Good Government
Nordic and East Asian Perspectives

Geir Helgesen and Uichol Kim
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Preface

This booklet is published a few weeks before the fourth Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM) is to be held in Copenhagen in September 2002. ASEM is a forum for state leaders with the basic aim of developing relations between the two regions. The research group behind this publication was inspired by the ASEM initiative of 1996, but has worked independently of the ASEM process. As concerned scholars from both the Nordic countries and East Asia, we decided to embark upon a study that could contribute to bridging the cultural gap between the two regions. Thus, in 1997 this group decided to form the Eurasia Political Culture Research Network (EPCReN) consortium, and developed a questionnaire aimed at gauging attitudes and opinions about good government in East Asia and the Nordic countries respectively. It is our hope that Good Government – Nordic and East Asian Perspectives will provide food for thought for people interested in the world in which we live. We approached this study without preconceived notions, focusing on themes and issues deemed of importance to the relationship between government and the governed. We have found similarities and we have found differences. Both are part of a larger picture comparing East to West. There are reasons to believe that the East-West gap can and will be bridged. One reason, interestingly enough, is that both sides have rich cultural traditions that have survived modernization and will survive globalization. Despite differences, the fact that both sides cherish their traditions while developing as part of the modern world actually binds them together. The Danish ambassador to Singapore, Jørgen Ørstrøm Møller, eloquently spells out what is needed when he states that:

[t]olerance is not to open the floodgates for everybody to behave as they like. Tolerance constitutes the right to think and act differently than other people but within a mutually agreed framework. Tolerance defined in this way forces us to know precisely where we stand ourselves. Other opinions must be measured against our own opinion. We must know what we think and why we think in the way we do – what is our mindset and why do we have it and why do we think it is the right one for us? Thinking in this way opens the door for realizing that what is best for us may not necessarily be best for others. And that gives birth to the crucial observation that the heart of tolerance is that we care for other peoples' destiny even if we do not agree with them. Understanding is the key to tolerance. And communication is the key to understanding how other people think and why it may be different from what we think. Unless we communicate and try to understand each other, there is no hope of comparing different ways of thinking with the ultimate objective of shaping a set of values to serve as the mutually agreed framework. Without such a framework tolerance becomes a beautiful but empty shell. And without striving for that objective there is not much hope for internationalism. (NIAS Nyt No. 2, 2002, p.10)

It is in this spirit that we present our research results, hopeful that they can contribute to the ongoing project of building a bridge of East-West understanding.
The Research Network
The ‘Good Government’ study was conducted as a collaborative project with the following active participants: Prof. Shen Mingming, Director, Research Center for Contemporary China, Peking University; Prof. Ken’ichi Ikeda, Department of Social Psychology, Tokyo University; Prof. Susumu Yamaguchi, Department of Social Psychology, Tokyo University; Prof. Ahn Byong Man, President, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul; Prof. Hahm Chai Bong, Dept. of Political Science, Yonsei University, Seoul; Prof. Lew Seok-Choon, Institute of Sociology, Yonsei University, Seoul; Prof. Kim Uichol, Department of Psychology, Chung-Ang University, Seoul; Prof. Torbjörn Lodén, Department of Oriental Languages, Stockholm University; Oscar Almén, doctoral candidate, Peace and Development Studies, Gothenburg University; Prof. Åke Daun, Department of Ethnology, Stockholm University; Dr. Annamari Konttinen, Department of Sociology, University of Turku; Tage Bild, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, Copenhagen University; Prof. Søren Risbjerg Thomsen, Department of Political Science, Aarhus University, Ass. Prof. Hans-Jørgen Nielsen; Department of Political Science, Copenhagen University; Geir Helgesen, senior researcher and network coordinator, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies.

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Introduction

This small publication aims to enhance and broaden mutual understanding between East and West. In this post-cold-war era, a unique chance exists to take advantage of the fact that Europe and Asia are both part of the same landmass (Japan being located nearby on the Eastern fringe). Despite geographical distances and traditional hindrances such as differences in language and cultural traits, we now have a chance of building something together. We now have an opportunity to see Eurasia as an entity that already exists physically, but has to be created and shaped by people mentally.

Globalization presents a challenge to societies and cultures all over the world. The reaction to this challenge should not be isolationism and xenophobia, but rather the creation of new and stronger bonds between societies and cultures. International cooperation in the political field and growing economic interdependence demand popular consent – in fact, popular support – to reach their full potential. Even though international cooperation seldom springs from grassroots activities, it must eventually attract popular support in order to operate within a democratic framework.

Why is it important to understand other societies?

Today, serious societal problems cannot be isolated to particular areas, countries or regions. Our global environment and economy defy borders; consequently, social and political problems also transgress borders. Yet, problems cannot be solved nor issues dealt with independently of the people affected by them. People feel, think and act differently. Concepts of right and wrong, good and evil, rational and irrational differ from place to place. So even if one has to think on a global basis, one usually tends to act on a local one. This is the challenge: to act on a local base in a way that will contribute to solving local problems without
creating problems somewhere else. From now on, local action must be taken with due consideration for other localities; ultimately, we always have to bear the global reality in mind, because we now live in a world that thirsts for concerted efforts towards solving a host of problems and creating a sustainable social and ecological environment. To set out in this direction, one needs to know the basic ways of one’s own society as well as those of others. Because we live in a global reality that is not uniform, we have to know more about the various ways in which people feel, think, and act. This booklet ventures to make a small contribution towards the achievement of a deeper mutual East-West understanding.

East Asia and the Nordic countries: an unequal comparison

The East–West comparison is problematic in many ways. Instinctively we know that societies within the two regions are immensely different. Their history, religion, culture and present conditions are very different. Moreover, the entities compared are extremely unequal in size. China, Korea and Japan, making up the core of East Asia, comprise together more than 10 million square kilometres and a population of about 1.5 billion. In comparison, the three Nordic countries relevant to the present study (Denmark, Finland, and Sweden) comprise together 830 thousand square kilometres of land and are populated by less than 20 million people. Within both East Asia and the Nordic region there are dichotomies such as rural–urban, young–old, male–female, high versus low education etc., which can affect the way that people feel, think and act. This makes a survey aiming to document similarities and differences between East and West in a comparative perspective a highly ambitious project. On the other hand, such differences may be overestimated simply because they are so self-evident.

East is East and West is West …

The recent East–West values controversy has taken place between elite groups in East Asia and certain Southeast Asian countries on the one hand and politicians and scholars primarily from the USA on the other. Some European voices have been heard, but the East–West dichotomy has basically been seen as an East Asia–USA controversy. Among Asian scholars the West is often equivalent to the USA, and in general, when globalization is seen as Westernization, ‘Westernization’ actually means Americanization. Europe’s invisibility in the East-West comparisons can be explained by the fact that the region is conceived of as a conglomeration of different countries, each with its own language and culture, and none of them is as important for Asia as the United States. This booklet strives to provide a small contribution towards the achievement of a deeper mutual understanding between East and West.
Introduction

States. Economically and politically, not to mention militarily, the US is and has long been an important player in the Asian region. On top of this, we must consider the significant role that American universities have played in educating members of the economic and political elite in several Asian countries. This includes many professors at Asian universities who educate the new generation of the elite.

The close ties between Asia and the USA are solid because the strings are many and because important fields of societal life are included. They are also fragile, however, because the relationship has been disturbed time and time again by the values discrepancy. Paradoxically, one often finds the most energetic resistance to Westernization among the American-educated elite in Asian countries. Hitherto the USA has generally been seen as the epitome of modernization; the 'new world' in relation to Europe as the 'old world'. This idea is probably loosely founded – as is much writing about modernization and post-modernization – on observations of street-corner societies. Yes, there are identical McDonald's fast-food restaurants everywhere, and young people do seem to have similar tastes and preferences, choosing the same food, fads and fashions everywhere. But because these manifestations are so obvious, their meaning may be overestimated at the expense of the underlying values. Several attitudinal studies suggest, as does the one presented in this publication, that basic values are much more stable than fashions and popular trends. Pop music, fast food, the Internet and mobile phones may have a lesser effect on fundamental values and norms than commonly expected.

To say this does not deny the significance of the present trends. Europe – and not least the Nordic welfare societies – are also vulnerable in relation to globalization in the form of Americanization. A strong tendency to focus on individual rights at the expense of social obligations has gathered momentum in the present political climate and may threaten the communal ideology that underlies the particular Nordic way of living.

There is, in other words, a global development taking place that is met with scepticism in both East Asia and Europe. Whether this is due to some kind of East–West similarity remains to be seen, but in this study we have borne that possibility in mind. The current prospect of redirecting the East–West relationship to include Europe on the Western side may open a new avenue for replacing the East–West controversy with an East–West dialogue. The Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM)
may be the right forum for such a development. That the idea of ASEM was conceived and the project first promoted in Asia makes for a good starting point, since initiatives on the international scene have historically predominantly been a Western prerogative. Another important aspect of the ASEM process is that economy is not the only area of interest. Although trade and economic cooperation are obviously important when the two regions meet to find ways of developing the relationship, social and cultural aspects are, fortunately, also prioritized. ASEM might still primarily be a business for the political elite, but at least there is an expressed will to include wider parts of the population, both East and West, in the process.

From its outset this forum for dialogue has emphasized the need to work towards a better mutual understanding. In 1996 a task force under the European Institute of Asian Studies in Brussels published a booklet entitled *Understanding Asian Values*. The first paragraph of the Executive Summary reads as follows:

Europe has rediscovered Asia. As the European Union further intensifies its relations with Asia, it should initiate a profound debate within Europe, and with Asians, on the fundamentals of their relationship. This may prove to be a challenge, given the unconscious assumption in Europe that Asian countries are gradually becoming "more like Europe". For many Asians, such an assumption demonstrates Europe's lack of understanding of values important for Asian culture, and thus serves as an obstacle to a genuine and respectful EU-Asian dialogue.

We would surmise that efforts to upgrade such debates would be just as significant in Asia as they are in Europe. The prevalence of unstated assumptions like those mentioned above is one main reason why social science research which goes beyond vague impressions and individual observations is necessary to bridge the gap between the two regions.

The ASEM process was initiated by political leaders.¹ The post cold-war situation invited a creative look at the new international landscape. The United States was now the only superpower, Europe continued on its path towards political integration, and in Asia the economic development was, by any standard, impressive. Links between Asia and the USA were strong, as they were between Europe and the USA, but there were no strong links between Asia and Europe. Leaders in both Asia and Europe saw a need to strengthen these, and

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¹ ASEM (Asia Europe Meeting) was initiated by Singapore’s P. M. Goh Chok Tong who conceived the idea at a European–East Asian economic summit organized by the World Economic Forum in Singapore in 1994. (Yeo Lay Hwee, *Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM)* fra spredt samarbejde til bredt partnerskab [From scattered cooperation to broad partnership]. Copenhagen 2002, Danish Institute of International Affairs/DUPI.)
Introduction

The first informal meeting between leaders from the two regions took place in Bangkok in 1996. The ASEM process, bringing Asian and European leaders together in a biannual event, is the first grand-scale attempt to develop closer relations between the two sides. What ASEM needs as a government-to-government link is to reach beyond political formalities and the focus on mutual economic gains and to develop and exchange knowledge about the cultures and the ways of life that dominate the vast area making up Eurasia. Such knowledge can be acquired through collaborating social-science research that is comparative, cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary.

The Eurasia Political Culture Research Network (EPCReN) was established in 1997 to perform just such research. Scholars from China, Denmark, Finland, Japan, Korea and Sweden have cooperated through the EPCReN to develop cross-cultural survey instruments and conduct surveys in East Asia and the Nordic countries. The surveys have focused on opinions and attitudes related to:

1) aspects of power and authority
2) leadership
3) education
4) trust
5) political efficacy
6) views of self and others

It has not been the aim of the study to measure the level of democracy in the different countries in which the surveys have been conducted. Rather, it has been our goal to try to find similarities and differences between the countries within and between regions. Thus, we are not ready to give grades or to point at certain deficiencies in one country or the other with regard to its level of democratic development. Our idea is that it is important for all countries to modify their political systems to allow for basic values, norms and ideas prevalent within the population, while staking out their own version of good government.
Political attitudes and opinions do not exist in a vacuum. When generalizing response patterns found in different countries for the purpose of comparison, we need to keep in mind the particular situations of each of the given countries, their history and culture as well as more recent developments. Most readers will have knowledge of this; thus, the following is just a brief repetition of some essential points.

We have decided to present an extremely succinct introduction to each country with an emphasis on historical matters together with a fact box containing important current figures. This, we hope, will constitute a helpful framework within which to consider the comparative reflections presented in the next chapter.

**Denmark**

Denmark is the smallest, though not necessarily the least significant, of the Nordic countries. Its geographical placement brought the nation into close – although not always friendly – contact with the greater European powers. While Swedish Vikings voyaged eastwards, their Danish counterparts sailed towards the West to the British Isles. Denmark’s size, or that of the local realms which constituted the country, has varied throughout history, including greater or lesser parts of the neighbouring lands to the south, greater or lesser parts of southern Sweden, and, for an extended period of time, Norway as well. The three countries formally constituted a union between 1397 and 1523. During the 16th and 17th centuries, Denmark and Sweden competed for supremacy in the Nordic region, including the Baltic area. Most of the wars ended unsuccessfully for the Danes, and the cost of these resulted in economic hardships for the people.

During the first part of the 19th century, the economy regained its strength through technical improvements in the agricultural sector and a growing demand for agricultural products on the international market. A coalition of liberal farmers and urban intellectuals criticized absolutism and villeinage and advocated the introduction of a democratic constitution. In 1848 a peaceful ‘revolution’ – not uninfluenced by the French February revolution? – paved the way for a democratic constitution in Denmark. A cooperative movement and efforts to educate – or rather enlighten – the peasants characterized the late 19th century. Popular movements among the peasants lead to the formation of agricultural cooperatives and a net of *folkehøjskoler* [people’s high schools] all
Six Countries in Brief

over the country. The incipient working class formed unions and political parties. All of this together became the soil in which the Danish welfare democracy grew.

Denmark was one of the first countries to introduce state-run social welfare schemes. The Constitution of 1849 established that any person unable to take care of him/herself was entitled to support from society, represented by the state. This became a model for the other Nordic countries. Post-World War II political developments have seen strong growth in the welfare system, the functional basis of which had been laid in 1899. From that time on, a basic agreement between labour and employers, reached by their respective national organizations after a prolonged general conflict, has, with periodic revisions, regulated industrial relations in Denmark up until today.

Denmark is a constitutional monarchy in which the queen, in addition to her ceremonial power, has a significant symbolic and moral power. The government is responsible to the parliament, which has 179 members and is called the Folketing. Here ‘folk’ means ‘people’ and ‘ting’ is a combination of the traditional word for communal deliberations and the place at which such deliberations took place. In the political arena, the Social Democratic Party was the country’s dominant political organization until the 1980s, when a coalition of non-socialist parties gained power. The smaller Socialist People’s Party belongs to the same political block as the Social Democrats. The main right-wing party, the Liberal Party, is (paradoxically) called Venstre [Left]; next comes the Conservative People’s Party; and, as a recent development, the far-right Danish People’s Party has entered the scene. Political activism in the form of membership of a political party has greatly decreased.

Under the Danish educational system, school attendance is not compulsory but education as such is compulsory. Private schools receive generous state support, and as a result a variety of experimental and alternative schools have been developed, but about 90% of pupils attend municipal schools. About 30% continue after 9th or 10th grade with general upper secondary education. Vocational schools with technical and business-related courses have gained popularity in recent years, and all three branches of secondary education give admission to university studies.

The Danish manufacturing industries are characterized by small-to-medium-size companies in the fields of food products, non-electric machinery and appliances and chemical products. Agriculture has been highly centralized and industrialized.

The five Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden) constitute an integrated region within which there is free travel and access to public services, including health care, education and job opportunities.

Fact box: Denmark
Area: 43,094 sq km
Population: 5,353,815
Urban population: 85% (of total)
Fertility rate: 1.7 births/woman
Net migration rate: 1.98/1,000
Major religion: Evangelic Lutheran
GDP – per capita: € 25,500
GDP composition: agriculture 3%, industry 25%, services 72%
Life expectancy: 76 years
Age structure: 0–14: 18%, 15–64: 67%, >64: 15%
Personal computers: 431 (per 1,000 people)
Internet users: 3 million
Mobil phones: 631 (per 1,000 people)
Government type: constitutional monarchy, parliamentary government
Voter turnout 1990s: 84% (average of 3 parliamentary elections)
Voter turnout 2001: 87%

Denmark is a member of the Nordic Council (founded in 1952), a forum for cooperation among parliamentarians in the five Nordic countries, and the Nordic Council of Ministers, a body of cooperation among Nordic governments established in 1962. After a referendum, Denmark joined the European Community (renamed the European Union from 1993) in 1973, and this relationship has divided the population into supporters, critics and sceptics ever since. Several referenda since 1972 have kept this division alive.

Sweden

During the Viking era, Swedes controlled parts of the Baltic region and had footholds reaching as far as eastern Russia. Up until the late 14th century, however, Sweden was a loose federation of provinces, and after that time Swedish and Danish rulers vied for control of the entire region, including Norway. Sweden used to be the major power in the Nordic region, a region that was troubled by repeated internal and external wars. Sweden took part in the Napoleonic wars as a British ally and lost Finland to Russia in 1809. In 1814 Norway was included – against its will – in the Swedish kingdom, and this union lasted until 1905.

The Swedish constitution, which dates back to 1809, is parliamentary and based on principles of popular sovereignty and representative democracy. Formally, the king is head of state but his function is ceremonial only. The parliament has 349 members. Political parties have remained stable with the social democrats and the Left Party (formerly the Communist Party) on the one side, and three non-socialist parties on the other: the Moderate (conservative) party, the Centre Party, and the Liberal Party. The Social Democratic Party was in power for a considerable part of the 20th century, and still is. This party has always had strong bonds with an equally strong trade union movement. It was a compromise between the political left and right in 1936, however, that formed the basis of the welfare state. This compromise was later accepted and supported by an agreement in 1938 between the national federation of trade unions and the national employers’ association. The welfare system has thus had a solid foundation and has been highly developed in Sweden. Through taxes, the income gap is narrowed and the population is provided with a broad spectrum of public services and social welfare benefits. For some years, Sweden was thus named ‘Folkhemmet’ [the people’s home] as it was seen to be the prototypical welfare society of the Nordic region. As in the other Nordic countries, fewer and fewer people join a political party as active members.

A general educational system was established in 1842 with board schools in every parish throughout the country. Primary and secondary education is free and compulsory for
Six Countries in Brief

Fact box: Sweden
Area: 449,964 sq km
Population: 8,875,053
Urban population: 83% (of total)
Fertility rate: 1.6 births/woman
Net migration rate: 0.91/1,000 population
Major religion: Evangelic Lutheran
GDP – per capita: € 22,200
GDP composition: agriculture 2%, industry 28%, services 70%
Life expectancy: 79 years.
Age structure: 0-14: 18%, 15-64: 65%, >64: 17%
Personal computers: 506 (per 1,000 people)
Internet users: 4 million
Mobile phones: 717 (per 1,000 people)
Government type: constitutional monarchy,
parliamentary government
Voter turnout 1990s: 85% (average of 3 parliamentary elections)
Voter turnout 1998: 81%


nine years (or ten years if the introductory year is included). The upper secondary schools underwent reforms in the 1970s and again in 1992–95. Today, both university preparation programs (there are two types of these) and vocational programs (altogether 14) are offered; therefore almost everybody goes on to attend high school. Around 30% continue with a higher education following the compulsory education.

Within the economic sector, agriculture produces mainly for the domestic market, while forestry produces export commodities (wood, pulp, and paper). The economy is dominated by medium to large-scale industries producing motor vehicles, chemicals, iron and steel, machinery and home appliances – including telecommunication apparatuses.

Sweden remained neutral during World War I. This neutrality has remained intact until this day, but has not impeded Sweden in holding an active foreign affairs profile. Sweden is also an active member of the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers, and became a member of the European Union in 1995. In Sweden, as in Denmark, EU membership divides the population into supporters, sceptics and critics.

Finland

Starting in the 12th century, Finland became a battleground between Russia and Sweden. In Finland, Swedish expeditions took on the character of crusades. Until 1809, Finland was part of the Swedish Kingdom; it then became an autonomous region (Grand Duchy) under the Russian Empire. The Russian defeat at the hands of the Japanese (1905), World War I and the Russian Revolution set the stage for Finnish independence. A history of dependence sets the backdrop for a strong Finnish national enthusiasm. In the formation of their national identity, notably in the arts and literature, Finland’s national epic, the *Kalevala*, has played a vital part. *Kalevala* is a poetic name for Finland meaning ‘land of heroes’.

In 1939 war broke out between Finland and the Soviet Union when the latter sought to secure Leningrad by border adjustments which the Finnish government refused to accept. The precarious relations to the Soviet Union brought Finland into an alliance with Germany in 1940, and the war with the eastern neighbour continued. In the post-war period Finland managed to develop positive relations with the Soviet Union. This helped the nation’s economic development by providing a huge market for industrial products and bringing in cheap energy and raw materials from the Soviet Union. In foreign affairs, Finland has traditionally maintained a neutral stance, as good relations with the Soviet Union were regarded as a priority.
According to the 1919 constitution, the Finnish president, who is elected for a six-year term by direct popular vote, is the executive head of the Republic of Finland. The president appoints the prime minister and the cabinet members. The possibility of re-election enhances the power of the president as well as the political stability of the country. The president has the power to overrule decisions made in the parliament, has a major say in foreign affairs and is the supreme commander of the armed forces. The parliament consists of 200 members who are elected for a four-year term. There are four major political parties: The Social Democratic Party, the People’s Democratic League, the National Coalition Party, and the Centre Party (formerly the Agrarian Union).

The social security system in Finland resembles that of the other Nordic countries, which means that it is based on centrally-made laws and regulations and financed through taxes. About 90% of employees are members of unemployment insurance funds. Children are entitled to day care provided by the state or by local authorities. The public health system covers the entire population and is financed mainly by the state and local authorities.

Compulsory education was introduced in 1921. The educational system is now based on a nine-year compulsory system divided into two levels, six years at the primary level followed by three years at the secondary level. Currently more than 90 percent of pupils continue after the ninth year with a three-year general secondary education. Education is provided tuition-free. The industrial sector, which is economically the most important, produces electrical and transport equipment (including telecommunication), food and beverages. Within the agricultural sector, forestry (wood, pulp and paper) is by far the most significant.

Finland became a member of the Nordic Council in 1955, and later that year it also joined the United Nations. The Nordic cooperation led to a similar development within the area of political institutions and legislation. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Finnish economy was hard hit. In 1995 Finland entered the European Union by popular vote, and in 2002 it was the only Nordic country to replace its national currency and introduce the new EU currency, the Euro.

Fact box: Finland

Area: 337,030 sq km
Population: 4,176,783
Urban population: 67% (of total)
Fertility rate: 1.7 births/woman
Net migration rate: 0.61/1,000
Major religion: Evangelic Lutheran
GDP – per capita: €22,900
GDP composition: agriculture 3.5%, industry 29%, services 67.5%
Life expectancy: 77 years
Age structure: 0–14: 18%, 15–64: 67%, >64: 15%
Personal computers: 396 (per 1,000 people)
Internet users: 2.3 million
Mobil phones: 720 (per 1,000 people)
Government type: republic, parliamentary government
Voter turnout 1990s: 67% (average of 3 parliamentary elections)
Voter turnout 1999: 65%

China

As with all countries, myth and fact are intermingled in early Chinese history. Sources trace the first Chinese societies back to 7000 B.C. The first dynasty was the Shang dynasty, which in later times stood as one of the model dynasties worthy of emulation. It is well known that China was united under the Qin dynasty in 221, and that the Great Wall was built around that time. But the Qin did not last long. In the Sui and later Tang dynasties, government reforms were initiated and subsequently perfected. Starting in this period, scholars were chosen by examination to become civil servants. Different dynasties competed for power in parts of the enormous land mass. China as it is known at present was united in the late 13th century.

Society in China has from the earliest times been located around cities where trade and crafts developed, and where people met at markets to exchange goods and services. In this way, urban culture was brought from the cities to the hinterland and helped by the growing functional literacy. This lent support to the rulers’ efforts to standardize Chinese society. Central to the longevity of China as a unified country are its written language, which carries the Chinese culture and identity, and the administrative system, which endowed relatively independent provinces with importance as centres of economic and political authority. The provinces have developed as areas of regional identification and have commanded a certain loyalty. The administrative system, which is in place today, bears a resemblance to the traditional system developed under the Sui and Tang dynasties. This continuity is connected to the educational system, in China highly developed (although for the elites) long before such systems were introduced to Europe. Education, past and present, is a major vehicle for transferring values and norms – and at the same time teaching needed skills – to the people. It is also today, as it was in the past, a vehicle for personal and social success. Traditionally, ‘education’ meant teaching Confucianism, and learning on all levels meant the study of Confucian social and moral precepts. This social morality took the ideal patriarchal and hierarchical family as its point of departure and

Fact box: China
Area: 9,596,960 sq km
Population: 1,273,111,290
Urban population: 32% (of total)
Fertility rate: 1.9 children births/woman
Net migration rate: -0.39/1,000 population
Major religions: officially atheist (traditional: Daoist, Buddhist)
GDP – per capita: C 3,600
GDP composition: agriculture 15%, industry 50%, services 35%
Life expectancy: 71 years
Age structure: 0–14: 25%
>15–64: 68%
>64: 7%
Personal computers: 16 (per 1,000 people)
Internet users: 22 million
Mobil phones: 66 (per 1,000 people)
Government type: people’s republic, Communist Party state
Election results not available.

described the society and the political system in the same terms. This contributed to the formation of a view of oneself and others in the surrounding world that was beneficial for the situation of the rulers and for the internal cohesiveness of the vast country. In the 14th century, China closed itself to the forces shaping the rest of the world, forces broadly understood as Western imperialism. Foreign traders and missionaries were rejected, the Chinese were kept within the realm. Travel was forbidden. While this period fostered the growth and refinement of Chinese culture, it left the country unprepared to cope with the surrounding world. The 19th century was a disaster for China; the Opium War, Taiping Rebellion and war with Japan resulted in internal political disintegration, which made China weak and vulnerable to foreign powers.

After a period of turmoil and internal wars between local warlords, a republic was proclaimed in 1912. Japan had occupied Manchuria and the northern part of China, and nationalists and communists joined forces against the invader. But at the end of World War II the nationalists and communists turned to battle each other for control of China. In 1949 the communists proclaimed the People’s Republic of China. Large-scale reforms were undertaken in all fields, including the education and health sectors.

The educational system has been divided into a five-year primary level starting at age seven, three years of middle school and perhaps an additional two years of secondary education. Enrolment rates are almost 100% and illiteracy is steadily decreasing; at present about 15% of the adult population is unable to read. Reforms are expected soon to result in the institution of a nine-year compulsory education period. An ambitious population control program has successfully slowed the rapid growth of the population, and thus contributed to improving the standard of living of the majority of the population.

Periods of political and economic pragmatism have alternated with periods marked by orthodoxy and revolutionary agitation in China. The current trend in Chinese domestic politics is to continue with reforms. On the local level, democratic governance is promoted. Since the end of the cold war, China has renewed its ties with the West, liberalized the economy and eased central government control. China entered the United Nations in 1971, and in 1996 it became a full dialogue partner in the Regional Forum of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) as well as an active member of ASEM.

China today is an active player on the global marketplace. It has enormous mineral reserves and holds a position as the largest producer of many important raw materials, such as coal and iron. It is the world’s leading producer of cotton textiles and cement, and Chinese goods are visible in all sectors, from toys and clothing to sophisticated electrical and information technology products.
Korea (Republic of)

People on the Korean peninsula have been closely linked to China and Japan throughout history. They stood as the bridge for the transfer of ideas, technological inventions and modes of life from the former to the latter. Since ancient times the peninsula had been divided into lesser kingdoms, but around the 8th century a unified kingdom ruled most of the territory. The ‘vikings’ of the Far East, the Mongols, who conquered most of Eurasia, also invaded the Korean peninsula and occupied it for almost one hundred years, but were unable to conquer Korea by force. A peace treaty was signed after thirty years of occupation.

The central government in Korea used civil service examinations to recruit bureaucrats who took positions as scholar officials, representing the government and sending their own vassals to collect taxes from the peasants. These scholar officials usually maintained a farm in their home region, and therefore often developed interests different from those of the central government. A main source of controversy was that land was not distributed according to official rank. In 1392, with the support of a military general and his troops, discontented members of the elite seized power and formed a new dynasty (Yi) which was to last until 1910, when Japan annexed Korea.

The Yi dynasty adopted the Confucian system of ethics as its state ideology, replacing Buddhism. Many institutions of learning were set up with roots in Confucian ethical, social and political ideas. The teaching system promoted a blueprint for the ideal society based upon five principal types of social relations for which the hierarchical, patriarchal family set the pattern. From the local schools to the village administrative system to the central academies of learning, everything was based on this ideology.

From around 1600, after a failed Japanese invasion, Korean rulers closed the country to all foreign contact and it came to be called the Hermit Kingdom. Korea continued to be an area of dispute between China and Japan. After victories in wars with China and Russia, the Japanese took complete control over the peninsula in 1910. Until 1945 the country’s administration was primarily directed towards the advancement of Japanese interests. As part of the conditions for Japanese surrender after World War II, Korea was divided. Soviet troops occupied the country north of the 38th parallel, while troops from the United States occupied the south. In 1950 North Korea sent troops southwards to ‘liberate’ the peninsula according to their plan, which stipulated the formation of a communist regime. The ensuing war resulted in millions of deaths and casualties and the 38th parallel remained the demarcating zone between a communist north and a Western-
Good Government – Nordic and East Asian Perspectives

oriented, non-communist (but initially author-
itarian – later even military authoritarian) south.

Although South Korea adopted a democratic constitution in 1948, a political system which actually took democratic principles more seriously did not materialize until about 1987. Political parties usually appear like mushrooms after rain just before elections, only to disappear again shortly thereafter. Political activism – prevalent during military rule, under which street demonstrations occurred regularly – has been replaced with an organized and institutionalized political dialogue. Civic groups are active and outspoken. Politics are still person-oriented and divided according to region, and moral issues play a central role. The president stands as the supreme executive.

Education still involves a combination of inculcating morals and learning skills. The teachings of Confucius are prominent in Moral Education, albeit today mostly implicitly. Primary and lower secondary education is compulsory and free of charge. Almost all pupils continue to the higher secondary level. The number of university students is disproportionately high in Korea, since education is seen as the safest and most respectable ladder to higher social status.

South Korea has had a turbulent development towards modernization. Militarily backed or directly military dictatorships took power by turns in the post-war period. From 1961 onwards the Korean 'economic miracle' was created through close relations between the political (military) authorities, the banks and big companies which grew into conglomerates. This state-directed capitalism succeeded in making South Korea part of the league of developed nations within thirty years. Korea today has moved forward from simply relying on products whose greatest strength is competitive price on the basis of cheap labour to competition with Japan, Europe and the USA in the areas of high information technology products and motor vehicles. In shipbuilding, Korea is at present the leading nation of the world.

Japan

Japan borrowed heavily in the areas of both religious and political ideas (including Confucian teachings) from China by way of Korea, but developed what it borrowed in distinctive ways. During a prolonged period from the late 12th century to the late 19th century, the emperors were subordinated to powerful regent families. The country was ruled by military governments, or shogunates, which sometimes launched military campaigns against each other and occasionally even operated with different emperors. Japan became a united country in 1600 under the Tokugawa shogunate and embarked upon a policy of isolation. Foreigners, traders and missionaries were persecuted and expelled or executed (with the exception of a few Dutch traders in Nagasaki). This seclusion gave rise to a flourishing culture but also led to stagnation in the society. Japan
Six Countries in Brief

was thus in dire need of reforms when Western traders pressed for access to the country. A group of young leaders under Emperor Meiji embarked upon the so-called Meiji Restoration, sending fact-finding missions to the Western world in order to pinpoint useful new ideas and technologies. Social and political institutions were systematically modernized along Western lines, ending with the promulgation of a constitution in 1889. While it was not a democratic constitution, certain rights and liberties were granted. However, the consent of the ruler was always a precondition. Private property was inviolate according to the constitution, but the emperor was sacred and inviolable. Effective power rested with the executive branch, which claimed to represent imperial will.

Japan embarked on an aggressive foreign policy in the late 19th century, leading to war first with China, then with Russia. After defeating these powers, Japanese leaders discovered that they had acquired a status equal to that of Western powers, and embarked upon an imperialist adventure in East and Southeast Asia. Korea was annexed in 1910, control over Manchuria was secured in 1931. The alliance with Nazi Germany, the subsequent occupation of European colonial possessions in Southeast Asia and the attack on Pearl Harbor eventually resulted in the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the first-use of atomic bombs by the Americans. The US post-war occupation of Japan led to a new democratic constitution which renounced war and denied the divinity of the emperor, although he continued to be a symbol of the state and the unity of the people.

A strong Liberal Democratic party has dominated the political scene in Japan in the post-war period, working in close cooperation with a strong state bureaucracy and major businesses. Scandals involving these three forces have at times undermined the image of Japanese democracy. In addition to the Liberal Democratic Party there are several other political parties, many with only local or regional interest. The (social democratic) Japan Socialist Party and the Buddhist-inspired Clean Government Party are the main opposition parties.

Japan is a relatively egalitarian society where welfare provisions have been developed by combining Western systems with the traditional values which uphold the family as the basic unit. Welfare benefits are thus partly public and partly private, with social security dependent upon the situation of the entire family. Health services offered through major institutions such as hospitals, however, are publicly funded.

Education in modern Japan is rooted in traditional Confucian moral philosophy, but today the aim is to develop the individual’s personality. Education is provided free of

Fact box: Japan

Area: 377,835 sq km
Population: 126,771,662
Urban population: 79% (of total)
Fertility rate: 1.4 births/woman
Net migration rate: 0/1,000 population
Major religions: Shinto, Buddhist
GDP – per capita: €24,900
GDP composition: agriculture 2%, industry 35%, services 65%
Life expectancy: 80 years
Age structure: 0–14: 15%, 15–64: 68%, >64: 17%
Personal computers: 315 (per 1,000 people)
Internet users: 27 million
Mobile phones: 526 (per 1,000 people)
Government type: constitutional monarchy, parliamentary government
Voter turnout 1999: 57% (average of 3 parliamentary elections)
Voter turnout 2000: 62%

Good Government – Nordic and East Asian Perspectives

charge in public schools until the 12th year, but the atmosphere is highly competitive, and numerous private schools and extra-curricular courses flourish due to the efforts of pupils to attain admission to the most prestigious universities. Vocational schools are often closely linked to large companies.

Modern Japan is a leading provider of high tech products and, increasingly, lifestyle products ranging from food, fashion, art and handicrafts to interior decoration and architecture. Characteristic traits of things made in Japan are simple form – often refined from traditional styles and patterns, small size and high quality.

Two regions, two cultures
In addition to their many obvious differences, East Asia and the Nordic countries have numerous common traits. The Nordic region has – like the East Asian region – experienced wars with neighbouring countries. However, there have also been periods during which trade and cultural exchange took place in the absence of skirmishes. Along the way, each region developed its distinct character within a shared framework. In the Nordic area, a welfare-oriented approach to society is a basic common feature, despite existing political differences. Many attempts have been made to locate the basis of this thinking. Some attribute it to the impact of the Viking spirit combined with a humanistic version of Christianity. Others presume that it originates from the fact that the generally inhospitable climate of the region demands hard work and requires cooperation of those who brave its conditions. Still others find that it derives from a particularly rational relationship between capital and labour. We do not find it necessary to choose among these explanations.

When we turn to East Asia, a similar collection of reasons is offered for the shared cultural framework. The hierarchical social structure and the strong extended family ties have been explained as a result of practical needs in a highly populated area in which the rice-producing society favoured or even required a sophisticated social organization and cooperation to function. In East Asia, this development led to the formation of centralized societies; hence the importance of education, which became the key to social ascent – and political power. Education increasingly became political socialization, and Confucius became the chief ideologue for the entire region. Again, this is just a brief sketch presenting the bare bones of a huge discussion. In the present booklet, the essential task at hand is to establish a context for the presentation of our research data.
The ‘Good Government’ Study

In this chapter we present the results of surveys conducted in the six countries under study. The topics dealt with in the surveys were: perceptions of human nature; trust in people and institutions; essential values; the role of governments, government involvement and government programs; political alienation or influence; the importance of rights and satisfaction with rights; political leaders; and finally, the respondents’ evaluation of the

Background statistics: The EPCReN Survey 1999–2000

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The information in the blue area of this table is calculated from EPCReN data material gathered from self-recorded information given by the respondents. The information in the yellow area of the table comes from subjective self-estimates. The three questions regarding income, social status and political orientation were stated as follows:

*) ‘Where would you place your family income?’ The scale included 5 options: 1) inadequate; 2) low; 3) middle; 4) above middle; 5) high. In the table we collapsed 1 + 2 and 4 + 5.
†) ‘In terms of what is seen as “social status”, how would you place yourself on the scale below?’ (0–10)
#) ‘In terms of political “left” and “right”, how would you place yourself on the scale below?’ (0–10)
political systems in their respective countries as well as their satisfaction with their personal life situation. These topics are held to be important indicators of the effective functioning of a political system.

The presentation of survey results is divided into four sections:

1) Background information
2) Shared values and attitudes
3) Nordic and East Asian differences
4) Overall assessment

On the previous page is some basic statistical information about the 7,127 respondents participating in this study. The nations surveyed were China, Denmark, Finland, Japan, South Korea and Sweden.

Instead of tables, figures are used as an aid to understanding and communicating the overall pattern of the results rather than their specific details. A detailed analysis of the data and the scientific basis of the study will be made available in a forthcoming volume.

Shared values and attitudes

*Human nature*. Respondents in all six countries answered five questions on their views of human nature:

1. Human nature is fundamentally cooperative;
2. The ideal society is like a family;
3. Human nature is fundamentally selfish;
4. You have to watch out for other people versus most people can be trusted;
5. Most people try to be fair to me even though they are not close friends versus most people who are not close friends would try to take advantage of me if they got the chance.

Percentages of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed to the above statements are provided in Figure 1. More than three-fourths of respondents in all six countries believe that people are fundamentally cooperative, and 90% of Chinese and Danish respondents agree to the statement.

Figure 1: Human nature
On the second question, more than 70% of respondents in all six countries agreed that the ideal society is like a family. The highest degree of agreement was found in China (88%) and Korea (86%). Although it was expected that a vast majority of East Asians would agree to the statement due to the strong Confucian influence, it was unexpected that the majority of respondents in the Nordic countries would also agree. It must be pointed out that although the family is considered to be an ideal model in both regions, the nature of families in East Asia is very different from that in Nordic countries. East Asian families emphasize role-based duties and obligations, while Nordic families emphasize egalitarianism and independence.

On the third question, a majority of respondents in all six countries agreed that human nature is fundamentally selfish. The highest level of agreement was found in Japan (86%) and Finland (83%). This set of results, when seen in light of questions (1) and (2), appears to be a contradiction, since people apparently believe that human beings are fundamentally both cooperative and selfish at the same time. However, the results point to the fact that both can be true. Human beings can be potentially selfish – but parents socialize their children and governments ensure that rules and laws are in place so that people behave in a rational and appropriate manner. At the same time, since people also have a potential for cooperation, they support a social system that takes care of all of its citizens (i.e., the welfare state). This result thus challenges a widely-held opinion that while people in East Asia may accept contradictory attitudes, Westerners are prone to an either/or attitude. Results in the next section present a further challenge to the idea of an East–West contrast.

A majority of people from all six countries supported the fifth statement (i.e., most people will try to be fair). The highest level of agreement was found in Denmark (85%) and China (80%), and a lesser degree
was found in Japan (66%) and Korea (61%). These results are consistent with the previous finding that people are basically cooperative.

A majority of the Chinese, Danish, Finnish and Swedish respondents agreed to the third statement that people are basically trustworthy, while only around one-third of Japanese and Korean respondents agreed to the statement. This set of results is consistent with the results regarding trust of people presented in Figure 2 on the previous page.

Trust in people. When respondents were asked how much they trusted family members, close friends, neighbours, alumni, colleagues, superiors, strangers and foreigners, the Japanese and Koreans were less likely than the Nordic respondents to trust strangers, foreigners, colleagues, and superiors (see Figure 2). However, the overall pattern of results is strikingly similar. People trust family and close friends, are less likely to trust neighbours, alumni and colleagues, and least likely to trust strangers, especially foreign ones. In all the countries, we trust those whom we know and with whom we have emotional ties (i.e., in-group members) and do not trust those that we do not know (i.e., out-group members). The distinction between in-group and out-group members is much greater in Japan and Korea, and thus Japanese and Korean respondents are less likely to agree that people are basically trustworthy – it depends upon where the person is placed in the hierarchy of relationships.

Lack of trust in foreign strangers is probably a generally-existing attitude that we are forced to accept. To do so is probably wiser than to indulge in wishful thinking regarding the brotherhood of all men. If one places attitudes towards other people on a continuum ranging from the closest family relations to the more theoretical ones between total strangers (brotherhood of man), it does not seem

![Figure 3: Socialization of values](image-url)
The 'Good Government' Study

unusual that the two categories occupy opposite poles. This points to the importance of gaining information about people outside our own circle of acquaintances and attempting to understand and appreciate their ways.

One area in which ideals about personal and social life are revealed is that of the education and upbringing of children. Thus, we tried to pinpoint those values that people tend to recognize as necessary for the success of the socialization processes.

Values. Figure 3 opposite shows which values are considered important and essential in raising children. In all the countries, a majority of respondents felt that it is very important to teach children good manners, responsibility, respect, and an ability to think for oneself. It was seen as rather important to teach a good work ethic, tolerance, independence, creativity, thrift, determination and self-restraint. The emphasis on these values is consistent with the above belief that children can be potentially selfish and thus need to be taught skills necessary for cooperation with one another. At the same time, they need to learn to be independent and creative and to think for themselves. These results indicate that people in all six countries think that children should be taught to be good members of the family and society, and at the same time should learn to be independent. The values of independence and interdependence are not contradictory, but represent the dual requirements of life – on the one hand in the family and on the other as an individual within the society.

There are some areas in which there was considerable disagreement. Finnish respondents felt that obedience was rather important; Korean and Japanese respondents did not find it as important as the other values. Chinese, Koreans and Swedes thought that ambition was quite important; there was less emphasis on this in Denmark and Finland. Finally, Chinese and Japanese respondents felt that unselfishness was very important; in Korea, it was emphasized to a lesser degree. It is interesting to note that some items that could be considered 'culturally relevant', such as obedience for East Asia, were given less support in Japan and Korea.

Figure 4: Role of government

![Role of government diagram](image)
than in the Nordic countries. Perhaps this response pattern reflects a critical stance towards the existing situation rather than an evaluation of the importance of this particular value to the socialization process.

**Role of government.** Respondents were asked how important it was for the government to implement the following programs:

1) providing a high level of social welfare;
2) fighting environmental pollution,
3) maintaining harmonious social relations;
4) ensuring that nobody will live in poverty; and
5) ensuring individual freedom.

Around 90% of respondents in all six countries agreed or strongly agreed that the government should maintain harmonious social relations and fight environmental pollution (see Figure 4 on the previous page).

Around 80% of respondents in all six countries support the provision of a high level of social welfare, measures against poverty and protection of individual freedom. These results are consistent with the above findings that people should be allowed individual freedom, but that it is important that the government develop policies and programs that can maintain the quality of life for all people (i.e., maintaining harmonious social relations, providing social welfare programs and fighting pollution). The result indicates that respondents in all six countries perceive the role of the government as crucial for solving problems as well as for securing individual freedom. This assumption is tested in the next question.

The respondents were questioned on whether the government should be more or less active. On a scale from 1 (the less government the better) to 4 (the government should be more active)
active), respondents were asked to state their opinion. The results in Figure 5 represent the overall average for each country. Respondents in all six countries tended to support a more active government. This tendency was greatest in Korea, China and Finland and less prevalent in Denmark and Japan.

In the following question, respondents were asked to choose between: ‘we need a strong government to handle today’s complex economic problems’ and ‘the free market can handle these problems without governmental involvement’. There was a general tendency to support governmental intervention rather than leaving it to the free market. China, Sweden and Finland were least likely to support the free market system.

This set of results suggests that a majority of the respondents in all six countries find the state to be a necessary instrument for maintaining the social fabric. They demand that the government play an active role in upholding harmonious social relations, providing a high level of social welfare, and guaranteeing individual freedom.

These results suggest that the respondents feel that the quality of life cannot be defined solely by economic wealth. It must be supplemented with a clean environment, individual freedom, harmonious social relations and social welfare to protect and take care of everyone.

**Political influence.** Four questions were asked to assess respondents’ political participation and influence:

1) **People like me don’t have any influence on what the government does**;
2) **Bureaucrats don’t care much what people like me think**;

![Figure 6: Political alienation](image)

- Lack of influence
- Bureaucrats don’t care
- Politics too complex
- People are neglected
3) Politics seem so complicated that people like me can't really understand what is going on; and

4) The people we elect stop thinking about the interests of the people after taking office.

The results presented in Figure 6 (see previous page) may show that respondents in all the countries feel politically alienated. In other words, they do not think that they have much influence on the government. The majority of the Danish respondents rejected the idea that politics are very complicated (Swedish respondents were divided equally on this issue). Otherwise, respondents clearly feel that they have little influence on the government; that the elected leaders stop thinking about the interests of people after they are in office; and that bureaucrats are apathetic to people's interest.

**Political participation.** Figure 7 presents the results of the question: How do people like you make their voices heard in society? Respondents in all six countries reported that they seldom or never use any available political channels except voting to make their voices heard. The Chinese respondents, like the Japanese, seemed less prone to vote compared with respondents from the other four countries. In Denmark and Sweden 98% and 94% respectively said that they often or always vote. In Finland the figure was 87%. In East Asia the response on voting is much lower; there Korea was the only country in which a majority (59%) answered 'often/always' on this question. The figures from Japan and China are 19% and 16% respectively. In addition, the apparently minimal political activity through different voluntary organizations and the improbability of respondents contacting representatives of the political system must be considered here.

These results may point to a problem of political alienation, especially in East Asia. The media that are supposed to represent the voice of the people may no longer effectively serve that function. Perhaps the parliament, which is supposed to represent the people, is
perceived as negligent in performing its duty. It appears that political parties, the classic bodies representing different economic and ideological interests and political strategies, no longer serve either the party members or the electorate. Our respondents rarely approach non-governmental organizations, of which there are a rich variety on all levels and spheres of the political scene. It seems that bureaucracy and apathy have replaced political participation and influence, which are held to be essential in a fully-functioning democratic society. Although political alienation seems to be most serious in East Asia, it also poses a problem in the Nordic countries, which traditionally have enjoyed active participation from their citizens. A more positive interpretation of this set of responses is possible, however. People in general may simply have decided that politics is a business for politicians and others who earn their daily bread by engaging in political activities. If this is the case, then active political participation should be erased from the recipe for ‘Good Government’. In the political culture literature, freedom from political activity has been mentioned as an overlooked issue. Whether it is the negative or the positive interpretation of the results that holds may become clear in the following section.

Nordic and East Asian differences

Importance of rights. Although the majority of the results support shared values and beliefs in all six countries, there were regional differences separating the Nordic countries from East Asia. Respondents in Denmark, Finland, Japan, Korea and Sweden were asked to rate the importance of the following six rights:

![Figure 8: Importance of rights](image)
1) to vote;
2) to participate in any kind of organization;
3) to gather and demonstrate;
4) to be fully informed on the work and function of the government;
5) to criticize the government; and
6) freedom of speech.

In China, respondents were not asked to respond to questions on rights. Figure 8 shows the number of respondents who felt that these rights were very important. As we can see from the figure, although the overall pattern is the same, the average scores of the Nordic countries are much higher than those of the East Asian countries. Respondents from Denmark, Sweden and Finland believe that these rights are very important. Significantly fewer people from Japan and Korea felt that they are very important.

Satisfaction with rights. Figure 9 shows the degree of satisfaction with the same six rights. The same nations that most strongly felt the importance of the rights – i.e., Denmark, Sweden and Finland – were basically satisfied with their rights. Although a large number of Nordic respondents were very satisfied with their voting rights, only half of the respondents were very satisfied with the other rights. Their level of satisfaction with how much they felt they were informed about the work and function of the government, however, was much lower. All in all, the Nordic respondents felt that having the six rights were very important and were generally satisfied with their rights.

Japanese and Koreans, in contrast, did not feel that having the six rights was very important. Nevertheless, they were dissatisfied.
with the scope of these rights. How can this contradiction be interpreted? It is possible that in Japan and Korea, since assertion of individual rights is considered confrontational and negative, people tend not to assert their rights. As a result, rights were not viewed as being very important. Also, since individuals are discouraged from exercising their rights and since it is difficult to assert these rights using the legal system or the political one, they are not satisfied with their rights. This could perhaps be translated to indicate a general uneasiness with the system. Seen in the relevant cultural context, the results are consistent with the fact that Western countries, including the Nordic ones, support a rights-based democracy. In other words, respondents focus on the individual’s right to participate (basically, this means voting), to be informed, and to have a chance to change the political system (through voting). In East Asia, people support the role of virtue-based democracy. Leaders are caretakers rather than representatives, elected to look after the people. In this sense, the model of democracy supported by the people of East Asia, where the collective consists of in-groups, can be seen as hierarchical with limited welfare provisions. The model of democracy supported by the people of the Nordic countries, where the collective consists of individuals within a communal frame, is egalitarian and provides for expanded welfare.

**Trust in institutions.** Figure 10 shows the degree to which respondents trust the following institutions: parliament, political parties, major companies, news media, the legal system, the police, the armed forces, public offices and the educational system. As in the above section on rights, we have two separate patterns here. There is a higher level of trust in the Nordic
countries. In Japan and Korea, there is a general distrust of all institutions, especially of the parliament and the political parties. It appears that Japanese and Korean respondents are alienated from both the political system and the governmental institutions. The level of trust in non-governmental organizations, such as major companies, trade unions and the news media is similarly very low.

In the Nordic countries, there is a higher level of trust than there is in East Asia, especially in institutions that maintain law and order (i.e., the legal system, the police, the armed forces). Even in the Nordic countries, however, the level of trust in the parliament and political parties is rather low. Trust in those institutions that are influenced by business or labour is also low (e.g., major companies, the news media and the trade unions). Trust in institutions like the educational system and public offices, which are perceived to be independent (i.e. not influenced by interest groups or business), is higher. Thus, it appears that when governmental and non-governmental organizations are seen as tied to businesses, they are trusted less. Results indicate that respondents in both regions feel that the government and organizations have a tendency to act in the best interests of business, and not those of its citizens.

Welfare. Respondents in all six countries were asked to what extent are they willing to pay taxes so that the state could provide the following programs:

1) equal educational opportunities for all;
2) social security for elderly;
3) unemployment benefits;
4) environmental protection;
5) fighting crime; and
6) aid to poor countries.

These results indicate country-specific differences (see Figure 11). In Sweden, respondents were very supportive of social security for
the elderly and educational opportunities for all, prevention of crime and protection of the environment; rather supportive of unemployment benefits, environmental protection and aid to poor countries. In Denmark, respondents are very supportive of social security for the elderly and prevention of crime, rather supportive of equal educational opportunities for all, environmental protection, and unemployment benefits, and somewhat supportive of aid to poor countries. Finnish respondents are very supportive of unemployment benefits, rather supportive of prevention of crime, social security for the elderly, equal educational opportunities for all and environmental protection, and somewhat supportive of aid to poor countries.

Japanese and Korean respondents were not as willing to pay tax to support government programs as were the Chinese and Nordic respondents, but they were rather supportive of most government programs except for aid to poor countries, of which they were only somewhat supportive. Chinese respondents were very supportive of all government programs, including aid to poor nations. It is important to note that Chinese participants pay very little tax, and this may explain some of their willingness to support these or any other programs.

The basically positive response in the Nordic countries towards tax-financed government programs reflects a widespread support for what we have called 'extended welfare'. The lack of willingness to pay taxes to support government programs in Japan and Korea can be linked to the lack of trust in government. This corresponds to what we have called 'limited welfare'.

Qualities of political candidates. Figure 12 shows which qualities of a candidate are important for respondents when deciding upon their vote:
1) candidate’s party affiliation (party);
2) candidate’s political ideas (ideas),
3) candidate’s moral character (morality);  
4) whether the candidate appears to be a strong leader (strength); and  
5) whether the candidate is independent of economic interests (independence).

In Denmark and Sweden, the candidate’s ideas and political party affiliation were considered most important while the other three qualities were considered to be on the same level of importance. In Finland, the candidate’s morality was considered most important, followed by independence, strength, ideas and party. Concerning morality, ideas and party Finland was grouped with Korea and China. The republican form of government in Finland that distinguishes this country from the two other Nordic ones may account for the emphasis on morality as an important quality of political candidates.

In East Asia, a slightly different pattern was revealed. In Japan, all the aspects except for party were considered almost equally important. Japan followed the Scandinavian pattern with regard to morality. For Korea, a candidate’s morality and strength were considered to be most important, followed by ideas, independence and party. Similarly to Koreans, Chinese respondents reported the candidate’s morality and strength as being the most important, followed by independence, ideas and party.

In East Asia, it is clear that a candidate’s party is the least important factor taken into consideration when respondents vote. Similarly, a candidate’s ideas are not as important there as they are in Denmark and Sweden. These results make it worth asking whether the political parties and ideologies that are the defining features of Western democracy can be considered universal. In East Asia, they appear to be relatively unimportant in comparison to a candidate’s morality. The importance in East Asia of candidates versus party and morality versus ideas brings us to the next section, which focuses on leadership.

Figure 13: Qualities of a leader
Political leadership. Figure 13 shows results of seven questions concerning leadership:

1. Good political leaders should maintain harmony in society (maintain harmony);
2. A good political leader should follow public opinion rather than his own conviction (public opinion);
3. I prefer a politician who understands the power game rather than a morally upright one (power game);
4. A leader should care for the people as parents care for their children (paternalism);
5. A group of people without a strong leader means chaos (strong leader);
6. It is more important to have an outstanding political leader than political democracy (outstanding leader); and
7. Most leaders would abuse their power if they were not constrained by popular control (popular control).

Consistent with previous results, respondents in all six countries agreed or strongly agreed that leaders should maintain harmony in society. With Japan as the only exception, respondents agreed that a leader should care for the people as parents care for their children. This wish for paternalism is by no means absolute, however, as respondents in all the countries maintained that popular control is necessary in order to avoid abuse of power.

Nordic respondents favoured paternalism and a strong leader, but were least likely to support an outstanding leader. They felt that political democracy was more important than an outstanding leader; they would not support a leader who was involved in power games. Here the Danish respondents in particular were less negative to the power game option.

Korean respondents generally followed the same pattern, although they stressed popular control, paternalism, a strong leader and public opinion to a greater extent. They were also less sceptical towards the possibility that an outstanding leader might be more important than having political democracy. The Japanese respondents also answered according to a similar pattern, except that they were less likely to support paternalism and least likely to accept a leader who plays the power game. The Chinese respondents were more tolerant of all types of leadership. Even though they were less likely to support the power game or an outstanding leader in comparison with the other options, between 60% and 70% of the Chinese respondents were still positive to these possibilities. The Chinese respondents had the highest scores on harmony, paternalism, strong leader, public opinion and an outstanding leader. It may reflect that political socialization has been successful here. It may, however, also show that respondents are less familiar with the idea that it is possible to choose between different kinds of political leadership.

Overall assessment

Satisfaction with the political system and with life. Two questions assessed how well respondents felt the current political system was working and the degree to which they were satisfied with their lives. Results in Figure 14, based on the overall mean of each country, indicate that the political systems are not perceived to be working very well. This is especially the case in Korea and Japan. The Danish result indicates that respondents in this country are most satisfied with the political system. In general, the results point in the direction of political alienation. A glance at the bars to the right side of Figure 14 (overleaf) may provide a partial correction to this assumption.

On the scale of satisfaction with life, Danish respondents are the happiest, followed by Finnish and Swedish respondents. Respondents in East Asia are not as satisfied,
but still relatively content with their lives. The lowest satisfaction level is found in Korea.

Correlational analyses indicate that those individuals who feel that the political system is functioning well feel greater satisfaction in their lives. This is also the case at the national level; a properly functioning political system is positively related to greater satisfaction in life. Thus, a political system which functions well seems to contribute to the overall quality of life.

Summary and conclusion
A main finding of this study is that respondents in East Asia and the Nordic countries share many attitudes and values related to society and government. Up until now very few comparative studies focusing on the two regions have been conducted, and thus it remains to be seen whether other studies will support our findings. The universal results of this study are particular to some extent, in the sense that a strong majority of the respondents of all six countries surveyed see the state as a positive and necessary player in today’s world. And, contrary to the widespread idea which holds that liberal democracy is the political system of the future on the global scale, respondents in East Asia as well as in the Nordic countries seem to adhere to a more old fashioned, patriarchal model. Modern liberalism sees political order as an artificial, impersonal, rational, mechanical and neutral entity that functions through proceduralism and contractualism. A Confucian-inspired order, on the other hand, is seen as natural, personal, moral and organic. Although Confucianism has never been a part of the Nordic tradition, the values and norms of the Nordic countries do not seem totally alien to the East Asian ones. Human relationships are strongly valued in both regions; the more distant the relationship, the lesser the level of

Figure 14: Overall assessment
trust; the political leadership is judged by moral standards. When government is seen as a necessary instrument to maintain the social fabric, it is also presumed that this includes providing basic welfare. The family is a role model for people’s perception of society in both regions, although the idea of the family in East Asia is different from that in the Nordic countries. Where the East Asian family emphasizes role-based duties and obligations in a hierarchical social structure, the Nordic family emphasizes personal independence in an egalitarian social structure. This obviously influences commonly-held notions of society and government. In the Nordic region, a model has been developed to support and, if needed, take care of the individual. In East Asia welfare must, in one way or another, be connected to the family. This may have contributed to the maintenance of a much more personal approach to politics in the East Asian region, and it may also offer some explanation of why rights are less emphasized in this region than in the Nordic countries – law deals basically with the individual and usually operates on the basis of right and wrong. This is obviously difficult to carry out in the same way in a family environment.

There is no doubt that democracy has a future in East Asia as well as in the Nordic countries. While people want moral leaders to perform a role as general caretakers, they also want to control and, if necessary, interfere in the political practice. Trust seems to be crucial for maintaining a society and its political system. In East Asia this creates a problem, although the Nordic social and political environments are also affected. Political centralization, distant international organizations and, ultimately, globalisation may be main reasons for decreased trust in institutions. Then, the main challenge for governments, both East and West, is how to build trust. Democracy as a government of the people, by the people and for the people may be too ideal for the real world. But perhaps at least for the people should be held sacred, now and in the future. The art of building trust between government and the governed everywhere must be based on a foundation that is known, accepted and trusted by the people at large. This is explained in compressed form in the following quote:

“Nationally a common set of values keeps the nation together and, if mutually agreed upon and applied successfully, produces a solid, even robust nation state. A common mindset presents an almost insurmountable obstacle to fragmentation, disintegration and disorganisation. By upbringing and tradition, people react according to some kind of common denominator defined by the underlying set of values.’


Values from where?

At the close of this publication, we shall present two brief chapters giving a small glimpse of the rich and varied traditions of East Asia and the Nordic countries. We have decided to focus on Confucianism in East Asia and a more loose review of some crucial aspects leading to the basically egalitarian social mood of the Nordic region. Korea is our Scandinavian case and Denmark represents the Nordic region. In no way do we claim that this is a thorough exposé of the cultures with which we are dealing. It may, however, contribute to explaining some of the results presented in this chapter, and hopefully encourage the reader to approach more comprehensive reading on the subject.
East Asian Ideals: Harmony with Nature, Self and Others

Historically, in Chinese, Japanese and Korean societies the essence of humanness has been defined in terms of what happens between individuals rather than within a single individual. Relational emotions – not private, self-centered emotions – that create a bond between individuals are emphasized. East Asian worldviews focus on the emotions that bind individuals and family members together.

In East Asia, relationships and emotional attachments are considered stable, while rationality and individuality are relatively unstable. This is not to say that individualism and rationality do not exist, but they play a secondary role to relationships and emotions. The goal in life is to cultivate the self towards the achievement of harmony with the human, natural and spiritual worlds. This worldview is depicted in East Asian landscape paintings: there, human beings are part of nature. Unlike Western paintings, which focus either on the holy person or an individual character, East Asian paintings emphasize the harmonious relationships between various aspects of the environment.

East Asian philosophies and religions assume that human beings are essentially good, and that this goodness can be realized in one’s lifetime. Although East Asian philosophy acknowledges the existence of conflict between opposing forces, such as yin and yang, it focuses, unlike the West, on the balance or harmony between these forces. The focus is not on the dichotomous contrast between black and white, but on the shades of grey between the two poles. In East Asia, extremes should be avoided and the middle path taken.

People are encouraged to work together and share the fruits of their labour. Rice cultivation was backbreaking labour that necessitated working together in unison. While they worked, the people would talk, sing, or share their emotions to relieve the stress of this redundant and difficult work. Relationship, not the individual, became the unit of survival, and sharing became the basis of happiness and
meaning in life. Although Western science and technology have been adopted, traditional values and beliefs that emphasize human relatedness coexist with, and have not been replaced by, individualistic Western values.

Confucianism

Confucianism is a system of philosophical and ethical teachings founded by the Chinese philosopher Confucius (551–479 BC) and developed by another Chinese philosopher, Mencius (c. 371–289 BC). Confucianism has had a definite influence on the cultures of East Asian societies.

Confucius saw the universe and all living things in it as a manifestation of a unifying force called the Dao (truth, unity or the way). Dao constitutes the very essence, basis and unit of life that perpetuates order, goodness and righteousness. Dao manifests itself in humans through virtue. Virtue is a gift received from Heaven and it is the ‘locus of where Heaven and I meet.’ Virtue can be realized through self-cultivation, and provides the fundamental source of insight and strength to rule peacefully and harmoniously within oneself, one’s family, one’s nation and the world.

Morality. The core aspect of virtue is human-heartedness. Confucius pointed out three related aspects of human-heartedness. First, it ‘consists of loving others.’ Second, ‘the man of human-heartedness is one who, desiring to sustain himself, sustains others and desiring to develop himself, develops others.’ Third, one should not do to others ‘what you do not wish done to yourself.’ Mencius noted that without human-heartedness, a person could not be considered a human being: ‘When you see a child drowning in a well, if you do not feel compassion, you are not human.’ Individuals are born with human-heartedness and experience it through the love and sacrifice of their parents.

The second concept is righteousness. Righteousness requires that individuals must perform and fulfil their duties as defined by their particular status and role. Confucius considered society to be hierarchically ordered, necessitating that people fulfil their duties. Fulfilling one’s given role as father, mother, elder brother, teacher or ruler is considered a moral imperative.
Since Confucius conceived of society as hierarchically ordered, each person had a ‘portion’ or ‘place’ in life. Each portion or place came with roles attached, and each person had to fulfill these roles. The duties and obligations of each place are prescribed by propriety. Propriety articulates the duties of each individual and expresses what is expected of them according to their status and role. Social order and harmony are preserved when people observe their places in society and fulfill the required obligations and duties.

The fourth concept is knowledge. Knowledge allows us to understand the virtues of human-heartedness and righteousness and to follow these virtues. It is the basis for the development of wisdom. The four concepts of human-heartedness, righteousness, propriety, and knowledge are the basis of Confucian morality. Like the two arms and two legs that we are born with, human-heartedness, righteousness, propriety, and knowledge exist within us from birth, but we need to discover, cultivate and develop them. Knowledge is further refined and expanded in the schools. At school, teachers affirm morality as the basis for all thoughts, emotions, and behavior. Teachers are seen as extensions of the parents. As children mature they need to interact with a wider range of people, including strangers, and as such they need to develop trust.

Self-cultivation. Although relationships, roles and duties are important, they are anchored and based on individuals’ virtue. Although virtue is received from Heaven, it must be cultivated to realize its true nature. In the Analects, Confucius noted that although ‘Heaven is the author of the Virtue in me’, one must realize this virtue through self-cultivation, like polishing jade. He distinguished two competing forces within the self: the first-order desires (i.e., material, carnal and selfish desires) and the second-order desires (i.e., virtue). Individuals have a potential for selfishness and thus need to cultivate their morality in order to override this tendency: ‘Of all the things that are likely to distort a man’s moral judgment and deflect him from his moral purpose, self-interest is the strongest, the most persistent and the most insidious.’ He pointed out that cultivated morality is the basis of peace in the family, nation and world as well as within oneself:

If there be righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in character.
If there be beauty in character, there will be harmony in the home.
If there be harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation.
If there be order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.

Self-cultivation is a relational concept that is different from the Western concepts of self-assertiveness or self-actualization. These emphasize the individuality and focus on the achievement of personal goals, while Confucius articulates the need to realize harmony between oneself and others, between oneself and nature. Self-cultivation involved examining oneself from within and learning from others: ‘When you meet someone better than yourself, turn your thoughts to becoming his equal. When you meet someone not as good as you are, look within and examine your own self.’ Constant self-examination had to be involved: ‘Every day I examine myself on three counts. In what I have undertaken on another’s behalf, have I failed to do my best? In my dealings with my friends have I failed to be trustworthy in what I say? Have I passed on to others anything that I have not tried out myself?’ To Confucius, self-cultivation and learning were a lifelong process and the basis of all activities.

Governance. Following the Way or the Dao is the basis of governance in Confucianism. A
leader must follow the Dao by developing the virtues of human-heartedness, righteousness and propriety, cultivate his/her knowledge and earn the trust of the people. Morality and virtue are the basis of Confucian governance: ‘Guide them by edicts, keep them in line with punishments, and the common people will stay out of trouble but will have no sense of shame. Guide them by virtue, keep them in line with the rites, and they will, besides having a sense of shame, reform themselves.’

When Confucius was asked about government, he answered as follows: ‘To govern is to correct. If you set an example by being correct, who would dare to remain incorrect?’ Only by setting a moral example can a leader rule the people: ‘If a man is correct in his own person, then there will be obedience without orders being given; but if he is not correct in his own person, there will not be obedience even though orders are given.’

The state is considered to be an extension of the family and the ideal ruler is like a benevolent father who takes care of his family members. In Confucianism, ‘the common people should be treated with the same loving care given to babies who cannot fend for themselves’ and Mencius describes such rulers as father and mother to the people. Confucius advocated a strong paternalism in government, and this basic principle has not changed throughout the history of Confucianism.

For a ruler, earning the trust of the people is considered essential. When Tzu-kung asked Confucius about government, he answered as follows:

Confucius: Give them enough food, give them enough arms, and the common people will have trust in you.

Tzu-kung: If one had to give up one of the remaining two, which should one give up first?

Confucius: Give up food. Death has always been with us since the beginning of time, but when there is no trust, the common people will have nothing to stand on.

East Asian societies

Confucianism has influenced all facets of East Asian societies: conception of self, family relationship, education and organizational culture. The following sections provide a brief description of these areas.

Three-generations-under-one-roof was considered to be the fundamental family unit in traditional agricultural communities. In accordance with Confucianism, relationships (not individuals) are the most basic unit. The basic relationship is that between the father and mother, since it is the foundation upon which children are born and the family lineage is maintained. In the traditional extended family, the role of each family member is clearly defined and prescribed.

In Korea, the grandfather is the head of the household and represents the family until he reaches the age of 60. He is responsible for educating his son so that he will continue the family line and elevate the family’s status. When he reaches 60, the grandfather passes his property and power on to his eldest son, and the son then becomes responsible for managing
the family affairs. The grandmother is responsible for managing the household, maintaining harmony and order in the family and for ensuring that the children are properly raised. She is also responsible for ensuring that the daughter-in-law supports and respects her son and brings up the grandchildren correctly. The grandmother passes her role and responsibility on to the eldest daughter-in-law.

In East Asia, conceptions of past and future are also relationally based: ancestors represent the past and children represent the future. It is important to pay respect to the ancestors since they represent the source from which one comes. Even in modern Korea, people pay respect to their ancestors by bowing to them and symbolically sharing a meal with them. Grandparents are a living testimony and link to the past. Parents must thus show their respect to their own parents by bowing to them. Grandchildren in turn also participate in showing respect to grandparents and parents. Children, on the other hand, represent the future of the family, and as such, tremendous relational, financial and social investments are made in them and for their sake.

In accordance with the Confucian philosophy, a father and a mother have different roles. A mother represents the inner world of the child (symbolizing human-heartedness) and the father represents the outside world (symbolizing righteousness). These contrasting roles are summarized by a common saying, ‘a strict father, a benevolent mother’. The father is the head of the household and he is responsible for maintaining or elevating the social status of the family. One of the prime responsibilities of the father is to provide for the birth of a son who can continue the family line. The other main responsibility is to educate the son so that he in turn will carry on the family name and succeed in society. The mother, on the other hand, is responsible for raising the children, for ensuring that the children respect and obey their father, for taking care of elderly parents and for managing household affairs, economy and human relationships.

As the head of the household, the father holds the authority to represent the family and to speak and act on behalf of the family – but not against the family. For example, property was traditionally the communal possession of the family, and not that of the father. Although the father had the right to dispose of the property, the other family members also had a claim to it. For the father to make an arbitrary decision on his own was generally considered a breach of tradition, and thus an illegitimate act. He had the authority, duty and responsibility to handle family property on behalf of the family – and not for himself.

As a case in point, modern Korean law guarantees the inheritance rights of wives, sons and daughters as being basic and inalienable,
although the eldest son is allowed to receive a slightly higher inheritance to cover the costs of observing ceremonies for the ancestors. The Supreme Court of Korea has upheld a ruling stating that the spouse and children have a basic right to the inheritance, even if this has been denied them in the will made by the deceased father. The spouse and children are, however, also responsible for any debts left by the deceased father. Thus, for a Korean father, wisdom and benevolence are necessary to ensure that his decisions are not short-sighted or self-serving. He must consider the long-term implications of his decision on his individual family members, the family’s reputation and position, the ancestors, and the future generations. The role of other family members is to obey and respect his decisions. Thus, rights and obligations in Confucianism are role-attached, unequal, paternalistic and situational.

Confucianism in modern East Asia
With the advent of modernization, urbanization and industrialization, the traditional extended families of East Asia have virtually disappeared. In modern Japan, Korea and Taiwan, the nuclear family structure has replaced the traditional extended family. Although grandparents no longer play a significant role in family life, the core family structure has remained the same. The father is still the head of the household and represents the family. A mother is still responsible for raising the children. In the modern nuclear family, the role of educating the children has been transferred from the father to the mother.

Modernization has moved the focus from status quo, conservatism and harmony with nature to change, progress and control of the environment. Traditionally, learning has been linked to Confucian classics and literature. Currently, success is defined not in terms of accumulation of wisdom or learning the Confucian classics, but acquiring scientific and technological knowledge through formal education. The primary role of the parents is not to take care of their own elderly parents, but to educate their children in a highly competitive and changing society. Traditionally, women did not receive a formal education, but currently, both men and women have to be educated in order to gain social success and to raise their children. Although gender-based discrimination has diminished significantly in the family, and especially in schools, it is still prevalent in the workplace. Many competent women are not hired or retained since the corporate culture in East Asia is highly paternalistic, masculine and hierarchical.

Socialization practices
Although the political, economic and social influence of Confucianism has declined with modernization, two important features of the Confucian values still remain: parental devotion and indulgence. In East Asia, parents view unselfish devotion and sacrifice to their children as their most fundamental role and duty. As described above, the most important goal of socialization is to cultivate a relationship of human-heartedness between parents and children, and this is achieved through parental devotion and indulgence.
Socialization begins in the prenatal stage, with the umbilical cord symbolizing the union between mother and child. A mother is taught to feel, think and act on behalf of the foetus in the womb. When the child is born, the physical bond is transformed into psychological and relational bonds. To maintain and cultivate the close mother–child relationship, a mother remains close to her child to make the child feel secure, to minimize the boundary between herself and the child and to meet all of the needs of the child. A child’s strong dependency, both emotional and physical, is satisfied by the mother’s indulgent devotion, even if it means a tremendous sacrifice on her own part.

A child’s psychological and physical well-being is considered the prime responsibility of the mother. It is the role of the mother to indulge a child and gratify her children’s wishes as much as possible. In weaning, during toilet training and at bedtime, a great degree of flexibility is exercised. Children are not forced to eat by themselves until the age of three. Even at this age, if they still show no inclination to do so, they are not pressured. Bedtime is not strictly enforced; it is usually determined by the child.

As children mature, they sense that it is through the mother that they obtain gratification, security and love. As such, children become motivated to maintain the intimate relationship with their mothers. They do so by gradually taking a more active role, attempting to please their mothers and behaving according to their mothers’ wishes. Thus, the feeling of relational dependence helps children to incorporate their mothers’ values and beliefs as their own. This strong emotional bond is later transferred and extended to other family members, such as the father and siblings, and to friends and teachers. The emotional security and confidence provided by the mother become the basis upon which a child can venture into the outside world of the school and the larger society.

Educational success

In East Asia, a phenomenal success has been systematically documented in the educational process. Students in Japan, Korea and Taiwan are among the top performers in international studies of achievement in mathematics and science. The main factor that explains this success is the practice of socialization that promotes and maintains a strong relational and emotional bond between a mother and child. A second major factor is the East Asian emphasis on self-regulation, especially on effort. The third major factor is the compatibility of values between the family and school environments.

Interdependence. As children grow up, they are expected to extend and transfer their interdependent identification and loyalty from their
mothers to their teachers. A mother’s job is to use her interdependent relationship with her child to prepare the child for social life. She becomes a mediator between the home environment and the school environment and she gradually implants appropriate social values to her children.

In East Asia, the relationship between teachers and their students is seen as an extension of the mother-child relationship. The typical climate in Korean schools affirms maternalism, pressures the student to strive for personal excellence and encourages students to co-operate in a group. Children are motivated to please the teacher and their attention is focused on the teacher. Even in a class with as many as 40–60 pupils, East Asians are more attentive, less disruptive and more devoted to doing their schoolwork and homework than students in the West.

Self-regulation. The second important value is the emphasis on self-regulation, especially the emphasis on effort. Consistent with Confucian philosophy, individual endeavour is viewed as a necessary component of the self-cultivation process. Excellence in performance shows evidence that a child has developed its moral character through perseverance and persistence. It is a visible demonstration of the child’s deeper inclination to be a virtuous person. Furthermore, ‘the emphasis on individual effort includes a sense of responsibility to the group to which one belongs.’ In Confucian societies, individuals are pressured to contribute to the group and success is collectively defined and shared. While natural talent and ability are emphasized in the West, in East Asia effort and self-cultivation are highly valued.

Compatibility of values. There is a greater congruence between the values emphasized in the family and those espoused at school in East Asia than there is in the West. In the West, individualistic values often come into conflict with the relatively hierarchical classroom structure, the curriculum and the teacher–student relationship. In addition, students, parents, teachers and administrators all often hold different views about the meaning of success and the factors that lead to success. The development of one’s talent, whether in sports, music, academics or the arts, is emphasized and academic achievement is not stressed to the same degree as in East Asia. This diversity of viewpoints is considered a strength in individualistic societies, but it can lead to conflicts between students, parents and teachers. In East Asia, students, parents and teachers unanimously agree that academic success is a primary goal for children and they work together towards this goal. There is greater agreement among all parties about both the goals of education and the methods of achieving them. This collective agreement between family, school and society is a key factor that motivates students to strive for a high level of achievement.

Organizations
In contrast to the Western emphasis on rights and a contractual relationship between employees and employers, organizations in East Asia are constructed, organized and managed as though they were an extended family. In these societies, companies and governments encourage hierarchy, paternalism and collectivism. Employees in a company are taken care of in the same manner in which parents look after their children. In turn, employees are expected to be loyal, committed and hard working. In a recent national survey of personnel managers from mining and manufacturing firms in Korea, the vast majority (over 80%) of managers strongly endorsed the ideas of paternalism and collectivism. Companies foster such ideas by
providing occupational and welfare services to their employees. This is found to increase production, efficiency, solidarity, loyalty, job satisfaction and social control. Similar results are also found in Japan and Taiwan.

It has at times been assumed that authoritarian paternalism would be the most effective type of leadership strategy. It was taken for granted that supervisors could give orders and employees would passively obey them. In reality, this type of leader turned out to be least effective. In contrast, those leaders who emphasized benevolent paternalism were most effective, i.e., leaders who took care of their employees and provided for their welfare evoked the highest productivity. Recent studies have found that leaders who demanded high productivity were effective only when they were able to develop a strong sense of group solidarity and provide the necessary emotional and relational support.

Comparative studies of American and Japanese managers show that these two nationalities view the nature and role of a group very differently. American managers give bonuses based on individual performance and they provide greater bonuses to individuals when an employee works alone. In the minds of American managers, the successful person working individually should expect the greatest remuneration. The Japanese managers, in contrast, give rewards equally, dealing greater bonuses out to employees who worked in a group. Japanese managers see groups as a facilitating factor, as productivity enhancers. Consistent with this belief, Japanese managers reward individuals who work with their group members in a highly interdependent manner and who are highly influenced by the group’s advice. Finally, in the USA, individuals tend to be most productive when they work alone. In contrast, East Asians are most productive when they work together in a group. Thus, the nature and function of the group can vary: in the West it is based on a contractual relationship, but in East Asia it is based on emotional and relational bonds.

**Justice and organizational effectiveness**

Decision and negotiation theories developed in the West deem a ‘tit-for-tat’ strategy to be the most effective. In other words, if your partner cooperates, then you cooperate with your partner. If your partner does not cooperate, then neither do you (as conveyed in the proverb ‘eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth’). Systematic research suggests that this is the most effective strategy in inducing cooperation and positive outcome in the West, and this model has been widely used in the economic, political and diplomatic arenas.

In distributive justice, equitable distribution of rewards is considered to be fair, just and effective. In equity, an individual’s reward is based on his/her performance. If your friend has given you a present for your birthday, you ought to give her a present of approximately equal value for her birthday. The pay that an employee receives from a company should be linked to his contribution to the company. In the West, this type of distribution is considered fair and just, and it is used widely in families, schools, companies and governments.

The tit-for-tat strategy and equity theory developed in the West are effective in individualistic cultures. In East Asia, the seniority norm is prevalent. The seniority norm means that a reward is based not on individual performance, but on how long a person has belonged to the group. At a typical university in Japan, Korea or Taiwan, senior professors get paid three times as much as their juniors. They have the largest offices and gain access to the greatest amount of resources, even though the junior professors may be much more produc-
East Asian Ideals

tive. Moreover, a junior professor is expected to respect and serve a senior professor, as well as to handle much of the administrative burden. This creates a temporary imbalance, with senior professors receiving much more compensation and junior professors being forced to serve the senior ones. However, when the junior professor eventually becomes a senior professor, he/she receives all the benefits of a senior professor – and also has a junior professor to serve him/her. Thus, in the long-term relational perspective, justice and equity have been maintained.

In this way, individuals are motivated to maintain the group. Since senior professors obtain benefits over and above their contributions, they will be motivated to remain in the group and maintain the group. Junior professors will ultimately only receive additional benefits if they remain in the group long enough to become senior professors. As a result, they too will be motivated to maintain the group. The seniority norm enhances group solidarity, commitment and loyalty and it has been widely adopted in East Asia. However, since rewards are not directly linked to performance, it has also contributed to incompetence, corruption and organizational ineffectiveness.

Aside from the seniority norm, East Asians interact differently depending upon the nature of the group and the partner. If Person A contributed 70% and Person B contributed 30%, Western people would divide the compensation up according to input (i.e., 70/30). In the West, this type of distribution is considered fair and just. East Asians would do the same as the Westerners (i.e., divide up 70/30) if the partner were a stranger. If, however, the partner were a friend, then the high performer would divide the compensation equally (i.e., 50/50). In other words, the high performer would sacrifice his/her rightful compensation in order to share it with the low performer. The sacrificial behaviour of the high performer promotes a sense of gratitude, loyalty and harmony. Although there is a temporary imbalance, the high performer expects to receive future benefits from the partner or from the group.

In families, East Asian parents willingly make sacrifices for their children, since their own parents took care of them unconditionally when they were young. They are expected to return their sense of gratitude to the parents, but not the favour. They are expected to raise their own children with the same degree of sacrifice, devotion and love with which their parents raised them. This flow of sacrifice, devotion and love is what binds family members together through generations and keep them strong. It is the flow of emotions from one generation to another that is valued in East Asia.

This long-term perspective among in-group members, rather than the short-term, tit-for-tat strategy is accepted as being just, fair and effective in East Asia since it promotes group solidarity, loyalty and harmony. The long-term perspective is a cultural norm and it has been widely adopted and implemented in East Asian schools, organizations and companies. This principle also lies behind the ‘sunshine policy’ that President Kim Dae-jung has been pursuing with North Korea. It is,
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There are two possible consequences for companies adopting the long-term perspective. The low-performance employee will receive the same benefits as the high-performance employee. In the ideal situation, this employee should feel a sense of shame and gratitude, and work harder to contribute to the group. This outcome creates synergy and organizational dynamism. If, however, the low-performance employee simply accepts the reward with no intention of making a greater contribution to the group (a so-called ‘free-rider’), this outcome will lead to organizational ineffectiveness and discontent. As described above, the high-performance employees expect to be rewarded in the long run. If they are not, they will eventually leave the company. Such a situation, if not addressed, results in most of the effective employees leaving the company and abandoning the fate of the company to a group of free-riders who do not contribute anything. The company may ultimately face financial and moral bankruptcy. This is among the main reasons for the Asian economic crisis that has plagued Japan, Korea and Taiwan.

The long-term relational perspective has contributed to phenomenal educational and economic progress in East Asia. It has, however, also contributed to incompetence, nepotism and corruption. Similarly, strong leaders have used the long-term relational perspective to justify their policies. However, in order to work in companies, organizations and governments – and to be trusted by people, the long-term perspective has to be supplemented with transparency, integrity and accountability.

When the system is transparent, everyone knows who the high and low performers are. Then a low performer will be compelled either to work harder or to leave the group. The high performer will be rewarded with respect in the short run and with a fairer share of the compensation in the long run. Transparency is also necessary to ensure that every member of the group behaves with integrity. Finally, individuals must be held accountable for their behaviour. Without accountability, individuals and groups will not be motivated to work hard and to contribute to the group.

Traditional East Asian communities were highly transparent and long-term relational perspectives worked effectively in families and agricultural communities. In non-transparent systems such as governments, this perspective has been plagued with incompetence, nepotism and corruption. For this reason, Confucius emphasized a morality that should be transparent and accountable. In modern East Asia, the current solution should not be a simple adoption of Western values, but rather the implementation of transparency, integrity and accountability.

The Asian values debate

In modern East Asia, leaders have used Confucianism to justify their government policies and programs, and even their authoritarian rule. President Park Chung-hee was the first Asian leader who used Korean culture to justify his authoritarian rule. Other leaders then rejected the universality of Western democracy...
and argued that Asia embodies a fundamental difference in values from those of the West. Some scholars joined forces with the politicians and used Confucianism to defend Asian values. This debate became known as the Asian values debate.

In this debate, Confucianism is often used to justify paternalistic leadership. In Singapore corruption has been limited, since individuals of greater merit were promoted to high positions. In other Asian countries, this has not been the case. Confucius was a forceful advocate of selecting government officials based on merit. He neither advocated, supported nor justified nepotism, in-group favouritism or dictatorship. Confucius' opinion was that a person who has cultivated virtue should become a government official and should serve the public. In Confucianism, education and the holding of a government position are considered twin activities – it has been emphasized that 'when a man in office finds that he can more than cope with his duties, then he studies; when a student finds that he can more than cope with his studies, then he takes office.' It was pointed out that 'to give these qualities their fullest realization, the gentleman must take part in government.'

Although morality lays the foundation for the self and for interpersonal relationships, the goal is to expand the boundaries of morality beyond the family and the community to include the nation and the world. Confucian philosophy separates personal, private life from public life and advocates a different set of principles and rules for the two spheres. In private life, such as within the family setting, Confucian morality focuses on human-heartedness and righteousness. In public life, propriety, knowledge and trust must also be included. As pointed out above, winning the trust of the people is a fundamental requirement for a leader. For this reason, morality and education were essential for all people who held public office. An individual must learn that public life includes many people and many dimensions. An individual had to navigate between the personal and public spheres and balance the demands of the two. The ultimate goal is achieving balance and harmony between individual and collective needs, not the denial of individual rights. The key to achieving this balance and harmony is morality, and this was considered to be the basic foundation for one's legitimacy, credibility and effectiveness, regardless of whether one was a father, mother, teacher or politician. According to Confucius, individuals of merit and strong moral fibre ought to become public servants, and he harshly criticized formalism, incompetence, corruption and nepotism.

Capitalism, communism and liberalism, political ideas that evolved in the West, were externally imposed upon Asia through colonization. Although some East Asian countries are still struggling in an attempt to cope with the destructive forces of these external impositions, some have been able to develop collective strategies that are compatible with their traditional cultural values. In East Asia, industrialization, urbanization and capitalism have not significantly altered the underlying cultural value system that emphasizes emotional bonds and human relatedness. Phenomenal economic, educational and political progress has been achieved due to the maintenance of human relatedness, and not in spite of it.
The Nordic Blend

On the threshold of the 20th century, the Nordic countries were among the poorest in Europe, but at its close the situation was reversed and they had risen to the economic top of the European league. As formulated by a well-known political scientist from the region, this had happened 'thanks to a demonstrably successful blend of market economy, democracy, voluntary organizations and active government policies.' This cooperation between private enterprise, different types of popular activism and the state as represented by government institutions did not always go smoothly. Industrialization meant class struggle and there was a world of difference between the ideas and ideals of the entrepreneurs and those of the manual workers. But it was somehow possible to strike a compromise between opposing forces. Thus the Nordic welfare model is not a creation of only one of the forces that constitute the different economic and political interests in society. It is a blend made possible by a mutual willingness to listen to the other side and to accept that it is not always desirable to win the struggle at the risk of making avowed enemies of the losers. In the Nordic region, there is a basic willingness to share and to accept the viewpoints of others. The aforementioned scholar suggests that if we look for historical factors that can contribute to explaining the present state of affairs, one fundamental factor is that the pre-industrial Nordic societies were comparatively egalitarian, with small populations and a high degree of cultural homogeneity. This could also explain why the distance between the individual human being and the state tends to be shorter in the Nordic countries than elsewhere. One could say that people generally recognize the state as a necessary and acceptable body for the general regulation of economic and social affairs such as the collection of taxes and the redistribution of funds for health care, education and a wide variety of social services. A necessary precondition for such a system is that the mutual level of trust within the society and between the state and the society is high. This precondition has been present in the Nordic welfare societies.

In the following, we shall try to trace some of the sources of this shared culture and the mutual trust that is inherent in it. We have chosen to focus on development in Denmark and to limit our focus to some aspects of interest in understanding the formation of the Danish political culture. Denmark is chosen due to limitations of space and because the Danish experience has had a certain effect on the other Nordic countries.

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A Nordic spirit?

What is the 'Nordic way', if such a way exists? Or rather, what is the emotional aspect underlying the Nordic idea? The serene landscape with long, bright summer evenings and a widespread trust between people seems to be, if not unique to the Nordic region, then prevalent in this part of the world. It is not economic or technological performance that receives praise in Nordic songs, but they deal instead with love and pride, feelings connected to the people in general, or to some of the outstanding citizens. They often sing about nature, or even the old cities. Such songs are emotive expressions, and when they become part of a nation's cultural heritage, they can be seen as collective emotive expressions. To characterize some of the core values of the common Nordic heritage in a few words, these values put relationships to others in a position as the most significant aspect of life. The Norwegian poet Arnulf Øverland has said it this way:

There is one happiness in life
Which cannot be changed to sorrow:
This: that you gave joy to another,
that is the only happiness.

There is one sorrow in the world
That no tears can lighten:
This: that it was too late
when you understood this.

(Borish 1991, p. 280)

The emphasis on relationships has had a strong impact on the way in which the Nordic people have created their societies. It has influenced the way in which democracy as a system has been practised with dialogue as a key word; the way in which private and collective economies have been seen as interdependent; the way in which education has been regarded as an effort to lessen the gap between the gifted and the not-so-gifted; the provision of free educational opportunities for all; the view that health care is a human right regardless of an individual's social position or economic power; the tolerance of wealth only in not-too-lavish forms; and the idea that poverty is the disgrace of a true democratic society. These ideas permeated the Nordic societies and were anchored as much in traditional core values as in incipient socialist principles, as much in Christian charity as in abstract principles of justice. These ideas – one could call them morals – are no longer the singular property of the social democrats in the present day. They are now held more or less equally by most political parties in the Nordic countries.

However, they also stand challenged by almost all political parties, notably even by leading figures within the social democratic parties. The debate now focuses on how to finance the social welfare project. The question is raised whether the high level of welfare can be sustained, or whether 'we' can afford to maintain all the benefits of a welfare society.

In this discussion between social morals and economic rationality, the moral aspect seems weak. Its has lost the power to convince. Politics have suffered to a considerable extent, since 'necessary' measures are usually implemented by administrators with educational
backgrounds in law and economy, while politicians have become more like followers – simply intermediaries between the bureaucracy and the people – in charge of explaining the necessary measures. The welfare society is on the retreat, not least because the ideology that supported it has failed to renew itself. It has been taken for granted too long.

Cultural roots

Where does this idea of society as a social organism come from, this idea which gives the individual responsibility for the community and the community responsibility for the individual? How did the Nordic people come to see the state as a body that cares for the common interest rather than as an alien, impersonal power interfering in the lives of individuals to no good end? ‘How can it be’, asked a Korean friend, ‘that you former Vikings, who used to kill and plunder the Britons as well as people on the continent, now are playing the role of peacemakers in the world? What kind of transformation made this possible?’

The question is not that far-fetched, so an answer is ventured. The Viking period started in Scandinavia in the eighth century and lasted for about 300 years. To the Christians in the rest of Europe, Vikings were the incarnation of Satan because they represented the most violent forms of behaviour. Their social norms glorified aggression, their culture only rewarded honour achieved in battle. The Viking ideal was one of wild courage and merciless revenge (Jonassen 1983, p. 24). This resulted in a masculine society that admired strength, bravery and heroic deeds and ignored the weak and the humble. However, it was not an anarchistic society, since the law was seen as the property of all people. Before each yearly meeting at the ‘ting’, a place where all free men gathered to decide on communal affairs, the law was read aloud for all to hear, so that it could serve and be used by all. This practice of avoiding a learned elite of interpreters of the law may have strengthened the egalitarian aspect of politics in these parts of the world. The earliest laws regulated aggressive behaviour such as fighting, killing and defamation of another person’s good name. Each specific type of wound had a certain price, and there were strict regulations as to where and when aggressive behaviour was allowed and where and when it was prohibited. These laws or rules covered all men regardless of wealth or position, including the king. If the king broke the rules, for example, by having an enemy killed in his own house, all free men were to carry out the punishment, which in this case would be to take the king’s life (ibid., pp. 33–35).

In Scandinavia the violent, masculine Viking culture gradually became transformed into a culture of non-violence. In Viking society, the greatest achievement was honour won in battle. Christianity, however, propagated eternal salvation that could only be achieved through behaviour running totally opposite to the Viking ideals. While social control in the Viking era was based on the idea that aggression could not be directed against anyone within the law (i.e. one’s own people), Christianity imposed another concept of law, regarding men as brothers (and thus kin), responsible only to God. Thus, it was just as bad to attack a foreigner
as to injure a neighbour. However, since the individual was responsible only to God, who was above man-made laws, a way was opened for aggression to take place between kin. Civil wars developed after the introduction of Christianity, and later on, violent crusades in the name of God became acceptable activities for ‘soldiers’ of this God.

The shift from paganism to Christianity took several hundred years, during which different influences coloured the world outlook of the peoples living on the periphery of Northern Europe. Christian morals only gradually replaced those of the Viking era. One possible reason for the slow transition was that the Catholic Church, influential in clerical and court circles, had difficulties in permeating all of society, because the ideal of the people was ‘to reject submission to any foe’ (ibid., p. 43). The egalitarianism of the Viking era made people skeptical, if not hostile, towards the authorities. Later, during the Reformation, when Lutheranism cornered the religious market in the Scandinavian countries, ideas changed first on the upper levels of society – ordinary people were unaffected to begin with. Pagan ideals and morality were probably still more influential among the common people than was Christianity, at least as long as the Church ‘insisted on purity of doctrine and complete acceptance of all aspects of the Bible’ (ibid., p. 45).

Later, however, when Protestantism promoted universal education in order to enable every individual to acquire the knowledge necessary to be able to distinguish between good and evil, something changed in the relationship between Christianity and the people. When it at least became possible for all men to interpret the Bible, Christianity took root among the Nordic people. Christian movements – some marked by indigenous views, many inspired by similar movements abroad – spread and gripped the consciousness of the people much more strongly than during earlier attempts by the authorities to impose faith by edicts and enforce edicts by the sword.

Among the more or less lay religious movements, Pietism, following the teaching of Calvin, was probably the strongest. This form of ascetic Protestantism was a kind of grassroots movement, which attempted to break down the dualism between faith and behaviour. The gospel was communicated in everyday language and promoted the concepts of commitment, enthusiasm and religious activism. It built on austere tendencies that were already a part of the Viking tradition. Other traditional or pagan values were transformed: tenacity became patience in enduring the trials of life; also the iron will of the Viking in battle became a useful tool in the process of self-transformation. People became convinced that the greatest battle was within themselves; nothing less than an iron will was called for to fight one’s own natural needs and desires.

In some respects, Pietism developed into a fundamentalist creed that attempted control of every aspect of daily life. It could therefore be viewed as a cultural revolution propagating a stern kind of fanaticism which banned the more pleasant things in life, such as worldly beauty (in people as well as in arts and crafts), enjoyment of good food and alcoholic beverages, joyful song and dance and free relationships between men and women. Just as the Viking spirit may linger on in sports and motivate people to strive for great achievements, a Pietist morality can be identified here and there as the basis for why people act – or hesitate to act – in certain situations.

A peaceful Danish ‘revolution’

Another grassroots movement, quite the opposite of Pietism and of great and lasting importance, developed in Denmark from the
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1830s and onwards. This movement and its ideas shall be discussed in more detail, as it might still be the single most important source of Danish – and, to some extent, Nordic – culture. A brief historical framework follows in order to place the phenomenon in question within its larger context.

The Danish fleet was destroyed when Denmark suffered a defeat in the Napoleonic wars. The nation’s capital was also destroyed in 1807 by the British fleet. Denmark found itself in the middle of a serious process of transformation, and the country’s very existence seemed threatened. Losses due to the war and difficulties in international trade led to state bankruptcy in 1813. As another result of siding with the defeated part, Denmark lost Norway to the Swedes in 1814. Norway had been under Danish rule for more than four hundred years at the time. Furthermore, epidemics and migration reduced the Danish population by one third, and after a long period of conflict, the southern part of the country, Schleswig and Holstein, was ceded to Germany in 1864.

The future of Denmark during this period was considered bleak, but there were other more encouraging signs. Already in 1784 a land reform had been enacted, undermining the powers of the traditional landed aristocracy, and as a consequence a new class of liberated farmers became a societal force. These people, together with an emerging urban bourgeoisie, became the instrumental forces in the peaceful transition from absolute monarchy to parliamentary democracy that was completed in 1849. The transition was peaceful partly because the nobility and the royalty acceded to relinquishing some of their power, and partly because the masses in the streets actually waited for their leaders to negotiate and then accepted the results of the agreement. In contrast to experiences from other democratic revolutions in Europe, the crowd in Copenhagen shouted ‘Long live the king!’ when the agreement between the people’s representatives and the king was reached in 1848.

The new class of liberated farmers was soon to be outstripped by the more modern, urban-educated elite, however, and they felt an urgent need for education to catch up. In an environment characterized by national crises and political change, a movement working for the enlightenment of the people became active. A new kind of school was organized, aimed at recharging the spirit of the people. These schools were called folkehøjskoler – literally translated: people’s high schools. The first one had been established near the German border in 1844, and in the following years this kind of school spread all over the country, reaching as much as 15% of the relevant age-group yearly (Borish 1991, p. 193).

In this new movement working for enlightenment, one person stands out as the natural leader. His name was N. F. S. Grundtvig (1782–1873). A non-orthodox Christian minister and adherent of Pietism, he also became a great poet, educator and politician with a cause that spoke to the need of his times. Grundtvig developed an ideology and a model for education that differed from the previous ones in that he stressed the process of formation of the human character. His aim was education for life. Grundtvig wanted to empower the people, to make them masters of their own destiny. He was always a critic of ‘dead’ learning, and claimed that books were
good, but not enough. Theory had to be supplemented with activity, practice and experience. Most of all, the ‘living word’, i.e. the spoken word and dialogue, were his preferred educational tools. With a foundation in his Christian belief, he claimed that man’s ability was God-given, but his priority was clearly first human – and then Christian. He became the father of the idea that modernization had to have a human face, and that this face was not just any particular face, but rather the face of ‘the people’. He expressed it in this way in one of his songs:

If one class regards itself as superior to the spirit of the common people, then the head, the hands and the feet will part ridiculously on their own. Then the nation is torn apart. Then history has come to an end. Then the people have been put to sleep, and you cannot wake them up again.2

To stress that the common people and their ways are the basis of society implies that generally accepted popular values and norms must be taken seriously. In particular, an educator and politician who wishes to guide his people must work with what is already there. Grundtvig was inspired by the past, when the Nordic people were known as strong and confident, albeit aggressive, even violent. He used history as an educational tool in his efforts to help the common people regain confidence as the masters of society and their own destiny. He wanted (and probably succeeded) to develop a common sense of shared history, and to encourage the manifestation of this in action towards the common good. This was the basis of Grundtvig’s nationalism, and it also became a basis for the Scandinavian welfare societies.

It may seem that this discussion gives too much credit to one person’s influence on the development of a societal model in at least three small countries on the northern fringe of Europe. Obviously, there were many other aspects that influenced the direction of social development in this part of the world. When so much credit is nevertheless accorded Grundtvig, it is because his influence was not only strong and direct during his own lifetime, but has grown considerably thereafter. His influence is direct, but also subtle in that he influenced even his opponents more than they were/are prepared to acknowledge. His thoughts became the foundation of the political culture and education in Denmark.

The first schools in Denmark, before the Protestant Reformation, were attached to religious institutions, and their task was to prepare young men for religious vocations, or service to the monarch at home and abroad. From 1537, Latin schools were established in all provincial towns. The Reformation changed the school curriculum, but only in that one set of dogma, the Vatican’s, was supplanted by another, that of Protestantism. The schools

2 From ‘Folkelighed’ Hymn 156 in Folkhøjskolens Sangbog [Folk high school songbook], cited from Borish 1991, p. 178.
were taken over by the state but were still charged with the same or similar duties. In 1721, schools for horsemen were established in all large estates around the country. These schools, 240 in number, were meant to educate horsemen for the king’s cavalry and to teach the commoners Christian dogma. It was in the 1830s and 1840s that the idea of village schools became popular, and it was here that Grundtvig’s ideas found fertile ground. His ideas developed after three visits to England (in 1829, 1830 and 1831) on which he was exposed to both positive and negative aspects of the industrial revolution. He also found a more practical outlook on world affairs there than the one he knew from Denmark, and at educational institutions he experienced a much more informal relationship between teachers and students than the sort to which he was accustomed. Discussions between them were open-ended, continuous and intense (Borish 1991, p. 167).

This cross-cultural experience developed his ideas on education. A central theme was the use of the spoken word, ‘the living word’, in his efforts to promote ‘enlightenment of the people’ and ‘enlightenment for life’. He was convinced of the importance of the ordinary people: he was certain that they harboured a wisdom of greater importance than the formal knowledge of the learned class. His view was that each country’s people had its own way, and none was better or more correct than any other. As already mentioned, he was preoccupied with the past and with everything Danish, but not in a chauvinistic way. He was in favour of cultural diversity and believed that only by engaging in a dialogue marked by mutual respect could peace prevail over violence.

Grundtvig lived in turbulent times and was exposed to the positive as well as the negative consequences of the industrial revolution. In Europe, a revolutionary political tide was
attempting to break the old order by violence, and in Denmark he witnessed the first severe conflict between labour and capital. As a Christian and a humanist, his answer to this development was enlightenment of the people. Grundtvig learned from cross-cultural experiences, and was in this sense a pioneer in the field of education. He stressed that the law had once been seen as the property of all people, and that everyone was supposed to know the law so that it could serve and be used by all. This supports the egalitarianism that became the hallmark of the political culture in Scandinavia.

Grundtvig never became an export commodity as did his younger contemporaries Hans Christian Andersen and Søren Kierkegaard. His influence on the Danish society, however, was and is more profound. If one word should be used to express Grundtvig's ideas, it would be the Danish word, *folkelighed*. He used this word for the first time in 1817. It is difficult to translate the exact meaning of this in one phrase. Even with the use of a longer description, the sense of what *folkelighed* really is may still escape translation. The first part of the word, *folkkelig*, means 'popular', or 'belonging to the people'. The second part, *hed*, is similar to 'ness' or 'hood', a noun-forming suffix which denotes a condition or a quality. A direct translation might be 'popularhood', but this construction hardly conveys the full meaning of the Danish concept. However, if 'popularity' should be used as an equivalent to *folkelighed*, popular would then refer to people in general – the general public in contrast to the elite. In the political sense, popular means democratic, consensus-seeking, and implies an adherence to anti-authoritarian attitudes and conduct. This becomes clear when observing Grundtvig's use of the concept. He sometimes divided the word in a unique way in order to stress his message, using a hyphen to divide it into *folke* and *lighed*. The word *lighed* means 'equality'. Thus he stressed that equality should prevail among the people, and that the people were the point of reference for all social action.

A strong sense of equality is thus embedded in the Danish idea of *folkelighed*, equality as well as a strong belief in a sort of widespread common sense. Enlightenment was not seen as a means to spread the culture of the elite to the entire society, but as a way to detect and utilize the qualifications and experiences that already existed within the people. *Folkelighed* was based on trust in the good sense of the common people as opposed to the more abstract knowledge in the command of the intellectual elite. In many languages, to be simple and common may mean something of which one is not particularly proud. In a Danish context, these are actually words with a positive weight, especially when characterizing a person. If a political leader is said to be *folkelig*, it means that he is 'pretty much like you and me', and this is meant positively. This idea of cultivating what is plain, ordinary and simple is something deeply embedded in Danish values and norms.

In 1849, when Denmark's constitution was completed, the Parliament had two chambers, one for the commoners and one for landowners. The commoners' chamber was called the Folketing, the other was known as the Landsting. The word *ting* originates from
old Norse and means the place where all free men in the Viking era gathered and, on the basis of a common law, made decisions on matters of common concern for the society. In the Nordic countries there were different tings on the national, regional and local levels. Every hamlet used to have its ting-place, where disputes and conflicts were settled. In Iceland the national parliament was called the Althing, which means the ting for all, while the Norwegian parliament was called the Storting – stor means ‘great’ – which refers to this ting in its status as the highest political body. The names Althing, Storting and Folketing are still in use in the respective countries, and a traditional Danish word for negotiation as well as a Nordic one is to tinge, even though the meaning of this word has changed slightly so that it now means something more like bargaining, or even haggling.

The word folketing has a strong historical and ideological link. It is firmly rooted in the traditional political culture. To label institutions with the term folke – i.e., people’s – means that everyone is included. It is more than just a coincidence that several institutions of fundamental importance in Denmark follow this practice. It was written into the 1849 constitution that the Lutheran Reformed Christian belief in Denmark was a state-based religion, and it was called Folkekirken: the People’s Church. When primary and secondary education had been firmly institutionalized, about 150 years after the royal edict which instituted education as a compulsory activity (1739), the school for children of the common people took the name folkeskole (the people’s school), signaling that this was a school for the popular enlightenment of all, and not necessarily a place where commoners were to be lifted up to the level of the elite.

In contemporary Denmark, Folkekirken and folkeskolen are as basic to the system as Folketinget. Then there are folkebibliotekerne, the people’s libraries, located in every city, district and village. These libraries serve smaller communities with ‘book buses’ to insure that culture and information are made available to all, free of charge. In addition there is folkepension, a pension system that guarantees everyone a basic income after retirement. Another fundamental part of the welfare idea is folkesundhed (sundhed means ‘health’), the idea of preserving the health of all the people, and in case of illness or injury, free treatment for all, regardless of status, income or level of personal insurance.

It is hardly surprising that political parties tend to cling to the label folk, no matter what their ideological inclination. In Denmark there are a Conservative People’s Party, a Socialist People’s Party, a Christian People’s Party, and a Danish People’s Party; and if one looks up the word ‘democracy’ in any English–Danish dictionary, the translation is folkestyre, which means people’s government or, ‘rule by the people’. Most of the terminology above that links the good society to folk (people) – i.e. the collective group – has almost exactly the same connotation in Norway, where the written language is very similar to Danish. Swedish differs somewhat from the two other Scandinavian languages, and the Swedish culture has its own particular characteristics, but it is worth mentioning that the Swedish welfare model was probably the most developed and well-known in the world before ‘modernization’ occurred. The Swedish political ‘pet word’ for the welfare society was folkhemmet, i.e. the people’s home.

In sum, the philosophy of Grundtvig, with or without explicit mention of his name, has influenced generations of individuals as well institutions such as the state church, the entire educational system and the organizations that regulate the Nordic labour markets. Since this ideology came out of a common heritage, the Scandinavian welfare-model-societies were
long considered to be as stable as the Norwegian mountains.

In the present situation this belief is challenged. Nothing stable is taken for granted, let alone appreciated in its own right. A world without borders and with freedom from any form of restraint is held up as a global ideal. Everything is moving, and moving fast. But to where, and for what?

The future

Development is another word for a process that moves society towards the future. As such, development has usually been perceived as a progressive movement away from the (backward) past, through the (problematic) present, and towards the modern (and thus positive), as yet unknown (but always better) future. In economic terms this would lead from poorer to richer, in culture from uncivilized to civilized, in technology from primitive to sophisticated and from simple to complicated, from expensive to cheap (this last is absolutely seen as a positive development!), in politics from less to more democratic, from centralized to decentralized. But recently – and this is our concern – new processes have emerged: from more to less democratic, from decentralized to centralized and from greater to lesser freedom.

When responsible authorities begin to state that this – and only this – is possible, due to economic considerations, and people generally begin to accept these views, then
politics have been side-tracked. Under such circumstances, elections, representatives, parliaments and the whole gamut of systems and institutions make little sense.

Grundtvig said that when the spirit of the common people is disregarded, the nation will be torn apart and history will come to an end. The end of history has been predicted time and time again. History usually continues, however, in one way or another. Now it is humanity that is at stake. The end of humanity means the prevalence of egoistic individualism. It means that a UN Human Development Report may document increased poverty and human suffering in the world, but not many really pay attention: nothing serious and effective is done. It means that politics – understood as a guiding force for social development working according to a mandate given by the people – become defunct.

A response to this unfortunate development would be to begin questioning development, technologies and the consequences of the type of rationality that they represent; and questioning the so-called economic necessities and the rights of an individual who violates society when there are no obligations or responsibilities attached. A response would be to seek for politics, for political ideas linked to cultural values that make sense to the general public – if anyone cares to ask them seriously, and if authorities care to listen to their response.

The Nordic welfare systems used to be perceived as models of a rational and just way of organizing society, of combining a market economy with a democratic polity, stressing equal opportunities and a certain balance between rights and duties. Perhaps Nordic methods are not suited to a world in the process of globalization. On the other hand, they may perhaps offer viable alternatives in a world where change is the order of the day but few answers can be made to the simple questions: ‘Where are we headed? What are all the changes good for? What kind of society will be the end result?’
Appendix – The Research Group and the Study

The research project ‘Good Government, Nordic and East Asian Perspectives’ was designed as a collaborative effort by researchers in the Eurasia Political Culture Research Network (EPCReN), established in 1997. The group includes members from China, Denmark, Finland, Japan, Korea and Sweden. Initially scholars from Iceland, Norway and Taiwan participated as well, but the lack of funding in these countries made it impossible to conduct national sample surveys there.

The research group consists of representatives of different disciplines; the fundamental ones being sociology, political science and psychology. All EPCReN members have research experience from their home countries as well as from collaboration on international projects.

The study

A workshop was held in Copenhagen in October 1997 to discuss broad guidelines for the research cooperation and to draft a pilot questionnaire. Which was to be further refined at later workshops. A pilot study that included six pilot surveys was conducted in 1998. A final questionnaire was then developed through interdisciplinary collaboration.

When designing the survey instrument, it was decided to start from scratch, first identifying themes and issues found to be central to a study of political cultures in the two regions. The group agreed to focus on power and authority and to include issues such as leadership, perceptions of good government, politics in daily life, tolerance, trust, rights and duties, the meaning of democracy and notions of life satisfaction. We tried to bridge the assumed cultural gap between East Asia and the Nordic countries when formulating the questions and statements. Phrases that work well in one language are impossible in others, and problems common to the one area are unknown in the other. Many unstated assumptions – concepts that we almost instinctively use to understand the world around us – cannot be assumed to be similar everywhere.

A Korean scholar usually knows best what works in Korea, a Danish one knows best in Denmark. Pilot survey results and qualitative
interviews with potential respondents helped us, nevertheless, to adjust the wording and fine-tune the survey instrument before embarking on the study proper. The original questionnaire was formulated in English, which was our working language throughout the process. It was then the responsibility of each national team to translate the questionnaire into the local language. Back-translations by qualified people independent of the EPCReN group itself secured the best possible congruence between questionnaires in six different languages.

Samples
The population of the research site in the Danish survey included Danish citizens eligible to vote in national elections. A Danish marketing firm, GfK Danmark A/S, used a panel of about 1,400 respondents in a stratified national sample used for political public opinion polls. A mail questionnaire was sent to the 1,438 respondents and 1,236 respondents returned the survey.

The Swedish sample was drawn from the entire population of citizens and resident non-citizens from the age of 18 and up. A total of 1,500 respondents were selected by using the proportionally allocated multi-stage stratified sampling method. The field sampling procedure was to divide the total number of households by 20 and to begin interviewing the number selected at a randomly chosen address in the neighborhood. Data collection was carried out through face-to-face interviews conducted by city teams selected by the Research Center for Contemporary China at Beijing University. Of the 574 people contacted in Shanghai, 463 agreed to the interview. In Xi’an, 469 out of 662 contacted agreed to the interview.

Further background information
Of the people who agreed to participate in the study, the male/female ratio was about equal. The participants’ average age was in the mid-forties. The vast majority of Nordic respondents reported Christianity as their religious observance. In East Asia, the number of respondents who reported a religious observance was much lower.

Around one-third of the respondents from Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Japan and
Appendix – The Research Group and the Study

Korea reported having completed a university education, and around half of the Chinese respondents reported having attained a high school degree. More than half of the Finnish respondents reported that they had completed only the nine-year compulsory education.

Around half of the respondents in all six countries reported holding a skilled/white collar job. An average income was reported by around half of the respondents in all six countries, with a similar number of Chinese respondents reporting an inadequate income. One-third of the respondents in all the samples reported belonging to the middle class, while a majority of Danish and Swedish respondents reported an upper-middle- or upper-class social status.

A majority of Danish, Finnish and Korean respondents reported belonging to the political right, while nearly half of the Swedish respondents reported belonging to the political left. In Japan, a majority of respondents reported their political stance as middle-of-the-road. This information was not obtained in China.

On the whole, the six samples were fairly similar in composition in terms of sex, age and job status, with Finnish and Chinese respondents reporting a slightly lower educational status, and Danish and Swedish respondents reporting a higher social status.

Group picture from EPCReN’s 2000 meeting in Seoul. Upper row from left: Oscar Almen, Chaibong Hahm, Hong-yuan Chu, Tage Bild, Anna Hjartardottir, Soren Risbjerg Thomsen, Ken’ichi Ikeda, Uichol Kim, Jin Yong-Jae, and Shen Mingming.
Sitting from left: Torbjorn Loden, Jean Blondel, Yao-chia Chuang, Geir Helgesen, Ahn Byong Man, Lew Seok-Choon, and Susumu Yamaguchi.
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