

From Sacrificing Life to Living It: The Humanistic Transformation of Moral Norms

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HUMANS – a violent species:

- Gat (2006; 2007) has amassed evidence showing that **homicide, war, raid, and genocide have been endemic** in “hunter-gatherer” societies, demolishing the romantic view that the original form of life of our species was peaceful.
- In the further evolution of our species, **inter-human violence has been elevated to higher levels of organization and destructive impact**: the “Neolithic Revolution” gave rise to agrarian empires with standing armies capable of devastating entire countries; the “Industrial Revolution” led to weapons of mass destruction and the two bloodiest wars in the history of our species.
- The arsenal of **nuclear, chemical and biological weapons** existing today has the capacity of eradicating our species and all life on planet earth--multiple times.
- Images of genocide killings in Rwanda and Darfour, terrorist bombings in Palestine and Iraq, ambush attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan, drug wars in Mexico, rumours about mass executions in North Korea, and mass shootings in US high schools and elsewhere, all leave us with the impression that **human civilization is a helplessly and increasingly violent enterprise**.



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How, then, can Harvard psychologist *Steven Pinker* conclude that

“we may be living in the most peaceful era in our species’ existence.”

(Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, 2011)

HERE ARE SOME REASONS:

- In 1984, **30 years** have passed during which **none of the world's major powers have waged war** on each other.
- Today, in 2014, **another 30 years** have been added to this warfree period, making it the longest time span of peace between major power since the Roman Empire: the **LONG PEACE**.
- Based on the “Armed Conflict Dataset” by Gleditsch et al. (2013), the Human Security Report documents a decline in the global number of **inter-state wars** since the end of decolonization as well as a decline in the global number of **civil wars** since the end of the Cold War.
- The same source reports that the relative and absolute **number of lost human lives** in war, civil war, genocide, and terrorism has declined even more dramatically over this period.
- The dataset on “Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes” (NAVCO) by Chenoweth and Lewis (2013) shows that **mass insurrections against tyranny** around the world have **turned increasingly non-violent** over recent decades; and they have proven more successful in ending dictatorships where this turn to non-violence happened.
- Despite authoritarian reversals, data by Freedom House (2012) show a long-term **spread in democratic freedoms and human rights** that protect increasing proportions of the world population from state repression.

SOCIAL SCIENTISTS PROPOSE VARIOUS EXPLANATIONS OF THE LONG PEACE:

- The **Democratic Peace Thesis** suggests that democracies are less likely to wage wars because the costs of war are disproportionately imposed on the population. Thus, a system designed to give the population a voice and a vote is less likely to wage wars (Doyle 1986; Gartzke 2007; McDonald 2009).
- The Democratic Peace Thesis exists in two versions: the “**dyadic peace**” thesis suggests that democracies are less likely to fight each other (Russett & O’Neal 2001); the “**monadic peace**” thesis claims that democracies are less likely to fight any type of regime and are inherently less violent (Forsberg 2007; Stockemer 2008).
- The **Capitalist Peace Thesis** suggests that grown affluence, trade interdependence and the rise of knowledge economies make war increasingly less profitable. Thus, democracies are less likely to wage wars only insofar as they are affluent, trade-dependent and knowledge-based (Hegre et al. 2010; Dorussen & Ward 2011).
- The **State Peace Thesis** suggests that the evolution of states with a monopoly of violence and the capacity to guarantee order has an inherently pacifying effect in inner-state affairs. Because of the growth of international law and international regulatory regimes, the inner-state pacifying tendencies spill over to the international arena, promoting inter-state peace (Elias 1987; Nazareyeta 2012).
- Pinker (2011) claims that these tendencies are driven by deep-seated **changes in mass values** that make violence less acceptable and he explains this value change by “**enlightening forces,**” such as rising education and access to information.

A GREAT IDEA - THE ESCALATOR OF REASON:

Pinker argues that these enlightening forces elevate people on the “**escalator of reason.**” He coincides in this view with **Flynn** (2014) who provides evidence of **rising IQ-levels** in developed societies: these rising IQs indicate a growth in people’s cognitive capacities, which include empathy and the **ability to internalize universal humanistic norms.** These norms are inherently non-violent (are we climbing Kohlberg’s stages of moral reasoning?)

A BIG RESEARCH GAP:

Pinker and Flynn both propose great ideas but they do not really theorize the **mechanisms of moral evolution**, nor do they provide the **evidence for these mechanisms**. This is the gap I'll try to fill.

FREEDOM RISING

Human Empowerment and the
Quest for Emancipation

CHRISTIAN WELZEL



CAMBRIDGE

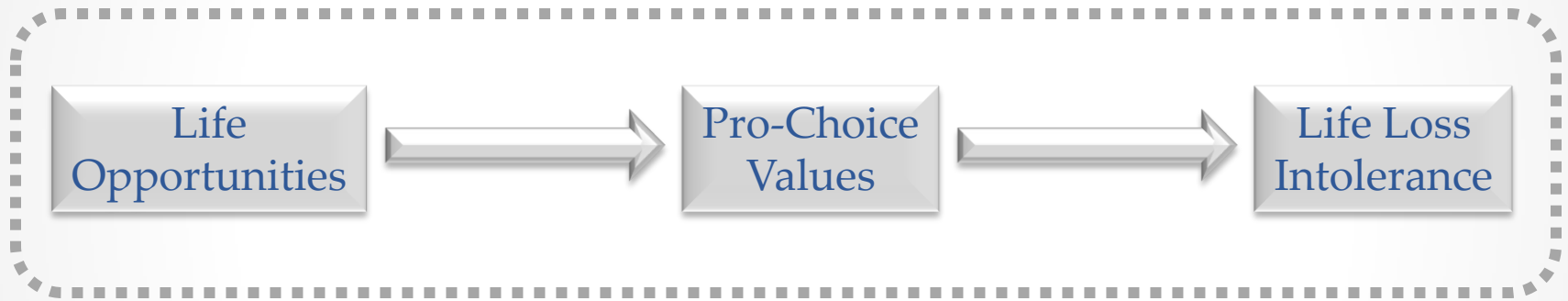
THE HUMANISTIC TRANSFORMATION OF MORAL NORMS (part I):

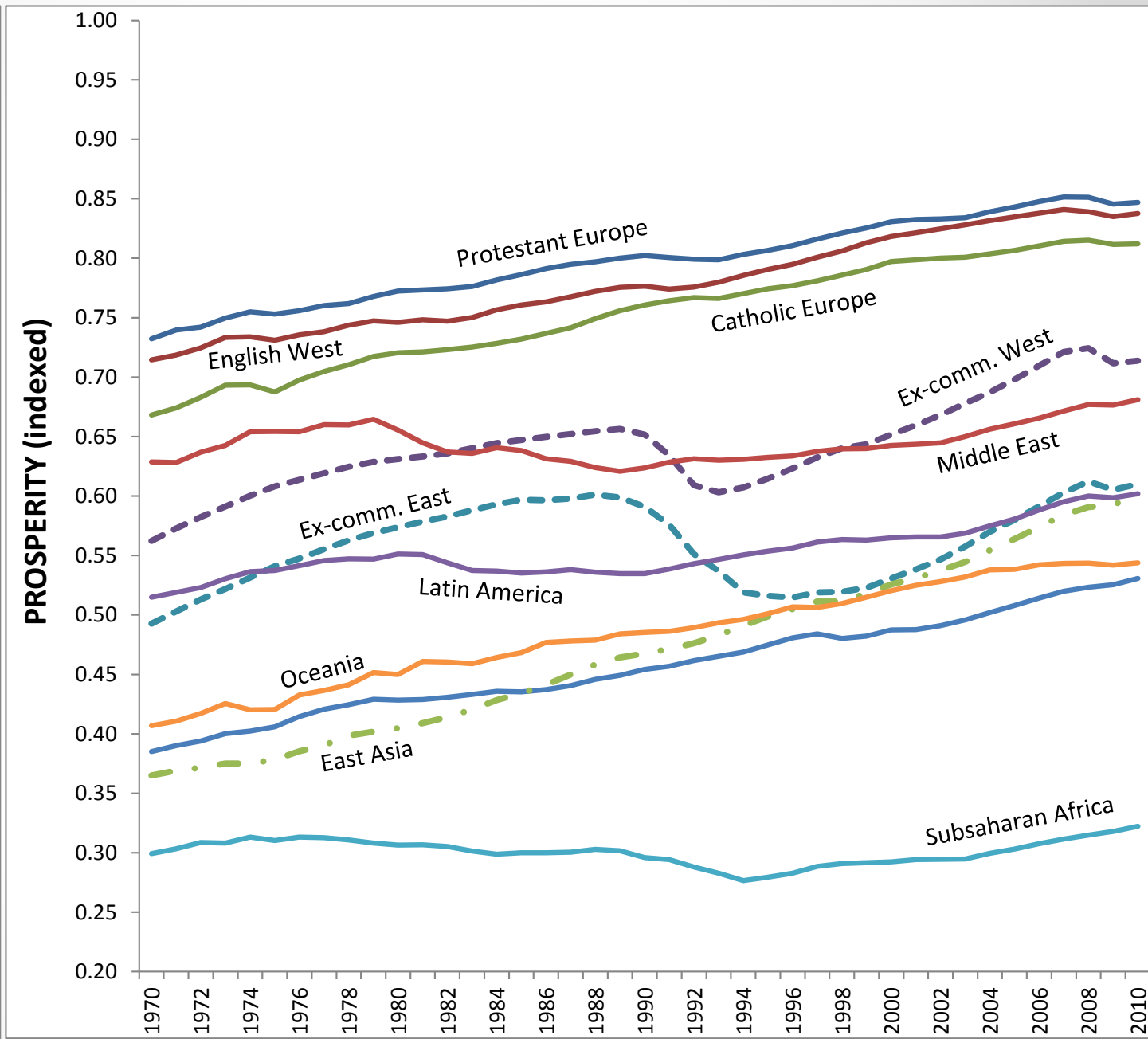
- Through improving material conditions, easier access to education and information and longer life expectancies, the **lives of increasing proportions of the world population have been improving** over recent decades.
- The engine of these improvements is consumer-oriented technological development: available on a mass scale, **new technologies** provide people with tools, devices and schemes that prolong our lives and give us more options to use our time for things we like to do and things that promote our personal development. We face rising opportunities for self-realization on a mass scale.
- For increasing population segments, **the nature of life changes from a source of threats to suffer into a source of opportunities to thrive.**
- Accordingly, entire population segments climb the “**utility ladder of freedoms**”: practicing and tolerating universal freedoms becomes increasingly vital to use the options that a more promising life holds on offer.
- In recognition of their ascending opportunities, people embrace **emancipative values** that emphasize **universal freedoms**.
- The rise of emancipative values is particularly significant in a domain where traditional family, fertility and sex norms blocked emancipatory gains since the ages: **reproductive freedoms** (I label the subset of emancipative values in the domain of reproductive freedoms “**pro-choice norms**”).

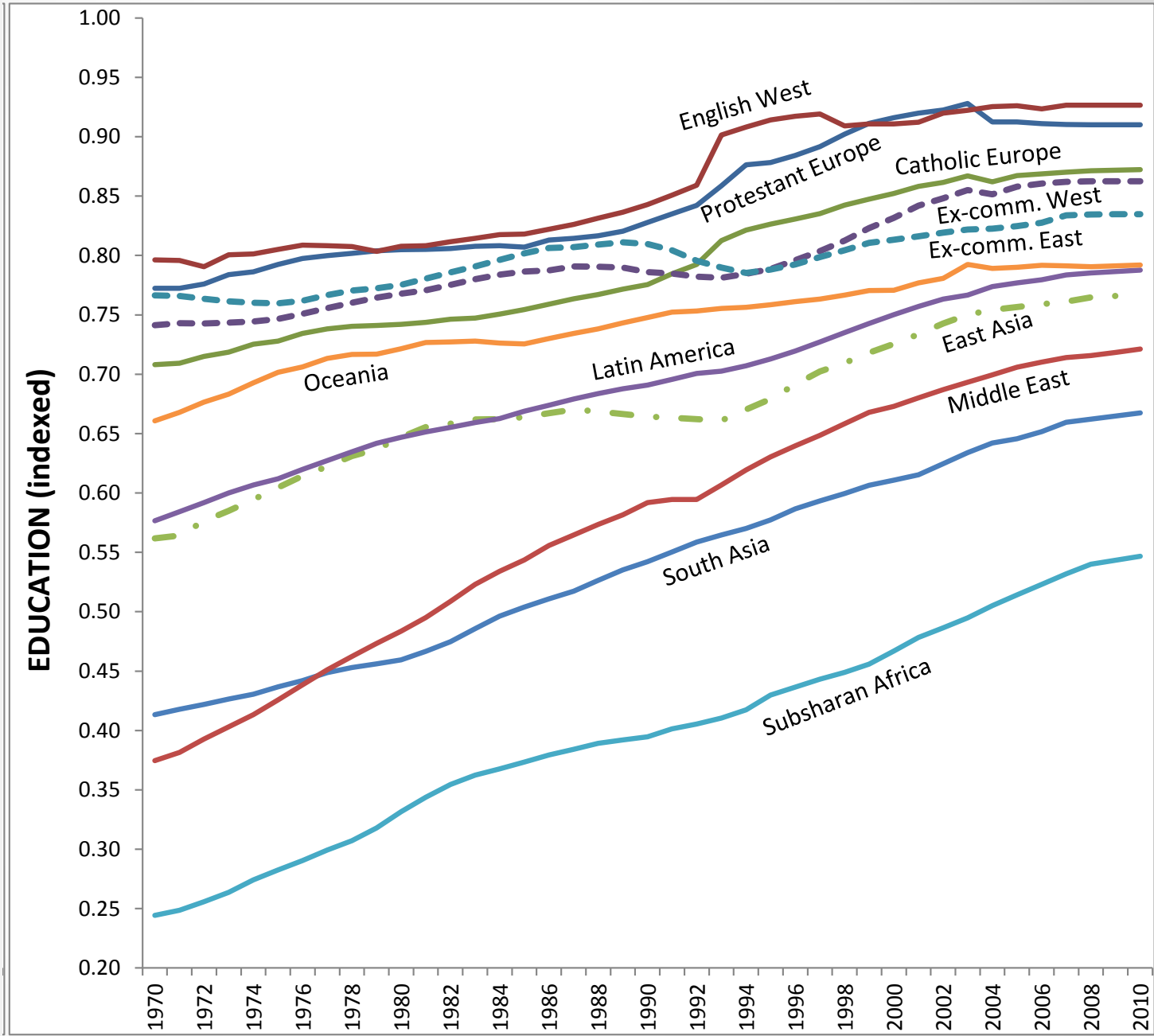
THE HUMANISTIC TRANSFORMATION OF MORAL NORMS (part II):

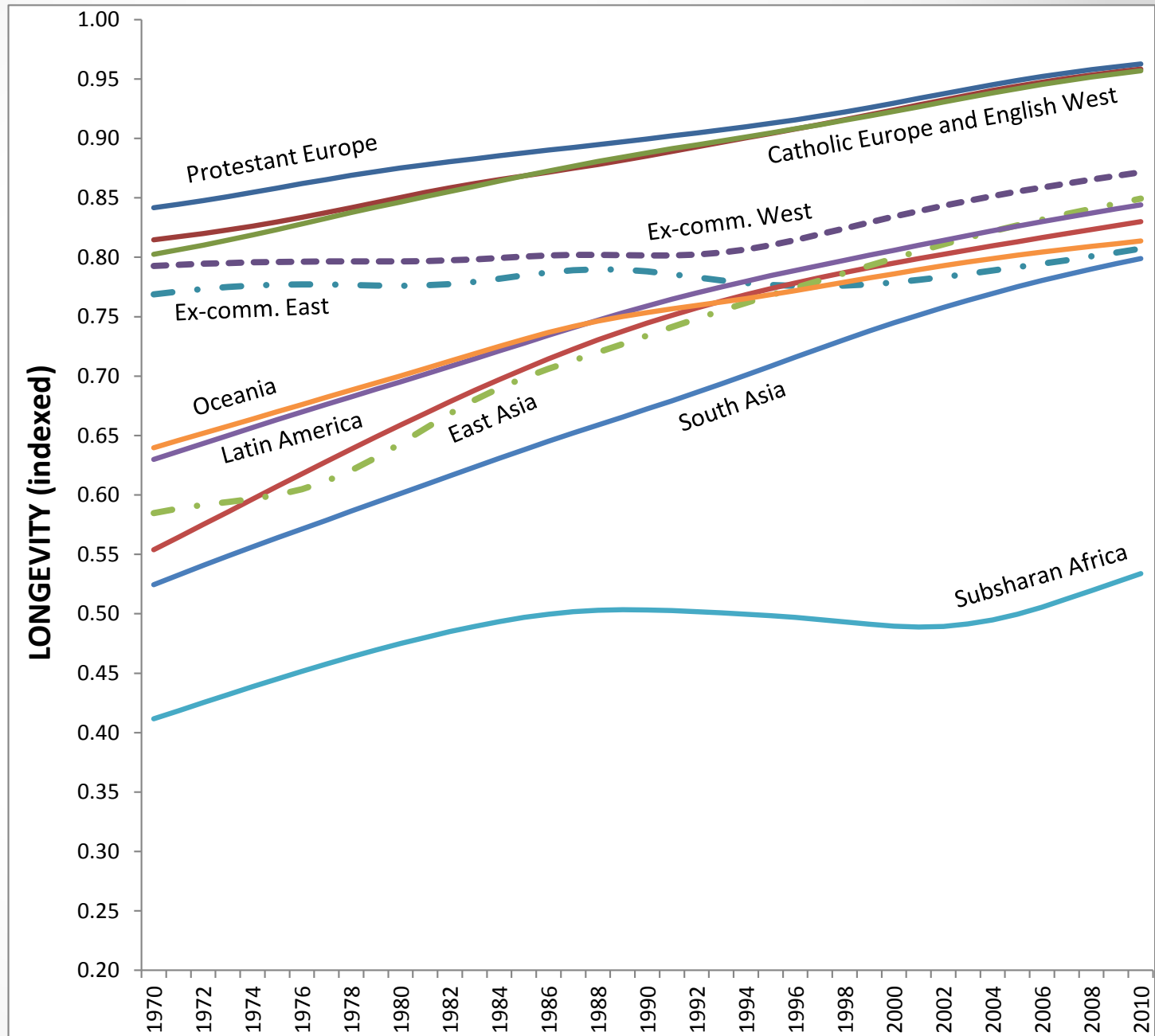
- When pro-choice norms become prevalent, people begin to see the sacrifice of lives in war (and in other acts of violence) increasingly as an intolerable waste of human potential: **instead of sacrificing their life, people insist on living it and living it the way they choose.**
- This **humanistic transformation of morality** is possible because our existence is shaped by an **opportunity-value link** that adjusts our subjective values to objective options. This link is essential to human livability and functioning, keeping our lives in touch with reality.
- Because of this opportunity-value link, human civilization is capable of moral evolution. And this **evolution takes a humanistic turn as improving living conditions elevate large population segments on the utility ladder of freedoms.**
- As this happens, **the Long Peace is underscored by an increasingly solid mass basis.**

Humanistic Transformation of Moral Norms

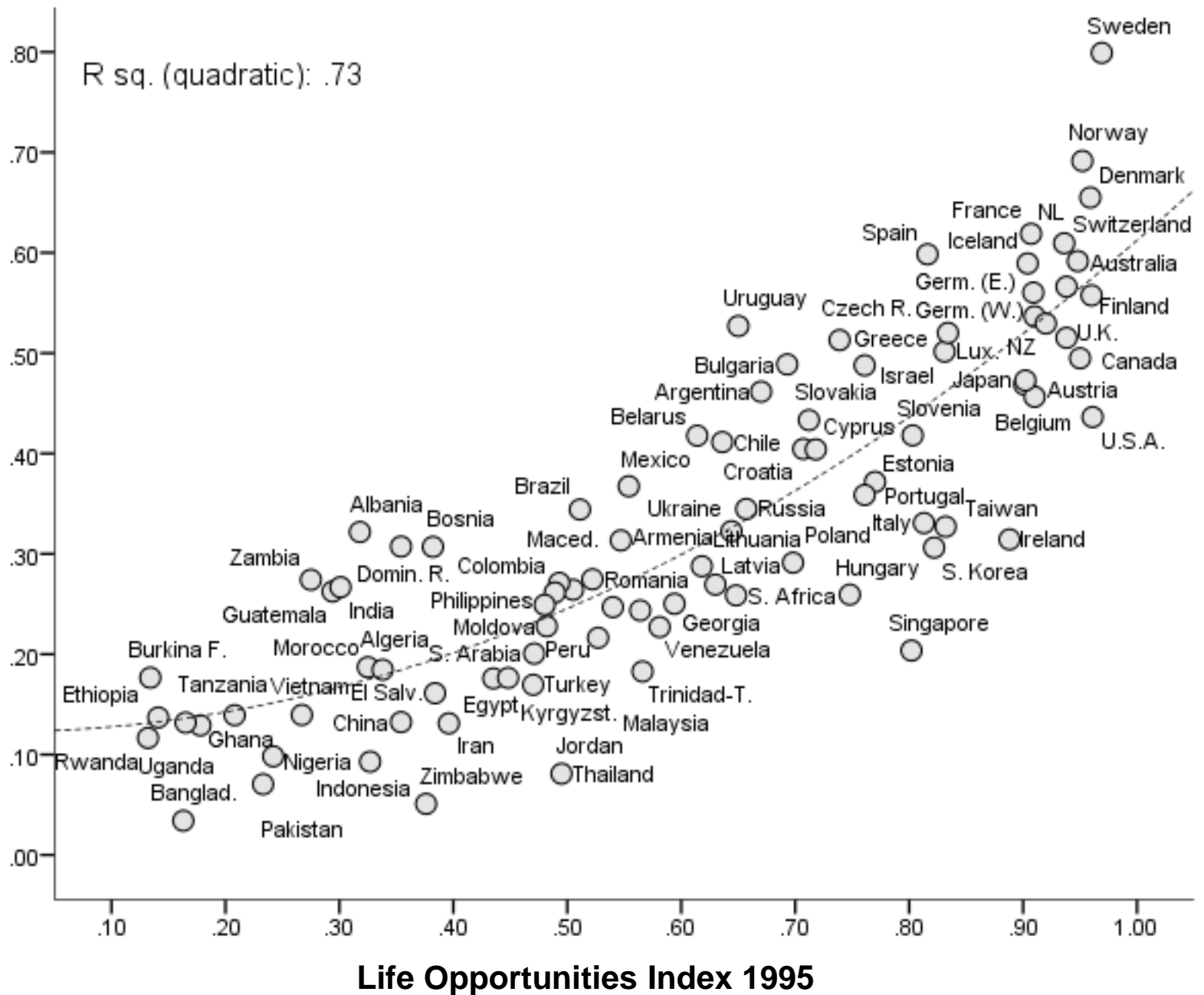


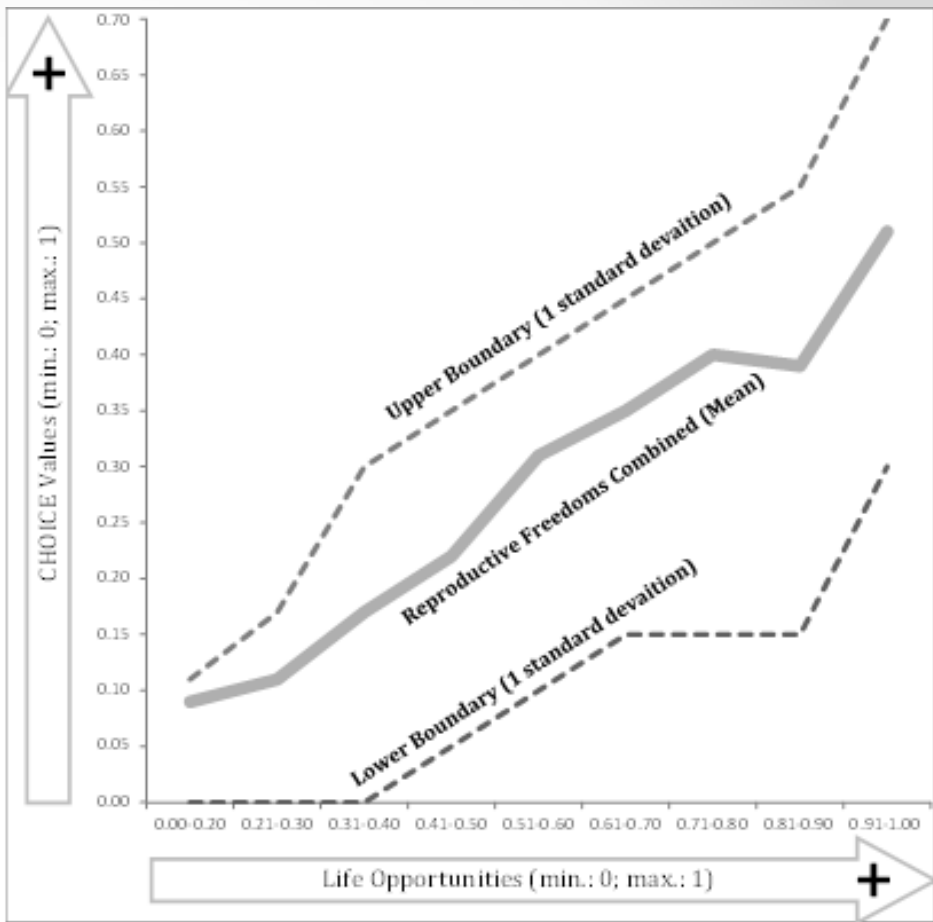
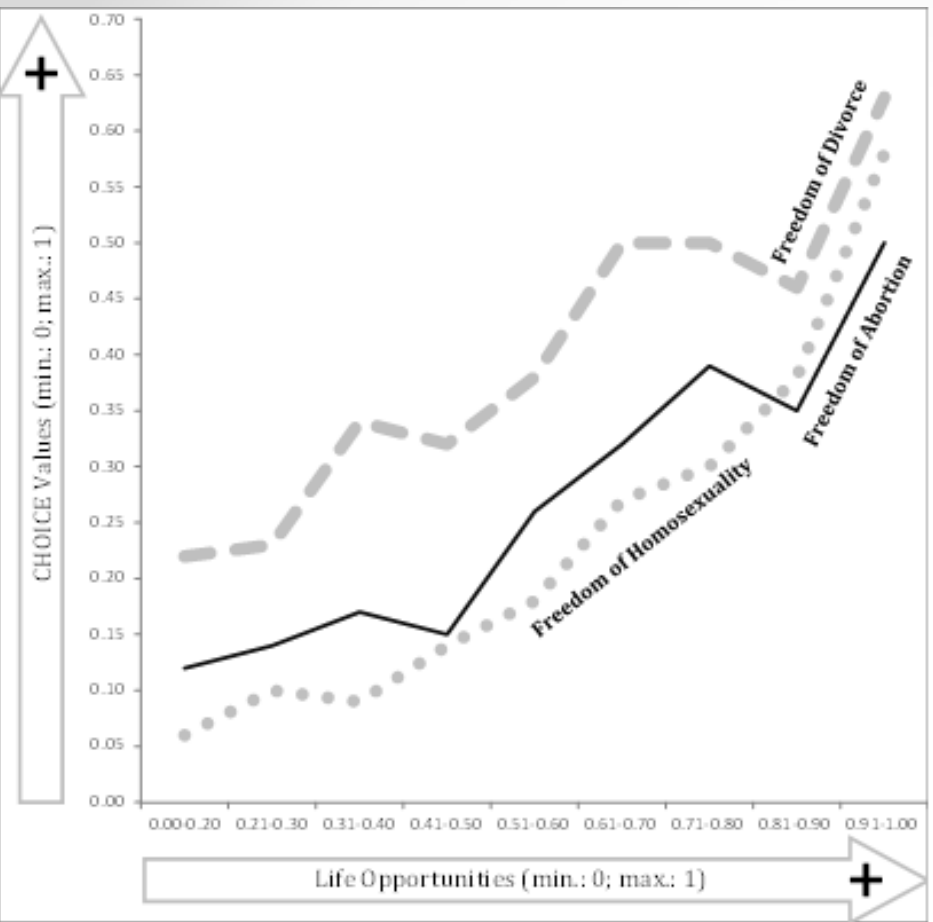






Pro-Choice Norms 1995-2005

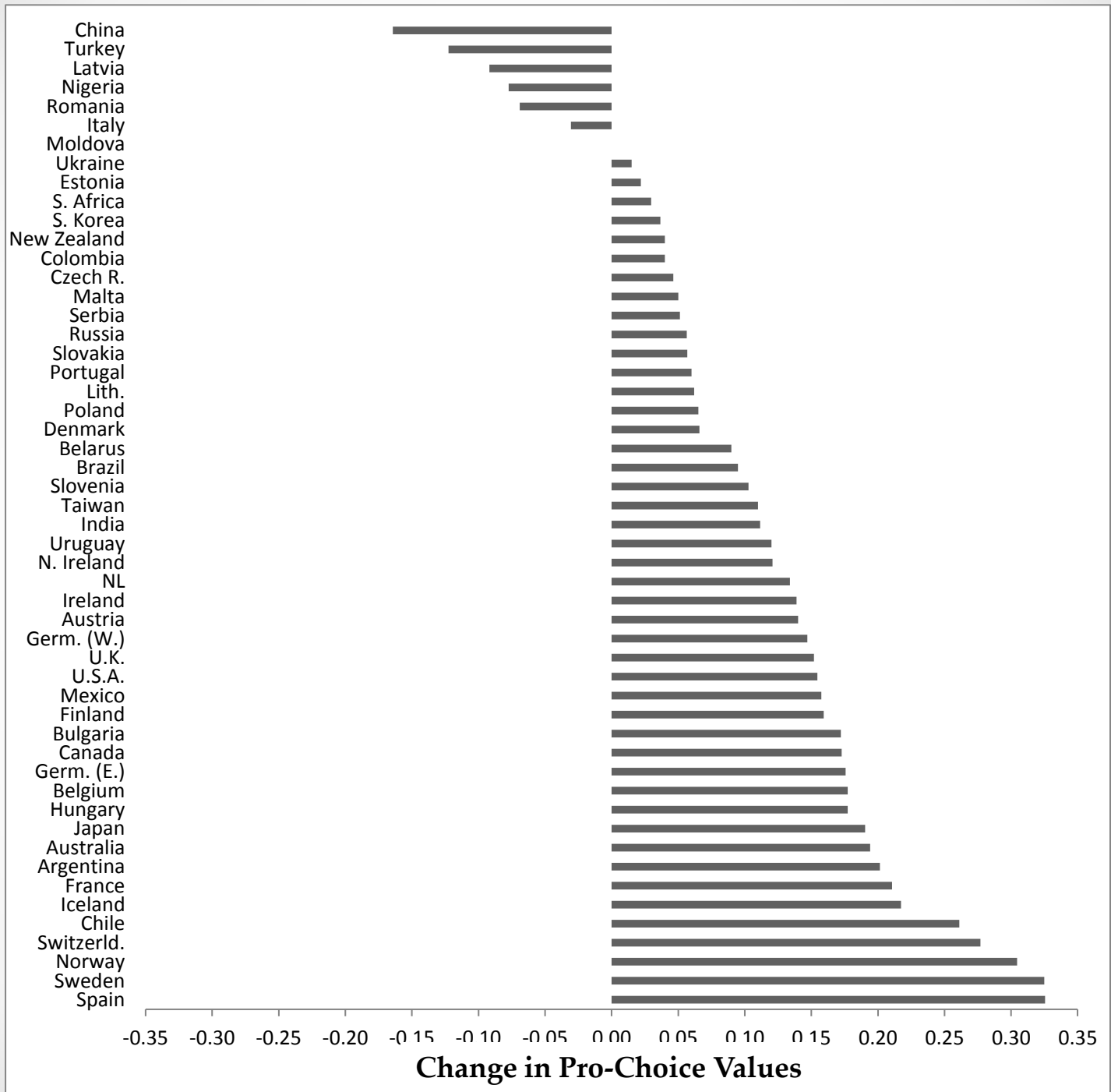




Life Opportunities I Index (respondents per category):

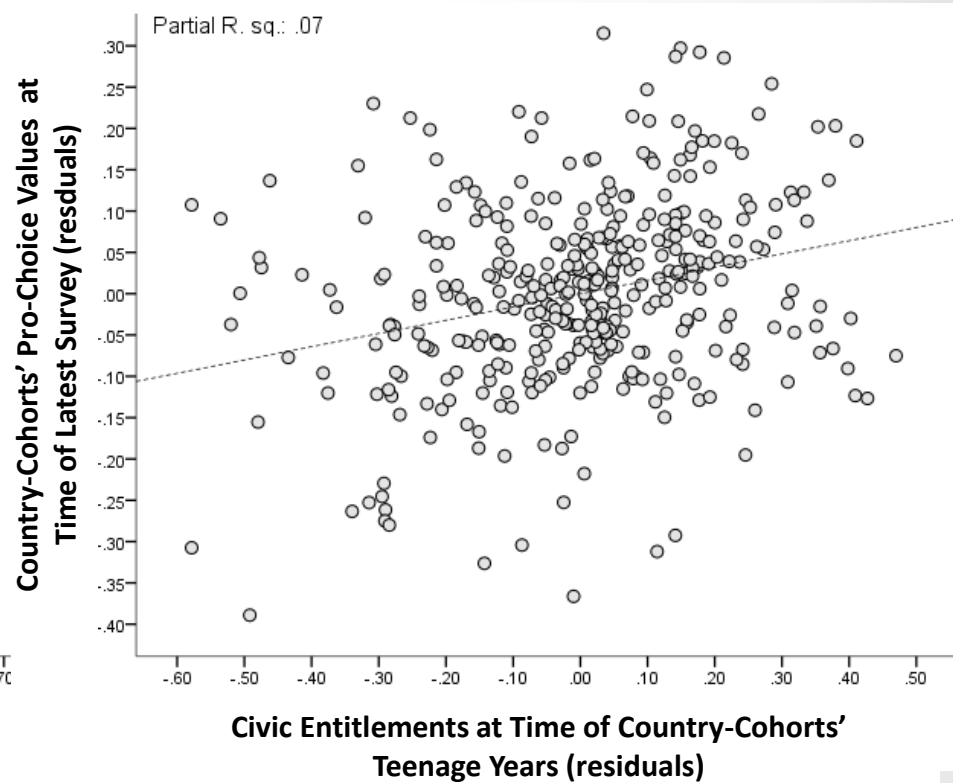
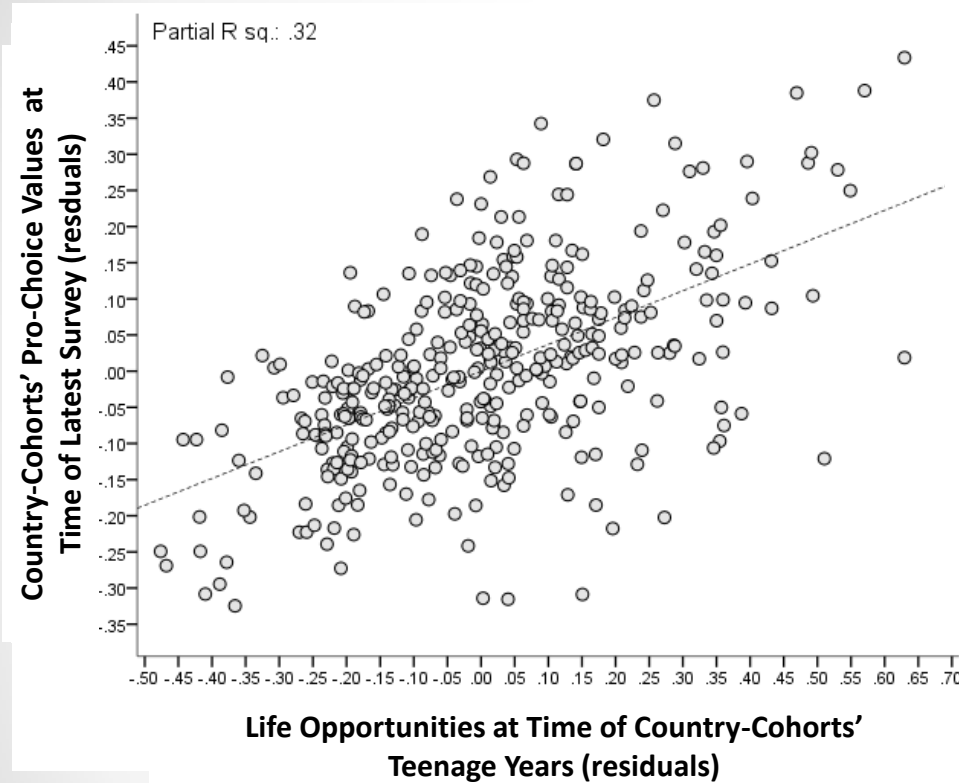
0.00-0.20	8000
0.21-0.30	8000
0.31-0.40	16000
0.41-0.50	14000
0.51-0.60	14000
0.61-0.70	11000
0.71-0.80	9000
0.81-0.90	9000
0.91-1.00	18000

Data from latest available sample per society; national samples weighted to equal size (N = 1,500 per society).

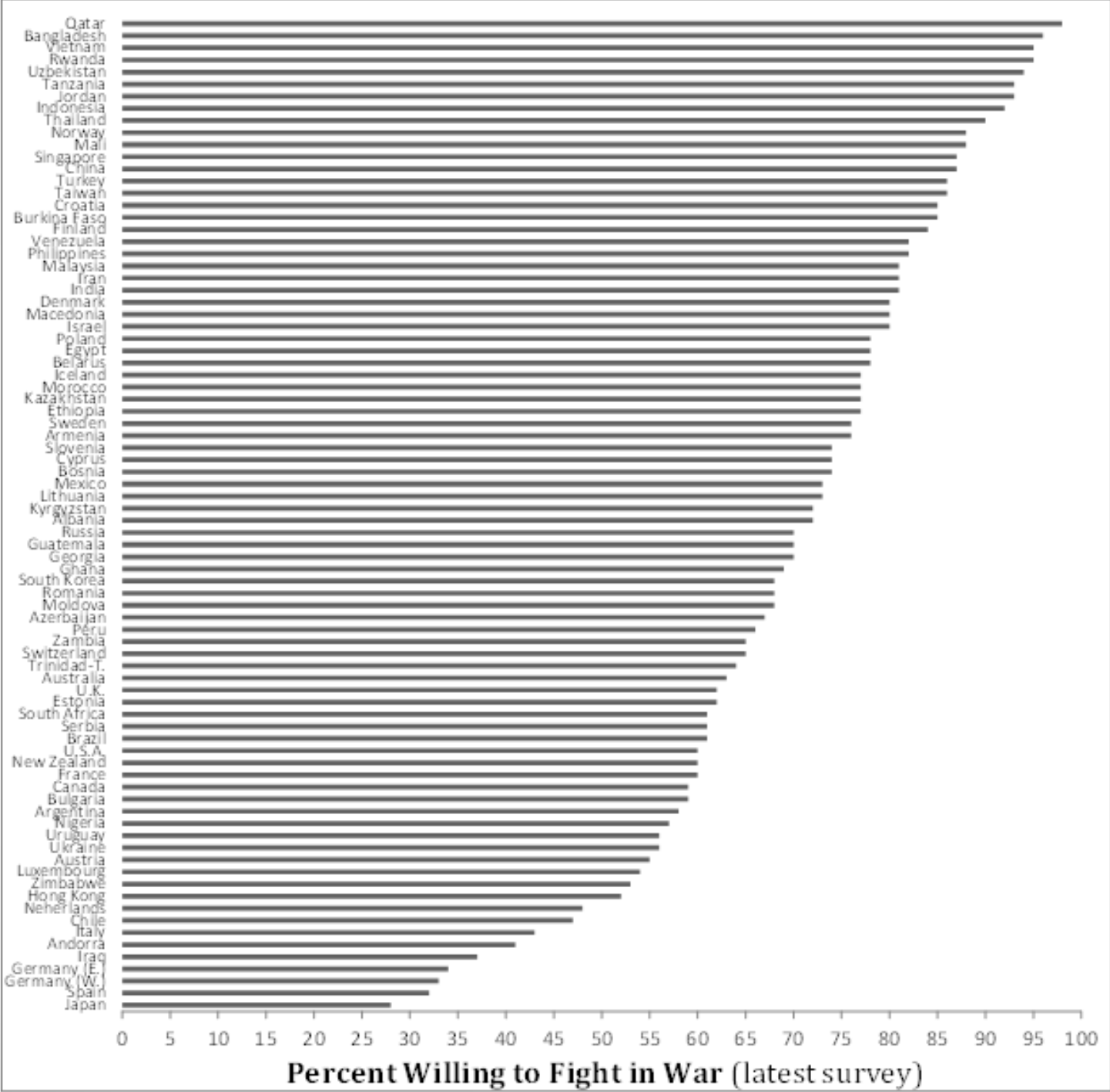


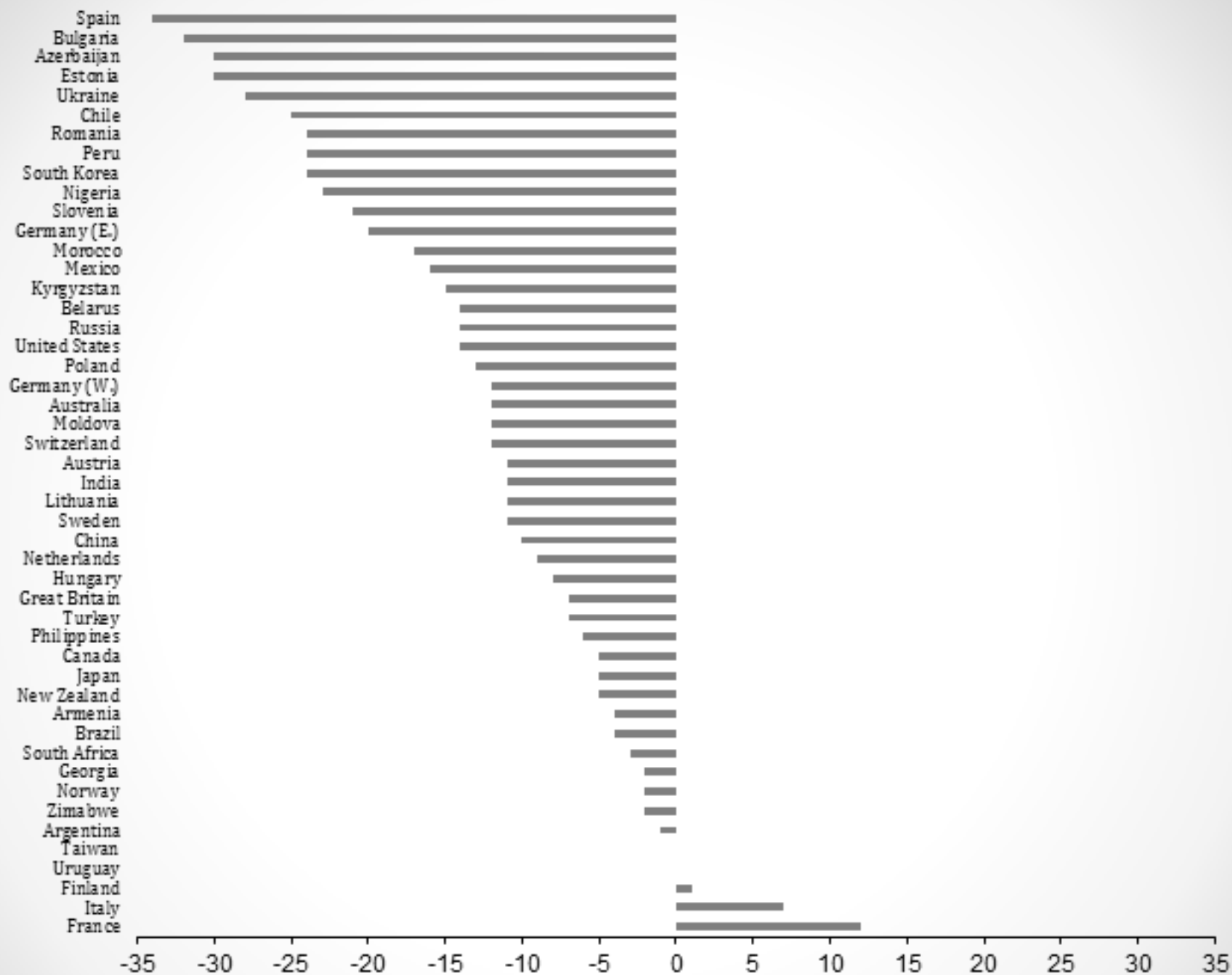
Long-term Partial Effect of Life Opportunities on Pro-Choice Values Controlling for Civic Entitlements

Long-term Partial Effect of Civic Entitlements on Pro-Choice Values Controlling for Life Opportunities

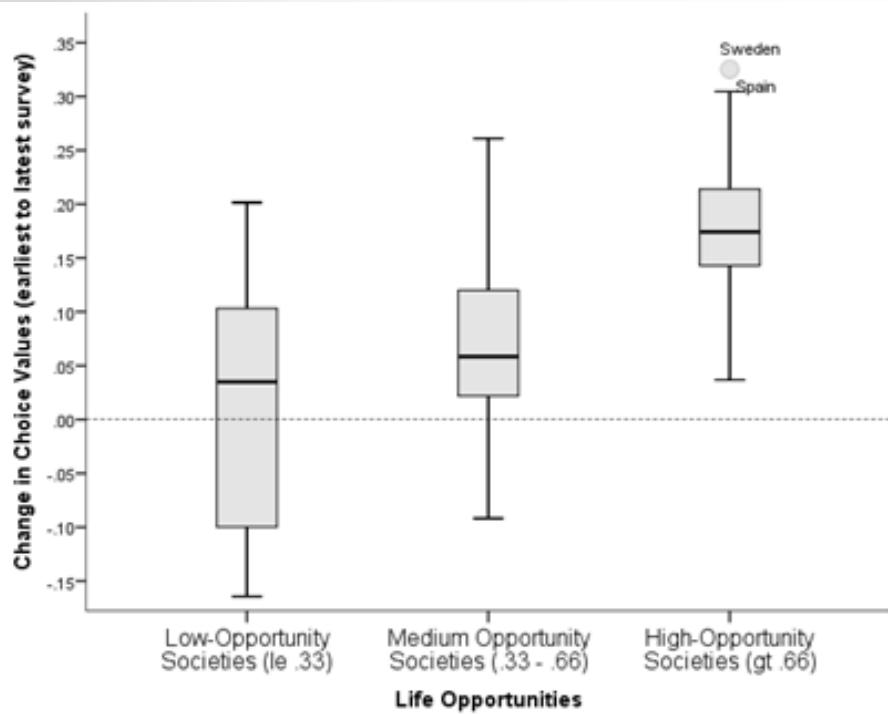


Note: Unit of analysis are country-cohorts (6 cohorts per 85 societies equals 510 observation units). Existential opportunities proxied by Vanhanen data on the combined literacy and urbanization rate; civic entitlements proxied by Vanhanen's democratization index (see Online Appendix for details).





Percent Point Change in Public Willing to Fight in War (earliest to latest survey)

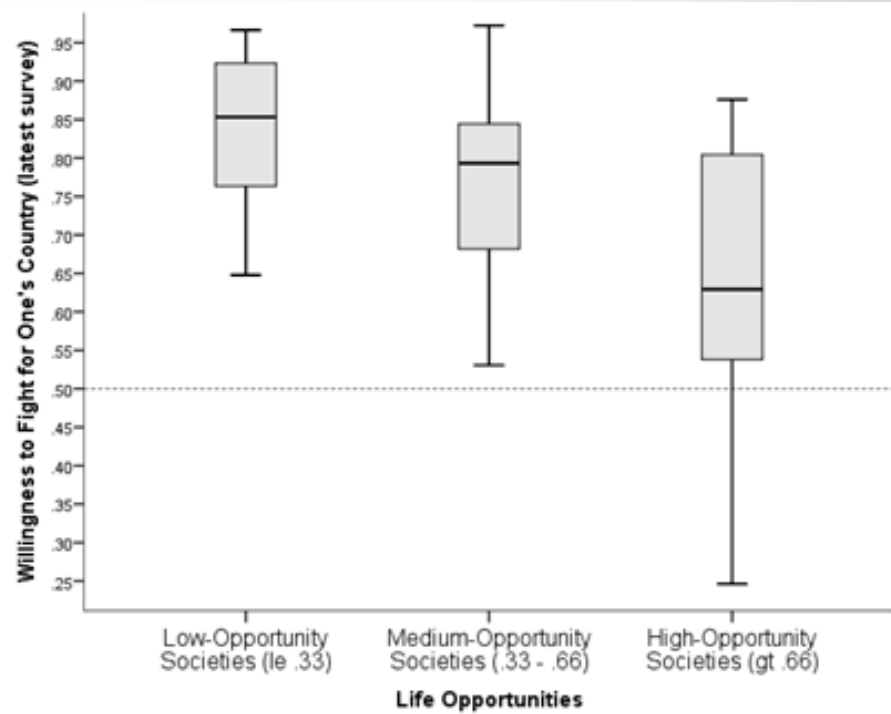


Life Opportunities II Index

Low-Opportunity Societies: Argentina, Brazil, China, Colombia, India, Nigeria, South Africa, Turkey.

Medium-Opportunity Societies: Belarus, Bulgaria, Chile, Czech R., Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Malta, Mexico, Moldova, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, Uruguay.

High-Opportunity Societies: Austria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany (E., W.), Iceland, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, The Netherlands, Norway, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, U.K., U.S.A.



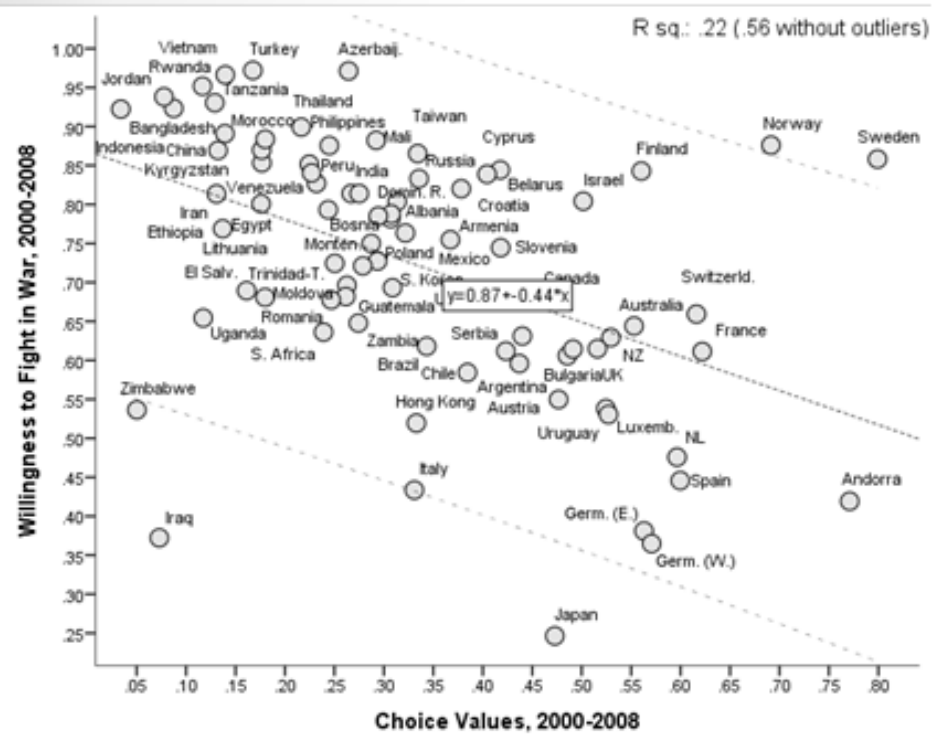
Life Opportunities I Index

Low-Opportunity Societies: Albania, Algeria, Bangladesh, Burkina F., Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

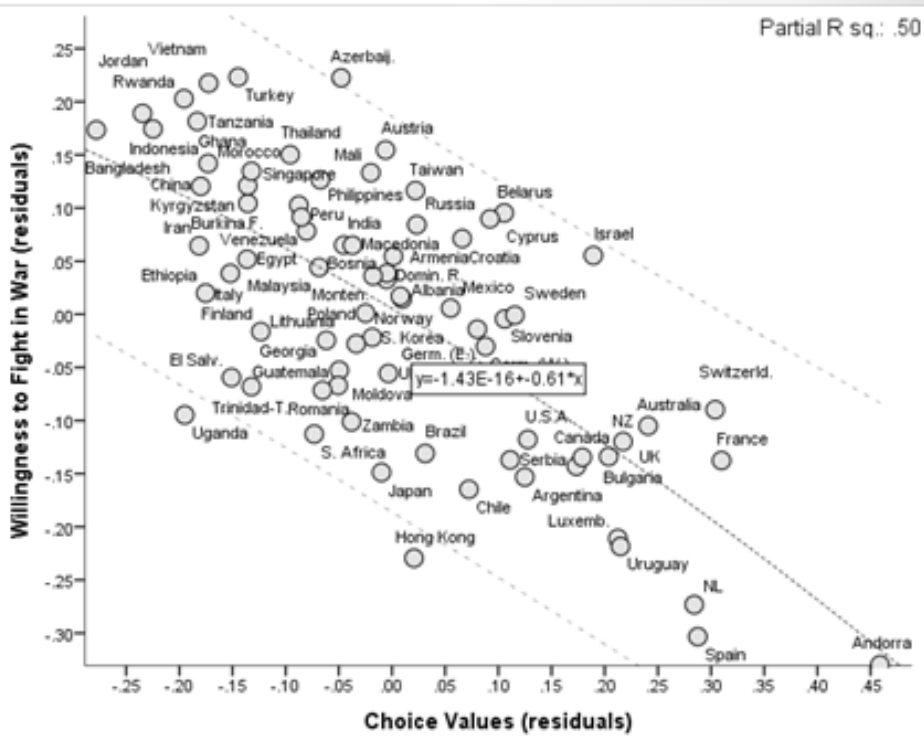
Medium-Opportunity Societies: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Domin. R., Egypt, El Salv., Georgia, Iran, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Malaysia, Mexico, Moldova, Morocco, Peru, Philippines, Romania, Russia, S. Africa, S. Arabia, Serbia, Thailand, Trinidad-T., Turkey, Ukraine, Uruguay, Venezuela.

High-Opportunity Societies: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech R., Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germ. (E., W.), Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxemb., Malta, NL, Norway, NZ, Poland, Portugal, S. Korea, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, U.K., U.S.A.

Before Controls



After Controls



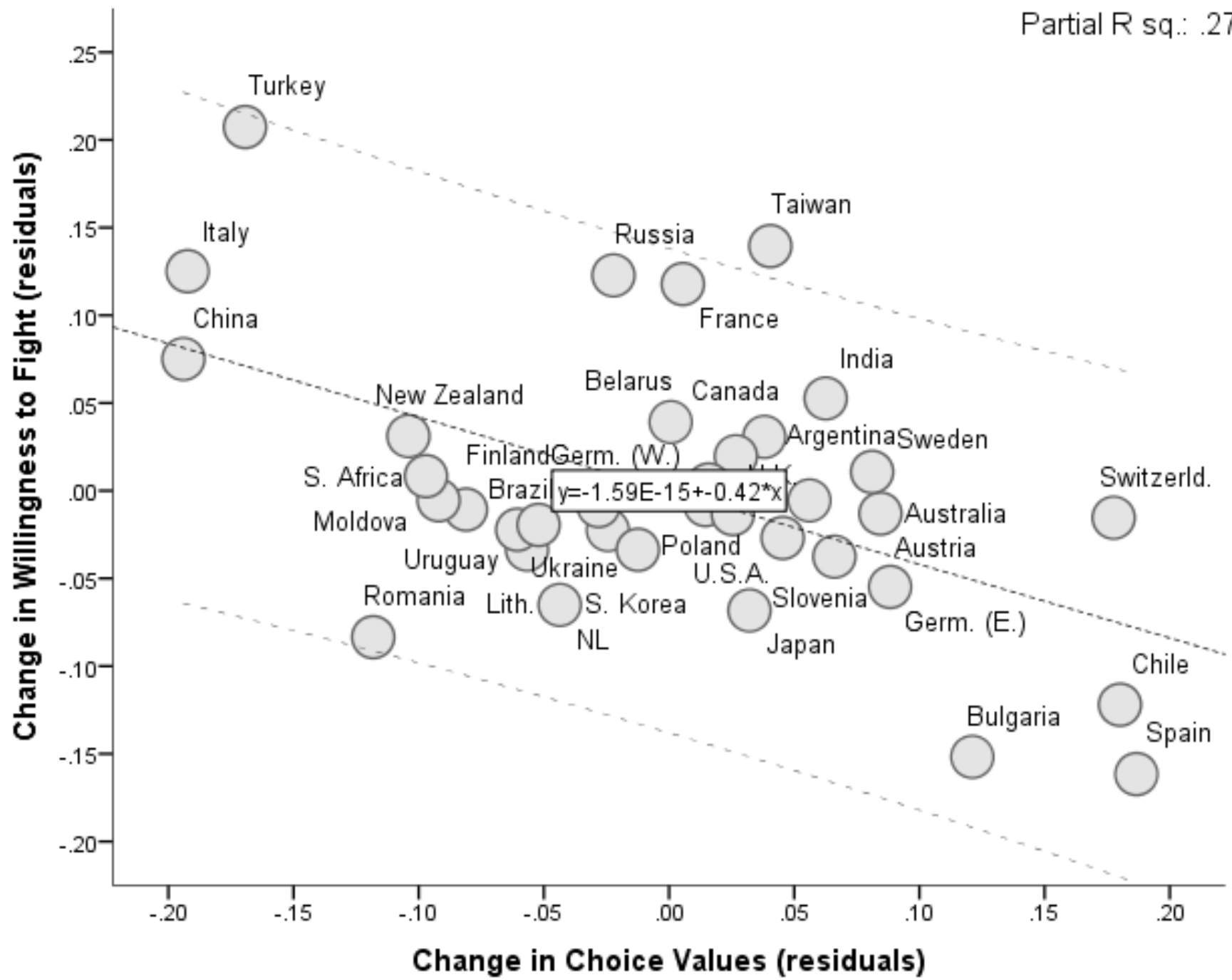


Table 1. Explaining Willingness to Fight for One's Country (national-level regression analysis)

PREDICTORS:	DEPENDENT VARIABLE: Willingness to Fight				
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Life Opportunities I	- .28 (-3.42) ***	- .23 (-3 .77) ***	- .05 (-0 .60)		
Enduring Democracy	- .07 (-0.92)	- .11 (-1 .85) *	- .06 (-1 .16)		
WWII Defeat		- .26 (-4 .99) ***	- .26 (-5 .62) ***	- .27 (-5 .04) ***	- .25 (-5 .51) ***
Nordic Experience		.25 (3 .69) ***	.34 (5 .43) ***	.32 (5 .34) ***	.34 (5 .47) ***
Choice Values			- .59 (-4 .58) ***	- .59 (-7 .22) ***	- .61 (-8 .48) ***
International Cooperation				- .09 (-1 .60)	
External Security				.15 (1 .50)	
Internal Security				- .08 (-1.55)	
Constant	.93 (22.84) ***	.93 (27.55) ***	.93 (35.13) ***	.99 (20.66) ***	.94 (37.31) ***
Adjusted R-squared	.26	.55	.65	.66	.65
Number of Societies (<i>N</i>)	73	73	73	63	77

Notes: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with their T-values in parentheses. All variables normalized into a scale range from a theoretical minimum of 0 to a theoretical maximum of 1.0. Test statistics for heteroskedasticity (White-test) and multicollinearity reveal no violation of OLS assumptions. Variables are measured at the time of the latest survey for each country (1995-2005). Significance levels: ****p* < .001; ** *p* < .01; * *p* < .05

Table 3. Explaining *Change* in Willingness to Fight for One's Country (dynamic regression analysis)

PREDICTORS:	DEPENDENT VARIABLE: Willingness to Fight at time T_2			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Willingness to Fight at T_1	.67 (6.17) ***	.54 (4.93) ***	.77 (4.99) ***	.50 (4.92) ***
WWII Defeat	- .07 (-1.08)	- .08 (-1.06)	- .01 (-0.01)	- .11 (-2.41) **
Nordic Experience	.09 (1.41)	.15 (2.42) **	.05 (0.70)	.18 (3.09) ***
$\Delta (T_2 - T_1)$ Democratic Freedoms	- .09 (-1.45)			
$\Delta (T_2 - T_1)$ Life Opportunities II		- .19 (-1.67)		
$\Delta (T_2 - T_1)$ Internat. Cooperation			- .22 (-1.52)	
$\Delta (T_2 - T_1)$ Choice Values				- .40 (-3.17) ***
Constant	.17 (2.01) *	.28 (2.95) ***	.12 (1.04)	.33 (3.76) ***
Adjusted R-squared	.70	.76	.69	.80
Number of Societies (N)	34	35	29	36

Notes: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with their T-values in parentheses. All variables normalized into a scale range from a theoretical minimum of 0 to a theoretical maximum of 1.0. Test statistics for heteroskedasticity (White-test) and multicollinearity reveal no violation of OLS assumptions. Influential statistics indicate Taiwan and Romania as opposite-end outliers; Turkey and Spain are opposite-end leverage cases (see Figure 6). Variables are measured at the time of the latest survey for each country (1995-2005). Significance levels: *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

T_2 : Time of latest survey if at least ten years after first survey (15 surveys from WVS round 4 with modal year 2000 and 37 surveys from round 5 with modal survey year 2006; mean year of T_2 is 2004)

T_1 : Time of earliest survey if at least ten years before last survey (23 surveys from WVS round 1 with modal survey year 1982, 22 surveys from round 2 with modal survey year 1990 and 7 surveys from round 3 with modal survey year 1996; mean year of T_1 is 1987).

$\Delta (T_2 - T_1)$: Minimum time distance is 10 years, maximum is 27 years, mean time distance is 17 years.

Table 4. Multi-level Model Explaining Willingness to Fight for One's Country

PREDICTORS:	DEPENDENT VARIABLE: Willingness to Fight for One's Country	
<i>Individual-level Effects (IL):</i>		
Female Sex	- .10	(-13.29) ***
Birth Year (indexed)	.08	(2.64) ***
Formal Education	- .01	(-0.51)
Confidence in Army	.19	(10.57) ***
National Pride	.11	(14.43) ***
Democratic Preference	- .01	(-0.29)
Choice Values	- .03	(-1.95) **
<i>Societal-level Effects (SL):</i>		
WWII Defeat	- .26	(-6.39) ***
Nordic Experience	.31	(6.77) ***
Choice Values	- .58	(-8.13) ***
Constant	.80	(79.03) ***
Number of Observations (N)	74,372 individuals in 71 countries	
Error Reduction:		
Within-country Variation of DV	09.2% (07.9% of total)	
Between-country Variation of DV	71.8% (10.1% of total)	

Notes: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with their T-values in parentheses. Models calculated with HLM based on robust standard errors. Latest survey used from each country, weighting country samples to equal size without changing the overall N. Individual-level variables are country-mean centered; country-level variables are global-mean centered. Percent error reduction calculated from random variance in empty model. 14% of the variance in the DV is between, 86% within countries.

На блáго мíра

The Bonobo Principle:
“Make love, not war!”
(John Lennon)

