members of the EU had generally transformed into reasonably well-regulated markets with growing economies, democratic government and civil societies. By contrast the CIS countries had only just

begun weak economic recovery, had poorly regulated market economies, authoritarian governments and weak civil societies. Whilst the peoples of the CEE countries had seen the re-establishment of socially integrated societies and could look to a relatively certain future, this was not the case for the people living in the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Secondly, it is worth noting that the level of general satisfaction was much higher in Kyrgyzstan than in the other three countries and this was unexpected given its levels of poverty. We can only speculate as to why people are more satisfied in Kyrgyzstan than would be expected given its level of economic development. Although it was one of the poorest republics in the FSU it experienced a significant decline in GDP in the 1990s and a growth in inequalities. It has reverted to a pre-modern society with a high proportion of the population dependent on subsistence agriculture and living in rural areas. This means that people spend most of their time in contact with people they know well and are likely to trust. Shevenko (2009) points out that while levels of trust in general are low in post-Soviet society, people trust relatives and friends. Paradoxically, being dependent on subsistence agriculture may also give people more control over their lives. Although the health of the population is not good, there was not the dramatic increase in mortality amongst men in mid-life experienced in the other CIS countries, and health status is certainly an influence on general well-being. Cultural factors may also be important, given that the population is predominantly Sunni- Muslim.

Thirdly, well-being is influenced by more than economic factors even in societies where economic security is a major concern - the system and social integration enabling the empowerment of the members of a society is important. What is surprising is the strength of the contribution of variables other than economic circumstances. All four quadrants of the Model made a significant contribution to the variance explained. However, economic factors are the most important. Financial security is a major influence on well-being, and other variables that influence well-being are influenced by material circumstances and may act as buffers that provide some support. Health, for example, is strongly influenced by material circumstances, and economic circumstances condition the extent to which individuals are able to access health care. Reliance on kin and friends for support also provides some buffer to those in poor material circumstances.

Finally, while the individual variables explaining the variance in satisfaction vary across the countries, the general model holds for all four countries. This reinforces the importance of using a theoretical model from which to derive the variables for inclusion.

Well-being in Rwanda

Rwanda is a small land-locked country, like several of those examined in this paper, which underwent an economic and social collapse in the first half of the

1990s. Its collapse was even more dramatic than those experienced by the countries discussed here; the Genocide destroyed the infrastructure, killed the people and scattered those who had the skill and knowledge to rebuild. The collapse was not just a failure of government or economy, but of the fundamental social contract between people, and its signs were not primarily economic or social collapse, but violence, torture and death.

It would be illuminating and of great interest to be able to compare Rwanda's recovery with that of the Caucasus and Central Asian countries, but the research has not been done. The extent of the recovery appears remarkable. The economy is now stable, though fragile and still including extreme poverty and bare subsistence for many people. The social order aims towards and appears to be achieving the rule of law, universal opportunity and a democratic form of political organisation. Crime is not an everyday experience and incidents of violence appear to be rare. One might suspect, therefore, that Rwandans would show a greater degree of satisfaction with their lives and their society than is shown in Central Asia or the Caucasus. However, it is possible that only some would be satisfied; we do not know to what extent there are two nations, only one of which is benefiting from reform and recovery. We do not know to what extent government and social institutions are trusted, across the range of economic conditions. We do not know whether there is internalised social integration of the nation as a whole, or whether people's loyalty is to fractions within it. We do not know to what extent different kinds of people in different social locations feel in control of their lives and able to have an influence on events. The extent to which there still appears to be a genuine unity and communal will to build the country, fifteen years after the catastrophe, would suggest social integration, mutual trust and a feeling of personal empowerment, but we do not know that this is what would be found. There is indeed much research still to be done in Rwanda, to inform government policy and the actions of the civil society. The same lesson would be expected to emerge, however: while economic circumstances are necessary for well-being, they are not sufficient, and social factors also play an important role in building and maintaining the social order.

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