Globalization may be undermining Kipling’s assertion that “East is East and West is West” but arguably this is more in the realms of technological advances and consumer behaviour than (say) in political culture. In the latter arena, much is still made of the contrasts between Eastern culture (characterized by collectivism and belief in authority) and Western culture (characterized by individualism and belief in democracy). Such comfortable assumptions will be shattered for readers of Politics, Culture and Self.

This volume indeed confirms that differences between East Asia and northern Europe do exist. Provocatively, however, it also points to major similarities (e.g. regarding social harmony and the role of the family in society) as well as significant contrasts mirrored within the two regions (e.g. concerning interpersonal and institutional trust).

These results are of especial interest because of the care taken to reduce “cultural contamination.” The data is derived from extensive and in-depth surveys conducted by a cross-cultural research team in East Asia and northern Europe. Here, methodological techniques were used to control for non-cultural differences as well as cultural variation in how people respond to questionnaires. This survey data is augmented by a wealth of historical and analytical contexts that will make the book an essential item in the library of anyone concerned with issues relating to political behaviour at all levels.
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POLITICS, CULTURE AND SELF
EAST ASIAN AND NORTH EUROPEAN ATTITUDES

Edited by
Geir Helgesen and Søren Risbjerg Thomsen
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PREFACE

Many years ago, during a quiet interlude late at night after a conference in which scholars from many Western and several Asian countries had participated (and were now comparing their drinking skills), an elderly Indian scholar – who abstained from the pleasures of intoxication – shared his thoughts with anyone who cared to listen. ‘All you can do’, he said, ‘is to provide a stone for the still non-existent bridge of understanding between East and West, and hope that there will one day be enough material to actually construct it.’

The present book is not a conference volume. Without criticizing conference volumes as such – there are probably almost as many interesting as there are trivial ones – this is said only to emphasize that the present product is the main outcome of a long cross-cultural research process. It all began in 1992, when the two editors of this book accidentally met at the University of Hawai‘i’s Center for Korean Studies. Both from Denmark, but with different backgrounds and research interests, we came up with the idea of trying to combine a quantitative, statistical approach with a qualitative, socio-anthropological approach in a study reflecting culture and self in two distinctly different regions of the world by focusing on popular attitudes and political opinions. While one of us, an election analyst and statistician, had conducted studies within his own country and his own part of the world, the other, a cultural sociologist, had focused on Korea, a remote and totally different country in East Asia. Through our discussions on the pros and cons of different approaches in the field of political culture, we slowly moved towards some kind of convergence. Each of us could see the advantages of the other one’s approach and was willing to try it out.

It was not long, however, before we realized that this idea was too big to be carried out by the two of us alone, and we embarked on a search for Asian collaborators. The University of Hawai‘i is just the place for such a search, and it was there that we found our first partner, a Korean social psychologist named Uichol Kim. Through

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him and his network we managed to link up with a group of scholars from Japan, Korea, China and Taiwan. After gathering this group of Asian scholars interested in comparative research, the next step was to find Nordic counterparts, and soon scholars from Norway, Sweden, Finland and even Iceland joined the group. Our first meeting took place outside Copenhagen in the autumn of 1997, and during that meeting we decided to establish a more formal, work-oriented partnership in order to carry out research in all the countries represented. What we agreed on was to seek empirical evidence to substantiate the stated similarities – and differences – between our two regions, located as far from each other as possible on the same land mass, the Eurasian continent. Coincidentally, or perhaps because the time was ripe, our efforts corresponded with the efforts to develop a more formal channel for dialogue between political circles in Europe and Asia, the ASEM process. It was encouraging to read that Asian and European leaders were clearly aware of the need to establish more grounded knowledge of ‘the other’ before the East–West dialogue could develop into a more solid cooperation. The Asian Values debate, stressing the fundamental difference in values between East and West and based more on ideology than on actual facts, had created a precedent that did not encourage repetition. Our ambition, then, became to present a picture of differences and similarities which was based on solid facts.

The most fascinating and challenging task was now to find the ways and means of carrying out this idea. To create a framework, we established a cooperative body, the Eurasia Political Culture Research Network or EPCReN. By exercising a readiness to question not only others’ fixed positions but also our own, we committed ourselves to a culture-sensitive approach in which politics, culture and self were all part and parcel of a larger body. Our response to the challenge is presented in this volume, where we do our best to clarify our procedure and the results.

The sources of inspiration in this work have been many. In addition to the above-mentioned ASEM process, we have also closely followed the work of other researchers and research teams. The works of the founding fathers of the political culture approach still provide a basic framework for contemporary research. Later cross-cultural studies in social psychology have fine-tuned the tools that are at our disposal today. On the quantitative side, large-scale survey research projects such as the Euro-barometer and the World Values Survey have added some important tools. Our own questionnaire was developed over a long period of time during which we communicated over the Internette; also, the group met face to face five times, once a year during the period from 1997 to 2001.

A stone is a stone, whether it is found in Asia or in Europe. In brief, this has always been the essence of the ‘universalist’ critique of the ‘culturalist’ approach. During the research process leading up to this final report, almost every stone,
Preface

no matter its size, was turned, observed and its true nature discussed intensively in order to reach a common understanding of its characteristics. A stone could represent a word – and what happens to the meaning of it when it is translated. It could be the number of statements in a questionnaire or the tendency of a particular group of people to respond in a positive or negative way, the so-called response set. Were differences due to cultural divergence? Would respondents be interested in answering our questions? Would current politics rather than more basic attitudes influence responses? Could this be detected and – if so – adjusted for? These and many more questions were discussed at length, and some of these discussions are reflected in the following pages. Our discussions can be considered an important qualitative aspect of the research process. By taking advantage of the fact that more than twenty scholars from ten countries, East and West, were engaged in a friendly and constructive dialogue, we could develop a questionnaire that aimed at detecting common values while taking particularities into account. A stone is admittedly a stone, but how one perceives it and the rest of nature, including mankind, is obviously not always identical from place to place.

The elaborate process briefly described above is the main reason why it actually took a couple of years before we were ready to carry out the first survey as well as the reason why it took another couple of years from the time that the last survey was conducted until this volume was ready for print. The process of interpretations of the results was as demanding and difficult as the construction of the research instrument. The comparative, cross-cultural nature of the project constitutes one reason why it has been a lengthy process, exceeding several optimistic deadlines but nevertheless (and fortunately) brought to completion. Another complication was the interdisciplinary nature of the project. Sinologists, ethnologists, sociologists, political scientists, psychologists – so many traditions and approaches to take into account and utilize! However, we see this diversity not as an obstacle, but as a strength. We may not fully have considered the dos and don’ts of each academic tradition, but we believe that we have contributed a couple of stones that can be accepted in the East as well as the West as important building materials towards the construction of a bridge of understanding between Asia and Europe.

G.H. & S.R.T.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was truly a matter of collaboration from beginning to end. The intellectual input was a collective effort; the final goal was the production of a book reflecting the ideas of the contributors, the spirit of cooperation and solid conclusions reached through analysis, interpretation and discussion. Thus, there are many who have put an investment into the project.

The contributors to this volume form the nucleus of the Eurasia Political Culture Research Network. Along the road, a number of worthy colleagues joined the group for longer or shorter periods of time, and they were all able to leave their marks on some part of the process. Susumu Yamaguchi of Tokyo University contributed throughout the project, as did Lew Seok-Choon of Yonsei University, both of them non-traditional and creative spirits. In China, Wang Shumao of Shenyang Teachers University contributed with the Chinese pilot survey and was active during the first part of the project, when we were not even sure that we could conduct a full study in China. He was succeeded by Shen Mingming of Beijing University, whose survey team actually conducted our Chinese study. Our Finnish colleagues, Liisa Salo-Lee of the University of Jyväskylä and Annamari Konttinen and Antti Kouvo of Turku University, were active during the first and last parts of the study respectively. In Sweden, Oscar Almén of Gothenburg University was a key player most of the time. In Denmark, Tage Bild, Hans Jørgen Nielsen and Rolf Kuschel, all from Copenhagen University, were involved, making valuable contributions at different points in time. Claus Mogensen and Henning Jensen, affiliated with the project at Aarhus University, contributed during the creation of the questionnaire and in making a technical report on all the surveys respectively. In Taiwan there were three active EPCReN people: Hong-yuan Chu and Huoyan Shuy from Academia Sinica in Taipei and Yao-chia Chuang of the National Pingtung Teachers’ College. In addition to providing a valuable pilot survey that became extremely helpful in finalizing the survey instrument proper, this group took active part in several workshops. From Norway, Kristin Dalen and Torstein Hjellum of Bergen University were part of the group during pivotal discussions on proper methodologies in cross-cultural survey research. Hjellum also conducted a pilot
survey which became a valuable part of the research process. Anna Hjartardóttir represented a prospective Icelandic team for a short period. Unfortunately, we never gained sufficient financial support to be able to carry out proper surveys in Taiwan, Norway and Iceland. Other colleagues joined the project for shorter visits. Some made their points clearly and with lasting effect. One of these was Jean Blondel of the European University Institute in Florence, whose active questioning of the basic idea of our project made us intensify our search for viable solutions to the problems of cross-cultural research. (The cover photo shows Blondel in vigorous discussion with Ahn Byong-man.)

The initial cross-cultural meetings, the subsequent national surveys and the ensuing long and intensive reflections and deliberations which took place in Copenhagen (1997), Tokyo (1998), Taipei (1999), Seoul (2000), Stockholm (2001) and again Copenhagen (2002) were made possible by financial support from several funding institutions. Major financial support came from the Danish Social Science Research Council. The project also received support from the European Science Foundation, Asia Committee; the Korea Foundation; the Asia Research Fund (Seoul); the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation; the Velux Foundation of 1981 (Denmark); the Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education; the Danish Foreign Policy Institute; and the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, which was the base of the study and the research project from beginning to end.

When the different contributions have been gathered and edited according to the basic idea of the project, a manuscript is produced. A book – one believes – is soon to be born. However, writing in a foreign language necessitates a language editor who knows and understands the ideas of the authors and masters the language far better than they do. Liz Bramsen is such a person. Her many corrections and suggestions of better, simpler ways of formulating complicated thoughts were taken care of by Lone Winther, whose meticulous eye detected problems to which we had been blind, and rectified them. At NIAS Press, the book design, typesetting and last-minute corrections and changes were expertly and professionally handled by Leena Hóskuldsdóttir. Last, but not least, the editor in chief of the Press, Gerald Jackson, created the cover, suggested the title and composed the text on the back cover, all to our absolute satisfaction.

We are deeply indebted to the above mentioned people and institutions. We have undoubtedly forgotten to mention the support of several colleagues, to whom we genuinely apologize for our forgetfulness.

As stressed in the first paragraph of these acknowledgements, this is a collective piece of work. As the editors, however, we take sole responsibility for any errors or mistakes throughout the volume.
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Politics, Culture and Self

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**Contributors**

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PART 1

EAST ASIA AND THE NORDIC WEST:
MAIN COMPARISON
Chapter 1

DIFFERENT AND SIMILAR:
POLITICAL CULTURE IN EAST ASIA
AND NORDIC EUROPE

Geir Helgesen

INTRODUCTION

What is ‘good government’? Within the global political context, the political cultures of East Asia and the Nordic European countries are supposed to be ‘worlds apart’ but have common traits regarding people’s expectations of their governments. Unexpectedly, popular control of government is not alien to East Asian political opinion; even more surprising is, however, the fact that the moral, paternalistic leadership style so widely accepted in East Asia attracts a positive response in the Nordic countries as well.

This book deals with perceptions of society and politics in six countries located in East Asia and Nordic Europe. We have asked 7,149 people to share their opinions on a number of relevant questions, and the resultant material constitutes the empirical part of this study. The other part consists of an overview of the historical and cultural context within which the survey data is interpreted. The two regions under study are far apart geographically and direct contact between them has been minimal. There is thus a general expectation that the two regions should prove to be characterized by very different cultural traits, an expectation to which any observer taking an East–West comparative perspective can testify. What might be the political consequences of this? In the field of comparative politics, the phenomenon of politics has mainly been studied and understood in relation to the social structure and institutions of the society, while political culture has until recently either been neglected or used as a residual explanation when other
explanations fail (Peters 1998: 82). We can see two reasons why the impact of culture on society and politics has been neglected; the first relates to the cold war ideologies and the second to a misguided ‘humanistic’ approach to the world.

The post-World War II period was the era of political ideologies in which the ideologies of the East (Communism) and West (Liberal Democracy and free market) superimposed themselves upon all other social and international particularities and relations. The balance between the two military superpowers set the scene and the agenda for the rest of the world. Friend and foe were to be judged based on their links with the one or the other superpower, a friend was often identified as a friend by being the enemy’s enemy. The world of the cold war left little room for other aspects than those derived from the two contending political ideologies. The very superfluous terms ‘communist’ and ‘democratic’ characterized the important regions of the world. Thus, the past has given us no rational way of grasping the post-cold-war world.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the great change in China’s economic system happened in an increasingly interdependent world. New possibilities as well as dangers confront us with new challenges and tasks in the face of which international and inter-human understanding remains basic and imperative. Left in the space between the former dichotomizing ideologies and their preconceived world views, it seems necessary to start almost from scratch and build up this understanding. An immediate obstacle to this is what we will term *idealistic universalism*, which holds that because ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’ it is negative and almost detestable to focus on differences in traits and traditions. This intellectual political correctness – or unconscious rigidity – with regard to acknowledging observable differences in individual and social behavior around the world is unwarranted, and it may easily lead towards a universalism that in reality is a disguised form of parochialism. In her *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* ([1946] 1989) Ruth Benedict clearly and convincingly rejects what she called at that time the protagonists of One World, who had:

[…] staked their hopes on convincing people of every corner of the earth that all the differences between East and West, black and white, Christian and Muhammedan, are superficial and that all mankind is really like minded. This view is sometimes called the brotherhood of man. I do not know why believing in the brotherhood of man should mean that one cannot say that the Japanese have their own version of the conduct of life and that Americans have theirs. It sometimes seems as if the tender-minded could not base a doctrine of good will upon anything less than a world of peoples each of which is a print from the same negative. But to demand such uniformity as a condition of respecting another nation is as neurotic as to demand it of one’s wife or one’s children. The tough-minded are content
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that differences should exist. They respect differences. Their goal is a world made safe for differences, where the United States may be American to the hilt without threatening the peace of the world, and France may be France, and Japan may be Japan on the same conditions (ibid.: 14–15).

What Benedict wrote during the Second World War and published for the first time in 1946 still makes sense, as there are still protagonists of One World today. People are reluctant to appreciate cultural differences, probably because they see them as an opening towards a disregard for the universal principles of human rights.

The cause for a widespread fear of stressing cultural differences is probably the basic human tendency to combine observation with judgment. Taking the impact of culture into consideration, however, it is questionable whether it is at all possible to avoid. This makes it absolutely essential to identify and understand existing differences as well as similarities in human behavior in different parts of the world. Failure to do this invites conflict. Expecting all people to follow the same behavioral patterns, to agree on good and bad, right and wrong, will inevitably lead to disappointment and possibly to unfounded depreciation of others.

An example of this unfolded during the so-called Asian Values debate. It happened when the Western debaters placed liberal democracy and the undefined essence of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights above discussion and above any historical, cultural, economic or other differences. In response to this, Eastern debaters pointed to their history, culture and particular economic situation as precisely being among the main reasons why democracy and human rights as defined in the West could not be realized in Asia. In hindsight, this debate appears as ideological as the cold-war debates, although the stakes were different and, supposedly, of a more practical kind. The position of the contenders in both cases was parochial. In most cases the Western position neglected the cultural dimension or considered Western ways to be universally valid. The East Asian perspective, on the other hand, was to place the culture in a determinant position and to argue as though the cultural pattern determined the political system. What both West and East lacked, however, was empirical evidence. The debate confronted different ideals, mostly as formulated by political leaders and political scientists.

While the world, due to technical and economic developments, has become a smaller place, the very same process has revealed a multitude of ways of life. Contrary to earlier predictions that saw globalization as a process that in a relatively short period of time would shape people according to a general norm, it now seems increasingly clear that a rich variety of cultures will persist. To some extent, distinct cultures may even be strengthened in the globalization process, as people become more aware of their own peculiar conventions when confronted with those of others. In this perspective, the importance of cross-cultural social research can hardly be
overstated. To operate in a world with increasingly international communication, where cultural diversity remains the norm, one needs skills to decipher the different signals. To be able to perform this kind of interpretative work, international social actors need basic knowledge concerning the values, ideas and norms that characterize different cultures.

The political culture approach will naturally take the above as the point of departure within the framework of cross-cultural research in politics. This approach focuses on how those affected by politics, either as actors or ‘bystanders’, understand what is going on, why they understand it the way they do, and the possible consequences of their attitudes and behavior. What we are aiming at is a way to locate these basic beliefs, ideas, values, and norms, and to judge the relative importance they hold for the group of people we are examining. From there we will try to make some generalizations. In a cross-cultural comparative study, the aim is obviously to portray individual cultures, locate similarities and differences, and distinguish the cultures from each other. But can we talk about cultures as given entities?

The very first sociologists saw that social solidarity was an important factor for the development of a certain order in society (Comte), and this order and its importance for the cohesion of society became one of the main fields in social theory. Within classical sociology, a particular cultural approach developed emphasizing the role of shared values and norms. An important early representative for this approach was Emile Durkheim, and in modern sociology Talcott Parsons stands out, but neither Marx nor Weber denied the role of values in society. Until recently, however, social theory and research were based on Western experiences and conducted in Western countries. Culture was primarily understood in the social sciences as something that related to levels of development, not very different from the formulation already used by Auguste Comte – three progressive stages of society: the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive, where only the third was characterized by scientific thinking. Only the post-war (1945 to the present) development, and especially the post-cold war part (after 1991), has brought culture to the forefront of social theory (Pye 1985; Landes 1998; Harrison and Huntington (eds) 2000; Crothers and Lockhart (eds) 2000). Upon observing that modernization did not necessarily lead to Westernization, social scientists had to come up with a more sophisticated understanding of development.

Could it be that there was something besides the sun that colored people; something that affected all people in a given area, that demanded certain practices, conventions or reactions? It is generally believed that the natural environment has a certain impact on people, that high mountains and deep forests affect the people living there in a different way than the ocean affects people living by the sea. What
one does for a living is as important as the environment in which one dwells - the countryside or the city. Such significant historical experiences as wars and foreign occupations also leave their mark, as do long and prosperous periods of peace. Basic psycho-sociological knowledge of man and society teaches us that religious and semi-religious creeds affect the values and norms of an indigenous population to a considerable degree. We also know that even though the values and norms based in dominating religions and creeds do change, they do so at an extremely slow rate compared to that of economic, technical and political change. This is why it makes sense to speak of a country’s dominant culture and of regions characterized by certain customs or conventions, based upon fundamental values and norms.

The two regions presented in this study include South Korea, Japan and China in East Asia and Denmark, Finland and Sweden, three small countries in Northern Europe. We assume that there are some aspects of similarity in the three East Asian countries, and some aspects of similarity in the three Nordic countries. These assumptions are based, first and foremost, on geographical proximity and shared historical experiences. The dominant religions of the two respective regions constitute a particularly important common background. In East Asia, Shamanism as a widespread folk religion is the basis of a shared experience, as are Buddhism and Confucianism. These have played – and still play – a decisive role in forming people’s world views and ways of life. The traditional folk religion in the Nordic countries was similar in some respects to the different forms of East Asian Shamanism, as it was a nature religion with gods and ancient heroes occupying the pantheon. The interrelationship between human beings, gods and nature presents another parallel, and the role of destiny a third. In this part of the world, however, Christianity not only replaced the indigenous religions, but seemingly eradicated what then became known as pagan beliefs. As opposed to East Asia, where religious pluralism is a characteristic, the monotheistic Christian belief system became the dominant religious creed of the Nordic countries.

That there is a relationship between belief systems and social organization seems to be a reasonable assumption, although it is difficult to determine which of the two affects the other the most, and in what order. The myth of the strong, independent Viking, a gruesome threat in foreign lands but well-organized and orderly at home, may well have affected leadership models throughout history and even in modern times in the Nordic region. Roughness and individual determination are still seen as positive male traits in this part of the world. In East Asian tradition, the image of the undefeatable shaman-king affected groups of young warriors, who were also inspired by Buddhism. In the long run, however, the strongest impact on East Asian society and social relations came from Confucianism. Social relations took on the model of Confucian moralism. The family became the blueprint for all
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social organizations; the father figure of the traditional, hierarchical family became the prototypical role-model for all leaders; and the strong but benevolent scholar-bureaucrat became the societal ideal and role-model of the male elite.

These few aspects of the social and religious traditions of the two regions under study may not have a determining influence as to which political systems become rooted where, but we assume that such influences affect how the different systems are rooted and how the political processes are formed. The general way that social relations are understood and the way that authority relations have been inculcated in people through socialization and education probably affect the way that ‘leaders’ and ‘followers’ relate to each other, the way that politics is conducted and the way in which it is understood. We are now talking about contemporary politics. Our assumption is that politics is embedded in a cultural context, and in order to decipher what people see as good government, one has to examine several non-political areas of social life, including the ideas, values and norms held by the people under study.

Based on previous research, it seems clear that individualism and collectivism do characterize Western and East Asian societies respectively. According to Triandis (1994, 1995) a great variety of social behaviors can be explained by these constructs, which indicates that as such they are powerful and useful concepts in any social research that seeks to be sensitive to cultural differences. While individualism is defined by loose ties between individuals and a strong need for personal freedom, collectivism is defined by strong, cohesive groups based on unfailing loyalty between members (Hofstede 1991). Individualism emphasizes independence, while interdependence is more important in collectivism (Markus and Kitayama 1991). The concepts discussed here are not confined to certain geographic-cultural areas, however. East Asian individualism obviously exists, as does Western collectivism (Kim et al. 1994). On the individual level, the case seems to be that the cultural context within which we live augments the one or the other aspect. In East Asia collective or group-based behavior is expected and promoted, while in the West individual choices which do not correspond with group behavior are fully accepted and even promoted.

As research tools, individualism and collectivism may be rather blurred categories, there have been several efforts to rationalize them by adding other, more specific characteristics to the basic concepts. One such effort is to divide individualism and collectivism into vertical and horizontal modes, reflecting attitudes towards hierarchy and equality (Triandis 1996: 47). In this scheme ‘Vertical collectivism’ is hierarchical and marked by a strong sense of duty. Cultures within the Confucian zone belong to this ideal type, and Korea would be a likely prototype. ‘Horizontal collectivism’ is more egalitarian and is marked by a strong sense of cooperation.
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Shintoism (state shamanism) rather than Confucianism is the religious basis of this ideal type, and a prototype country would be Japan. ‘Horizontal individualism’ is more egalitarian but emphasizes uniqueness. Both Christianity and Buddhism make up possible religious foundations for this type, and the Nordic countries are likely prototype countries. ‘Vertical individualism’ is hierarchical and achievement oriented; its religious base is Christianity, and it promotes capitalism and liberalism. The USA might be the prototypical system.

People living in different parts of the world, in this case East Asia and the Nordic countries, have developed different ways of living, different ideas about what is good and what is bad, different tastes in food and the arts, different social and moral values and norms, and different social, political and economic arrangements for dealing with the organization of society. The above-mentioned countries are all modern in the sense that industrialization and urbanization, modern education, communication and transportation infrastructures, etc., are highly developed, although this has happened at different times and at different speeds. What we will try to do is to understand each country and its population as far as possible on its own terms, realizing that a one-to-one comparison would be misleading. Although we advocate cultural sensitivity, we do not imply that all kinds of comparison are futile or impossible. We do not live on different planets; as biological human beings we do have most things in common. Moreover, East–West exchanges now happen every day, and thus comparisons are made and form the basis for mutual judgments. These exchanges are not always unproblematic, though, as most people with cross-cultural experience can testify.

The post-cold war period between East and West has been marked by attempts to bridge the gap by developing instruments for closer cooperation. It has also, as mentioned above, been marked by an ideological cum cultural conflict. As we see this conflict, it is based on a Western-directed agenda promoting human rights and democracy as turnkey projects in Asia. Since the USA is undoubtedly the strongest player on the international scene, and also the most challenging power, the democracy that is expected to conquer the world is the US liberal version. With the demise of the Soviet Union, and thus the disappearance of state communism as a global alternative for organizing national economies and polities, these efforts became stronger and more clearly addressed. When globalization replaced development as the catchword in the international political discourse, this one-sidedness in international relations was strengthened.

Globalization as Westernization made many people in non-Western countries perceive current trends in the international arena as a threat to their ways of life. That some political leaders in Asia utilized this situation to serve their own interests by harnessing culture to their political wagon added to this threat. In the late
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1990s the financial and economic crisis (which probably also provoked a political-moral crisis) that hit Asia subdued the Asian Values advocates. At the same time, it negatively affected the balance of East–West relations. It has not, however, made East–West studies superfluous. A more balanced and positive dialogue still has not been established, although the ASEM process, bringing Asian and European leaders together as a bi-annual event, is the first grand scale attempt to develop closer relations between the two sides. As a government to government link, ASEM needs to reach beyond political formalities and the drive for mutual economic gains in order to develop and exchange knowledge about the cultures and ways of life that dominate the vast expanse known as Eurasia. Such knowledge can only be acquired through international, cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary research. Thus, different ways of utilizing the data will be demonstrated. Some chapters look only at a single country, others compare a few and still others compare all the countries in our study.

It is important to note that because we were interested in identifying similarities and differences in different political cultures, a considerable part of the items in our questionnaire were consensus-questions. It was expected that most people would agree or disagree with a particular statement, but that the answer might differ somewhat from one country to another. Such questions are often avoided in value surveys simply because methods of statistical analysis are based on variables with substantial variation (Togeby 2002: 268). A consequence of the fact that consensus-questions are under-represented in survey research is that the constancy of basic attitudes has been underrated. Based on experiences with the Danish section of the World Values Survey (Gundelach 1981, 1990, 1999) and with reference to other American studies, it is stated that basic attitudes shared by the general public change slowly and only with great difficulty (Togeby 2002: 291). Based on this, we are quite confident that the results of our analyses of data gathered from 1999 to 2001 will apply in 2005 as well as in the years to come.

THE CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH NETWORK

The Eurasia Political Culture Research Network (EPCReN) was established (in 1997) to carry out cross-cultural research. With scholars from China, Denmark, Finland, Japan, Korea, Norway, Sweden and Taiwan the EPCReN cooperation developed a cross-cultural survey instrument and conducted surveys in East Asia and the Nordic countries. The surveys focused on opinions about and attitudes towards power and authority, dealing with leadership, education, trust, efficacy and other issues of importance for people’s orientations in society, their views on self and others in society and in the political process. It has not been the aim of the study
to measure the level of democracy in the different countries where surveys have been conducted. Rather, it has been our goal to try to find cultural similarities and differences between countries within the same region and between the regions.

To find out what values, norms and ideas are prevalent in a society is a complicated affair, and all available ways and methods have been contested. In the EPCReN Good Government project, we decided to make the development of a survey instrument a collaborative project. Well aware that surveys in general and attitudinal surveys in particular are rough instruments, and that this research method has numerous pitfalls, we nevertheless agreed to make the attempt. Our study is not the only one of its kind, nor is it the first. But it may be one of the very few international and cross-cultural surveys in which the instrument was developed through a collaborative effort, from scratch. It is not as though no previous work inspired us, nor did we avoid the use of questions from previous studies. Several of those cooperating on this project have conducted surveys previously, and after intense discussions on the wording, we often borrowed their formulations. Other similar projects were consulted, and we have no reason to hide our debt to numerous colleagues in the survey business. Not surprisingly, we have taken advantage of the work of Ronald Inglehart and his colleagues in their impressive and continuous World Values surveys.

One could argue that more of our items should have been borrowed directly and without any kind of adjustment, in order to increase the amount of comparative data. However, the particular idea that we have tried to follow is that the issues addressed and the wording of the questions in our questionnaire should be as meaningful to the respondents as possible, and at the same time as similar as possible in the different translations across different countries. To follow this line of thought, we engaged in many in-depth debates on questionnaire design, and on themes and issues of relevance both to the study and to the respondents. Over a period of two years, the questionnaire was developed and tested in pilot surveys in both East Asia and the Nordic countries, then discussed and revised again. We found that even small nuances in the wording often altered the entire tone of the question. For this reason, the EPCReN survey sometimes asks similar questions to those of other studies, but does not use the same wording.

One reason for using the survey method despite obvious weaknesses is that what we in the East and the West know of each other is mostly based on other types of sources. Philosophers and historians provide in-depth knowledge of the past; traditions and creeds can be claimed to have an impact on the contemporary world. This is clearly in line with our assumptions, but we attempt to identify this impact in people’s responses to our questions. Social scientists have described organizations and institutions, how they are developed and how they function – or are supposed to
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function. They can point at development stages and possible reasons for continued development, change or decline. We are more interested in the people populating the institutions. What are their preferences, and why? Economists gather information, and analyse and describe possible scenarios, but reality often disappoints them. A frequent statement among people dealing with the world economy is that it is all psychology. It is the expectations of people, not the amount of goods produced, that determine the fate of the economy. We believe that this is even more so in politics. Therefore it is important to survey what people believe, feel and think about other people and about the society in which they live.

THE COMPOSITION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

In order to grasp the meaning of ‘good government’ in different political cultures, it is presupposed that culturally determined notions of authority, power, leadership, political rights and political duties are to be investigated. When we claim that politics as a social activity is linked to a cultural context that bestows meaning upon phenomena in the political process, it is obvious that an a priori definition of ‘good government’ is totally out of the question. Our aim has been to survey the respondents’ notions of different themes deemed to be of importance to their understanding of society and politics. The following nine themes are supposed to cover essential features of all the political cultures we are surveying:

1. Good government. Here we seek to find out how people judge the government in general to be acceptable or even good, and what the authorities must do to deserve such a judgement.

2. Politics in daily life. This theme focuses on how much attention the respondents pay towards politics, how they perceive their own role, the instruments of participation and ways to gain influence.

3. Tolerance. The degree of tolerance towards deviant behaviour, as well as tolerance towards people with different opinions is important in relation to political pluralism.

4. Trust. This concerns general inter-personal relations as well as in-group relations. Both the general notion of what to expect from society and the political institutions as well as in-group links are seen as relevant in determining the level and quality of trust.

5. Rights and duties. The balance between rights and duties are a general societal concern. We present this problem as mainly an act of balance between the individual/the family on the one hand and the society and the state on the other.

6. Leadership. To judge perceptions of leadership, we ask questions about what kind of background is preferable; what personal and social skills are required; what are the relations between principles and morals; and how are power and conflicts related to and dealt with?
7. Citizenship–followership. Aspects of participation are touched upon, as are notions of power, good leadership, and the importance of rules versus morality.

8. Meaning of democracy. What does the concept cover? Is it within reach? How can it be achieved? What does it imply in relation to freedom, rights, participation, representation, equality and leadership?

9. Social relations. Here we relate to notions of life satisfaction, the meaning of life, family and social values, morals versus principles, the meaning of traditions and modernity, individual and group interests, and self-evaluation.

Through presenting issues and statements within these nine themes in a questionnaire, our aim is to analyse the survey data and construct a map consisting of the six political cultures studied. The main interest is to reveal the respondents’ perceptions of authority and power, the core aspects of politics. Not every chapter in this book deals with all nine themes. The authors have been free to focus on aspects particularly relevant to their research interest and knowledge.

**RESPONDENTS’ RECEPTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

The second to last item in the questionnaire read as follows: ‘How well do you think that the questionnaire covers your political and social attitudes?’ The response scale included four options: 1) inadequate, 2) not so well, 3) adequate, 4) very well. In Table 1.1 below the results are collapsed into two categories, one negative (1+2) and one positive (3+4). This division seems reasonably clear and unproblematic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Korea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate/not so well</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate/very well</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>(1228)</td>
<td>(752)</td>
<td>(920)</td>
<td>(919)</td>
<td>(1000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the researchers’ point of view, the response pattern is rather satisfying, as a clear majority in four out of five countries respond in a positive way, finding that the survey adequately covered their concerns. In Japan, however, the response is directly opposite, and a clear majority say ‘not so well’ (64.0 per cent) or even ‘inadequate’ (11.9 per cent). This was indeed a surprise, since we had discussed measures to steer clear of the usual consensus-seeking response bias, which is especially disturbing in survey research in Japan. Worried about by this result, we
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enquired about the survey methods, and found out that our Japanese colleagues,
in order to avoid the usual bias towards positive and agreeing responses, had made
a brief introduction to the questionnaire in which they stressed the importance of
relating to the questions with a critical mind. Although we cannot explain away
or ignore the skeptical Japanese majority, the result can be seen as the outcome
of a positive and accommodating response to this introductory inducement to
critical thinking. Another possible reason for the critical stand towards the survey
instrument might be something that is claimed to be a widespread notion among
the Japanese, that they are members of a particular group of people who are not
comparable to others, be they regional neighbors or people in faraway lands. This
topic will be discussed at some length in Chapter 9.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

It needs to be stressed here that the present study is not a mainstream survey report,
primarily basing its judgments and conclusions on the available data. Conducting
surveys with about one thousand respondents in each of six countries is both
time-consuming and expensive, thus the data is obviously one important part of
the study. However, the interpretation of the data is also important, and here we
strongly emphasize the historical and current cultural context as the foundation for
such analysis.

The book is divided into two parts. Part I deals with the main research questions
and the overall comparison between the countries in our study, with special focus
on the major cultural differences between East Asia and the Nordic West. This
part includes an introduction to the political culture approach, the worldviews of
the two regions, the profiles of the countries, and the main findings comparing the
survey data on the national level. Part II includes an analysis of a series of special
subjects using our survey data in more detail. Here we look deeper into special
topics such as the validity of, particularly, the Chinese survey data, the sensitive
pattern of efficacy and trust in Korea, the uniqueness of Japan within the East
Asian region, the delicate difference between the Danish and Swedish mentalities,
and the usefulness of the concept of social capital in cross-cultural comparisons.

After the introduction in this chapter, Chapter 2 focuses on culture and its
relevance to the social sciences. By means of an historical exposition, we show that
cross-cultural influences between Asia and Europe go further back in history than
one usually imagines, and that one has probably been more attentive to the Western
impact on Asia than to impact the other way around. The chapter attempts to
clarify our understanding of the concept of ‘culture’ and why we hold it to be a
central feature of comparative studies. The next two chapters, Chapters 3 and 4,
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present East Asian and Nordic European cultures respectively by discussing how their traditions have developed and how they have survived until today in one form or another, thus impacting on our modern understanding of people, society and politics in different ways in the two regions.

Chapter 5 gives a brief quantitative comparison of the six countries in the EPCReN study from an historical perspective. The aim is to show important economic, demographic and political indicators for the development of each country historically, setting the stage for the following studies of political culture either as single-country studies or as comparative studies.

Chapter 6 compares the six political cultures represented in this study by analysing all the survey data on the aggregate national level. The focus of the chapter is partly methodological and partly on the main similarities and differences between the countries. The chapter demonstrates the different statistical methods with which the political cultures in East Asia and in Nordic Europe can be compared, and it also points at some common pitfalls in comparative studies. It summarizes the findings and relates these to the initial assumptions and expectations, reaching a general conclusion with regard to differences and similarities between East Asian and Nordic European political cultures.

The first chapter in the second part of the book, Chapter 7, focuses on a thorny issue in our study: the question of the validity of the somewhat unexpected results in the Chinese survey. This is done by comparing China and Sweden, a rather atypical pair in comparative studies. It is stated that the two countries – for obvious reasons – cannot be treated in a similar way, and that Sweden (as the home country of the author) plays the role of the comparative base for the interpretation of the Chinese data. One aim of this chapter is to question common stereotypes with regard to Eastern and Western political cultures. To establish a framework for interpretation, the political histories of both countries are dealt with, and a special paragraph treats the understanding of Confucianism from the perspective of collectivism versus individualism, which is one of the main themes treated in the second part of the chapter, which interprets the survey results. The other main theme deals with democratic versus authoritarian culture.

Chapter 8 on Korea explains the impact of Confucianism on the political culture of the country. It also delineates its post-war political history, which has obviously been affected by its political tradition and has been of crucial importance to the present political situation in Korea. A brief detour to an elite study based on surveys conducted in the 1990s prepares the way for the results of the 2000 EPCReN survey. A general overview of the results is followed by a more focused study relating to questions of political efficacy and trust. These topics are then discussed in relation to the development of Korean democracy.
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Chapter 9 on Japan takes a brief look at the country before Westernization and discusses the impact of different traditions before and during the early modernization period. The different religious creeds are then dealt with, especially with regard to their impact on the Japanese people, not least through moral education, a controversial subject in the school system. A lengthy part of the chapter is a discussion of the assumed Japanese uniqueness, and finally, some questions with regard to the country’s political culture are illuminated through the EPCReN survey results.

Chapter 10 deals with two neighboring countries, Denmark and Sweden, in a comparative perspective. The histories of the two countries are marked by many similar aspects. Impact from abroad has affected both countries, often in a similar way but not always in the same sequence of events. By comparing the social and political histories of the two countries, including the impact of the religious tradition through moral education, one gets a picture of two similar, yet distinct, political cultures. On this basis, the survey results are compared and interpreted. A wide range of the themes represented in the questionnaire are presented and the results discussed, leading to a general picture of a Scandinavian political culture with some country-specific traits and some references to the other countries in the EPCReN study.

The last chapter about special subjects, Chapter 11, compares four countries with regard to social capital, an important aspect of the political culture. The concept is defined and placed within the field of democracy studies. The chapter highlights the following three cultural factors as important in understanding social capital: general values; ideas on leadership and authority; and basic norms for social interaction. Based on these factors, the chapter discusses the role and impact of trust concerning participation and political efficacy in East Asia (Japan and Korea) compared to two Nordic European countries (Denmark and Sweden).

The twelfth and final chapter summarizes the findings with regard to East–West understanding. Some important aspects of the different political cultures are highlighted to ascertain how each region holds to its own peculiar ways, but also to see where there actually are rather close resemblances, despite different forms or structures. We discuss issues that might create serious difficulties for an East–West dialogue, and suggest ways of overcoming misunderstandings by creating a common project for a mutually beneficial future.

NOTES

1 Technical details are described in Thomsen and Jensen (2002).
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5 Due to lack of funding we lost Norway and Taiwan in the process.

6 This item in the questionnaire also offered the respondents half a page to formulate their own answer to the following question: ‘Did we miss any of your concerns? Please list the most important ones.’ Very few, less than 15 per cent of the respondents, used this opportunity to articulate their criticism or concerns. The question was not included in the Finnish survey.

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Chapter 2

CULTURE MATTERS

Geir Helgesen

The importance of values, beliefs, and social norms – in short the importance of the human factor – to the working of the political system has preoccupied political philosophers throughout history. Plato (427–347 BC) in one of his dialogues asks: ‘Do you know that governments vary as the dispositions of men vary, and that there must be as many of the one as there are of the other? For we cannot suppose that States are made of “oak and rock” and not out of the human natures which are in them’ (The Republic, Book 8, VIII).

Our purpose in this chapter is to trace the seeds of the political culture approach, to find out what encouraged the interest in culture in the social sciences, and further to discuss whether or not this perspective was prevalent in the works of the founding fathers of sociology. This rather meticulous exposition is necessary to lay the groundwork for the later part of the book, in which we present and analyse survey research data from East Asia and Nordic Europe, two distinct cultural regions of the world.

CULTURE, SOCIETY AND POLITICS

In this book we endeavour to draw a picture of the political cultures of six countries, three in East Asia and three in Nordic Europe. Our main tools have been an attitudinal survey and the insights of actively collaborating researchers in all six countries. This cross-cultural and inter-disciplinary research group took great pains in constructing a relevant survey instrument. A main issue was that the items in the questionnaire should be perceived as meaningful to all the respondents.

To take an example, presupposing that family life affects the development of perceptions of authority (a widely held assumption in the political culture literature), we were obviously interested in our respondents’ views regarding family matters.
But how would we acquire this information? Although this basic social unit called ‘family’ is a universal phenomenon and certainly exists and plays an important role in all of the six countries under study, the significance of the family is not necessarily the same in each country, but depends upon how the family operates in relation to the whole social fabric. Is it a base for the development of independent and self-reliant individuals, or is it a base for the formation of we-ness and the social character of each individual? Interpretations of survey data cannot but reflect upon such fundamental differences. Hence, the existence of different cultures was from the outset both a basic condition and an issue to deal with, to identify, interpret, understand and describe.

We will return to the concept couplet political culture, but give here only a brief and condensed definition of culture (one which we will return to and discuss throughout the chapter). Culture is defined as prevalent values, beliefs and norms, as well as orientations and underlying assumptions characterizing the majority of people in a society. This definition, which clearly has been borrowed from anthropology, shows that culture is learned behavior. To clarify this interpretation of culture – as there are several – we will add that values are shared ideas about what is good, beliefs are shared ideas about what is true, and norms are shared expectations about how to behave based on the common values and beliefs. Orientations are more fluctuating, affected by the given information as well as by daily life experiences, and underlying assumptions belong, on the mental level, to the subconscious field and, on the behavioural level, to what is considered the natural and standard way of doing things. Of these five elements, orientations remain outside of the scope of our approach, as they are assumed to be too susceptible to the influence of day-to-day politics.

As such, culture is intrinsic to society and to the human being. It is not meaningful to see culture as an outside force which limits the freedom of the individual but rather as that which makes the individual human. It is hard to envisage a person not tempered by culture, or a society not governed according to the values, beliefs, and norms embedded in a particular culture. Our basic point of departure is the centrality of culture in societal development, its particularity and dynamism, and not least its intertwinement with politics. E. R. Service in his ‘Origins of the State and Civilization: The process of Cultural Evolution’ (1975) eloquently formulates this approach to world history:

The human achievement was the creation of culture, the means by which societies tame and govern their members and create and maintain their complex social organization. Culture also has technological, economic, religious, artistic, and recreational functions, among others. All of these depend on the ability of the political aspect of the culture to integrate and protect the society. The gravest
problems, aside from sheer subsistence, are political, and all societies must be able to solve them in order to perpetuate themselves (Service 1975: 3).

In the present book we are interested in the political aspects of culture, aspects that by plain observation appear different in different regions of the world. Such differences are often related to in a judgmental way. Societies are seen as more or less free, pluralistic, participatory, effective, moral, responsible and of course, in the present period, more or less democratic. In this study, however, we have been less interested in measuring different ways according to a fixed norm, and more interested in trying to grasp how people in different countries perceive and relate to their habitat, to social institutions – including the political system – as well as to values, beliefs and norms that are deemed basic to social existence.

As formulated by Service, all political aspects of culture are also efforts towards integrating and protecting the society. No matter what the given political system, such efforts are based, to a certain extent, on tradition. A Japanese prime minister differs from his Nordic colleague in attitude and behavior, and this difference is more marked than that between the Japanese and Korean political systems. From our point of view, the more interesting aspect of this is that perceptions of politics and its agents, leaders and organizations also differ. In this respect, leaders and followers are cultural agents. It is our starting assumption that similarities and differences follow cultural zones, to a certain extent, and that these cultural zones often – but not always – correspond with geographical zones. Based on extensive survey research over a period of more than thirty years, and as of today covering about 75 per cent of the world population, Ronald Inglehart concludes that economic development (modernization) leads to cultural change, but at the same time he finds clear evidence of the persistence of long-established cultural zones (1997, 2000a).

Each society must solve the problem of taming the individual and governing the society to perpetuate itself. From the perspective of development, and not least the development of different ways of life, culture is the core concept. In The Wealth and Poverty of Nations, David Landes concludes by stating, ‘If we can learn anything from the history of economic development, it is that culture makes all the difference’ (1998: 516). Landes mentions the enterprising economic activity of expatriate minorities in different parts of the world in support of his definitive statement, and has here as well an argument against moncausal explanations: ‘The same values thwarted by “bad government” at home can find opportunity elsewhere’ (ibid.: 517). Here we learn that not only does culture matter but so does government, and also that the widely-held assumption of culture as static and unchangeable is wrong. Well aware of the never-ending discussions on this matter,
he points to what is probably the main reason why culture still provokes and repels some people. Having stressed the primacy of culture in social development, he continues: ‘Yet culture, in the sense of the inner values and attitudes that guide a population, frightens scholars. It has a sulphuric odor of race and inheritance, an air of immutability’ (ibid.: 516). This aversion to joining reactionary or even racist circles is understandable from a humanistic point of view; nevertheless, from a social science perspective it is unacceptable. We cannot reject a creative and constructive approach simply because this approach is utilized by others for non-scientific purposes.

The practical solutions found in different societies as a response to similar political problems are not the same. Even between political systems which apparently are based on the same model, we find a host of particularistic ways. These differences can often best be explained as the outcome of a long developmental process. No matter which system we are dealing with, the practical ways and means of operating the system are closely linked to what are considered to be normal, natural and rational social activities in the given society. In Pye’s words: ‘Common sense exists in all cultures, but it is not the same from culture to culture. Sentiments about change, judgments about utility, expectations as to what different forms of power can and cannot accomplish are all influenced by cultural predispositions’ (1985: 20). This statement may seem trivial, but international relations at all levels, from tourism through trade and diplomacy to top level summits, testify that it is difficult – to put it mildly – to maneuver without taking this insight into account. Hence the problem of different kinds of –ism’s, from Eurocentrism to parochialism, hampering cross-cultural understanding.

Cross-cultural loans are normal and a part of the development of societies and systems throughout history. However, technology travels quite easily and political institutions travel almost as easily, but values, beliefs and norms do not at all travel easily. Within the span of a generation, economic, technological and political revolutions may occur, and in our time conditions of life have changed beyond recognition. We can still, however, distinguish people from different parts of the world based on their habits and mores. Arguments stressing visible signs to the contrary, namely fashion, pop-culture, fast food and other signs of our globalized everyday life confuse superficial trends and shallow styles with habits of the heart.

It is the nature of culture to resist change, as all change is modified by the existing culture. Culture is thus a conservative force. It is not immutable, though. History is a long cross-fertilization process in which different cultures play stronger or weaker roles in ever-changing relations. A close and long-lasting relation between a superior and inferior counterpart, for instance during military occupation or colonization of the one by the other, may not leave a lasting impact upon the victim. Animosity
and resistance may prevent any important cultural borrowing from taking place. The opposite may be the case when contacts are voluntary, when no threat exists, and when cultural impacts, although selective, are welcomed. Below we examine Asia’s impact on Europe. While the impact the other way around is well-known and documented, Eastern influence upon the West is usually less accentuated. In this connection, dealing with society and political culture East and West, we have a special interest in tracing Asian influences on the intellectual history of Europe.

**ORIENTAL SOURCES FOR ENLIGHTENMENT**

It is a well-known but often neglected fact that East–West relations date back to the remote past. The earliest contacts took place during a period from which we have only scarce written documentation. Evidence exists, however, that the Indian Emperor Asoka sent Buddhist monks westward, and that these monks reached the Hellenic world, as Buddhist scriptures were translated into Greek and Aramaic (Clarke 1997: 37–38). Alexander the Great, who was tutored by Aristotle (himself a student of Plato), invaded India in 327 BC and was concerned about good relations between Europe and Asia – thus, he brought with him several philosophers (ibid.).

The advent of Islam in the seventh century hindered a continuous development of East-West relations, but in the thirteenth century Venetian seafarers, Marco Polo being the most famous one, made adventurous journeys to the East. After prolonged stays they brought back accounts from ‘another world’. At that time this world was the land of fairy-tales for the West, ‘a land of one-footed and dog-headed men, of unicorns and griffins, of winged scorpions and gold-digging ants’ (P.C. Almond 1986: 85). It was nevertheless due to the mysterious character of these accounts that they came to play ‘an important role in the imaginative and intellectual constructs of the European mind’ (Clarke 1997: 39). More accurate and detailed accounts from the East came when missionaries started to operate in this part of the world. The Jesuits particularly were known as keen observers and describers of the exotic practices they encountered in foreign lands. They were especially active in India, China and Japan and are acknowledged as formulating the first detailed understanding of the East to be disseminated in Europe. ‘Though their aim was certainly the conversion of “heathens” to the Catholic faith, it must be remembered that the priests of the Society of Jesus were not bigoted, narrow-minded evangelists, but rather highly educated and cultured men who had absorbed the mind-broadening ideals of Renaissance humanism’ (ibid.: 40).

What was the impact in Europe of these early accounts from a different world? To answer this question we will now briefly turn to the thoughts of the Enlightenment philosophers. In his *Oriental Enlightenment* J.J. Clarke writes that the list of thinkers
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from the pre-Enlightenment and Enlightenment periods ‘who professed a more than passing interest in Eastern philosophy is impressive’ (ibid.: 42). He mentions ‘Montaigne, Malebranche, Bayle, Wolff, Leibniz, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Diderot, Helvetius, Quesnay, and Adam Smith’ (ibid.). Their interest in Eastern thought and ways was comprehensive, according to Clarke: ‘They were fascinated by its philosophy, by the conduct of the state, and by its education system, and in all kinds of ways sought to hold it up as a mirror in which to examine the philosophical and institutional inadequacies of Europe, as a model with which to instigate moral and political reform, and as a tool with which to strip Christianity of its pretensions to uniqueness’ (ibid.). Information about Asia was widely diffused and profoundly affected European thought. The image of Asia ‘was channeled to Europe in a huge corpus of publications which was widely distributed in all European lands and languages. Few literate Europeans could have been completely untouched by it, and it would be surprising indeed if its effects could not be seen in contemporary European literature, art, learning, and culture’ (Lach and Van Kley 1993: 1890).

The Chinese person who attracted most of the interest was none other than Confucius, the great sage of moral conduct and learning. Confucius (551–479 BC), who lived in turbulent times with widespread tyranny and warfare, urged a system of statecraft based on moral principles and conduct to bring about peace, stability and just government. It would not be far-fetched to label Confucius the Eastern originator of the political culture approach. He was also, however, as concerns us here, a source of inspiration for reform-minded intellectuals in the West. In 1687 a Latin version of the Confucian classics was published in Paris and designated as Confucius Sinarum Philosophus. This marked the introduction of Chinese philosophical and political thought to Europe (Zhang 2000: 23–24).

Many of the Enlightenment philosophers were critical of and disappointed with the state of affairs of their time and eager to promote more rational and reasonable alternatives, especially in relation to the power of the Church. The accuracy of their impressions of China and Eastern philosophy (including Confucianism) can certainly be questioned, but China became nevertheless ‘closely integrated into the consciousness of the European Enlightenment, touching on many aspects of the intellectual and cultural life of the time’ (Clarke 1997: 43). The Enlightenment philosophers took a keen interest in political culture, emphasizing the public and their duties in relation to the state. Montaigne (1533–92) was a critic of religious intolerance and used China as an example of a different way, to show that alternatives existed. Malebranche (1638–1715) was an exponent of the idea that Oriental philosophy could be a tool for studies of purely European matters. Bayle (1646–1706) found in Chinese philosophy a weapon against metaphysical and religious claims to the truth. Wielding what he saw as the more enlightened
attitude of the Chinese he attacked religious intolerance and persecution at home (ibid: 44). Leibniz (1446–1716), however, claimed that Chinese basic beliefs were fully compatible with basic beliefs shared by Protestants as well as Catholics, but he underlined that in practical philosophy, that is in the precepts of ethics and politics adapted to the present life, they clearly surpassed the West (Zhang 2000: 25).

For Montesquieu (1689–1755), who is credited with introducing scientific methods to the study of human societies and who is famous for stressing the need to separate the institutions of power, China played a central role. In his *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748) China and Chinese ideas, customs and habits seem to form one of several frames of reference in his comparative reflections (Cohler et al. 1989), although he also voiced concern about ‘oriental despotism’ (Mackerras 1989: 35). Montesquieu was also preoccupied with political culture as a tool the authorities could use to give their subordinates reason to love their duties, leaders, homeland and laws (Montesquieu 1949). He distinguished between three types of government and each type, he claimed, had a distinct ethos necessary to maintain its institutions. The viability of the different types of political system depended, according to him, on a certain consistency between institutions, values and practices. Education was among the instruments necessary to secure this consistency (ibid.).

François Quesnay (1694–1774), in his day known as the European Confucius, strongly influenced Adam Smith, the founder of modern economics (Hobson 2004: 196). He introduced his influential Physiocratic Doctrine with a chapter on the government of China, and he was especially fascinated by a political system that recruited personnel through learning and examination rather than inheritance (Zhang 2000: 25). Likewise, Jean Jacques Rousseau (who, by the way, was among the strongest voices criticizing the fascination with things Chinese) wrote in his *Emile* (1762) on how to train a child for the sake of the state as well as in accordance with nature. Political socialization was of paramount concern for all the three above-mentioned authors.

We are not going to review the whole group of Enlightenment thinkers affected by Eastern thought, but one name that stands out and deserves to be mentioned here is Voltaire (1694–1778). He envisaged mankind’s future as ruled by a simple theism which reinforced the civil power of the state (Encyclopædia Britannica, Vol. 23, pp. 115–119). Described as having an immense productivity and an enormous influence (The Concise Columbia Encyclopedia, 1983: 901) he is by some even made responsible for the French Revolution, but his interest in China is less well known. It is nevertheless a fact that Voltaire, like the above-mentioned thinkers, used an idealized image of China as a different and more enlightened way to point up Europe’s deficiencies. Voltaire, who advocated a revolution in the human spirit, expressed admiration for Confucian ethics in a play staged in Paris in 1755, which
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was presented as ‘a five-act play based on Confucianism’ (Zhang 2000: 30). This play influenced Adam Smith, although he never mentioned Confucianism in his works (ibid.: 29). Clarke portrays Voltaire as ‘the leading French sinophile of that period’ (1997: 44). He had learned about China from his teachers, the Jesuits, and ‘he conscripted Confucian China in his battle against the tyranny, bigotry, and intolerance of the ancien regime. [T]he use that Voltaire made of his Jesuit-filtered image of China to attack and undermine the established order and orthodoxy of Church and State was repeated and refined by many of his contemporaries, (ibid.: 45–46).

For many of the Enlightenment thinkers, Confucian China became an imagined ideal, a secular state with rational leaders who worked for the common good in a harmonious political order. Some of the ‘enlighteners’ saw China as a secular state, others saw in Confucianism an ideal social religion, others again were critical towards the idea of holding China up as an ideal model for Europe.

The important thing in this context is that the critical intellectual elites, not only in France, but also in Germany (Leibniz, Wolff and Kant) and England (David Hume and Adam Smith), built up their impressions of China on missionary accounts and through their own interpreting of these accounts. The image of China and Confucianism seen through the eyes of the Jesuits and some early travelers and hopeful traders was refigured by leading European intellectuals, and came to play an important role in the development of ideas about the ideal society in Europe.

CULTURE IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

There is a direct link between the Enlightenment and the development of modern social science. It is not hereby implied, however, that there is a direct and unbroken link between East Asian Confucianism, through the European Enlightenment, and the creation of modern social science. But what we want to emphasize is that there was an influence. Although it was not the most important one, this influence played a role as an inspiration for those formulating modern sociology. Of particular importance to the present study is that the East Asian influence seems to have strengthened the focus on patterns of values and norms as crucial aspects for the new science to deal with. In the following we will show how culture from the very beginning made up a core issue in sociology.

In his introduction to The Crisis of Industrial Civilization: The Early Essays of Auguste Comte, Ronald Fletcher writes: ‘At the heart of a hundred and fifty years of the making of sociology there has been one dominant concern: the achievement of a new society’ (Fletcher 1974: 3). Auguste Comte (1798–1857) was a son of the Enlightenment, carrying on the tradition of the philosophers of progress. For
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a social reformer to achieve his goal – to find the formulas for a new and better society – Comte held that his perspective had to transgress formal politics and political philosophy and include as many aspects of the social system as possible. Sound statesmanship could, according to the founding father of sociology, only be based on a sufficient knowledge of the whole social system (ibid.: 28).

The time in history when social science transformed itself from purely philosophical speculation to more grounded speculation about earthly matters coincided with great changes in European societies. Comte was clearly inspired by the Enlightenment thinkers, including Montesquieu, as well as by developments in the natural sciences. It was now proving possible to unveil the laws governing the universe and human biology; thus a similar project for society seemed timely to him. Comte developed his ideas on a particular science for society, and reached a conclusion around 1830. He then called his theory sociology. At that time the positivist approach was already prevalent in the natural sciences. Another reason for Comte's engagement in this project can be found in the vivid negative image of the French Revolution, which still haunted the memories of his contemporaries. In Comte's view idealistic ideas used as guidelines for social change had caused tremendous suffering (Eckstein 1996: 473–476).

What was needed was a better understanding of the reality within which social actions occur. The problem for Comte was how to make use of earlier acquired knowledge within a new social science. He found his solution within biology by borrowing the term 'consensus', using it to denote the fitting together of the parts of a whole (ibid.: 477). By this he meant that just as different parts of an organism fit together in an interdependent way, so do different parts of a society fit together interdependently. Part of this was also the individual feeling of being part of a whole, a collective solidarity, without which consensus could not really exist (Lenzer 1975: 394).

It is in this part of the Comtean approach to social science that one finds the notion of culture, not yet as a concept and still in an embryonic form, but nevertheless present. By seeing consensus as basic to our understanding of societies, Comte emphasized relations between the parts of a whole, and by adding sentiments or feeling to the idea, the orientations of the individual parts could be taken into account. Society as a precondition for the individual's life as a human being was perceived by him as a common responsibility, implying certain duties and obligations. In an ideal society characterized by a new positivist order, love should be the basic principle, order should be the basis of human relations, and progress its overall aim. (Coser 1977: 132–136)

Amongst the early social and political observers, Alexis de Tocqueville (1806–1859) has been perceived as ‘one of the most perceptive observers during the nineteenth century of the tendencies of political and social democracy’ (Encyclopedia...
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Britannica, 1972, Vol. 22, p. 49). His basic concern was the evolution of a democratic society, and his *Democracy in America* has influenced generations of scholars in the social and political sciences. Without explicitly using the phrase political culture as a concept, Tocqueville emphasizes the importance to politics of a persons moral and intellectual condition; something he also terms ‘the habits of the heart’. Moreover, when dealing with this issue, he includes ‘the various notions and opinions current among men and the mass of those ideas which constitute their character of mind’ (Tocqueville 1945: 299). Interestingly, he rejected the accepted view that the French Revolution marked a complete break with the past, and in his work he ‘sought to demonstrate the continuity of political behaviour and attitudes that made post-revolutionary French society as prepared to accept despotism as that of the old regime’ (The New Encyclopedia Britannica, 1993, Vol. 11, p. 816). In this way Tocqueville was reflecting on social development from a political culture position.

Emile Durkheim (1858–1917), Comte’s intellectual inheritor, set out to solve the problem of how social solidarity came about, and of what promoted such a feeling. As societies became more complex and an extensive division of labor resulted from industrialization, people became more dependent upon each other, and especially upon the goods and services others could provide. This material dependence had to have a matching non-material dimension. The new dimension introduced by Durkheim was collective consciousness, a phenomenon outside the individual – which organized social relations. This is obviously an abstract idea; it can be neither touched nor easily measured. It is nevertheless something that all societies try to inculcate in their members: a more or less common social morality.

This means that the individual does not create the values and norms that, to a large extent, guide his actions. These values exist before the individual does and are independent of the individual’s acceptance or rejection. They are an active and effective force as long as they are meaningful to a majority of the members of society (Durkheim [1885] 1966: 11–12).

This complex and interdependent relationship between the individual and society is important for sociological thinking, and seems to be an initially acquired modern insight which later was pushed out into the periphery in heated discussions between proponents for individualist versus collectivist approaches. When social control loses power, is outdated or inefficient, normlessness (or, in Durkheim’s word, anomie) prevails in society. One reason for a breakdown of social order might be a rapid change in economic and technological conditions or a sudden economic crisis. Sudden shifts in material and social conditions will naturally undermine previously accepted values and norms, in that they no longer correspond with the material situation. This may easily disturb social relations and may as a consequence destroy general social cohesion (Coser 1977: 132–136, Bilton et al. 1996: 701).
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Two forces, according to Durkheim, guide social groups, one being social integration and the other moral regulation (Bilton et al.: 705). Norms and values are the basis of social life and make up patterns that influence social actions, and hence they must be studied as social facts. In other words, Durkheim saw culture as the main dynamic force shaping individuals and governing their behavior. Culture was the shared normative system keeping societies together (ibid.: 706), but since culture is a historically developed product of collective human thinking and action, it is also a dynamic force, responding to the tasks set forth by human interactions with each other and with nature. This dynamism is partly due to changes in the external environment that slowly but surely affects the worldview inherent in socialization practices, in which an attempt is made to incorporate the reality out there into the individual’s mindset (Charon 1980: 144). This basic insight was formulated before the dawning of the twentieth century, and has not become obsolete with the passage of time.

The founding fathers of sociology were both philosophers and social reformers. Their theories both addressed the questions of their time and suggested remedies for the problems confronting the immediate future. The cohesion of society was the problem and the development of social solidarity the solution. Because individuals were always born into an already existing social environment with a certain set of norms for social interaction, the individual had to adapt to these norms in order to function in society. In this sense society came first, the individual second. In stressing the collective as primary, the early sociologists were not neglecting the individual. They were actually defining the territory of their field: the study of shared subjectivities that connect the individual and constitute a society. While psychologists study the individual and the group (usually from the perspective of the individual) sociologists study the ‘spirit’ of society, or as in the case of Durkheim, ‘the collective consciousness’.

A slightly younger contemporary of Durkheim was Max Weber (1864–1920) who, although he covered a wide variety of social science disciplines, is for many the founder of modern sociology. He was particularly interested in social change. In his view, ideas and values have as much impact on this process as economic conditions do. From several of his works, most noteworthy in The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism ([1904], 1985) Weber emphasized the role of culture in shaping human action. While he never proposed that Protestantism was the cause of capitalism, he claimed that this aspect of Christianity produced a culture in which individualism, hard work, rationality and self-reliance became predominant. This ethic was – as he saw it – conducive to the development of a capitalist system. His thinking concerning social development seems to be based on the idea that people’s general world outlook, their basic values, beliefs and norms, have a crucial effect
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on their intentionally motivated actions. Weber was thus particularly fascinated by the importance of the subjective meaning that humans attach to their actions during interaction with others. As a social scientist interested in the ongoing societal transition from tradition to modernity he focused on the rational social action. Weber found that the protestant ethic broke the hold of traditional ways and beliefs and that it encouraged men to apply a rational approach to their work (Aron 1970, Coser 1977). When the world exists to serve the glorification of God, and God requires social achievements from those he has chosen, wasting time becomes a sin. Laziness, idleness, inactive contemplation and even plain sociability and small talk that impede such achievements need to be condemned (Weber 1985: 108, 157–158). A logical continuation of this line of thinking was, of course, that cultures lacking in such values and norms consequently also lacked the spirit conducive to (capitalist) growth.

It is common knowledge that Weber deemed East Asian cultures to be unfit for capitalist development, a view that has been passed on to generations of students and that certainly has contributed to forming many intellectuals’ perceptions of Asia. Although one can find support for this interpretation in Weber’s works, it is important to note that his judgments are far from categorical. In his The Religion of China (1962) Weber discusses the impact of Confucianism on China compared with that of Puritanism on Europe and North America. Here he underlines that while the Chinese developed the strongest links within ‘personalized associations or associations affiliated with or modeled after them’ (ibid.: 236), the Puritan objectified man’s duties and saw them as ‘reaching beyond the organic relations in life’ (ibid.). This personalized mentality of the Chinese was, according to Weber, a barrier both to impersonal relations and ‘to impersonal matter-of-fact-ness’ (ibid.). It tended to bind the individual to different groups rather than to functional tasks or ‘enterprises’ and, writes Weber: ‘It is of considerable economic consequence whether or not confidence, which is basic to business, rests upon purely personal, familial, or semi-familial relationships as was largely the case in China’ (ibid.: 237). He sees the lessening of the bonds between kin as one of the great achievements of the Protestant ethic, and this, combined with the effort of rationally transforming the world, as compared to the Confucian adjustment to the world, distinguishes these two rational ethical systems from each other (ibid.: 240–241).

It is worth noting that Weber saw both systems as rational, and also that he was well aware of the Chinese as an economic man. He describes a Confucian deification of wealth, referring to the oldest document of Chinese political economy in which the usefulness of wealth and commercial profit is emphasized (ibid.: 237). He also refers to ‘a calculating mentality and self-sufficient frugality’ as well as a ‘crass materialism of the Chinese’ (ibid.: 242). ‘Reliable travelers reported that the
conversation of the native Chinese was about money and money affairs, apparently to an extent seldom found elsewhere’ (ibid.). However, out of this no business thinking arose, neither did there emerge the sort of environment presupposed by modern capitalism. It is important for a full understanding of Weber’s thinking concerning culture and development that he observes that only in Canton where foreign influences had taught modern ways of business to the Chinese did this develop (ibid.). This prompts Weber to the following prediction: ‘The Chinese in all probability would be quite capable, probably more capable than the Japanese, of assimilating capitalism which has technically and economically been fully developed in the modern culture area. It is obviously not a question of deeming the Chinese “naturally ungifted” for the demands of capitalism. But compared to the Occident, the varied conditions which externally favored the origin of capitalism in China did not suffice to create it’ (ibid.: 248). This emphasizes that the simple reading of Weber’s view on China, that it was unfit for capitalist development, has conveniently disregarded his clearly stated reservations.

One of Weber’s fundamental tenets was that since people attach meaning and significance to most of what they do, this must be taken into consideration when studying society and human relations. Although he acknowledged that politics and economics could influence people’s ideas, ideas could not be seen as deduced from economic or political circumstances (Weber 1985: 277–278, note 84). He maintained that ideas had to be dealt with as a force of their own. Moreover, he saw culture as the particular pattern of ideas in a society institutionalized by the intellectual elites, and in principle, these institutions were seen as ultimately reducible to individual acts (Bilton et al. 1981: 731). It is thus reasonable to suggest that even though the political culture approach did not exist in Weber’s times, he must be counted as one of the important predecessors of that approach.

This brief survey of the development of our basic approach shows that political culture actually can and should be traced to pre-scientific social studies, that it was prevalent in the works of the founding fathers of sociology, and that this interest in culture initially was encouraged by the earliest East-West intellectual interaction. Below we shift the focus and take a closer look at the political culture approach.

POLITICAL CULTURE AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL SCIENCE

In the social sciences the political culture approach originated in the USA in the first part of the twentieth century. This approach became influential during World War II, and was known as the culture and personality school. This new approach came as a challenge to traditional social science which had hitherto focused on institutions and structures as (nearly) objective entities, basically unaffected by individual
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actors. A particular trait of this institutionalism was a hierarchy of importance among institutions, which placed economics and politics as the first and second in command, with social and cultural institutions much further down the ladder of importance. The functional relations between the different institutions became the object of scientific investigations and the basis of elaborate theories. Derived from economics and with a utilitarian leaning, rational choice theory was the main challenge to the political culture approach. The philosophical assumption behind this theory is that people act in an economically rational way. As it is perceived to be in every single individual’s best interest to be economically rational, people will, as a rule, maximize benefits and minimize costs. This taken-for-granted idea that people act in a rational way involves a rather simple model of possible actions, and hence the complexity of human psychology tends to be ignored (Coleman 1990).

Based in sociology, developed within political science, the political culture approach overlaps with both social psychology and social anthropology. One of the founding fathers of the approach, Lucian W. Pye explains the inclusion of different disciplines in this way:

In selecting my plane of analysis I rejected the increasingly narrow, but highly sophisticated, focus of the separate social science disciplines and have sought instead an approach which will exploit the best of several different academic fields. I have done this because of a conviction that political analysis without historical perspective is flat and as lacking in human vividness as is sociological theorizing without the benefits of the insights of depth psychology. By focusing on political culture one becomes, in fact, obligated to explore all aspects of behavior, making use of whatever advantages are offered by all the relevant disciplines (1985: X (preface)).

The political culture approach covers an area ranging from the impact of history through knowledge, ideologies, religions, traditions, myths, and the emotions these phenomena may bring about, to the individual human being with particular dispositions, a personal character and a socialized or learned behavior. Initially, it was in particular the socially learned behavior that attracted the interest of students of political culture. If one can assume that popular values and beliefs reflect the influence of upbringing and education to a significant degree, it would be reasonable to see individual responses as conditioned by this environment (Wilson 2000: 258) as well as by history, i.e. traditions expressed in mores and generally accepted ways of living.

While the concept of culture is borrowed from anthropology and revised and adapted for its use in sociology and political science, its political socialization part deals with upbringing and education, which as such belongs to the field of social psychology. This includes early socialization practices in the family, the inculcation
of certain moral practices and ideas by parents, moral and civic education in the school system, the impact of peer groups, etc. All of this makes up the subject matter of social psychology studies but also attracts attention from political scientists interested in the ‘human factor’ (cf. Pye above). Basically, the political culture approach suggests certain unavoidable links between politics and culture, understood as the given social context. It furthermore suggests that these links are crucial to an understanding of any political system or action. Politics relates to social practices in which authority and power are exercised. Authority and power are not independent forces, universally following their own logic. In Lucian Pye’s words, political power is extraordinarily sensitive to cultural nuances, which is the reason why ‘cultural variations are decisive in determining the course of political development’ (1985: vii).

In all aspects of human affairs culture is a remarkably durable and persistent factor, and furthermore:

> It is the dynamic vessel that holds and revitalizes the collective memories of a people by giving emotional life to traditions. Culture has this vital quality because it resides in the personality of everyone who has been socialized to it. People cling to their cultural ways not because of some vague feeling for their historical legacies and traditions, but because their culture is part and parcel of their personalities – and we know from psychoanalysis how hard (and expensive) it is to change a personality. Cultural change therefore involves true trauma (ibid.: 20).

In his *Culture and Social Behavior*, Harry C. Triandis (1994) suggests that it might be useful to think about culture as ‘unstated assumptions, standard operating procedures, ways of doing things that have been internalized to such an extent that people do not argue about them’ (ibid.: 16). How can this elusive phenomenon help in an understanding of concrete realities such as political authority and power? The key word culture denotes, as we have defined it in this book, values and norms shared by people living together in a society. It is obvious that people in any society have different views, ideas and opinions about a host of things. It is nevertheless maintained in this approach that values, beliefs and norms represent deeply embedded and enduring orientations toward political actions and the political system (Diamond 1994: 8). The formation of such basic values, beliefs, and norms are thus still, as in the childhood of sociology, seen as fundamental to social research.

Culture is an intermediate concept, necessary for the simple reason that human behavior cannot be understood as a direct response to external stimulation. It will always be conditioned by – and expressed in – a certain cultural context (Berkhofer 1973). Culture is seen as a product of human action, and at the same time as a precondition for further actions. Let us take conflicts of interest as an example.
is the perception of interests, not the interests *per se*, which affects behaviour, and the perception of interests is very much a function of the culture within which the perceiver is embedded (Boulding 1973). By maintaining that culture must be taken into account, it is stressed that values, beliefs, and norms fundamentally stemming from early socialization and learning processes last and make a difference, not least in relation to political phenomena.

A general definition of politics holds that it involves the wielding of power within social relations: power to act within a society according to one’s own will or the will of a group, the final aim being governance of the entire society. The political process consists of leaders and followers, and politics — no matter what the system — implies authority of the few and acceptance by the many. In the articulation of political desires and the justification of political actions, communication takes place between leaders and followers. In order to reach their followers, leaders must get their story through with the use of well-known idioms, must touch the feelings and play the tunes that find resonance in the hearts and minds of their followers. And that is what successful leaders do. This makes ideology a fundamental tool for the authorities in maintaining power, and a congruence between the political ideology and the political culture is absolutely crucial to the success or failure of the political system. The cultural approach to politics looks at the place and the importance conferred on ideology in the given socio-cultural setting. Sidney Verba, one of the pioneers of the cultural approach in modern political studies, explained this as follows: commitment to an ideology can be shared throughout a system (or country), but the ideologies to which individuals are committed may vary from group to group (Verba 1965). And again, if ideology plays a crucial role in forming people's perceptions of the surrounding world, even different ideologies seem to be affected by the same general disposition.

If we are to focus on power and authority as the cornerstones in the political process, an urgent question is: when and how do people develop their understanding of power, and what makes authority acceptable to them? The cultural approach to politics sees this development as mainly — but not solely — connected to child rearing and education. In the relationship between parents and children a natural perception of power is developed in the life experience of the child. Parental power is perceived as natural because authority — in the beginning — fundamentally develops as an effect of the emotional bond between parent and child (Greenstein 1965). In a political context, the important thing is the relationship between natural perceptions of power and learned perceptions of the same. As the child grows up and learns to take part in social interaction, the natural concept of power and authority is supplemented by intellectually developed notions of the same, transmitted through the educational process. Together, emotional and intellectual ideas form a
world-view. When what is internalized in the earliest part of life corresponds with the content of what is taught later on, the values and norms that emanate from these lengthy and interconnected processes are solidly founded as ‘the software’ of a person’s mind. This might even be termed universal common sense. When we look at the methods of upbringing and the content of social and moral education, however, the specific culture becomes relevant.

All human beings start off essentially the same, but are moulded by experience. And cultural persistence is the effect of the fact that each generation of children is brought up in reaction to the same group of values (Pye 1988). An important insight gained from a cultural approach to politics is that values, feelings, and rules of conduct all contribute to creating and ordering people’s ‘political lives’, and that these aspects are communicated from generation to generation in the process of socialization and education. Since the individual’s involvement in society is usually only partly political, it seems likely that political attitudes will be structured in ways similar to the structuring of non-political aspects of life. By focusing, then, on basic cultural values as a context, the observed political attitudes may more easily be understood.

The cultural approach to politics moreover refers to attitudes toward the political system and the self as a part of that system. It does not focus on the system as an independent entity, but as it is perceived and internalized in the cognition, feelings and evaluations of the group of people under study. The political culture of a group of people, or even a nation, means the distribution of patterns of orientation towards politics – ideas and actions – among the members of that group or nation (Almond and Verba 1963). It does not imply uniformity of ideas but one can often refer to common tendencies occurring within a social group or even within a nation.

The areas of investigation for the establishment of a pattern of orientation as a context are cognitive, affective and evaluational, comprising knowledge, feelings and judgement, about the system as well as its incumbents (ibid.). A political culture is identified by the general pattern of orientation that is important for explaining the operation of the political system. In other words, there is a web of relations that fits together into a meaningful whole, comprising empirical beliefs, expressive symbols and values. These together define the situation in which political actions take place, actions that are responses to what people perceive of politics and how they interpret their perceptions (Verba 1965). Thus it should be obvious that culture makes up an indispensable framework in political studies, and from this insight different approaches have developed.
SCHOOLS OF POLITICAL CULTURE

When the study of national character was developed, it soon attained the status of an applied social science with a special focus on so-called ‘enemy countries’. In the early post-war period, critics pointed at the psychological and anthropological reductionism inherent in the approach, doubting general predictions made on the basis of such micro-level studies. This prompted efforts to develop the approach, and together with mainstream social science the political culture approach was modernized between 1950 and 1970, implementing more rigorous research techniques combining qualitative and quantitative methods in conducting large-scale comparative surveys supported by in-depth interviews. Political culture became a respectable school of American political science. In 1956 Gabriel Almond formulated the essential insight of the political culture approach in a condensed form by stating that ‘every political system is embedded in a particular pattern of orientation to political action’ (Quoted in Pye 1988: 7). Later, Lucian Pye expanded this by adding, in an equally condensed fashion, that this subjective realm gives meaning to the polity, discipline to institutions, and social relevance to individual acts (ibid.: 9).

By the late 1960s the political culture approach had sought to cross the borders of Western-centrism, but before it succeeded it was out of fashion. According to the radical left which dominated Western universities in the 1960s and 1970s, political culture was nothing but a bourgeois ideology that ought to be exposed rather than studied. In this atmosphere, political culture was discredited and lost its momentum. Also in this period, economics was introduced into political studies, the idea being that in a variety of ways political phenomena could be explained through the assumption that political actors were ‘rational, short-run-interest maximizers’ (Almond in Diamond 1994: xi). It was purported that rational choice was, in the last instance, the cause of political decisions and actions, and thus political culture was banished from the domain of social science and marginalized. Pressured by both the left and the right in the politicized field of social science in the 1960s and 1970s, culture as an aspect of political studies evaporated.

Another reason why culture continued to be excluded from the social sciences for some time was that it was perceived as intangible. Lucian Pye identified the root of this problem as lying in the Western-centric setting of the whole discourse, stating ‘the study of political culture has been hampered by theoretical problems that arise from the Western philosophical propensity to believe in the possibility of pure rationality in human affairs’ (Pye 1988: 15). In his view, the intangible character of culture is a condition to be confronted head-on rather than an uncertainty to be avoided. The same problem is touched upon by Hans Fink, a Danish philosopher who presents a vivid picture of the problem of establishing a distinct definition...
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of culture for analytical purposes by comparing it with an attempt to hold onto a handful of water by clenching one’s fist; the more firmly one grasps it, the less one has (Fink 1988: 22). Fink suggests that one should accept the intangible character of culture and finds it counter-productive to rule out, *a priori*, certain aspects of reality as unimportant for social research simply because they are intangible.

To some extent it was the collapse of Soviet and East European Communism that brought culture back to the forefront of the social and political sciences. At this point the left had to admit that politics was more than just the class-based reflection of economic structures, processes, and interests; that social classes are not objective realities; and that class struggle is not the only viable way of political action. The political right, on the other side, was confronted with the fact that their ‘rational choice’ models fell short. They had to recognize that rationality operates within the context of laws, rules and ideologies, which necessarily are connected to values, beliefs and norms.

During the period when political culture as a field of study was almost non-existent, a new and impressive sophistication characterized the development of the social sciences. The utilization of the immense potential of the computer as a tool with which to handle unlimited quantities of data quickly and effectively opened new avenues. Statistics were also introduced to the field of political culture, making the building of new theories possible by allowing the creation of schemes for measuring the extent to which different cultures are characterized by different kinds of typologies. In his *Culture’s Consequences* (1984), Gert Hofstede compared survey data from 40 countries (116,000 questionnaires), finding that differences between countries could be explained in four dimensions: large versus small power distance; strong versus weak uncertainty avoidance; individualism versus collectivism; and masculinity versus femininity. A fifth dimension called Confucian dynamism, or long-term versus short-term orientation, was later added, based on Michael Bond’s research in China (Hofstede and Bond 1988).

Another effort to create a scheme which captures cultural differences is the grid-group typology based in the anthropological tradition. This model avoids individual psychological variables and refers instead to typological differences between those sub-groups presumed to exist in all societies. The grid-group typology was proposed by Mary Douglas (1982) and developed by Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky (1990). The ‘grid’ refers to the socially prescribed individual behavior, and the ‘group’ refers to the extent to which individuals operate as group-members. In their cultural theory, they operate with five ‘social beings’: characteristic ways of life by which all people can be classified. One asset of this theory, according to the authors, is that it bridges the gap between structures/institutions and cultures/values (ibid.: 8–10, 21). This particular school in the field of political culture aims at meeting
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the challenges of comparative politics in this era of Globalization. Moreover, its ambition is to develop a ‘grand theory’ capable of explaining the patterns and processes by which people sustain and make sense of their lives (ibid.: 99). It is clear that something deemed intangible gains strength and, not least, visibility by being put into a model. Moreover, from an analytical point of view it seems necessary to formulate and demarcate the field.

However, if culture is context, a way of life and of understanding the world, then how can we test the impact of this phenomenon? If culture is intangible, omnipresent and permeates everything, can we then at all operate with it as an aspect of the reality that we want to describe and explain? The approach based on Mary Douglas works with a theoretically identified pattern; nothing exists outside the five social relationship patterns. The same may be said about Hofstede, although he included another dimension when confronted with another cultural reality. This suggests that schemes and typologies are more culturally connected than the theorists usually believe, that their concepts and theoretical tools are linked to a particular reading of the world, and that this reading is seldom universally acknowledged or accepted.

One of the successful practitioners within the political culture approach, political scientist Robert D. Putnam, explored the field of political institutions and civic life in Italy (1993). Here he distances himself from the structure-versus-culture controversy by comparing it with the chicken and egg debate. His perspective is that political institutions are ‘path dependent’, which in his terminology means that history matters (181). To understand the dynamics of institutional performance it is important to know that institutions shape politics, that institutions are shaped by history, but also that the practical performance of institutions is shaped by the social context within which they operate (8). The social context is also termed social capital, and this perspective is supported by the World Values Survey (WVS), by far the single largest longitudinal values survey project ever conducted, covering 65 countries and about 75 per cent of the world’s population (Inglehart 2000b: 82).

The WVS project under the leadership of Ronald Inglehart defines culture as ‘the subjective component of a society’s equipment for coping with its environment: the values, attitudes, beliefs, skills, knowledge of its people’ (1997: 55). Furthermore, the political and historical dimension of the phenomenon is emphasized by stressing that ‘Culture does not simply consist of the myths propagated to justify those in power (though this is always an important component). It reflects the entire historical heritage and life experience of a given people’ (ibid.). And finally, the particular response pattern that is found within different countries and regions in the World Values Survey does not reflect individual personality traits as much as shared historical experiences (2000b: 91). These differences are apparently coherent.
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and relatively stable and are perceived to have important behavioural consequences for social, political and economic development. Nothing much indicates that the ‘rational’ choice in a particular situation would be the same in Nordic Europe as in East Asia. ‘To understand a given people’s worldview and its implications requires a detailed knowledge of that society’s history and culture’ (Inglehart and Carballo 2000: 346).

One of the interesting findings in the WVS is that even though empirical evidence supports the modernization theory, which claims that economic development affects cultures in a predictable direction, clear evidence is also found for the persistence of long-established cultural zones. The study provides strong evidence for the impact of a society’s historically developed cultural traditions (2000b: 88–89). Inglehart, like Putnam, uses the term ‘path dependent’, in his case with regard to values: ‘A history of Protestant or Orthodox or Islamic or Confucian traditions gives rise to cultural zones with distinctive value systems that persist after controlling for the effects of economic development’ (Inglehart and Baker 2000: 49). After having questioned the assumption that economic development homogenizes the countries of the world, and likewise rejected the claim that cultural change (due to economic development) means ‘Americanization’,11 the authors advance the following interesting view: ‘If any societies exemplify the cutting edge of cultural change, it would be the Nordic countries’ (ibid.). The authors do not develop this assessment, but we will try to do so in the latter part of this book.

CONCLUSION

Culture indeed matters. We hope by now that we have sufficiently stressed and demonstrated that culture is not a static but, on the contrary, a dynamic phenomenon. Further, we deem it important to stress that culture should not be seen as causing particular effects in a one-to-one process. The impact of culture as a dynamic phenomenon depends on several other circumstances. It is perfectly reasonable to expect a particular culture to produce different effects under different circumstances. A relevant example is Confucianism in the past as compared to present-day Confucianism. It is clear that economic development and exchange, the present technological level, the general level of information, etc., all have an impact on what Confucianism ‘does to people’ and on the outcome of this impact. Another example may be the way in which a particular creed affects people in China proper compared with how it impacts on those in overseas Chinese environments. Initially, we chose East Asia and Nordic Europe as two ‘most different’ cultures for comparison (possibly, this choice reveals that it is difficult in practice to operate with cultures as dynamic entities). Recently Lawrence Harrison (1992) has argued that

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important parallels may exist precisely between Confucian and Protestant cultures. ‘With respect to economic development,’ the Confucian emphasis on education, merit, hard work, and discipline, combined with the achievement-motivating tradition of ancestor worship and Tao emphasis on frugality, constitutes a potent, albeit largely latent, formula for growth comparable in its potential to Weber’s view of Calvinism’ (ibid.: 112). Later Harrison adds that for Confucianism to take on the mantle of developmentalism it has to ‘neutralize the forces that suppress entrepreneurship, above all bureaucratic suffocation’ (ibid.: 113). Having achieved this, Confucianism would summon up a critical mass of achievement motivation approximating that found by Weber in the Protestant Ethic. This, adds Harrison, would probably not have come as a surprise to Weber (ibid.: 114).

Based on such thinking, and probably with Max Weber’s insights in mind, Ronald Inglehart suggests that we see East Asian culture not as a barrier to change and development, but as the basis of a particular type of change and development:

In Western history, the rise of the protestant ethic – a materialistic value system that tolerated economic accumulation and encouraged it as something laudable and heroic – was a key cultural change that opened the way for capitalism and industrialization. But precisely because they attained high levels of economic security, the Western societies that were the first to industrialize have gradually come to emphasize postmaterialist values, giving higher priority to the quality of life than to economic growth. In this respect, the rise of postmaterialist values reverses the rise of the protestant ethic. Today, the functional equivalent of the Protestant ethic is most vigorous in East Asia and is fading away in protestant Europe, as technological development and cultural change become global (2000: 225).

To see Confucianism as a possible functional equivalent to the Protestant Ethic is indeed interesting, and also challenging to some of the assumptions that have guided the work leading up to this book. But then, what about the global aspect mentioned in the quotation above? If we are entering a totally new era in which ideas and attitudes are formed through a globally active network of information and opinion-forming agencies, the political culture approach focusing on ‘cultural zones’ might be outdated. According to one of the contemporary authorities in globalization theory and research, this is not the case. In his What is Globalization the German sociologist Ulrich Beck stresses that it would be more correct to talk about translocal than global phenomena (2000: 46). Referring to Roland Robertson,12 who coined the concept ‘glocalization’ (combining local and global), Beck states ‘that it is absurd to think that we can understand the contemporary world, with all its breakdowns and new departures, without grasping what is expressed in the key words ‘politics of culture, cultural capital, cultural difference, cultural homogeneity, ethnicity, race and gender’ (ibid.: 49). By including this
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understanding, one moves away from the old world system approach towards a new culturally attuned ‘sociology of globalization’ (ibid.).

Without going further into the sociology of globalization, which we ventured to mention in order to strengthen our cultural approach, we now find it substantiated to assume that values and norms to a large degree remain ‘path dependent’, thus giving good reasons for studying people’s worldviews, and the sources thereof, as a framework for interpreting perceptions and attitudes. In the following two chapters we will present accounts of the East Asian and Nordic European worldviews prior to a comparison between the two cultural spheres.

NOTES

1 Norms support cultural values by attaching sanctions to the alternatives from which people choose how to behave, and thus norms regulate behavior (Johnson 2003: 209).

2 A contemporary imaginative mind, the submarine commander turned historian, Gavin Menzies, has put forward a new theory claiming that the Chinese circumnavigated the globe a century before Magellan, and discovered America 72 years before Columbus. (1421. The Year China Discovered the World. Bantam Press.) This admittedly controversial idea is just mentioned here to further stress that East-West contacts may have been stronger than we generally acknowledge today. However, we would not be Nordic if we did not also mention Leif Erikson (Leifr inn heppni Eirikssón, meaning Leif Erikson the Happy), the Norwegian emigrant to Iceland who discovered America in AD 1001, preceding Columbus by nearly 500 years.

3 In his Plan of the Scientific Operations Necessary for Reorganizing Society (1822) Auguste Comte writes that ‘Montesquieu must have the credit of the earliest direct attempt to treat politics as a science of facts and not of dogmas’.

4 This characterization seems durable. In a recent statement Francis Fukuyama says ‘Sociology is, in the end, a discipline devoted to the study of social norms’ (2000: 104).

5 Compiled from a number of essays on religion translated and edited by Hans H. Gerth.

6 Quotes from the original text.

7 Power and authority are used as interconnected concepts. Power denotes the ability to pursue a plan of action, while authority denotes an acceptance of the goals of the plan and the action taken to reach them.

8 This phrase is coined by Geert Hofstede (1991). In his Culture’s Consequences (1984), Hofstede defines culture as collective programming of the mind (p. 13).

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11 ‘In fact, the United States seems to be a deviant case’ claim the authors, referring among others to Lipset’s studies of American life, documenting that its people hold more traditional values than people in other equally prosperous societies. (Lipset, S.M., 1996, American Exceptionalism, New York: Norton).


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Chapter 3

THE ORDER OF THE TAO: CONFUCIAN VERSUS LIBERAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF ORDER

Hahm Chaibong

INTRODUCTION

Clifford Geertz says that human beings, ‘every last one of them, are cultural artifacts’ and that ‘there is no such thing as a human nature independent of culture’ (Geertz 1973: 51, 49). Such a pronouncement, coming as it does from a cultural anthropologist, is not very surprising. When such a view is applied to political science, however, the implication is profound. In recent years, a growing number of political theorists have been exploring the implications of the idea that there are no ‘facts’ or ‘knowledge’ independent of particular historical, social and cultural contexts. Whereas ‘mainstream’ social scientists never doubted the possibility of achieving ‘objective’ knowledge in their respective fields, others began to note the degree to which social and political knowledge is ‘mediated’ by language and other social and cultural practices. As a result, many have come to appreciate the ‘complex ways in which linguistic practice, concepts, and institutions shape political and social reality’ (Bernstein 1976: 112–13). Knowledge, as it pertains to the social and the political, came to be seen as less than ‘objective’ or of ‘universal validity.’ In the words of Michael Oakeshott, political traditions ‘compose a pattern and at the same time they intimate a sympathy for what does not fully appear.’ As such, ‘political activity is the exploration of that sympathy; and consequently, relevant political reasoning will be the convincing exposure of a sympathy’ (Oakeshott 1962: 124).

More recently, the debate over ‘Asian Values,’ as well as Samuel Huntington’s ‘Clash of Civilizations’ thesis, has brought a sense of urgency, both political and theoretical, to the earlier theoretical explorations of the thesis of cultural relativity.1
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The Asian Values controversy has been brought about, not by theorists and philosophers ruminating over the implications of epistemological relativism, but by a group of politicians and intellectuals trying to explain and justify particular political systems and value orientations. The Clash of Civilizations thesis has brought attention to the fact that cultural misunderstanding can lead to consequences far more serious than polemics over values. Both of these debates have brought to the fore the degree to which different cultural orientations contain within them different conceptions of the ‘good’ or ‘just’ political order. This is not to deny that some of these arguments have been cynically manipulated for the purpose of defending political institutions and practices that are clearly unpalatable and indefensible, regardless of one’s cultural orientation. However, it is also true that it has forcefully brought to our attention the amount of work that still needs to be done so as to foster inter-cultural understanding.

In trying to understand Korean or East Asian politics, then, we need to be able to ‘convincingly expose’ the ‘sympathy’ which motivates politics in East Asia. In order to do so, we need to explore, among other things, the Confucian political discourse that has had a profound influence on the politics of this region for centuries, and the sympathies intimated by that tradition. In doing so, we need to start from the ‘basics’, with such seemingly ‘value neutral’ concepts as order.

THE LIBERAL ORDER

In the Western political discourse, the opposite of ‘order’ is ‘disorder’ and ‘chaos.’ A disorderly or chaotic state is one in which social life cannot and does not exist. Order has to be created out of chaos before human life and society can flourish. What can bring order out of such a state? It is a literal ‘order,’ a command of God that brings order out of chaos. Order is creation. Order is a post-chaotic state brought about by conscious, intentional action on the part of a supernatural or super-human being.

In the Western imagination, order is synonymous with law. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Decalogue is the basis of socio-political order. An order from God in the form of law creates as well as preserves social order. Greek political tradition also equates order with law. As such, the archetypal political leaders of the West are lawgivers such as Moses, Lycurgus, and the framers of the American Constitution. They create peoples, nations and states by providing the laws that bring order out of chaos.

The means of preventing society from sliding back into chaos is power, thereby preserving ‘law and order,’ violence or the threat of violence. That is why order is almost synonymous with power. The history of Western political theory is a history
of efforts to justify and legitimize the exercise of such powers that can be used to undergird order. Because it is a deeply ‘legal’ tradition, the basis of political power necessary for the maintenance of order is always thought of and debated in legalistic terms.

Modern western philosophers and political theorists brought about a shift in ideas about order. The modern imagination turned to ‘rationality’ as the means by which order is established and preserved. Of course, the medieval Christian view also regarded rationality as essential for order in the universe. However, the rationality in this case was that of the almighty God. For moderns, rationality was to be found in the human ‘mind.’ Modern political theorists also start from a state of chaos and disorder, or the ‘state of nature’, its modern equivalent. In this state, the only law that prevails is the law of the jungle or of the survival of the fittest, and men live ‘solitary, nasty, brutish, and short’ lives. However, each human being is equipped with a minimum of rationality in the form of the desire for self-preservation. This basic rationality in the form of a natural desire ‘orders’ human beings in the state of nature to agree to a social contract which will provide them with minimum security in the form of a society or government. According to the modern imagination, order is derived not from outside commandments or power, but from the natural desires, emotions, and inclinations of individuals who constitute a ‘commonwealth’ out of rational necessity.

One thing that remains unchanged is the importance of the legalistic tradition. In fact, law becomes all the more important in the theory of social contract. The liberal ideal, born out of the social contractarian tradition and the even more ‘rational’ philosophy of Kant, amplifies the self-generating as well as the legal nature of the social and political order. Liberals believe not only that some sort of order can be brought about without outside help but also that it can be preserved and maintained in a similar fashion. If order is brought about and preserved without a command or based on the authority of an outside power that oversees the process, the order itself will be ‘neutral’ with respect to its constituents. Now a neutral procedure replaces power and hierarchy. There is no need for any form of hierarchy either within the order so established or between it and another one. Absolute equality among the members of the order becomes possible. The only command or order that they heed is the voice of rational self-preservation. In this ‘procedural republic,’ legal institutions, norms and procedures are the only sources of legitimate order.

The resulting ‘procedural’ order is based on contracts through which individuals practice their political and economic rights:

The commonwealth seems to me to be a society of men constituted solely for the preservation and advancing of civil goods. Civil goods I call life, liberty, the integrity and freedom from pain of the body, and the possession of external things,
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such as estate, money, furniture, and so forth...in truth the whole jurisdiction of the magistrate reaches only to these civil goods, and all civil power, right, and dominion terminates in and is limited to the care and promotion of these things alone (John Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, quoted in Pangle 1988: 253).

The role of the politician is to preserve the ‘civil society,’ a new form of political order, arising out of logical necessity from the chaotic ‘state of nature.’ The traditional role of the executor of divine will and overseer of the true faith is denied:

You say: ‘What if someone neglects the care of his soul?’ I reply: What if he neglects his health? What if he neglects his family affairs, which are to a greater degree properly the magistrate’s concern? Will the magistrate, by an edict addressed to the problem, guard against the party’s becoming a pauper or invalid? Laws strive as much as possible to guard goods and health from the violence and fraud of others, not from the carelessness and dissipation of the owner (ibid.).

The most striking metaphor for this new order is the free market. The market is where individuals engage in exchanges based only on rational calculations of self-interest while order is preserved spontaneously, or at most, with the help of the ‘invisible hand.’ The modern urge to imagine a spontaneous political order, one without power, hierarchy and authority imposed from the outside finds its fullest expression in the liberal tradition. However, the spontaneous political order is fundamentally based on legal proceduralism.

Given this, liberals agree to disagree on the ultimate shape of the ‘good society.’ The assumption that posting and/or imposing a particular conception of the ultimate good is both impossible and undesirable is what distinguishes liberalism from other political theories. This is not to say that they think people can go without conceptions of the good. It is only that liberals think that ‘good’ is a matter of individual preference. Socialists also agree to disagree on the ultimate shape of the ‘good society.’ The difference is that they think that the conception of the good society depends on the interest of the class that one belongs to. What is ‘good’ is a matter of class preference and interest. Democracy is a procedural means by which the differing conceptions of the good, be they individual or class based, can get a fair hearing as well as a share within a particular polity. The concept of the civil society is devised as an extra layer of protection between the individual, or the class, on the one hand, and the state, or the government, on the other. The state, despite being indispensable in both liberal and social political theories, is thought to be a constant threat to the individual and the class that it was constituted to protect and nurture. Civil society, then, presupposes a very western conception of a good society, namely, one in which agreement on the ‘good’ is bad as well as impossible, and that the state is a necessary evil, at best.
In Confucianism, the term that comes closest to ‘order’ in meaning is ‘Tao’, or the ‘Way.’ It is a term that Confucianism shares with Taoism, its most famous competitor in East Asian philosophy. It refers to the pattern, pathway, or structure of things. It is a pattern, an order, but the pattern of an organic whole rather than an unchanging structure or law governing the objective world. It also refers to a ‘mystic reality,’ especially in the Taoist context (Schwartz 1986: 194). As such, Tao is a structure or order, but not in the Western sense of an ‘eidos’ or geometric form:

A structure is something totally transparent to our analysis. We know what it is made of and how it is put together. Ideally, it should contain no mysteries. However, the concept of order which we have found in China is not a structure in this sense. It is the total organic pattern, not at all ‘built-up’ out of the parts. So long as one thinks of an order, whether spatial or temporal, as an immanent whole, one notes that it is composed of a multitude of separate components and relations and yet what holds the whole together is not in the parts. It is the elusive whole which holds the parts together. To the extent that there is an order, there is some kind of ungraspable principle of unity at its heart. Indeed, in a dynamic order, the elements and the relations may undergo great change, as in the processes of biological growth, and yet the principle of unity will remain (ibid.: 194–195).

It is not an ideal form or a structure in the sense of a ‘pure’, ‘simple’, shape of things. It is not a set of simple but powerful laws which succinctly summarize the laws of the motions of heavenly bodies or societies. It is a concept of order alien to Western concepts of metaphysics, geometry, mathematics, or law. Let us listen to how the Tao-Te Ching, the Taoist classic, describes the concept of Tao:

The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao;  
The name that can be named is not the eternal name.  
The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth;  
The Named is the mother of all things.  
Therefore let there always be non-being so we may see their subtlety,  
And let there always be being so we may see their outcome.  
The two are the same,  
But after they are produced, they have different names.  
They both may be called deep and profound.  
Deeper and more profound,  
The door of all subtleties! (Tao-Te Ching, 1, Chan 1963: 139).
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Tao is empty (like a bowl),
It may be used but its capacity is never exhausted.
It is bottomless, perhaps the ancestor of all things.
.....
Deep and still, it appears to exist forever.
I do not know whose son it is.
It seems to have existed before the Lord (ibid.: 141).

We look at it and do not see it;
Its name is The Invisible.
We listen to it and do not hear it;
Its name is the Inaudible.
We touch it and do not find it;
Its name is The Subtle [formless].
These three cannot be further inquired into,
And hence merge into one.
Going up high, it is not bright, and coming down low, it is not dark.
Infinite and boundless, it cannot be given any name;
It reverts to nothingness.
This is called shape without shape,
Form [hsiang] without object.
It is The Vague and Elusive.
Meet it and you will not see its head.
Follow it and you will not see its back.
Hold on to the Tao of old in order to master the things of the present.
From this one may know the primeval beginning [of the universe].
This is called the bond of the Tao (ibid.: 146).

For Taoists, as for Confucians, Tao is real. However, because the Tao is unnameable, unknowable, it does not yield itself to human cognition. As such, it is useless to try to know it by conscious, purposive pursuit of knowledge. The only thing to do is to become one with it through ‘inaction’ or ｗu-ｗei.

However, for Confucians, a similar understanding of the order of things, the Tao, leads them to a patently different way of knowing and preserving it. The Doctrine of the Mean, one of the Four Books of Neo-Confucianism, and the most important exposition of Confucian ‘metaphysics’ opens with the following passage:
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What Heaven (T’ien, Nature) imparts to man is called human nature. To follow our nature is called the Way (Tao). Cultivating the Way is called education. The Way cannot be separated from us for a moment. What can be separated from us is not the Way. Therefore the superior man is cautious over what he does not see and apprehensive over what he does not hear. There is nothing more visible than what is hidden and nothing more manifest than what is subtle. Therefore the superior man is watchful over himself when he is alone (The Doctrine of the Mean, 1, Chan 1963: 98).

Following the Tao means to follow our nature, which is given to us by Heaven. Given that Heaven is not an intentional ‘being’ for Confucians, it is synonymous with the Tao. The Tao is that ‘pattern’ or ‘order’ within human beings. Unlike the Taoists, however, Confucians are not content to simply let the Tao take over through inaction. Instead, in order to know the way and to follow it one needs education. It takes purposive, conscious effort to know and follow the order within ourselves. The history of Confucianism can be seen as a debate on how to know and realize the Tao through purposive action.

Chu Hsi, the founder of Neo-Confucianism starts his famous introduction to The Great Learning thus:

Since Heaven first gave birth to the people down below, it has granted them all the same nature of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom. Yet their psychophysical endowments often prove unequal; so not all are able to know the composition of their natures and thus to preserve them whole. Should there appear among the people one who is bright and wise, capable of fulfilling the capacity of his nature, heaven would certainly ordain him to act as sovereign and instructor to the multitudes, commissioning him to govern and teach them so that their natures be restored (Introduction, The Great Learning, Gardner 1986: 78–79).

All human beings have as a part of their nature the Four Constants (benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom). However, most do not know that they possess them in themselves and thus are not able to follow them. It is necessary to educate them. The obligation to educate people to ‘repossess’ the Way falls on the shoulders of the political leaders and sages. Thus, in Confucianism, the political leaders are educators and vice versa. Once the political leaders cum educators can make people ‘realize’ their potentials, the Tao will be realized and benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom will flourish.

In contrast to the Western view, order is not derived from chaos. The state of nature is not one of disorder and violence. The order of the universe is itself a harmonious and organic whole with life-giving and preserving power. Moreover, this benign and creative order is reflected in the constitution of each individual human being. The
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Confucian political leader is therefore not someone who lays down the laws which will bring order out of disorder, or someone who enforces order through the use or the threatened use of violence. Rather, he is someone who has realized his own nature and imparts his knowledge to others through instruction.

How then does the political leader come to realize his own nature? He does so through self-cultivation and discipline. He educates himself and masters the rules of propriety and rites through which he learns as well as manifests his Four Constants. Hence the importance of education and rituals in Confucianism. Indeed, the sages of Confucian myth who give birth to civilization embody this ideal of Confucian political leader cum educator. ‘Thus, Fu Hsi, Shen Nung, Huang Ti, Yao, and Shun carried on for heaven and established the highest point of excellence; and these were the reasons for which the office of the Minister of Education and the post of the Director of Music were founded’ (ibid.: 78–79).

This is why, if the archetypes of political leaders in the West are law-givers, judges, ‘Leviathan,’ and the ‘Nightwatchman’, those of East Asia are sages, educators, and the self-cultivated man. It also explains why self-discipline and learning are deemed essential in Confucianism:

Is it not a pleasure to learn and to repeat or practice from time to time what has been learned? (Analects, 1: 1, Chan 1963: 18).

Confucius said: ‘When walking in a party of three, I always have teachers. I can select the good qualities of the one for imitation, and the bad ones of the other and correct them in myself, (Analects, VII: 21, de Bary, Chan and Watson 1960: 23).

Confucius said: ‘Sometimes I have gone a whole day without food and a whole night without sleep, giving myself to thought. It was no use. It is better to learn.’ (Analects, XV: 30, de Bary, Chan and Watson 1960: 23).

Confucius said: ‘Having heard the Way (Tao) in the morning, one may die content in the evening’ (Analects, IV: 8, de Bary, Chan and Watson 1960: 23).

Modern liberalism imagines the political order to be an artificial, impersonal, rational, mechanical, and hence neutral one. The functioning of this order is based upon proceduralism and contractualism. Confucianism, on the other hand, imagines the political order to be natural, personal, moral, and organic. Political order is viewed as a ‘fiduciary community’ (Tu Wei-ming) and is maintained through ‘moral rigorism’ (de Bary.) The order is maintained through moral example on the part of those who, through self-discipline and education, have realized their true nature. Government means to ‘set things right,’ to bring the order back into harmony with the natural order:
Chi K’ang Tzu asked Confucius about government. Confucius said: ‘To govern is to set things right. If you begin by setting yourself right, who will dare to deviate from the right?’ (Analects, XII: 17, de Bary, Chan and Watson 1960: 32).

Confucius said: ‘If a ruler himself is upright, all will go well without orders. But if he himself is not upright, even though he gives orders they will not be obeyed’ (ibid.).

Tzu Lu asked about the character of a gentleman. Confucius said: ‘He cultivates himself in reverential attention.’ Tzu Lu asked: ‘Is that all there is to it?’ Confucius said: ‘He cultivates himself so as to be able to bring comfort to other people.’ Tzu Lu asked again: ‘Is that all?’ Confucius said: ‘He cultivates himself so as to be able to bring comfort to the whole populace. He cultivates himself so as to be able to bring comfort to the whole populace—even [sage-kings]. Yao and Shun were dissatisfied with themselves about this’ (Analects, XIV: 45, de Bary, Chan and Watson: 32).

Confucius said: ‘Lead the people by laws and regulate them by penalties, and the people will try to keep out of jail, but will have no sense of shame. Lead the people by virtue and restrain them by the rules of decorum, and the people will have a sense of shame, and moreover will become good’ (Analects, II: 3, de Bary, Chan and Watson 1960: 32).

When Confucius was traveling to Wei, Jan Yu drove him. Confucius observed: ‘What a dense population!’ Jan Yu said: ‘The people having grown so numerous, what next should be done for them?’ ‘Enrich them,’ was the reply. ‘And when one has enriched them, what next should be done?’ Confucius said: ‘Educate them’ (Analects, XIII: 9, de Bary, Chan and Watson 1960: 32).

Politics is synonymous with education, which leads to a politics of virtue which in turn brings peace to the order by restoring it to its true nature. This is the message of the opening passage of The Great Learning:

The Ancients who wished clearly to exemplify illustrious virtue throughout the world would first set up good government in their states. Wishing to govern well their states, they would first regulate their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they would first cultivate their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they would first rectify their minds. Wishing to rectify their minds, they would first seek sincerity in their thoughts. Wishing for sincerity in their thoughts, they would first extend their knowledge. The extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things. For only when things are investigated is knowledge extended; only when knowledge is extended are thoughts sincere; only when thoughts are sincere are minds rectified; only when minds are rectified are our persons cultivated; only when our persons are cultivated are our families regulated; only when families are regulated are states well governed; and only when states are well governed is there peace in the world (The Great Learning, 1, de Bary, Chan and Watson 1960: 115).
It is commonly held that, in contrast to liberalism, Confucianism abets or inevitably leads to authoritarianism. The Confucian order is characterized by status, patriarchalism, and innumerable forms of hierarchy informing all aspects of human relationships. Given the modern liberal understanding of the natural and political order such a judgment is understandable. However, once the Confucian idea of order, or the Tao, is understood, we gain a different perspective on Confucian politics. Confucian politics also strives for a spontaneous order, with a minimum of human intervention. Moreover, it also tries to eradicate power and coercion from the political space. It tries to maintain a political order based upon the education of virtue and virtuous example. The only hierarchy is the hierarchy of the learned and the less learned: ‘Those who are born wise are the highest type of people; those who become wise through learning come next; those who learn by overcoming dullness come after that. Those who are dull but still won’t learn are the lowest type of people’ (Analects, XVI: 9, de Bary, Chan and Watson 1960: 24). That is why the ruling class of a Confucian society, the scholar-bureaucrat or the scholar-gentry, achieves and maintains its status through education and the civil service examination. As mentioned before, education means to learn and cultivate the Four Constants, the human nature that is imparted to each individual by Heaven. This is the way to restore and maintain the Tao, or order.

What of the free market economy that all these countries purport to adopt and the liberal democracy that some do? How can institutions born out of such different understandings of the natural and political orders coexist and harmonize? Here, the essential characteristics of the so-called ‘Confucian Capitalism’ and ‘Confucian Democracy’ reveal their true nature. The market is the mechanism adopted by the state and the ruling elite in these countries. Unlike in the West, the market is not the order adopted by the bourgeois class so as to replace the feudal order and the landed aristocracy that ruled in the past. It was a tool, the most efficient one, that governments could find with which to enrich the people and to educate them. Liberal democracy, for East Asians, means the rule of virtue, a political order led by wise leaders who have ‘earned’ their position through education, self-discipline, and self-cultivation. For those societies which have experienced authoritarian and military rule in one form or another, liberal democracy also means a return to civilian rule, as is the case in Korea. It signifies a return to the true Confucian order and the restoration of the Tao.

To be sure, in reality, Confucian politics has not produced the results hoped for by its theorists. In Korean politics, for example, the Confucian worldview has
actually exacerbated the divisions within the polity. The Confucian idea that there exists a single, knowable, practicable Way gives rise to a strong sense of the orthodox. Rather than being regarded as the natural outcome of the competition for power between incompatible values, politics is regarded as the means to attain and defend the ‘right way’ (正道). Rather than being regarded as the neutral and objective means by which competing moralities can be mediated, legal and bureaucratic procedures are viewed as hindrances or irrelevant if they are seen to stand in the way of the ‘right way’. Hence, former President Kim Young Sam’s favorite calligraphy was of the passage ‘The Great Way has no Doors.’ (大道無門) The opposition, rather than being viewed as a group of people who have fundamentally different conceptions of the good that must be respected, if mine is to be respected in turn, is viewed as the heterodox.

The irony is that this view of orthodoxy has been strengthened, rather than weakened, as one might expect, since the transition to democracy in Korea. The pro-democracy fighters regarded their cause as a moral crusade against the heterodox military rulers. Hence the so-called ‘reforms’ of both Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung, the famous champions of democracy, have been veritable crusades, righting all that was morally wrong and corrupt, including history itself. (역사 바로세우기) The military rulers, on the other hand, always had the sense that they were illegitimate. Even though they came to power due to what they considered were moments of national emergency or crisis, they always had to apologize for grabbing power. Such was the reason for their headlong rush to modernize and industrialize the nation, making it strong and wealthy (富國強兵), which they thought would somehow exonerate their heterodox regimes. The pro-democracy fighters, who stood for orthodoxy in the eyes of everyone, felt no such pressure. They viewed their mandate as righting the wrong committed by the military and ridding the society of all that was wrong.

This is the reason for the highly moralistic tone in which the reforms of the two Kims have been carried out. Moreover, the reforms not only punish procedural wrong-doings, but actually aim at morally disgracing the targets of reform. Hence, it is never enough to bring illegal activities to light. Rather, all reform measures end up by destroying the target as a morally unworthy, corrupt person. The transition to democracy, it turns out, was a transition back to the moral politics of Confucianism.

This is in stark contrast to politics in a liberal society like the United States, for example. The case of former President Bill Clinton is illustrative. Despite the fact that his actions regarding the White House intern Monica Lewinsky were morally reprehensible in certain ways, his impeachment was not based on such a moral judgment. It only had to do with the procedural matter of giving false
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testimony before the Grand Jury. Beyond that, insofar as the President was doing his job well in terms of running the country, the rest was a matter of his private life. Imagine what would have happened in Korea if a president was caught in a similar situation? In fact, Lee Hoe-chang, the former leader of the opposition and the former presidential candidate, lost his bid for the presidency when it was revealed that he had helped his son to dodge the draft. It was unacceptable that a would-be leader could show so much self-interest as to keep his son out of the military, abusing his considerable influence in the process. The mere hint of such wrongdoing was enough to destroy his chance for the presidency.

In the Confucian discourse, the ‘private’ carries a singularly negative meaning. To be private means to be unfair, egotistic, selfish, yielding to naked desires and destructive of the good. To be sure, Koreans talk about the ‘invasion of privacy’ too, but, at the same time, Koreans agree that there are codes of conduct, standards of goodness, that must be observed and defended even in the most private moments. Hence, ‘The superior man is cautious over what he does not see and apprehensive over what he does not hear. There is nothing more visible than what is hidden and nothing more manifest than what is subtle. Therefore the superior man is watchful over himself when he is alone.’

As pointed out by Hannah Arendt, the word ‘privacy’ has the same root as ‘privation,’ meaning ‘to lack’ or ‘to be deprived of something’. For the Ancient Greeks who invented the quintessentially western distinction between the public and the private, private was bad. It was the modern political theorists who essentially turned this distinction upside-down. The public was no longer thought to be a good in and of itself. The only reason for its existence was the preservation of the private. The public which once was the realm where man manifested his being amidst his peers through oration and physical competition now became the realm of neutral procedures, designed to protect the privacy of individuals. All meaningful activity now belonged to the private sphere. The liberal idea that all conceptions of the good are a matter of individual preference is just another way of articulating the primacy of the private.

In a sense, the Confucian conception of the Way retains the pre-modern, pre-liberal conception of the public–private distinction familiar to the ancient Greeks. The private is still considered unremittingly bad. The only sense in which the term private, or sa (私) is used, is in a negative one. It is used in words like self-interest (私利) or selfish-desire (私慾). To be just is to be public, fair and un-private (公平無事). Indeed, even in everyday practice, Koreans rarely view the private as the good. Being alone, eating alone is seen as a sign of social maladjustment – or just plain strange. The sense of private space so dear to many Westerners is simply ignored. A Korean friend is apt to violate one’s privacy all the time. In fact, it is a
sign of true friendship to be able to violate one’s privacy constantly. No one ought to leave a friend alone. Such action would be unbecoming of a true friend.

This, of course, ties in with the Korean (and East Asian) conception of Man as quintessentially an inter-subjective being. In fact, ‘inter-subjectivity’ is not even adequate for describing the essentially social, communal nature of the Korean word for human being, *in-kan*, literally meaning ‘between-men.’ Because a person is never viewed as an absolute individual, but only as a being acquiring ‘subjectivity’ through relations with others, the individual is not a private being. Strong school ties (學緣) blood ties (血緣) and regional ties (地緣) are different means by which Koreans ‘stay connected.’ The individual is never private.

Despite obvious drawbacks for liberal democracy, the ability to reach a moral consensus has sometimes worked to the benefit of the Koreans. The spectacular growth of the South Korean economy during the past three decades was made possible by a national consensus that exacted many individual sacrifices, political and economic. At the height of the financial crisis, South Koreans once again astonished the world by lining up to give up their private holdings of gold. Such acts of ‘patriotism’ would not have been possible if the Korean people did not have a strong sense that they were doing what was right for the whole nation.

**CONCLUSION**

The Confucian order, both natural and political, is strikingly different from the modern liberal one. However, it is only if we limit ourselves to the liberal tradition that we find an ‘unbridgeable gap’ between East and West. If we broaden our theoretical horizon to include those non-liberal political discourses of the West such as Communitarianism and Civic Republicanism, we find that there are many ideas that resonate with the Confucian conception of political order. The emphasis on community, virtue and civic responsibility and not just on individuals and their rights, to be found in these other Western traditions, has close parallels in Confucianism. The holistic, organic conception of society and political order to be found in these alternative theories provide powerful conceptual and theoretical resources for criticizing the shortcomings of a liberal, rights-centered social and political order and for imagining a more human society. Confucian political theory and its conception of order can join in and contribute to this increasingly international debate on the creation of ‘universal ethics.’ Confucianism can be a continuing source of theoretical and normative reflections on the ideal political order, not only for the East Asians, for whom it is a tradition, but also for other cultures and civilizations, including the Western, liberal ones, in the continuing ‘conversation of mankind.’
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NOTE


REFERENCES


Chapter 4

A NORDIC WORLDVIEW

Åke Daun and Geir Helgesen

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter Chaibong Hahm discusses East Asian Confucianism in relation to Western liberalism. Confucian thinking means taking a normative view of the individual within the context of the world. The impact of this East Asian worldview is far-reaching. It certainly accounts for quite diverse spheres of social life. Chaibong Hahm argues for the need to consider Confucianism as a political factor. He illustrates how current political actions are informed by traditional values and norms, and makes a good case for the need to understand differences between the East Asian political order and the modern liberal one. In Nordic Europe, political traditions and culture may be almost as different from Western Liberalism as is East Asian Confucianism. Although a search for a Nordic Confucianism may be in vain, we do need to highlight normative views on the individual and society in the Nordic countries, views that may constitute ‘a moral compass’ of contemporary significance. In spite of geographic distance and differences in history – and thus no direct common historical causal background – the two geographical areas seem to share some common features. A comparative review of Swedish and Japanese mentalities found that consensus seeking, conflict avoidance, social reserve, shyness or avoidance of communication and a dislike of improvisation were shared traits (Daun 1986).

These similarities are mentioned to underscore the fact that particular cultural characteristics may be shared in widely separated areas. Of course, the unique characteristics of a given culture cannot be limited to some few traits; to try to do so would amount to crude stereotyping. However, most traits are actually universal, in the sense that people all over the world can recognize them. It is the specific pattern of traits that characterizes a given culture. The advantage of a comparative study is that ‘the Other’, in this case East Asian Confucianism, challenges our conventional perspectives. It is commonplace, although necessary, to state that most people are
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blind to their own culture. Commonly accepted perceptions, norms, values and ideas become part of the self, invisible as long as they affect everybody. Awareness of other ideals and ways of life triggers curiosity and promotes self-reflection: if they are different, then so are we, from their perspective. What made us different in the first place, and why do we remain different – or do we?

While it is obvious that we have to look for the roots of Nordicness in the past (whether the notion of this past is real, invented or imagined), it is a matter of subjective judgment how far back we have to look. We can hardly match the time span of East Asian civilization, where already back in the fifth century BC Confucius admonished and advised power-holders to rule according to a sophisticated set of social norms and prescribed social relations, norms and relations which still influence people and societies in that region. During Confucius’ time, the Nordic region was a sparsely populated area. In historical chronology the time is referred to as the period of the great migrations, and not until 1200 is there a solid written tradition in this region. One therefore has to search outside the Nordic region for a Western counterpart to East Asia’s great teacher, and then the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322) comes to mind. Like Confucius, he was preoccupied with man within the context of society. Although his impact on Western thinking and social values is less direct than that of Confucius on East Asia, it is interesting to note that a comparison of the two reveals that while Confucius emphasized the family as the basic model for society, Aristotle was more preoccupied with the importance of law and the development of rational thinking. Aristotle distinguished between family and social life, and suggested how a person could live as a self-determining being (Yu 1998). It seems therefore reasonable to trace the seeds of Western individualism and East Asian collectivism, or familism, to these two philosophical traditions. The Western tradition must, however, be supplemented by the impact of Christianity. This has been stressed by Francis Fukuyama in his dealing with values East and West. In his words: ‘The idea that there is an eternal realm of divine law superior to all positive law gives the individual with access to that higher law potential grounds for revolt against all forms of secular authority. It promotes both individualism and the concept of universalism (1998: 2).’ Greek philosophy and the Christian religion have no doubt in a basic and fundamental way influenced the European population’s worldview. Our interest in this chapter, however, is the Nordic part of Europe. Is it possible to envisage a Nordic worldview that is substantially related to Confucianism? If nothing else, such a comparison could open the door to a new perspective on Nordic mentality.
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NORDIC EUROPE

What then is ‘Nordic’? Is it a geographical demarcation, a mental map, an historic vision or a contemporary reality? One could answer yes to all of this and still miss important aspects. ‘In different times and places, Nordic distinctiveness has been labeled different names and embraced various groupings,’ writes Nolan Parker (2002: 355–381) and continues: ‘but all have possessed comparable features of difference and qualified independence from the Other further south (ibid.: 355–356).’ The remote location of the area in relation to greater powers has been, and probably still is, a formative feature of Nordic distinctiveness, as this location has made it possible for autonomous rural societies to negotiate compromises both with state authorities within the region as well as with powers further south. From the middle ages the population in Denmark and Southern Sweden (as in England and parts of Middle Europe) lived in villages surrounded by fields that were jointly cultivated. In the lowlands the village was often subordinated to an estate, and the villagers – to some extent – dependent on the landowner and local power holder. The scope and importance of this dependency in different parts of Europe varied, and beside the hierarchical link based on power, duty and protection, there was the link, or rather inter-relationship between the villagers, the community link. The village community was a working partnership which regulated economic activities necessary for agricultural production, and it was a political association. The village community developed local institutions, rules and laws, for self-governing purposes. Village laws adopted by the villagers are known from the thirteenth century, and later the village became the representative unit for the peasants’ relations with the king (Bagge 2003).

In the Nordic countries localized and relatively independent communities have survived into modern times, and a ‘consciously shared socio-political heritage has, [then], underpinned various versions of a “Nordic posture” to assert difference and autonomy vis-à-vis Europe and the West in the strategic, economic, political, and cultural spheres (Parker 2002: 357).’ While Denmark and Sweden – together with Norway – belong to the core Nordic area, also called Scandinavia, Finland has – with Iceland – a more peripheral position ‘drifting in and out of the Nordic category (ibid.: 358).’ Although Norway belongs to the core of the Nordic area, it was the minor party in forced alliances first with Denmark (with interruptions between 1337 and 1814), and then with Sweden, until it gained independence in 1905. Iceland was in the ninth century populated by people mainly from the Western part of Norway, but came in the fourteenth century, together with Norway, under Danish jurisdiction. Iceland has preserved the Nordic traditions more rigorously than any other country in the region. In the case of Finland it seems safe to say that it took on its Nordic identity at a rather late stage, but that perhaps because...
of its problematic relationship with its Eastern neighbour, Russia, for Finland ‘the Nordic has always been a road to a wider western world (ibid.).’ In this chapter, we will thus focus on the ‘Nordicness’ developed and found in Denmark and Sweden, bearing in mind that much of this has affected Norway, Iceland and, especially throughout the last century, also Finland.

To trace the social and political impact of Christianity in the Nordic region, we need to make a short detour into the pre-Christian era, to briefly describe the soil within which Christianity took root in this part of the world.

FROM PAGANISM OVER ASCETIC PROTESTANTISM TO ENLIGHTENMENT CHRISTIANITY

The Viking period started in the eighth century and lasted for about 300 years. To Christians in the rest of Europe, Vikings were the incarnation of Satan. The Vikings at that time represented the most violent forms of behavior. Their social norms glorified aggression, their culture rewarded only honor achieved in battle. The Viking ideal was one of wild courage and merciless revenge (Jonassen 1983: 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 it could serve and be used by all. This practice of avoiding a learned elite of interpreters of the law promoted an egalitarian aspect of politics in these parts of the world. The earliest laws regulated aggressive behavior such as fighting, killing and defamation of another’s good name. Each specific type of wound had a certain price, and there were strict regulations as to where and when aggressive behavior was allowed and where and when it was prohibited. These laws or rules covered all men regardless of wealth or position, including the king (ibid.: 33–35).

The violent, masculine, Viking culture gradually became transformed into a culture of non-violence. In Viking society, the greatest achievement was honor won in battle. Christianity, however, propagated eternal salvation that could only be achieved through behavior running totally opposite to the Viking ideals. In the Viking era social control 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. The fact that Christianity came to the Nordic region at a time when kingdoms were established helps explaining the relative success of the new religion, as the sacred and the secular powers utilized and reinforced each other (Bagge 2003: 106).
The shift from paganism to Christianity took several hundred years, during which Christian morals only gradually replaced those of the Viking era. One possible reason for the slow transition was that the Catholic Church, although 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.: 43).’ The egalitarianism of the Viking era made people sceptical, if not hostile, towards authorities. Pagan ideals and morality were probably still more influential among lay 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.: 45).’ Later, during the Reformation, when Lutheranism cornered the religious market in the Scandinavian countries, ideas changed towards an ascetic form of Protestantism, or pietism, which attempted to break down the dualism between faith and behavior. 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, and the iron will of the Viking in battle also became a useful tool in the process of self-transformation. Once the 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. This ascetic Protestantism developed into a fundamentalist creed that attempted control of every aspect of life. It came to propagate a stern kind of fanaticism that 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 a free relationship between men and women. This austere teaching never truly conquered the Nordic scene, however.

It was not until Protestantism promoted universal education so that every individual could acquire the knowledge necessary in order to be able to distinguish between good and evil – according to Christian morality – that real change occurred. When it at last became possible for all men to read and thus interpret the Bible, Christianity took root among the Nordic people. When Lutheran state churches were established in the sixteenth century, religion was so to speak nationalized in the Nordic countries (Kuhnle et al. 2003). When ‘church and state bureaucracies were fused under the mantle of the state (ibid.: 13), this promoted a stronger state as well as popular participation. An example is that the state church took responsibility for making the population literate and the implementation of this was in the hands of local authorities.

For centuries the Lutheran interpretation of the Christian faith was the main religious, social and moral teaching in the Nordic countries (Holte 1997: 94, 101). It thus constitutes the basic and common cultural body upon which the different
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Nordic political cultures were built. This homogeneous cultural platform emphasized certain structures, values and norms, of which the following in particular came to colour the Nordic worldview (Holte 1997, Stenius 1997, Stolt 1997):

• The farmers were a central social force in the development of the cultures of each country.
• Work constituted ‘the admission card’ to society. Contribution to society by hard work was seen as a moral duty (The Protestant Ethic).
• State and church remained united. (The Reformation was largely a state-directed project, more so in Sweden than in Denmark.)
• Education promoted ideological uniformity, dissent was feared and rejected and social control was a common responsibility. The judge was a local leader, a lay person, not a government official.
• Social responsibility and solidarity were attributed the Christian faith and the negatively formulated Ten Commandments were translated into positive duties.

The Nordic brand of Protestantism emphasized individual freedom balanced by personal responsibility. This implied that authority no longer (if ever) was taken for granted. Thus, while religion came to function as a liberating force, the Church as an institution lost what was left of its influence over daily life practices. ‘The Lutheran and popular chain in political culture merged within civil society and formed a parish community which later in the nineteenth century became the nucleus of the secular communes’ (Kuhnle et al. 2003: 14). And the implication of this socio-cultural phenomenon has been taken even further, holding that ‘social democracy, developing from the 1870s and 1880s, has been seen as a continuation or transformation of Lutheranism, parochial political culture, popular movements and social liberalism, and even reform conservatism (ibid.).’

The founding father was N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783–1872), a non-orthodox Christian minister, who also became a great poet, educator and politician with a cause that spoke to the need of his times.

The duty of the first educational institutions had been to teach the commoners Christian dogma, first in the Vatican way and then in the Protestant. In the 1830s and 1840s the idea of village schools became popular. Developments in Europe, where the industrial revolution gathered steam and caused social conflicts, to the extent that a revolutionary political tide threatened to break the old order, made educational and social reformers aware of the urgent need for a response to that particular challenge. This promoted the egalitarianism that became the hallmark of the political culture in Scandinavia.
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The Danish name for the parliament, *folketing*, has thus a strong historical and ideological link, as it is firmly rooted in the traditional political culture. To label institutions with the term *folke* – that is, 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 its institution was, and still is called *Folkekirkken*: 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) – and has kept it since – 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.¹

This Lutheran Protestant, Grundtvigian-Enlightenment, Christianity has had significant impact on the political culture in Denmark, and has also impacted the other Nordic countries through education and religious teaching. To understand the magnitude of this development, it must be added that the whole enlightenment idea was an example of a social engineering project on a grand scale.

The ambition of this project was to bind together the nation and the state. The nation defined as: ‘a society of people with joint feelings of identity and cultural sameness’ (Allardt 2000: 130), and the state as: ‘a territorially based organization with a certain degree of centralized, coercive power’ (ibid.). This was done by promoting egalitarianism, consensus-seeking and anti-authoritarianism, and by cultivating the ordinary and simple rather than the sublime and exceptional. A common trait in the Nordic countries has been trust in societal solutions. Here it is preferred ‘to uphold the belief that a people are happy when it can pass laws on its own and then make a commitment to obey them’ (Stenius 1997: 171). Based on a humane interpretation of the faith, in which an active contribution to the common good through hard work is combined with a social obligation towards the unfortunate, poor and disabled, a platform was established for the future welfare society.

We have now briefly identified important cultural characteristics in the Nordic development towards social and democratic welfare societies. We do not claim that we have managed to explain the surprising transformation from a violent, masculine, warrior-society to a peaceful, feminine welfare society. And we have so far indeed painted our picture with a broad brush. In this simplified picture, however, egalitarianism, (and thus social responsibility) and the importance of law make up a trait of continuity that might help explaining later developments and contemporary Nordic ways. In the following we will concentrate on Swedish experiences.
The Swedish welfare model was probably the most developed and well-known in the world before ‘globalization’ occurred. The Swedish political ‘pet word’ for the welfare society was *folkhämnet*, i.e. the people’s home. Quite a few peculiarities in Swedish culture and politics have been commented on by foreigners throughout the years (Childs 1936, Austin 1968, Jenkins 1968, Huntsford 1971, Phillips-Martinsson 1981, Popenoe 1988). Among the other Nordic countries, Sweden has often been unanimously presented as the extreme case. However, high progressive income taxation is a common Nordic characteristic, as is a comprehensive welfare system and a multiplicity of programs based on the idea of social equality. This implies a concern for a variety of disfavored or ‘underprivileged’ groups, such as ethnic minorities, refugees, the sick, drug-addicts, the homeless, the handicapped, women, single mothers, children, low-income families, the unemployed, senior citizens, homosexuals, and criminals. Such a ‘humane’ commitment is not unique to Nordic Europe, but it certainly is a characteristic feature.

The idea of human equality, that is, the attribution of equal value to all human beings, is the philosophical foundation for a welfare society. Based on the Lutheran tradition, this value can only be realized within the social organizations one belongs to, not outside of them. However, other explanatory perspectives are also available. A welfare policy could be seen as a means to gain political power. Alternatively, it could be interpreted as the final outcome of social class struggle. Quite another perspective, applied in this context, explores a more general historical perspective that is not restricted to politics.

What amounts to the Nordic version of ‘the good society’? What could explain the high level of political trust? A glimpse into the history of Swedish mentality might offer one answer. Mauricio Rojas, Swedish Professor of Economic History, identifies ‘the Swedish Model’ as ‘the entire social fabric of contemporary Sweden’, characterized by the following institutions.

Overwhelming social democratic hegemony, a high degree of political stability, pervasive public regulation of the civil society, monopolistic state control over the welfare sector (education, health care, social security and service), a very high taxation burden making the real distribution of income more a question of political decisions than of contribution to the productive process, strong organizations completing the public regulatory system, low net-wage differentials but not negligible levels of wealth inequality, insignificant degrees of poverty, and last, but by no means least, the paradox of massive institutional mechanisms of support on the one hand and control on the other hand of deviant or marginal groups and individuals (Rojas 1991: 63).
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‘The Swedish Model’ is dependent on distinctive historical traditions and a strong economic base created before any implementation of the ‘model’ came into question. Three crucial features are involved: the basically non-feudal nature of pre-industrial Sweden, the very late urbanization, and the peripheral geographical location. Swedes, being separated from the ‘European continent’ by the Strait of Øresund, tend to speak of ‘Europe’ as if Sweden were not included. The non-feudal structure implies a different perception of social stratification, as well as the economic weakness of the Swedish aristocracy. The restricted political and social presence of a bourgeoisie and other urban strata was another distinctive factor implying a relative absence of aristocratic and urban traditions.

When looking at the peasant population itself, its freedom has to be noticed, whether they were free-holders or lease holders cultivating royal or noble land. ‘The freedom and the strength of the peasant stratum were obviously correlative to the existence of a weak aristocracy and feeble towns, and it laid the basis of Swedish absolutism’ (ibid.: 66). Rojas maintains in the same paper that these conditions account for ‘a peculiar symbiosis between peasant freedom and autonomy on one hand, and political centralization on the other’ (ibid.). This symbiosis marked both the people’s lack of hostility and their acceptance of paternalistic rule, he adds. ‘This is presumably the key explanation behind what is to this day a very striking feature of Swedish political life: the amazing confidence of the citizens in the righteousness of the rulers, and the rulers’ total conviction in their fairness and altruism’ (ibid.). Given these circumstances, it makes sense that the peasantry had its own political representation, forming the fourth estate of the Swedish parliament, with no equivalent outside the Nordic countries.

What is crucial here is the peculiar construction of state power in Sweden. It was not based on social diversity or any kind of balance of power among the different social groups or regions. Sweden was not a mosaic, a ‘multipolar’ society, and in this sense it cannot be included in mainstream Western European development. Sweden was much more a monolithic society, tightly integrated and integrative, with a high degree of cultural and ethnic homogeneity, with a hierarchical order in which local society and central state authorities were only differentiated parts of a continuum. The National State, which in Western Europe was often both the result of and the mediator among highly differentiated and not so infrequently contraposed interests, was in Sweden the expression of an unusual social cohesion.

This, then, is the background explaining why such things like the classical ideas of the division of power and the state power must be externally controlled, are not generally prevalent in Sweden. The political order, not being historically the expression of hostile contraposed forces, has in Sweden a legitimacy and a position that is quite alien in ‘continental’ Europe. The unimportance of constitutional rules in Sweden as well as the pervasive normative attributions of bureaucracy are expressions of the same historical background. This integrative and pyramidal
relationship between civil society and the state, this confident but often suffocating embrace between rulers and the ruled, is today at least as evident as it was in the past. In this sense no break is discernible in Swedish history, and this is very much an essential component of the Swedish model (Rojas 1991: 67).

Would such a symbiosis (between the ruler and the ruled) be possible without a basically shared and coherent value system, a system imbuing in people throughout the centuries a strong sense of egalitarianism and social responsibility? This traditional cultural trait cannot be disregarded if one wants to grasp the different bases of a political culture which maintains a fundamental balance between the political order and societal life.

What makes Sweden (but also the other Nordic countries) special is its ‘pre-modern’ or community-related values, the vitality of its historical heritage. There is still a community spirit that brings the state, the public institutions and the citizens together. This entity, rhetorically called ‘folkhämmet’ (the peoples’ home), is one of the most symbolically loaded concepts in the history of modern Sweden. It is identified by its family-like concern and by the relative absence of sharply competing values, allowing for a hegemonic ‘principle of equality’. Although ‘folkhemmet’ as a term has lost its earlier luminosity, the public support of the ‘equality principle’ meets little overt resistance. One of its political guises is a commitment to disfavored groups, as noted above. The key concept of the political discourse is solidarity, still a powerful term albeit somewhat insipid today, but not explicitly questioned (cf. Tilton 1992).

The ‘community spirit’ seems to account for the popularity of voluntary organizations and social movements (political, temperance, religious, environmental, sports related, etc.), which attract a great many Swedes. The popularity of these is based on the shared interests of the participants, that is, the similarity itself, the sense of Gemeinschaft, satisfying a culturally-based preference for mutual confirmation. The same goes for the popularity of educational (and leisure) courses, which also create a sense of Gemeinschaft. Choral singing is extremely popular; similarly, it brings different people together to do the same thing at the same time. Since individual differences are not displayed, the shared purpose gives a feeling of equality.

This principle of equality is also exposed in the ‘flat’, non-hierarchical structures found in business management, as well as in other types of organizations. This trend has strengthened over time, even in the absence of any apparent ideological campaign. This is in sharp contrast to Europe outside Scandinavia (Finland not included). Executives in Sweden are expected to play down their formal status. Position-holders of different status address each other by their Christian names, and orders are expected to be given as polite requests. Non-hierarchical conduct is an absolute must for political leaders, the Prime Minister being no exception. Prime Minister Palme was assassinated in 1986 while walking home from a theater visit in
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central Stockholm, accompanied by his wife; and only because of this, mainly for
security reasons, members of the government no longer use public transportation.
The implicit message is therefore fundamental. Politicians are, like anyone else,
part of the people and are regarded as representatives rather than as leaders.

As a consequence, group membership and social cohesion are highly valued.
It makes sense that Swedes are generally known as consensus seekers, good team
workers, and for their ability to compromise. Part and parcel of this character is
the typical personality trait of conflict-avoidance between friends, colleagues and
neighbors. Parliament members never argue aggressively during debates, and no
speaker in Parliament is ever interrupted, thereby displaying a communication
style alien to most political assemblies in Europe (further South) (cf. Daun 1996:
74–94).

Community has a moral dimension. Favoring one’s own individual interests
carries the risk of being labeled as egoistic. Those in high positions, such as politicians
and civil servants, have to be especially careful. Public opinion and the media are
extremely observant. Swedish collectivism means equal value, equal possibilities,
shared restrictions and no special privileges for anybody. As an idea, community
does not mirror the social realities of today’s Sweden, but the consequences for
social life and political culture are vast. To many foreigners the phenomenon is still
amazing, puzzling and fascinating.

Swedes have two sides, however. One collectivistic, the other individualistic.
There is an emphasis on independence in economic and practical matters both
between generations and between individuals, for instance between spouses. Swedes
insist on taking care of themselves and being independent of neighbors and friends.
Among other things, Swedish school children and pre-school children seem to be
relatively independent of activities within the family. Swedish children seem to be
more inclined than others to break family traditions (Ekblad 1984).

On the other hand, Swedes are collectivistic in terms of their opinions and
in terms of personal contacts. Unlike people in Latin countries, Swedes are not
attracted to developing personal points of view and seem to find less enjoyment
in arguing an opposite opinion. Swedes prefer to agree, to find consensus, and
to find support in values represented by the group. Consequently, Swedes have a
strong preference for associating with their equals. Paradoxically, it is in southern
Europe, where people are more dependent on their families that we will find the
‘true’ individualists, especially in terms of personal opinions. South Europeans are
also less attracted than Swedes by voluntary associations and other leisure activities
that are carried out collectively (Daun 1991).

Still, the power of the Social Democratic Party in Sweden has been very strong.
The Social Democrats have held governmental power for longer periods of time
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than elsewhere in the world. We could argue that pre-industrial Sweden was fertile ground for the Swedish labor movement. Social Democratic politics, implemented from the 1930’s onwards, meant a great change, but it seems to have been promoted by an already established structure.

This structure was similar but not identical in Sweden and Denmark (see Chapter 10). The two countries share a common cultural basis, which was imbued in the people through a prolonged religious, and later also secular, educational process. The political cultures in the Nordic countries developed out of this, but it was also a conscious nation-building project. The ‘Nordic way’ is clearly perceived as a positive notion by most people in this region (Østergård 1997: 29), although it has never constituted an alternative to the independent nation-states. The different countries came to be characterized by social democratic dominance from the second half of the twentieth century. Although many problems and issues were similar, the countries developed their own national ideologies using the Nordic as a cohesive frame, mainly to distinguish Nordic Europe from ‘the Others’ further South.

In this way, the culture we have briefly outlined above has affected politics and the social and political development in this region. Here it has been presented as a context within which it is easier to understand the survey results that make up the empirical foundation of this book. Before turning to the survey results and our interpretations of the similarities and differences between the six countries under study, we will take a brief look at the Nordic worldview in relation to East Asian Confucianism. Is there a basis for pointing out similarities, or do these two geographical areas operate with entirely different views and conceptions?

CONFUCIANISM AND NORDIC MENTALITY

‘Confucians think that there is an ultimate good that can be discovered and agreed upon by all’, writes Chaibong Hahm in his presentation of the East Asian philosophy. We may discern a corresponding Nordic conception of the ultimately good society, an idea that most citizens probably could agree upon. The good society, then, is imagined as a means to organize collective endeavors, to satisfy common needs and basic interests. As a matter of fact, belief in the ultimate good is not violated by different demands on the content of ‘the good society’. The opposite position is held by liberalism. In the previous chapter, Hahm argues that the view that a particular conception of the ultimate good is both impossible and undesired is what distinguishes liberalism from all other political theories. ‘This is not to say that they think people can go without conceptions of the good. It is only that liberals think that ‘good’ is a matter of individual preference’. To see society as a collective body within which individuals operate on certain conditions, and not solely based on
their own will is common to East Asian and Nordic views. From this, one could say that both cultural regions share a collective trait, although the form and content of the collective may differ.

Confucianism ‘imagines the political order to be natural, personal, moral, and organic. [... And this] order is maintained through moral example on the part of those who, through self-discipline and education, have realized their true nature’, writes Hahm. ‘Government means to “set things right”, to bring the order back into harmony with the natural order.’ In contrast, modern ‘liberalism imagines the political order to be an artificial, impersonal, rational, mechanical, and hence a neutral one’. What about the Nordic perception of order? It is not as ‘natural’ and personal as the East Asian, but neither is it rational, impersonal and neutral as the liberal one.

A moral dimension is probably also what both East Asia and the Nordic area have in common. Confucianism actually holds a certain similarity to a wide-spread Nordic worldview, which is underpinned by a moralistic tone that rejects selfishness. ‘In the Confucian discourse’, Hahm says, ‘the ‘private’ carries a singularly negative meaning. To be private means to be unfair, egoistic, selfish, yielding to naked desires, and destructive of the good.’ He clarifies the Confucian perspective when he states: ‘Because a person is never viewed as an absolute individual, but only as a being acquiring “subjectivity” through relations with others, the individual is not a private being.’ Such a non-individualistic view means identifying with groups. Group membership is not a means for private ends; it is a sense of belonging in its own right, like being part of an organism. Although the private has less of a negative connotation in the Nordic context, in effect, life in this part of the world does involve dedication to others, as people accept sharing about half of their income through taxes. This particular fact also relates to the level of trust in society, and between society and the state. In general, people in the Nordic countries believe that the system is fair and that the redistribution of wealth through the welfare sectors is carried out according to fairly appropriate principles (this not to claim that there is no criticism). When we add to this that leaders in Nordic Europe are seen as representatives, rather than models, and that the law is seen as a product of common efforts to organize society for the common good, rather than as cold, impersonal principles, then one may have a basic idea of the similarities and differences between basic, traditionally based East Asian and Nordic worldviews.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Nordic political culture is in the process of change in a liberalistic direction. Although collectivism is still significant in Nordic societies, individualism is beginning to take the upper hand. This ideological change is occurring even within the social democratic policy itself. A new spirit of the times opens new doors for private solutions. Such a transformation
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supports Ingelhart’s observation that economic development goes hand in hand with diminishing support for state ownership (1997: 262). State-owned companies in the Nordic countries are launched into the general market and obliged to make a profit. Public services such as schools, hospitals, railroads and garbage collection are being privatized. Private contractors are asked to take care of public municipal services. Public multi-family blocks have been sold out and converted into private cooperatives. Pension funds have become dependent on the stock market. The private sector is continuously increasing.

However, the trend towards privatization of public services does not necessarily mean that there is corresponding support among citizens for private solutions. The increase in cost-effective thinking is partly a consequence of scarce resources, paired with stiffer market competition. As a consequence, public services such as health services, schools and care of the elderly do not have the same quality as before. Recent studies reveals that the ‘tax-burdened’ Nordic people are prepared to pay even higher taxes, in order to have better access to what has long been defined as a welfare system (Svallfors 2003).

Both East Asia and the Nordic countries (as well as most other parts of the world) are subjected to liberalism and ‘economism’, both powerful means of generating money. There seems to be no alternative to growth, and globalization has apparently come to stay. However, this transformation inevitably carries with it a change in attitude. We may wonder how long, or to what extent, the cultural traits developed in the pre-industrial societies such as East Asian Confucianism and the Nordic community spirit, will have any impact on contemporary society. Liberals talk about ‘invasion of privacy’, says Chibong Hahm, in contrast to the Confucian discourse, where ‘private means to be unfair, egoistic, selfish, yielding to naked desires, and destructive of the good’. Egocentrism and privatization have become prevalent traits in the so-called globalization process affecting every corner of the world. Will the principle of social equality, originated so very long ago, notions of trust, and a moral approach to society survive, if subjected to such powerful challenges? These questions cannot be conclusively solved in this book, but by presenting survey data from East Asia and Nordic Europe, discussed within a relevant cultural context and in a comparative perspective, interesting empirical evidence is offered to broaden and deepen our cross-cultural understanding of the era in which we are living.

NOTE

1 In contemporary Denmark, folkekirken and folkeskolen are as basic to the system as folketinget. There are also folkebibliotekerne, the people’s libraries, located in every city, district and village. These libraries serve smaller communities with ‘book buses’ to
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e nsure that culture and information are made available to all, free of charge. In addition there is the *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 this is also relevant to the Swedish welfare democracy, hence the word *folkhämmnet* ‘the people’s home’

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Chapter 5

COUNTRIES IN PERSPECTIVE

Søren Risbjerg Thomsen

In this chapter we will give a brief quantitative comparison of the six countries in the EPCReN study from a historical perspective.\(^1\) The historical development is illustrated with different quantitative indicators that have been constructed for comparative purposes by different international agencies. We will concentrate on indicators for the general economic, social and political development.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

One of the most widely applied indicators for the material standard of living in a country is the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in a logarithmic scale (Barro 1999). In an OECD report, crude estimates of GDP per capita were made for all countries except Korea for the entire period from 1500 to 2000 and for South Korea from 1950 until 2000 (Maddison 2001).\(^2\)

Figure 5.1 (on p. 76) shows a steady, slow growth for the Nordic countries and Japan until the beginning of the nineteenth century, followed by strong growth until the end of the twentieth century. The four countries all started well below 1000 dollar per capita in 1500 and had passed the 10,000-dollar mark sometime before 1950. By contrast, while the material level of China in the beginning of the period was somewhere in the middle, China showed no growth until the beginning of the nineteenth century, and then declined until 1950. Only after 1950 did a period of growth in the standard of living start in China. This was further accelerated in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Korea was also on a low level in 1950, but the growth of Korea was even greater than of China in the second half of the twentieth century. These developments show that all countries have experienced strong material growth during the last few generations, but that in China and Korea, this happened from a very low level.
From the perspective of world civilizations it is worth noticing that China since 1500 lagged behind in economic development until the twentieth century and Japan until the nineteenth century. In contrast, the Chinese civilization in medieval times led the world in terms of technology with such inventions as cast iron, the compass, gunpowder, paper and printing. It also led the world in political power, navigation and control of the sea as late as the early fifteenth century, when vast imperial fleets crossed the Indian Ocean on explorations reaching as far as Africa (Diamond 1998: 411–417). As distinct from other civilizations, China was culturally and linguistically homogeneous. It was politically unified already in 221 BC and has remained so for most of the time since then.

Diamond attributes China’s loss of political and technological pre-eminence to Europe precisely to this unity. Because of the monolithic character of the Chinese empire it was very vulnerable to idiosyncratic central decisions, as when a power struggle between two factions at the imperial court resulted in the decision to forbid ocean-going shipping. By contrast, the continuing disunity of Europe resulted in prolific competition among countries in the struggle to gain advantages by employing new ideas and technologies (ibid.).

At about the same time that the Western legal tradition was established in medieval Europe, neo-Confucianism became the dominant ideology in China by
integrating Confucian thought with Daoism and Buddhism. While the legal tradition in Europe, based on reforms within the Christian Church, created the basis for free cities and universities and eventually for modern science, intellectual development was restricted in China until the beginning of the twentieth century by a meritocratic examination system that tested ability to memorize the Confucian classics, and to write calligraphically and to compose classical poetry (Huff 2003: 240–324).

The decline in the Chinese standard of living in the nineteenth century coincides with the forced opening of China by Western powers and the weakening of the Manchu rulers by internal rebellions and military defeats. After the collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1912, a turbulent period of disintegration followed with civil war and war with Japan. When the leader of the victorious Communist Party, Mao Zedong, proclaimed the People’s Republic of China in 1949, the standard of living was at its all-time low since 1500. In spite of such disastrous policies as the ‘Great Leap Forward’ (1958–60) and the first hectic years of the ‘Cultural Revolution’ (1966–69), the hegemonic position of the Communist Party from 1949 onward probably created the stable conditions necessary for economic growth. These became strengthened after 1976 when the pragmatic Deng Xiaoping became the de facto ruler of China. Figure 5.2 shows the development in GDP per capita (logarithmic scale) with yearly statistics from 1950 until 2000.

Figure 5.2 Short-term developments in GDP per capita (1990 int. dollar, logarithmic scale)
As neighboring countries to China, Japan and Korea were heavily influenced by Chinese culture. Thus, in Korea Confucianism was adopted by the Yi Dynasty (reigning 1392–1910). A Japanese invasion of Korea was resisted with Chinese help in the late sixteenth century, and the kingdom became increasingly isolationist and sought to cut off all contact to foreign countries. When China was defeated by Japan in 1895, Korea became a Japanese protectorate and was annexed as a colony to Japan from 1910 until Japan was defeated in the Second World War. After the Korean War (1950–53), Korea was divided into a communist North and a capitalist South Korea. In South Korea, strong economic growth was initiated under a military dictatorship supporting the development of large economic conglomerates, and strong economic development continued after a certain measure of democracy was introduced in 1987. In 1998 Korea suffered severely under the financial crisis in East Asia, but then recovered fairly quickly.

In Japan, neo-Confucianism was adopted by the isolationistic Tokugawa Shogunate that ruled from 1603 until 1868. When Japan was forcibly opened to the West in 1852, its reaction was very different from that of the Chinese. Instead of trying to protect the local culture, the Meiji Restoration of 1868 abolished the feudal system and adopted numerous Western institutions. Economic, social and military reforms transformed Japan into a world power that defeated China in 1895 and Russia in 1905. Japan’s curve in Figure 5.1 shows a strong increase in the standard of living during this period (1870–1913). Growth was less impressive in the next period (1913–1950), which included the defeat in the Second World War and the US occupation. Economic growth was remarkable from 1950 to the first oil crisis in 1973, and after that, less impressive, much as it was in the rest of the capitalistic world. At the end of the second millennium, Japan was among the richest countries in the world. However, growth came to an almost complete halt in the last four years of the twentieth century.

Denmark and Sweden followed the same successful economic path as most other North European countries with steady and slow growth until the beginning of the nineteenth century, strong growth until the first oil crisis in 1973, and more moderate economic growth thereafter. As mentioned above, the Western legal tradition created the basis for modern science that was so important for the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century. Agrarian reforms in the late eighteenth century returned benefits to Denmark in the nineteenth century due to the international demand for agricultural products. Sweden benefited somewhat later from the international demand for timber and iron ore. By 1950, due to strong industrial growth, the Swedish standard of living had caught up with that of Denmark. Strong social movements in both countries based first on religious revival and later on the strength of the working class resulted not only in high economic
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achievement but also in the social equality for which the Nordic welfare societies are known. From 1990 to 1993 Sweden experienced an economic recession, partly caused by internal political problems (see Chapter 10).

Because of its cold climate, extensive forests and lack of arable land, Finland was a relatively poor country before the industrial revolution. It was conquered and Christianized by Sweden in 1154 and the Swedish language, although very different from Finnish, became dominant in administration and education. It was conquered by Russia in 1808, becoming an autonomous Grand Duchy in personal union with the Russian Empire until 1917. During a nineteenth century surge of Finnish nationalism, defenders of the status of the Swedish language eventually had to give in. In 1918, after independence from Russia, social tensions between an educated class supported by independent small farmers on the one side and propertyless rural and industrial workers on the other resulted in a brief but bitter Civil War. During World War II, Finland fought the Soviet Union twice, and until the Soviet breakdown in 1991, Finnish politics were highly influenced by the delicate relationship with the Soviet Union. Industrial and economic growth was impressive after 1950, and Finland also benefited economically from its relationship with the neighbouring Soviet Union. With the Soviet breakdown, Finland experienced a severe economic setback from 1990 to 1993, which provided a strong motivation for it to join the EU in 1995. Since 1993 the Finnish economy has recovered and the standard of living at the end of the millennium was on the same level as that of Sweden.

This brief economic history of the countries in the EPCReN study shows that all countries eventually succeeded in modernizing by adopting Western technology and institutions. This is dramatically illustrated by the contrast between Japan and China in the nineteenth century, during which time Japan rose to be a world power. The strong growth in the East Asian countries compared to the rest of the world after 1950 requires a special explanation. One explanation could be that the strong tradition of education of the Confucian-inspired culture in East Asia produced a powerful human capital for modernization as soon as the goals of education became directed away from traditional thinking and turned towards application of Western science and technology.

An indication of how far industrialization has advanced in the different countries can be seen in Figure 5.3, showing the percentage of the total workforce still employed in agriculture during the last two decades of the twentieth century. It shows that all the Nordic countries and Japan had less than 10 per cent employed in farming already by 1990 and that South Korea was approaching this mark in 2000. China still has a long way to go, with 48 per cent employed in farming in 1998.
A crude indication of the role of the public sector in securing social welfare can be seen by public expenditures as a share of the GDP in Figure 5.4. Unfortunately, all time series are not complete for the whole period from 1970 to 2000, but the series clearly indicate that expenditures were relatively higher and increasing in the Nordic countries, while they were lower and more stable in East Asia. The unusually high unemployment in Denmark in the beginning of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, and in the 1990s in Sweden and Finland, can explain some of the increase in public expenditure in the Nordic countries, as can be seen from the unemployment series in Figure 5.5. Korea and Japan also showed increasing unemployment at the end of the century, strongest in Korea because of the financial crisis, but more enduring in Japan because of the long recession.5

Thus, figures 5.4 and 5.5 illustrate well the fact of the more active role of the state in securing the social welfare of the population in the Nordic countries as opposed to in East Asia. Interestingly, the case of Japan shows that this difference is not only a function of the standard of living, but is probably an indication that the culture in East Asia compared with that of the Nordic countries leaves more social responsibility to the family than to the state. This pattern was under pressure due to the increasing unemployment rates in East Asia at the end of the twentieth century.
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Figure 5.4: Public expenditures as a percentage of GDP 1970–2000

Figure 5.5: Unemployment as a percentage of labor force 1980–2000
Two important demographic indicators are life expectancy (Figure 5.6) and the fertility rate (Figure 5.7, 1960–2000). Life expectancy at birth is the number of years a newborn baby can expect to live, given the current survival conditions for all age groups. The curves for life expectancy show that in spite of great differences in standard of living and social welfare there were only small differences in the health conditions between all countries at the end of the twentieth century. In contrast, in 1960 the chance of survival was lower in Korea (54 years) and very low in China (36 years). However, the very low level in China in 1960 can be explained by the harsh living conditions immediately after the disastrous ‘Great Leap Forward’, a failed attempt to force industrialization at the village level. Only two years later, life expectancy in China was on the same level as that of Korea and was steadily improving.

![Figure 5.6 Life expectancy at birth (years) 1960–2000](image)


The fertility rate indicates how many children a woman can expect to have during her lifetime given the current age-specific birth rates. Thus, a permanent fertility rate of 2.0 would indicate a stationary population. Figure 5.7 shows that after 1975 the Nordic countries and Japan were below this mark (except for Sweden in 1989–93), while China and Korea showed a dramatic decrease until Korea passed the 2.0 mark in 1986 and China did so in 1992. The suffering imposed by the ‘Great Leap Forward’ may explain the low fertility rates in China from 1960–61.
Countries in Perspective

The fertility rate is an interesting indicator of expected family size that usually shows high values in traditional societies and low values in modernized societies (unless low values are caused by harsh living conditions as in China from 1960–61). Thus, it is also an indicator of modernization values such as the career ambitions of women and ambitions concerning the welfare of one's children. In this perspective, Figure 5.7 is an illustration of the recent dramatic change in family values in China and Korea from the 1960s to the 1980s. However, it should also be kept in mind that the decrease in family size in China was also the result of the one-child policy that was strictly enforced in urban areas from 1973.

Figure 5.7 Fertility rate (births per woman) 1960–2000

DEMOCRACY AND CORRUPTION

In Figure 5.8 two different Freedom House (2000) expert ratings of ‘Political Rights’ and ‘Civil Liberties’ were added together to form an index for the degree of democracy in 1972–2000 and then rescaled from 0 to 100. It should be noticed that the ratings very much reflect the rights and liberties that are characteristic of a Western conception of democracy. Thus, high ratings are awarded for protection of individual rights and liberties and for implementation of Western style political institutions. This means that improved living conditions and higher trust in government and institutions are not necessarily reflected in the Freedom House ratings. The curves in Figure 5.9 show
Politics, Culture and Self

The shift in Korea from low to high ratings from 1986 to 1988 reflects the democratization process when direct presidential elections were introduced in 1987 and with the 1988 constitution limiting the elected president to a single five-year term. The further increase in the democracy score in 1993 reflects an anticorruption campaign, but corruption remained a problem and the draconian National Security Law, motivated by the threat from North Korea, was still used to arrest and detain political activists.

The political system in China has been very far from the Western ideal of democracy with stumbling blocks such as the power monopoly of the Communist Party, widespread corruption, persecution of dissidents, police brutality, etc. The first ‘take-off’ from the absolute bottom in democracy ratings occurred in 1977 after the death of Mao Zedong with the prospect of a gradual move from central planning to a market economy under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping. The hopes of an accompanying democratization process were destroyed with the bloody army crackdown at Tiananmen Square during student-led protests in 1989. Signs of a cautious democratization process at the end of the century were party-controlled local elections at the village level, some efforts to strengthen the rule of law, and tolerance of criticism of lower-level officials.

Figure 5.8 Democracy 1972–2000 (on a scale from 0 to 100).
Countries in Perspective

In Japan, democracy was introduced in 1947 with a US-drafted constitution that ended the emperor’s divine status. The formal legal and political systems are in accordance with Western democratic principles, but in practice there have been problems with human rights violations and unofficial discrimination against women and minority groups. According to the Freedom House surveys there have been frequent reports of police abuse of detainees, and criminal trials are often based on coerced confessions. A long history of isolation from other cultures and a high degree of cultural and ethnic homogeneity seem to have contributed to ethnocentrism and have impeded the integration of minority groups such as the Burakumin (descendants of feudal-era outcasts), the indigenous Aino minority and Koreans, even though they may have lived in Japan for several generations.

The democracy ratings were permanently high for Denmark and Sweden. The somewhat lower ratings for Finland until 1986 were mainly caused by the fact that the powerful president was indirectly elected. This has been changed; the constitution of 1999 diminished the power of the president while increasing the power of the parliament. The former concentration of powers in the hands of the president was caused by his vital role in the delicate relationship to the Soviet Union. The high democratic ratings for Denmark and Sweden are based on strong civil societies and a century of experience of democracy and parliamentarianism. However, the increasing problems in both countries concerning the integration of poor immigrants especially from Muslim countries have resulted in informal discrimination towards these groups. In recent years the official policy in Denmark has been to acknowledge that the Muslim minority creates problems with regard to integration, while the Swedish policy has been based more upon the acceptance of a multi-ethnic society (Chapter 10).

The curves for corruption in Figure 5.9 are based on secondary analysis of several representative surveys and surveys asking business people about the extent of corruption, understood here as the ‘misuse of public office for private benefits’ (Heidenheimer et al. 1989: 3). This definition reflects a Western view of efficient bureaucracy, and the curves thus indicate how closely the public bureaucracies in the different countries align with the Western rational ideal. The ratings are not so reliable as to permit safe conclusions about development since 1983, but they clearly show relatively high levels of corruption in China and Korea, very low levels in the Nordic countries, and put Japan in an intermediate position. This pattern partly reflects the longer experience with rational bureaucratic systems in the Nordic countries than in East Asia. However, the somewhat more widespread corruption in Japan despite long experience of Western institutions begs the question of the influence of specifically East Asian culture on the function of political organizations.
THE SIX COUNTRIES AT THE TURN OF THE MILLENNIUM

Table 5.1 shows a snapshot of major indicators for all the countries at the turn of the millennium.

The most obvious difference between the countries is the fact that those of East Asia have very large populations compared to the Nordic countries. One might argue that this could be a serious impediment to our East-West comparisons because large countries are more heterogeneous and more resistant to change than small ones. However, our data does not show more cultural heterogeneity within the East Asian countries, and the social change in these countries has indeed been impressive in the twentieth century. Thus, as is common within the field of comparative politics, in our study we will consider all countries as systems of equal importance regardless of population size (Peters 1998).

Most of the indicators have been discussed above. The additional indicators on the popular use of information technology (personal computers, Internet use, mobile phones) show a much lower level in China than in the other countries. As a consequence of the previous high fertility in China and Korea, the age distribution is considerably younger in these two countries. The higher net immigration into the Nordic countries is mainly caused by immigration from outside the EU, creating increasing problems with integration of immigrants. Finally, voter turnout is consistently higher in Denmark and Sweden than in all the other countries.
# Countries in Perspective

## Table 5.1 Statistical snapshots of the six countries at the turn of the millennium.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Fin</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Chi</th>
<th>Kor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Area, km²</strong></td>
<td>43,000</td>
<td>450,000</td>
<td>337,000</td>
<td>378,000</td>
<td>9,597,000</td>
<td>98,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population</strong></td>
<td>5.4 mill.</td>
<td>8.9 mill.</td>
<td>4.2 mill.</td>
<td>126.8 mill.</td>
<td>1.273 mill.</td>
<td>47.9 mill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major religion(s)</strong></td>
<td>Ev. Lutheran</td>
<td>Ev. Lutheran</td>
<td>Ev. Lutheran</td>
<td>Shinto, Buddhist</td>
<td>Off.; Atheist; Trad. Daoist/Buddhist</td>
<td>Shamanist, Buddhist, Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GDP, per capita</strong></td>
<td>24,200</td>
<td>21,000</td>
<td>20,900</td>
<td>21,400</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>14,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GDP composition (per cent)</strong></td>
<td>agri. 3</td>
<td>industr. 25</td>
<td>services 72</td>
<td>agri. 3,5</td>
<td>industr. 29</td>
<td>services 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban popul. of total</strong></td>
<td>85 %</td>
<td>83 %</td>
<td>67 %</td>
<td>79 %</td>
<td>32 %</td>
<td>82 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% employment in agriculture</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pc’s (per 1000 people)</strong></td>
<td>431</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internet users, total figures &amp; % of population</strong></td>
<td>2 mill./37%</td>
<td>4 mill/45%</td>
<td>2,3 mill/53%</td>
<td>27 mill./21%</td>
<td>22 mill/1,7 %</td>
<td>19 mill/40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mobil phones (per 1000 pers.)</strong></td>
<td>631</td>
<td>717</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Life expectancy</strong></td>
<td>76 years</td>
<td>80 years</td>
<td>78 years</td>
<td>81 years</td>
<td>70 years</td>
<td>73 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fertility rate: births p. woman</strong></td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age structure</strong></td>
<td>0–14: 18%</td>
<td>0–14: 18%</td>
<td>0–14: 18%</td>
<td>0–14: 15%</td>
<td>0–14: 25%</td>
<td>0–14: 22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;64: 15%</td>
<td>&gt;64: 17%</td>
<td>&gt;64: 15%</td>
<td>&gt;64: 17%</td>
<td>&gt;64: 7%</td>
<td>&gt;64: 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net migration rate (per 1000)</strong></td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>- 0.39</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>voter turnout 1990s</strong>,**</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>85 %</td>
<td>67 %</td>
<td>57 %</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>67,9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Democracy (Freedom House, index 0–100)</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Corruption (Transparency International, index 0–100)</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*De: Denmark; Sw: Sweden; Fi: Finland; Ja: Japan; Ch: China; Ko: Korea

*international $; **average 3 parliamentary elections

CONCLUSION

This brief study based on quantitative indicators of economic, social and political development shows clear patterns for the six countries in the EPCReN study. On the one side we have the social welfare societies, Denmark and Sweden, with relatively high standards of living since the beginning of the nineteenth century and with a relatively harmonious and peaceful social and political development. On the other side we have the two traditional Confucian societies, China and Korea that suffered from isolationist policies and external pressure until after the Second World War, but then succeeded in accomplishing impressive growth by directing their existing human capital towards fast industrialization.

In the intermediate position we have Finland and Japan. Finland was originally disadvantaged due to harsh natural conditions, ethnic suppression and violent class conflicts, but overcame these difficulties in an effort to endure its difficult position in relation to a strong neighboring country (the USSR). Finland now has a strong economy and is well-integrated in the European Union. Japan was originally isolationistic under the feudalistic Tokugawa shogunate, but already with the Meiji Restoration in the 19th century, its human capital was directed towards fast industrialization, using Western technology and institutions. Japan is now situated among the strongest economic powers of the world without fully having adapted to Western political principles.

In the following chapters we will investigate how far the countries in our study, in spite of successful economic development using Western technology and organizational principles, still have distinct political cultures that can be traced to the particular developmental history of each country.

NOTES


2 For comparison between countries and over time, a measure of GDP per capita in1990 international dollars was constructed using purchasing power parity (PPP).

3 Although contested according to one author, Chinese fleets even explored most of the world in the beginning of the fifteenth century (Menzies 2002).

4 One can even question how meritocratic the system was in reality, since chances of passing the very difficult examinations seemed to be increased after intermarriage with the established elite gentry Furthermore, probably more than half of the civil service personnel got positions simply because they were relatives of officials (ibid. p. 287).
Countries in Perspective

5 Due to the different traditions of employment insurance it is questionable whether the level of unemployment in East Asia can be directly compared with that of the Nordic countries.

6 Several historical facts in this section are cited from Freedom House (2000).

REFERENCES


Chapter 6

COMPARING POLITICAL CULTURES: MAJOR METHODOLOGICAL AND SUBSTANTIAL RESULTS

Søren Rishjerg Thomsen

INTRODUCTION

This chapter has two major purposes. First, we try to take into account the possible sources of bias occurring when comparing survey results between countries with different cultures. We present several techniques for adjusting for these biases and apply them to our survey data from Nordic European and East Asian countries. Second, we discuss these results in view of the main theoretical assumptions. In this way, we present the major methodological and substantial results of this study.

In addition to the results of the representative surveys from the three Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland and Sweden, and from the three East Asian countries: China, Japan and South Korea, our analysis also includes results from a pilot study in Taiwan using a non-random sample. The same questionnaire, developed by the cross-cultural team of researchers and translated into the different languages, was used in each country.

Initially, the primary expectation of this study was that the strongest contrast would be found between the East Asian countries on the one hand, which are characterized by a culture of collectivism, and the Nordic countries on the other hand, which are characterized by a culture of individualism. As discussed in Chapter 1, the East Asian countries might be divided with China and Korea characterized by vertical collectivism on the one hand, and Japan characterized by horizontal collectivism on the other hand. Further, the Nordic countries might all be characterized
Comparing Political Cultures: Major Methodological and Substantial Results

by horizontal individualism, thus excluding the category of countries belonging to vertical individualism from this study.

In line with the basic assumptions of the political culture approach, it is to be expected that despite internal differences caused by age, sex, class, etc., it is possible in each country to find a dominant value pattern or worldview. Consequently, we concentrate on differences between the countries at the aggregate country level to see where the strongest contrasts appear.

METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

When comparing the answers to a specific question between countries, several problems could confuse the comparison. We will focus on three major problems. The first problem concerns the risk of making an individualistic fallacy, meaning the fallacy of overlooking the point that the difference between countries is caused not only by cultural contrasts, but also by the different social compositions of the country samples at the individual level. The second problem concerns the possibility of response bias – i.e., the tendency systematically to give answers differing from one’s true feelings. Different response biases in the individual countries could then place a bias on the comparison of the countries. The third problem concerns ranking versus rating. Most questionnaires, including the one applied in this study, mostly use item-rating questions. However, the comparison between countries could be obscured if the ratings, for different reasons, are not directly comparable between countries. In this case, ranking of items may be more appropriate than rating of individual items.

We propose concrete methods for the solution of these three problems and present the results applying these methods to the attitude questions asked in every one of the seven countries.

DESIGN

The decision to compare countries in East Asia with Nordic countries using a common theoretical perspective complies with what has been suggested as a sound research strategy in comparative politics. In our research design, we combine the strength of the most similar systems design with the strength of the most different as advocated by Frendreis (1983). By having more than one representative for each supposed homogeneous region of countries, it is possible to test the assumption of homogeneity and thus to test the assumption of a common cultural identity within each region. At the same time, by studying the strong contrast between East and West, we are able to identify both strong sources of cultural variance and possible
universal similarities across cultures. The weak point in this connection is that
we only have two cultural regions; thus, every difference between East and West
is a possible candidate for an explanatory variable (Peters 1998: 66–67). For this
reason, a strong extension of our design would be to introduce yet another group of
countries with a supposed common cultural identity.

An argument for choosing to compare the Nordic countries with the East
Asian countries is found in the most comprehensive study of political culture, The
World Values Survey (WVS), organized by Ronald Inglehart. In his analysis of the
differences between 43 societies all over the world, he arrived at the conclusion that
a process of modernization followed by a process of postmodernization can explain
the major part of the cross-country variations in political culture. The group of
countries that currently has arrived at the most advanced state of modernization
without yet having entered postmodernization is the East Asian group (together with
Eastern Europe). The Nordic European countries (together with the Netherlands)
constitute the only group of countries that have arrived at the most advanced state
of postmodernization (Inglehart, 1997: 93). Thus, by comparing East Asia with the
Nordic countries, we are keeping modernization constant while varying the degree
of postmodernization.

In the later work by Inglehart and Baker (2000), they show that origin in a
certain cultural zone can have a lasting effect on the trajectory of cultural change.
Therefore, we should also keep in mind that the differences between the two groups
of countries might better be explained by different cultural origins than by different
stages in the modernization-postmodernization process.

The fact that our definition of culture concerns shared beliefs and values that
have been internalized in the minds of the individual members of society justifies
the choice of the representative interview survey as a measuring instrument. As
demonstrated by the WVS, the questionnaire survey is a strong tool for measuring
individual beliefs and values and thus for identifying the culture of a society. Thus,
the questionnaire was developed as a tool for recording the values, attitudes and
opinions of the individual respondents concerning our research questions. Further,
questions were asked about the social background of the respondent such as age,
sex, education, occupation etc.

The questionnaire was designed and developed within a cross-cultural
interdisciplinary research network. In this way we benefited from the insight and
knowledge of scholars from various cultural backgrounds and disciplines. A first
and rather long version was tested in a pilot study on samples made up primarily
by students in Denmark, Norway, China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan. On the basis
of intense discussions about the results of the pilot study, a revised questionnaire
was constructed and representative surveys were conducted in Denmark, Finland,
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Sweden, China, Japan and Korea from October 1999 to July 2001. The respondent samples in the Nordic countries and Korea were constructed to be representative of the entire adult population. In both China and Japan, because of shortage of resources, urban samples were constructed as representative of the adult population in two major cities in different parts of the country. We will later in this chapter show that these restrictions do not seem to create serious difficulties for cross-cultural comparisons. This chapter also includes results from a pilot study in Taiwan using the same questionnaire with a non-random sample. Although this survey does not carry the same weight as the others, it is included in the analysis in order to strengthen the comparative scope.

The questionnaire was designed to be filled out by the respondent. For this reason, most of the questions were short and had four multiple-choice answer categories. After numerous deliberations we decided to omit a neutral category. For example, the set of answer categories to the statement ‘The objective of good government is to ensure individual freedom’ was ‘Strongly disagree’, ‘Disagree’, ‘Agree’, and ‘Strongly agree’. Hence, a neutral category stating ‘Neither disagree nor agree’ was omitted. This was done on the strong recommendation of the Japanese participants, who claimed that most Japanese respondents would choose the neutral category if one was presented. In itself, this would be an interesting result, showing that the Japanese are reluctant to voice opinions, but it would not reveal a lot about the true attitudes of the Japanese respondents.

We thus decided to place a mild pressure on the respondents in all countries to make a stand by omitting the neutral category. We did so in good faith, because we do not think that there is such a thing as a neutral questionnaire. An answer should always be understood as a response to interference, and in our case we interfere to impel the respondent to reveal an attitude in spite of a possible predisposition not to do so. For the same reason, categories such as ‘Don’t know’ or ‘Not relevant’ were not put into the questionnaire. Of course, we could not hinder the respondent in choosing not to answer a question, but in the introduction to the questionnaire we pointed out that there were no right or wrong answers, and so urged the respondents to answer all the questions by selecting the answer ‘closest to your own view’.

Furthermore, we also decided to put mild pressure on the respondents to voice possible negative opinions such as disagreement, or the opinion that something was not important. This was done by always presenting the most negative answer category, such as ‘Strongly disagree’ or ‘Not at all important’ as the first one in the set of answer categories. In this way, it was more acceptable to give a negative answer, something that is often thought of as inappropriate, especially in East Asia. Again, the idea was to provoke the respondent to reveal a true attitude instead of just being polite.
As indicated above, most questions were answered by an absolute rating with four answer categories. In opposition to this approach, Ronald Inglehart has presented a strong argument for the idea that cultural values are not as much a matter of rating, as a matter of making priorities. Thus, he suggests that ranking is better than rating, as demonstrated by his ranking-based index for postmaterialism (Inglehart 1997: 114–130). Although ranking also throws away information by ignoring the intensity of opinions, we have taken Inglehart’s argument seriously by enquiring about the same attitudes using both rating and ranking methods in two batteries of questions. In this way, we hope to contribute to this important discussion.

The final version of the English questionnaire had 39 questions, most with subquestions, resulting in 150 variables for each respondent. Subsequently, the questionnaire was translated into the different languages and then retranslated into English by a neutral person to detect conceptual errors in the translation. This process generated several corrections in the questionnaires before the surveys were conducted. Details on the different representative national surveys are found in the Technical Report (Thomsen and Jensen 2002).

AVOIDING THE INDIVIDUALISTIC FALLACY

It has been voiced as a criticism of the classical value study by Almond and Verba (1965), The Civic Culture, that they attributed too few of the differences between countries to socio-economic differences within them (1998: 127–128, Pateman 1970: 46–50). This is referred to as the individualistic fallacy, because apparent differences at the country aggregate level can be explained by different compositions at the individual level in the different countries.

A similar problem could arise in the current study, for example caused by the different composition according to age and education in the different country samples. Thus, there are almost no respondents above the age of 65 in the samples from China, Korea and Taiwan, while the percentage in this age group varies from 15 to 22 in the rest of the countries. Since certain values are strongly correlated with age, differences between these two groups of countries would be caused solely by the difference in age structure. For this reason, all respondents above the age of 65 are excluded in the analysis which follows in the rest of this chapter, thus removing the major part of the difference in age structure between samples.

After the exclusion of the oldest age group, there are still some differences in educational composition. Actually, the difference in education between the country samples is not very strong (ignoring the non-random Taiwanese sample). All countries except China are considerably urbanized, and the strategy of using only an urban sample in China seems to make the samples more comparable at
Comparing Political Cultures: Major Methodological and Substantial Results

the aggregate level. However, the educational level of the Chinese sample is still somewhat lower than that of the other countries. For this reason, the samples are standardized by weighting to the same educational distribution in each country with 25 per cent having only an elementary education, 50 per cent having further education, and 25 per cent having a university education.

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF ALL RATING QUESTIONS

To get a first impression of the variation between countries, we computed the average rating of each item (transformed to a scale from 0 to 100) in each national sample after the above standardization by age and education.3

The expected clear difference between the Nordic countries on the one hand and the East Asian countries on the other is, in general, not found. The most convincing difference between the two regions concerns the importance of democratic rights and the satisfaction with these rights in one's own country. For these items, the ratings are clearly higher in the Nordic European than in the East Asian region (unfortunately, these questions could not be asked in China). For the questions that have been asked in every country, resulting in 99 items, a clear Nordic versus East Asian difference is found for only 13 items.

Although this result does not seem to be a very convincing confirmation of our primary assumption, the 13 discriminating items reflect important differences between the two regions. For example, the item measuring general satisfaction with life clearly shows higher satisfaction in the Nordic region (73–80 per cent) than in the East Asian region (51–57 per cent). It should be added that this item in the World Value study was found to be a key element in the cultural syndrome called postmodernization (Inglehart, 1997: 87). A second important, discriminating item measuring the overall assessment of how well one's own country's political system is working also show systematically higher values in the Nordic region (57–58 per cent) than in the East Asian region (40–52 per cent). A third discriminating item is also very important, since it tries to reflect the priority of good leadership compared to democracy. The agreement with ‘It is more important to have an outstanding political leader than political democracy’ is clearly higher in East Asia (42–62 per cent) than in the Nordic region (27–33 per cent).

To get an overall assessment of the similarities between countries, a cluster analysis of all ratings items asked in every country is performed with countries as units.4 Figure 6.1 shows the dendogram from the cluster analysis.
The more similar any two countries or clusters are, the shorter is the distance from the left to where the two countries or clusters are connected in the dendogram. It is in accordance with our expectation that the Nordic countries form one cluster while the East Asian countries Korea, Taiwan and Japan form another cluster. However, China clearly singles out as the most deviant. This means that if one should only form two clusters, China would represent the one while all the other countries would represent the other.

There has been much discussion in our research team about the possible interpretations of the deviant position of China. Especially, in view of the many reports of corruption and violation of human rights (see Chapter 5) many of us found it hard to believe when the Chinese respondents showed very high institutional trust. Compared to the other East Asian countries, the Chinese respondents also seem quite satisfied with the political system. An obvious interpretation could be that many Chinese respondents simply do not dare voice mistrust towards authorities, but observers of public opinion in China seem to agree that this is not so much of a problem. The problem is more one of self-censorship by local investigators by excluding certain questions to avoid possible problems with local authorities. Another interpretation could be that the Chinese respondents are comparing the current conditions in China with earlier conditions, and there is no doubt that especially the economic conditions have dramatically improved for most urban people in China in recent years (see Chapter 5). This problem is thoroughly discussed in Chapter 7.

Another problem is that of how representative the Chinese sample is for the urbanized part of China. One way to test this is by comparing the representative results that we have from the two cities in China, Shanghai and Xi’an. If the results from the two cities tend to be similar, in spite of the two cities being located in different parts of China, then this would indicate the existence of a common urban culture in China. A similar argument holds for the two representative samples from Tokyo and Osaka in Japan. For this reason, another cluster analysis on the same items was performed with both China and Japan divided into cities. The Dendogram from this cluster analysis is presented in Figure 6.2.
Comparing Political Cultures: Major Methodological and Substantial Results

Figure 6.2 Dendogram for cluster analysis of all rating items. China and Japan divided into cities

Interestingly, both in China and Japan the dendogram shows that the results from the two cities are very similar, and much more similar than any two countries. This finding indicates that the results from Japan and China are quite reliable and representative, at least for the more urbanized parts of each country.

REMOVING RESPONSE BIAS BY DIFFERENCES

Response bias, i.e., the tendency to give answers which differ from one’s true feeling in a systematic way, is especially a problem in cross-cultural research (Smith and Bond 1993). For example, it has been reported that ‘relative to Americans, questionnaire answers by Japanese tend to be closer to the midpoint of Likert scales’ (Heine and Lehman 1995, see also Stening and Everett 1984). Heine and Lehman investigated whether a ‘social desirability bias; namely, a tendency to answer in a manner that is socially desirable’ was more common among Japanese than among Canadian students, but this seemed not to be the case (ibid.).

In our study, we tried to avoid the first kind of bias by omitting the neutral answer category. However, we will investigate the ‘agreement response bias’ i.e., the tendency to agree with any statement, no matter what the content is. In East Asia this could be explained as a kind of social desirability bias, since it is considered impolite to openly disagree. In the West, this is not so much of a problem, but Nordic respondents might be tempted to agree on certain statements if they do not feel they have the capacity to argue against them. In other words, the competence of the respondent could play a role.

In our questionnaire we have found five examples of ‘opposing’ questions where one would expect a respondent to disagree with the second question if he/she agrees with the first question. The first example is Q11a and Q11b, where the statement in Q11a, ‘Every political viewpoint should be tolerated,’ seems to be opposite
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to the statement in Q11b, ‘Strong difference of opinion may undermine social order.’ In this and in the following examples it is actually possible to imagine a consistent intellectual argument denying or supporting both statements. It is more likely, however, that an agreement to both statements reflects a tendency to agree with the argument in the statement, no matter whether the content is logically contradictory. The second example is Q16b, ‘The moral and human qualities of a political leader are more important than his ideas,’ versus Q16c, ‘I prefer a politician who understands the power game rather than a morally upright one.’ The third example is Q18c, ‘Most leaders would abuse their power if they were not constrained by popular control,’ versus Q18f, ‘We can leave everything to a morally upright leader.’ The fourth example is Q18d, ‘Rules are always there for a good reason and must therefore be followed even if you do not understand them,’ versus Q18e, ‘It is acceptable to break a rule if you find that it is unjust.’ The fifth and final example is Q21a, ‘Human nature is fundamentally cooperative,’ versus Q21d, ‘Human nature is fundamentally selfish.’

As an index of willingness to agree, no matter what the content, we have computed an average of all 10 items, transformed to a scale from 0 to 100. If all pairs of items were perfectly logical opposites, one would expect an average value of 50 across all 10 items if there were no agreement response bias. Table 6.1 shows an interesting variation in willingness to agree across countries as well as across educational categories.

Table 6.1 Willingness to agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Fin</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Chi</th>
<th>Kor</th>
<th>Tai</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average agreement with items P11a, P11b, P16b, P16c, P18c, P18f, P18d, P18e, P21a, P21d.

Abbreviations for countries: De: Denmark; Sw: Sweden; Fi: Finland; Ja: Japan; Ch: China; Ko: Korea; Ta: Taiwan

Overall, the East Asian respondents are more likely to agree than the Nordics. However, the average willingness to agree of the Japanese (57) is only slightly higher than the average value of the Finns (56). With an average value of 64, the Chinese respondents score the highest followed by Korea (62) and Taiwan (59). With an average value of 51 the Swedish respondents are close to having no agreement response bias at the aggregate level. Table 6.1 also shows that more highly educated respondents are less willing to agree than are those with a lower educational level within each country. However, the educational contrast between the university and the elementary level is more pronounced in the Nordic region than in East Asia. Thus, the difference between those with an elementary education and those who
Comparing Political Cultures: Major Methodological and Substantial Results

have attended university in the Nordic countries is eight to nine per cent points, while it is only one to five points in The East Asian countries. These contrasts tend to confirm the expectation that an agreement response bias is mostly caused by a lack of competence in the Nordic countries, while it could be explained by a general social desirability bias in the East Asian countries. Further, as stressed by Nisbett (2003), in the East Asian view ‘it can sometimes be more sensible to admit that an apparent contradiction exists than to insist that either one state of affairs or its opposite is the true one’ (ibid.: 177). This culturalist interpretation might help to explain the overall difference in willingness to agree between the Nordic region and East Asia.

To get closer to the genuine opinion regarding the content of the questions, we have tried to remove the response bias in two different ways. An adjustment is applied to those five pairs of opposite items that were used to detect the willingness to agree. The response bias is simply removed for any two opposite items by subtracting the score of the one from the score of the other for each single respondent. To transform this measure to a scale from 0 to 100, the difference between the two items is divided at the individual level by two and then added to 50. Table 6.2 shows the average value of each of these five measures, with an interpretation of the meaning of each measure.

Table 6.2 Agreement on subjects adjusted by difference between pairs of items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Fin</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Chi</th>
<th>Kor</th>
<th>Tai</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D11ab Tolerate political differences</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D16bc Leaders moral quality is most important</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D18fc Leave control to moral leader</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D18de Rules must always be followed</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D21ad Human nature cooperative and not selfish</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Each new item is formed by adding half the difference between two items to 50. For example item D11ab is computed by D11ab = (P11a – P11b)/2 + 50.

Since the common content of the first two items P11a and P11b refers to tolerance towards political differences, the label ‘Tolerate political differences’ is given to the measure D11ab (where D refers to the difference and 11ab to the two items 11a and 11b). With this measure, there is no big difference between the two regions, but China and Taiwan stick out as least tolerant to political differences, while Japan is the most tolerant of all countries. The common content in the second example is ‘Leader’s moral quality is most important’, and it was expected that East Asians would score highest on this measure because of the importance of benevolent leadership in this part of the world. However, this was not the case. Rather, the
importance of the leader’s morals seems to be highest in Finland, Japan, and Korea, and lowest in China. The third example shows that even though the Chinese put less emphasis on the leader’s morality, they are more willing to ‘Leave control to a moral leader’ than respondents from all the other countries. This indicates a more authoritarian attitude in China than in the other countries. The low average value of Japan, on a level with the Nordic countries, could be explained by Japan being more ‘modernized’. However, it could also be explained by the traditional Japanese culture of horizontal collectivism and thus greater egalitarianism. The expectation that the Chinese would be more authoritarian is confirmed with the fourth example showing that agreement with ‘Rules must always be followed’ is also highest in China, even when the willingness to agree, regardless of the content, has been removed. The fifth and final example, measuring how far ‘Human nature is cooperative and not selfish,’ shows little difference between countries, except that the respondents from Finland and Japan seem to be most skeptical about human nature.

REMOVING RESPONSE BIAS BY REGRESSION

In the questionnaire, there are a lot of other questions formed as statements with which the respondent can either agree or disagree. These items do not have clear opposites, so we cannot use the technique for adjustment by difference that we have just described. Instead, we assume that each respondent’s general willingness to agree, described above in Table 6.1, is reflected in the respondent’s answer to each of the other agree/disagree items. The effect of general willingness to agree on the answer of each of the other items is estimated by regression analysis.

Table 6.3 Agreement with statements adjusting for willingness to agree by regression.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree? (on efficacy)</th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Fin</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Chi</th>
<th>Kor</th>
<th>Tai</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A8a Agree: No difference between political parties</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A8b Agree: Bureaucrats don’t care what I think</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A8c Agree: I have no influence on government</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A8d Agree: Politics is too complicated for me</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree? (on leaders obligations)</th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Fin</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Chi</th>
<th>Kor</th>
<th>Tai</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A16a Agree: Politicians stop thinking about people's interest after taking office</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A16c Agree: Political leaders should maintain harmony in society</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A16d Agree: A political leader should follow public opinion rather than own conviction</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Comparing Political Cultures: Major Methodological and Substantial Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Fin</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Chi</th>
<th>Kor</th>
<th>Tai</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A16f Agree:</strong> A leader should care for the people as parents for their children</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A18a Agree:</strong> A group without a strong leader means chaos</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A18b Agree:</strong> More important with outstanding political leader than democracy</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A19a Agree:</strong> Even extremist parties should run in elections</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A19b Agree:</strong> Good government is to maintain harmonious social relations</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A19c Agree:</strong> Good government is to ensure nobody will live in poverty</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A19d Agree:</strong> Political decision not fair if minority view is disregarded</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A19e Agree:</strong> Good government is promoted by competition for power</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A19f Agree:</strong> Quality of politicians more important than laws and institutions</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A19g Agree:</strong> People should not be forced to articulate opinions</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A19h Agree:</strong> Good government is to ensure individual freedom</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A19i Agree:</strong> Political discussions are a natural part of classroom instruction</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A19j Agree:</strong> Political discussions are an obligatory part of children's upbringing in the family</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A21b Agree:</strong> The ideal society is like a family</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A21c Agree:</strong> Modern life-style contributes to breakdown of society</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A22a Agree:</strong> I would rather depend on myself than on others</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A22b Agree:</strong> I enjoy competing with others</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A22c Agree:</strong> Spending time with others is pleasure to me</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A22d Agree:</strong> My duty is to maintain harmony among the people I associate with</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The idea in this analysis is that some items provoke more agreement than others. For a certain item, this degree of provoked agreement can be measured with regression analysis by how strongly the answer to this item is related across individuals to the
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index of willingness to agree, mentioned above. This measure is subsequently used to adjust for the effect of willingness to agree that is specific to each individual item. Table 6.3 on the previous spread shows average values of the adjusted items. The letter ‘A’ before the question number indicates the adjustment for willingness to agree by regression.

The items in Table 6.3 cover political efficacy, leaders’ obligations, authority, political liberties, the ideal society and social harmony.

Initially, one would expect that the respondents from East Asian countries have the lowest political efficacy, because their political institutions are of recent origin, but this seems not to be the case. For example, the Swedes are most likely, while the Danes are least likely, to see no difference between the political parties, and the Finns are most likely to think that they have no influence on government and that politics is too complicated. The Japanese seem to have a special problem with trusting bureaucrats to care for them. Since the Swedes and the Danes have quite similar political orientations in other questions, it is difficult to understand the difference in political efficacy between these two countries regarding the difference between the parties as a permanent cultural difference between Denmark and Sweden. It must rather reflect the political situation at the time of the surveys, when a new extreme protest party in Denmark, The Danish People’s party, was gaining acceptance and influence, while the Swedish parties were more uniform. Similar, the low efficacy in Finland regarding influence on government and understanding politics could reflect the turmoil (recent to the time of the surveys) in the reorientation of Finnish politics away from relative dependency upon the Soviet Union and towards integration in the EU. The distrust of the Japanese towards bureaucrats is probably a more enduring feature of Japanese politics, since the powerful bureaucracy resting on the traditional ‘iron triangle’ of politicians, business and the bureaucracy in Japan continues to function with limited transparency (Freedom House 2001).

Of the four questions on leaders’ obligations in Table 6.3, the first one allows the respondent to pass critical judgment on the politicians’ awareness of people’s interest after taking office (A16a). Although one should think that the Nordic respondents would be least critical because of the higher satisfaction with democratic rights in the Nordic countries, this is not the case. Instead, after adjustment for willingness to agree, the Chinese are by far the least critical. Again, the interpretation could be that the Chinese respondents give an authoritarian response, not daring to criticize leaders. An alternative or supplementary interpretation could be that the answers reflect satisfaction with the growing criticism of widespread corruption. The three other questions on leaders’ obligations concern how political leaders ought to behave. Although the two statements ‘Good political leaders should maintain harmony in society’ (A16c) and ‘A leader should care for the people as parents for
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their children,’ (A16f) were thought to reflect Confucian ideals, there is no clear difference between the Nordic and the East Asian responses. Interestingly, in spite of decades of socialism, China scores highest on the last mentioned item (A16f) that stresses the relations between parents and children as a model for leadership. The mistrust of politicians implicit in the statement ‘A good political leader should follow public opinion rather than his own conviction’ (A16d) seems to be strongest among the Chinese and the Swedes, probably for very different reasons. Thus, the Chinese response could indicate a simplistic conception of democracy, while the Swedish reaction could reflect the suspicion that many politicians would be willing to sacrifice their own convictions to get elected.

After adjustment for willingness to agree, all East Asian countries continue to be more likely than the Nordic countries to place importance upon an outstanding political leader rather than on democracy, although only China scores as high as the neutral value of 50 (A18b). The assumption that the Chinese respondents would prove to be the most authoritarian is clearly supported with a high average value of 72 regarding the statement ‘A group without a strong leader means chaos’ (A18a).7

Most statements in question battery 19 relate to political liberties, and it was expected that the value of political liberty would be most strongly endorsed in the Nordic countries. Again, the expectation was not confirmed. The only statement that has systematically higher endorsement in the Nordic countries after adjustment is ‘The objective of good government is to ensure that nobody will have to live in poverty’ (A19c). This is a statement about social welfare rather than liberty, and a possible explanation of this result could be that this is not a genuine East-West contrast but rather an indication that the horizontal individualism of the Nordic countries compared to the vertical individualism of other Western countries places greater importance on social welfare than on political liberties.

The last questions from question battery 21 and 22 in Table 6.3 mostly relate to social harmony either with positive or negative statements, and it was supposed that East Asian respondents would be most in favor of social harmony. Again, this is not the case. Concerning ‘Spending time with others is a pleasure to me’ (A22c) all Nordic countries score even higher than all East Asian countries, although the latter also have quite high average values after adjustment for willingness to agree. However, the cultural background for these similarities could very well be different in the two regions. Thus the explanation for harmony in the Nordic countries could be the high level of social capital, while the wish for harmony in the East might rather express a moral obligation.

The adjusted averages concerning the statement ‘The modern life-style contributes to the breakdown of the society’ (A21c) show no systematic difference between the two regions, although one should think that the recent, rapid transformations of the
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East Asian societies would cause such speculation. On the contrary, Finland shows the highest worry, and China the lowest. This could be one more confirmation of the assumption about the satisfaction in China with the recent development.

RANKING VERSUS RATING

The rest of the questions in our questionnaire are mostly about so called ‘valence issues’ such as ‘Equal education for all’ or ‘Social security for the elderly’ i.e., objects that nearly all respondents find beneficial; the only disagreement concerns how beneficial they are (Stokes 1963). Following Rokeach (1973), Inglehart has presented the argument that cultural values are not as much a matter of rating preferences as a matter of setting priorities.

The first example about ranking versus rating concerns how far the respondent is willing to pay taxes so that the state can provide different programs (Q3). First, the respondents were asked to rate the extent of willingness to pay taxes from ‘1. Not at all’ over ‘2. Somewhat’ and ‘3. Rather’ to ‘4. Very’ for each of six programs. Afterwards, the respondents were asked to indicate what was the most important program and what was the second most important program. Table 6.4 shows the results.

The upper section of Table 6.4 shows the average absolute ratings on a scale from 0 to 100 (after standardization by age and education). It is clear that the Swedes especially and the Chinese in general are more willing to pay taxes than the respondents from the other countries. This is probably for very different reasons, since the taxation level is high in Sweden and low in China. On the other hand, the difference between Denmark and Sweden in willingness to pay taxes may be explained by short-term factors such as the current public discussion on the taxation level in Denmark and the recent decrease in this level in Sweden (see Chapter 10). Probably, the ranking of the different issues in the different countries is more stable, as presented in the middle section of Table 6.4, where the percentage choosing an issue as either the most important or the second most important program (the letter ‘C’ before the question number indicates ranking by choice – ranking was not performed in Finland). As expected from Inglehart’s argument, with rankings the contrast between the two cultural regions becomes clearer, with the Nordic countries all giving higher priority to social security for the elderly than all the East Asian countries, and all the East Asian countries giving higher priority to environmental protection than all the Nordic countries.
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Table 6.4  Willingness to pay tax for different programs.
Rating, ranking, and relative rating.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Willing to pay taxes for programs below?</th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Fin</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Chi</th>
<th>Kor</th>
<th>Tai</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absolute rating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3a Pay taxes: Equal educational</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opportunities for all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3b Pay taxes: Social security for elderly</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3c Pay taxes: Unemployment benefits</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3d Pay taxes: Aid to poor countries</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3e Pay taxes: Environmental protection</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3f Pay taxes: Fighting crime</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average rating across items</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>66</td>
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The conclusion is that a ranking of several items in relation to each other is probably a better technique for describing contrasts between cultures than an absolute rating of each item. This creates a serious problem for comparative research, since most attitude surveys are dominated by rating questions. However, a simple technique may remedy this problem. By simply subtracting the average absolute rating across items from the absolute rating of each item (and adding 50 for convenience of interpretation), we get a relative rating of the item independent of the general intensity. We can thus remove the general willingness to pay taxes from the absolute ratings in Table 6.4, and arrive at relative ratings – hopefully similar to
rankings – in the lower section of Table 6.4 (the letter ‘R’ before the question number indicates relative rating). We can now include Finland in the analysis by computing the relative ratings from the absolute ratings.

It actually turns out that the relative ratings are strongly correlated with the ranking of the different programs, although not perfectly so. Interestingly, the Finnish relative ratings conform to the contrasts between regions, found with rankings without data from Finland.

The different perception of the obligations of the welfare system versus the family in East Asia compared to the Nordic countries might explain the higher priority on social security for the elderly in Nordic Europe. The higher priority on environmental protection in East Asia can be more difficult to explain, since this issue in the West is often correlated with left wing new politics and postmaterialism. However, more serious pollution in East Asia has made the need for environmental protection much more a matter of physical survival than in the Nordic West.

The other example, investigating ranking versus rating, is the question battery on what qualities children should learn at home (Q23). The three sections of Table 6.5 show the same kind of measures as in Table 6.4.

**Table 6.5** Qualities children should learn. Rating, ranking, and relative rating

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</table>
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C23c Children should learn: Creativity 10 14 13 31 14 11
C23f Children should learn: Tolerance 33 21 22 7 5 12
C23g Children should learn: Respect 27 44 8 25 17 43
C23h Children should learn: Thrift 3 5 3 9 26 12
C23i Children should learn: Determination 10 5 16 17 12 11
C23j Children should learn: Religious faith 2 1 3 5 3
C23k Children should learn: Unselfishness 3 6 19 11 1 5
C23l Children should learn: Obedience 4 3 2 1 1 5
C23m Children should learn: Ability to think for oneself 52 47 36 11 17 8
C23n Children should learn: Self-restraint 4 3 1 6 8 6
C23o Children should learn: Ambition 4 10 13 39 6 13

Average relative rating across items (3 out of 15) 19 19 19 20 20 19

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Relative rating</th>
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<tr>
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<td>52 28 51 53 48 52</td>
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</table>

Average relative rating across items 50 50 50 50 50 50

All countries give high absolute ratings to all qualities apart from religious faith (not included in China) with an average rating across items of 87 for China and between 71 and 78 for the rest of the countries. Thus, the adjustments by relative ratings are only substantial for China. This makes the contrasts between the absolute ratings and the relative ratings less dramatic. The rather low ranking of some issues like thrift, unselfishness and self-restraint may be explained by the fact that the respondents were only asked to pick three out of 15 qualities. In any case, the systematic contrasts in rankings between the two regions that were only found for the qualities ‘tolerance’ and ‘ability to think for oneself’ before adjustment, with higher ranking for the Nordic countries than for the East Asian countries, were also found with the relative ratings. These results conform to the expectation of a more individualistic culture in the West than in the East. Some results are difficult
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to understand, for example the high relative rating of creativity and the very low rating of unselfishness and obedience in Korea. A possible interpretation could be that these ratings reflect current wishful thinking rather than actual childrearing practices. Thus, the Korean participants in our research team mentioned that the low incentive for creativity in upbringing and education is now a much-debated issue in Korea.

The example above gives the impression that the contrasts between the items might be too strong by ranking, especially if one is allowed to pick only a few out of many items. Thus, relative ratings might better reflect the relative importance of the different items.

OTHER RELATIVE RATINGS

The technique for transforming absolute ratings into relative ratings was also applied to several other question batteries, but without the possibility of comparisons with rankings, and with different justifications.

The question battery on programs to which the government should pay special attention (Q1) included three valence issues ‘Providing a high level of social welfare’, ‘Maintaining a high level of economic growth’, and ‘Fighting environmental pollution’. Table 6.6 shows average absolute and relative ratings.

<table>
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<th>Table 6.6 Importance that government pay special attention to programs. Absolute and relative ratings</th>
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Relative rating | Average rating less average rating across items + 50 |
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Comparing Political Cultures: Major Methodological and Substantial Results

Again, absolute ratings were highest in China, and relative ratings created a clear contrast between all the Nordic countries and all the East Asian countries on the issue of social welfare, as previously observed, although not a very strong contrast. Again, there was also a tendency towards higher relative ratings for environmental protection in East Asia, but this time also in Finland, probably because the Finns had been giving less priority to economic growth than environmental protection in comparison to Denmark and Sweden.

Table 6.7 Making voice heard by various means. Absolute and relative ratings

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<tr>
<td>R9b Make voice heard:</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contacting government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>officials</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>R9c Make voice heard:</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacting member</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>of parliament</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>R9d Make voice heard:</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working through a</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>political party</td>
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<tr>
<td>R9e Make voice heard:</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working in other</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>R9f Make voice heard:</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>57</td>
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<td>Participating in</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>R9g Make voice heard:</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>63</td>
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<tr>
<td>Using family and</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>personal network</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R9h Make voice heard:</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacting the media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average relative rating</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Politics, Culture and Self

The question battery on how people make their voices heard in the society (Q9) did not include typical valence issues, since some issues, such as ‘Contacting member of parliament’ and ‘Contacting the media’, have quite low absolute ratings. The problem is rather that some of the countries, especially Finland and Korea, have conspicuously low absolute ratings compared to other countries in the same region, as shown in Table 6.7 (p. 109).

These results raise the suspicion that these questions are not comparable across countries. This suspicion is supported by the fact that a much clearer pattern appears when the relative ratings are presented. Thus, ‘contacting government officials’ is relatively more frequent in the Nordic region, and ‘working through a political party’ and ‘contacting the media’ are relatively more frequent in East Asia. The first contrast could be explained by the more strained relationship to official authorities in East Asia than in the Nordic region. The second contrast could be explained by the stronger tradition for personal contacts between party workers and voters in East Asia, and the third contrast could be explained by the stronger scepticism towards the media in the Nordic region.10

The items in the question battery about the importance of different qualities of a political candidate (Q10) have also been transformed to relative ratings. Although the relative ratings in Table 6.8 show no clear contrast between the two regions, they may reveal important country-specific traits in current politics.

Table 6.8 Importance of candidate’s qualities. Absolute and relative ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Absolute rating</th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Fin</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Chi</th>
<th>Kor</th>
<th>Tai</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average rating</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10a Important candidate quality: Party affiliation</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10b Important candidate quality: Political ideas</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10c Important candidate quality: Moral character</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10d Important candidate quality: Strong leader</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10e Important candidate quality: Independence of economic interests</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relative rating</th>
<th>Average rating less average rating across items + 50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R10a Important candidate quality: Party affiliation</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R10b Important candidate quality: Political ideas</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R10c Important candidate quality: Moral character</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R10d Important candidate quality: Strong leader</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R10e Important candidate quality: Independence of economic interests</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example, it is noteworthy that Finland is more similar to the countries in East Asia than to the two other Nordic countries in giving low importance to a
Comparing Political Cultures: Major Methodological and Substantial Results

candidate’s party affiliation, but high importance to the moral character of the candidate. The explanation could be that the most recent election in Finland at the time of the survey was the presidential election, where party affiliation had less importance.\footnote{11} Although we do not comment much on the Taiwanese results, because of the non-random sample, the very low importance of the candidate being a strong leader is quite remarkable. This might reflect the reorientation in attitudes towards strong leadership in Taiwan in connection with the recent democratization process.

The question battery on trust in different institutions (Q12) is one of the most difficult to interpret because of the very high absolute ratings of the Chinese respondents, shown in Table 6.9. It should be noted here that this is in contrast to Fukuyama’s claim (1995) that China is a low-trust society while Japan is a high-trust society.

Table 6.9 Trust in institutions. Absolute and relative ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Fin</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Chi</th>
<th>Kor</th>
<th>Tai</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Absolute rating</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12a Trust the parliament</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12b Trust political parties</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12c Trust trade unions</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12d Trust the media</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12e Trust the legal system</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12f Trust public offices</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12g Trust the police</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12h Trust the armed forces</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12i Trust major companies</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12j Trust the educational system</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average rating across items</strong></td>
<td>48</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| **Relative rating** |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| R12a Trust the parliament | 49  | 54  | 38  | 42  | 53  | 34  | 42  |
| R12b Trust political parties | 40  | 41  | 27  | 43  | 53  | 39  | 42  |
| R12c Trust trade unions    | 40  | 47  | 46  | 47  | 47  | 51  | 50  |
| R12d Trust the media       | 34  | 38  | 50  | 51  | 47  | 54  | 48  |
| R12e Trust the legal system| 64  | 56  | 52  | 62  | 50  | 49  | 53  |
| R12f Trust public offices  | 46  | 49  | 52  | 43  | 50  | 52  | 53  |
| R12g Trust the police      | 70  | 64  | 68  | 53  | 46  | 52  | 47  |
| R12h Trust the armed forces| 58  | 56  | 65  | 58  | 63  | 61  | 57  |
| R12i Trust major companies | 43  | 42  | 41  | 47  | 37  | 45  | 48  |
| R12j Trust the educational system | 56  | 53  | 61  | 53  | 53  | 63  | 61  |
| **Average relative rating across items** | 50  | 50  | 50  | 50  | 50  | 50  | 50  |
Politics, Culture and Self

The average absolute trust in China across all items is considerably higher than in the Nordic countries and about twice as high as in the other East Asian countries. As previously discussed, the high trust in China can be difficult to believe in light of the many reports of corruption and violations of human rights. An effect of the improved Chinese economy on the overall trust in the system may be at work here, but it is difficult to envisage that this should create high trust in each of the individual institutions. A closer inspection actually reveals some variation in absolute trust between the different institutions in China, with the highest trust placed in the armed forces and the lowest trust in the trade unions and the police.

Table 6.10 Interpersonal trust. Absolute and relative ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Absolute rating</th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Fin</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Chi</th>
<th>Kor</th>
<th>Tai</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P24a Trust my family</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P24b Trust my friends</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P24c Trust my neighbors</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P24d Trust my colleagues</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P24e Trust a person I went to school or university with</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P24f Trust my superior</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relative rating</th>
<th>Average rating less average rating across items + 50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R24a Trust my family</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R24b Trust my friends</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R24c Trust my neighbors</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R24d Trust my colleagues</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R24e Trust a person I went to school or university with</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R24f Trust my superior</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, even if all items were biased, relative ratings may give important information about the relative trust in the different institutions. Interestingly, the most important institution of internal coercion in the society, the police, has clearly higher relative ratings in all Nordic countries that in all East Asian countries – China shows the lowest relative rating. This may reflect the higher legitimacy of the state’s monopoly on coercion in the Nordic region. For the other institutions, there is no clear contrast between the two regions. This is sometimes because Finland tends to differ from Denmark and Sweden, for example with lower trust in the parliament and the political parties and higher trust in the armed forces and the media.

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Two questions, trust in ‘strangers of my own nationality’ and trust in ‘foreign strangers’, have been removed from the analysis of the question battery on interpersonal trust (Q24) because they do not directly relate to trust in specific persons. Table 6.10 shows that for the rest of the items, a similar pattern to that of institutional trust appears, but it is not as strong. Here, the highest average absolute ratings are found in China, followed by the Nordic countries, and the other East Asian countries show the lowest average ratings.

It is not surprising that in all countries the relative interpersonal trust in family and friends is higher than that in more distant persons such as neighbours, colleagues, schoolmates and superiors. Relative trust in friends seems to be higher in the Nordic region and in Japan than in the rest of the countries. For some reason, trust in neighbors is quite low in Japan, perhaps because the Japanese respondents were exclusively selected from metropolitan areas.

**NON-ADJUSTED RATINGS**

Most items have been adjusted either for willingness to agree or by transformation from absolute to relative ratings. The only items asked in every country but not adjusted (except by standardization according to age and education) appear in Table 6.11 (p. 114).

There are two types of questions that we thought did not need adjustment of ratings. One is the type in question batteries Q2 and Q20 where the respondent is asked to place his or her view on a scale between two opposite statements such as ‘The less government the better’ and ‘The government should be more active’. With this kind of question, there is no absolute rating of the two alternatives, and the scale between the two ratings functions as a relative rating between the two statements. The average ratings of the different items in question Q2 and Q20 show no clear contrasts between the two regions, but they often show strong contrasts between countries within the same region. For example, the philosophy that ‘Parents have to earn one’s respect’ – as compared to ‘Parents are entitled to respect’ – has much higher support in Finland than in Denmark and Sweden and much higher support in Korea than in China and Taiwan.

The other type of question uses the ‘thermometer scale’ (Q13 and Q17), where the respondent is asked to indicate a position from 0 to 10 between two extremes. One could say that most other questions also use thermometer scales from 1 to 4, but this is usually in battery questions registering degree of agreement, or battery questions on the importance of different valence issues. The response categories are probably given a more balanced presentation in question 13, which asks how well the political system is working and in question 17 querying satisfaction with life,
### Table 6.11 Items not adjusted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position between alternatives (on strong government)</th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Fin</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Chi</th>
<th>Kor</th>
<th>Tai</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P2a More active government vs. less government</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2b Free market vs. strong government</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>43</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often do you discuss political issues?</th>
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<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P6a Discuss politics how often: My family</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position on scale from very bad to very well?</th>
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<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P13 How well the political system is working</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position from very dissatisfied to very satisfied?</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P17 Satisfaction with quality of life</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position between alternatives (on trust and social obligations)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P20a Most people can be trusted vs. Watch out for other people</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P20b Good and evil apply at all times vs. depend on circumstances</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P20c Most people take advantage of me vs. try to be fair</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P20d Parents must earn vs. are entitled to respect</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you trust other people?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P24g Trust strangers of my own nationality</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>P24h Trust foreign strangers</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although there still may be problems with the social desirability bias. Both items show higher average values in all Nordic countries than in all East Asian countries, and are taken at face value. Question 13 on the political system probably reflects greater problems in reconciling politics with modernization in the East Asian countries. Question 17 reflects that the quality of life is more important in the more postmodernized Nordic countries; but we cannot exclude the possibility of a cultural element influencing the expression of the life situation of the respondent.¹²

Only three items in Table 6.11 are ordinary absolute ratings. They were singled out from more comprehensive question batteries. Concerning political discussion with others only one item (P6a) was asked in all countries. It examines discussion of political issues with family members.¹³ This form of political discussion seems to be most common in the Nordic countries and in Japan. The two other items using absolute ratings concern trust in strangers (P24g and P24h). They both show higher average trust in strangers in all Nordic countries than in all East Asian countries and are also taken at face values. They probably reflect that trust in East Asia is based more on personal relations than on orientation towards generalized others.
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CLUSTER ANALYSIS OF ALL ITEMS AFTER ADJUSTMENT

As mentioned, a cluster analysis was first performed on all items asked in every country with countries as units. A similar cluster analysis was then performed on the same items after possible adjustment either for willingness to agree or by transformation to relative ratings. Only the 10 items in Table 6.11 were included without adjustment. Figure 6.3 shows the dendogram of this cluster analysis.

Figure 6.3 Dendogram for cluster analysis of all adjusted items

Again, the dendogram shows that the Nordic countries form one cluster, but this time all the East Asian countries are joined into a second cluster. This is different from the preliminary cluster analysis before adjustment of items (Figure 6.1), where China had a more deviant position. The obvious interpretation is that the adjustment for response bias as well as the focus on value priority by computing relative ratings more clearly shows the genuine cultural differences between the countries. This said, it must also be stressed that the two clusters are quite heterogeneous, especially the cluster of East Asian countries. The Nordic countries are also heterogeneous, with Denmark and Sweden quite similar, and with Finland more deviant. Among the East Asian countries the two most similar countries are probably Korea and Taiwan, but the degree of similarity is not higher than between Denmark and Finland. Interestingly, after the adjustments, Japan seems to be even more deviant from the other East Asian countries than China.

To investigate whether the results from China and Japan still can be assumed to be representative of urban culture in the whole country after the adjustment of items, another cluster analysis with the same items were performed dividing both China and Japan into cities. The dendogram from the cluster analysis in Figure 6.4 still shows that the two cities in each country are very similar, thus confirming the existence of a common urban culture within each country.
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Figure 6.4 Dendrogram for cluster analysis of all adjusted items. China and Japan divided into cities

PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS OF ALL ITEMS AFTER ADJUSTMENT

To get a deeper understanding of the difference between countries, we have identified those items that most clearly differentiate between the countries by performing a principal component analysis on all the items in the cluster analysis with only the seven countries as units. With only two components, one can describe 53 per cent of all the variation in the items across countries. The first component describes 30.5 per cent of the variation while the second component describes 22.4 per cent of the variation.

Figure 6.5 shows the items with the strongest association with the two components. The vertical axis is the most important first component and the horizontal axis is the second and less important component. An item with high position in the graph has a strong positive association with the first component, while an item with a low position has a strong negative association with the first component. Similar, an item to the far right in the graph has a strong positive association with the second component while an item to the far left has a strong negative association with the second component. We can use these items to interpret the meaning of the two components.

In view of our expectations about individualism versus collectivism, it is interesting to note that three items stressing individualism have a high positive association with the first component, ‘good government should insure individual freedom’, and children should ‘learn to think for oneself’ and ‘learn tolerance’. Further, items with a negative association with the first component are statements about the importance of benevolent leadership which are often connected with collectivism, such as ‘It is more important to have an outstanding leader than democracy’ and ‘The quality of politicians is more important than laws and institutions’.

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Figure 6.5 Item positions on the two principal components

Other items with a strong positive association with the first component are items that are usually connected with postmodernization. These are the items regarding the quality of life, ‘Satisfaction with life’ and the items registering interpersonal trust such as ‘Trust my friends’, ‘Trust strangers from own nation’ and ‘People can be trusted’. Also the items ‘Discuss politics’ and ‘Contacting government officials’ indicate a level of political participation usually associated with postmodernization. Furthermore, the first component has a negative association with an item connected with the modernization process, ‘Children should learn thrift’. These results suggest that the difference in our selection of countries between individualism and collectivism is connected with the degree of postmodernization, as expected from our design discussed above.

The remaining items strongly associated with the first component might be derived from the difference between the Nordic European countries – characterized by individualism – and the East Asian countries characterized by collectivism. For example, the strong positive association with the relative item ‘Trust the police’ can be derived from the fact that police corruption is a problem in East Asia. Similarly,
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the strong negative association with the relative item ‘Environmental protection’ reflects the more severe environmental problems in the East than in the West.

The second component in Figure 6.5 shows that the difference in values and attitudes between the countries in our study is not only a question of collectivism versus individualism. Instead, the second component is associated with items on trust in institutions and leaders. Strong positive associations occur for the overall index for ‘Institutional trust’, and for the relative items ‘Trust in parliament’ and ‘Trust in political parties’. Strong negative associations occur for ‘Leader’s moral quality important’, ‘Politicians forget people’s interests’ and ‘Bureaucrats don’t care’. The negative direction of the second component is also related to concern about the rights of dissidents and minorities: ‘Tolerate political differences’ and ‘Treat minorities fairly’; as well as with a pessimistic social outlook: ‘Modern lifestyle is harmful’ and ‘Most people are not fair’. The second component is further related to strong leadership with ‘Chaos without a strong leader’ on the positive side and ‘Free market better than strong government’ on the negative side.

The second component clearly indicates optimistic trust in government, institutions and strong leadership in the positive direction, and pessimistic distrust in the moral quality of government and leadership in the negative direction. The position of a country on this component probably reflects the evaluation of the performance of the current government and leadership. Since this performance might be subject to short term changes, the position of a country on this component might be less stable than the position on the first component. This means that the position on the second dimension does not indicate a stable cultural trait. However, as the current political conditions are evaluated on the basis of shared values in the society, the position of the second component is indirectly derived from the political culture.

The positions of the seven countries on the same two components are shown in Figure 6.6. China is shown in parentheses because of the uncertainty of the validity of its position on the second component.

As expected, the Nordic European countries are located in the upper part of the graph, indicating a tendency to individualism, while the East Asian countries are located in the lower part, indicating a tendency to collectivism. Denmark and Sweden seem to be most strongly infused with individualistic values, while Taiwan, Korea and China are most strongly infused with collectivist values. Finland and Japan hold intermediate positions nearer to the neutral value on the first component. This fits well with the often mentioned finding that in some cases Finland is closer to East Asia than to the other two Nordic countries, while Japan is in some cases closer to Nordic Europe than to the other East Asian countries.

The most unexpected finding in this study is probably the wide contrast within each of the two cultural regions. Most notable is the contrast between China and
CONCLUSION

This chapter proposes methods for the solution of three methodological problems that could obscure cultural differences between countries, using survey data, and applies these methods when comparing the political culture of the seven countries in the EPCReN Good Government study.

The first problem, involving the risk of making an individualistic fallacy is solved by removing respondents over 65 years of age and by standardizing the samples by weighting to the same educational distribution in each country. The cluster analysis on the country level of all rating questions, after standardization, reveals a pattern with a group of Nordic countries, a group of East Asian countries, and China as a deviant case. The assumption that two cities in China and two cities in Japan are representative of the urban population in each of the two countries is investigated.
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by another cluster analysis where China and Japan are divided into cities. Since the two cities in each country are very similar this result indicates the existence of a common urban culture within each of the two countries.

Omitting a neutral category in the rating scales and thus putting a mild pressure on the respondents to take a stand counteracts the second problem: response bias. In addition, the identified varying level of willingness to agree, no matter what the content of the question, is either adjusted for by joining opposite items or by a special regression technique that estimates the effect of willingness to agree on the individual item, and then by adjusting for this effect.

The third problem, how to analyse priorities when ratings are not directly comparable between countries and ranking questions have not been asked, is solved by subtracting the average rating across items in a question battery from the individual items, thus creating relative ratings.

A closer inspection of all items, after proper adjustment, reveals many unexpected results. In some cases, these unexpected results may be explained by the possibility that they do not reflect permanent values, and are more likely reactions to current political conditions. However, a major unexpected finding is that the respondents in the Nordic countries value social harmony and the family as an ideal model for the society as much as respondents in East Asia. An interesting question for further research would be how far this result indicates a special property of Nordic countries compared to other Western countries.

In spite of these unexpected results, the cluster analysis of all items after adjustment reveals the expected pattern, placing all the Nordic countries in one group and all the East Asian countries in the other group. A principal component analysis on the country level shows that the first most important component dividing the two groups of countries, as expected, is strongly correlated with items reflecting individualism in the Nordic countries versus collectivism in East Asia. Further, as expected, the first component is strongly correlated with a higher quality of life and a stronger emphasis on democracy rather than outstanding leadership in the Nordic countries when compared to East Asia.

Another major unexpected finding is the wide contrasts within each region, especially the strong contrast between China and the other East Asian countries, and also the less significant contrast between Finland and the two other Nordic countries. This second component reflects higher institutional trust and also a more authoritarian attitude in China, especially in comparison to Japan, Finland, and Korea. However, it is not clear how much the expression of higher institutional trust in China should be interpreted as an expression of an authoritarian attitude or as a favourable reaction to the improved economic conditions in recent years. The similar, less authoritarian positions of both Korea and Japan on the second component are contrary to the
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expectation that Korea would prove to be a prototype of vertical collectivism, while Japan would be a prototype of horizontal collectivism, as discussed in Chapter 1. One more interesting research question is how far this reflects a change in Korea towards a more egalitarian society as a basis for continued democratization.

In sum, after reasonable adjustments of the results in the EPCReN Good Government Study, and despite surprising similarities across the two regions, we did confirm the overall expectation of a major cultural dividing line between East Asia and the Nordic European countries as well as the supposition that this dividing line concerns collectivism versus individualism. We also confirmed the expectation that the syndrome of postmodernization, including subjects such as the quality of life and participatory democratic values, is more prominent in the Nordic countries. We did not confirm the expectation that values of social harmony, with the family as the ideal model for the society, are more prominent in East Asia than in the Nordic countries. It is difficult to interpret the results from China showing strong institutional trust, but we found strong indications of more authoritarian values in China than in Japan and Korea.

It has been substantiated that the overall design, comparing both the contrast between very different regions and the internal contrasts within each region, produce a richness of results and interesting questions for further research.

NOTES

1 Eventually, it was considered most practical to conduct personal interviews in China and Korea.

2 A more profound version of the individualistic fallacy is when individual level covariation is used to explain country level covariation.

3 For example, the values 1, 2, 3 and 4 were transformed to the values 0, 33.3, 66.7, and 100. These results are presented in Chapter 10 (with the letter ‘P’ preceding each question number) primarily to compare Denmark and Sweden, because there is little cultural bias in this comparison. Chapter 10 also presents the standardized results from the other countries (except Taiwan), with cautious remarks about a possible cultural bias.

4 The method was hierarchical cluster analysis based on squared Euclidean distance and between-group linkage.

5 The rationale is that a constant term $a$ for response bias is added to the true attitude $t$ regarding each question. Thus, the equation for the response $X$ to the first item is $X = t + a$, while the equation for the response $Y$ to the second question is $Y = (100 - t) + a$, since the second item is reversed. The solution is $t = (X - Y)/2 + 50$. Further, the willingness to agree with the two items is $(X + Y)/2 = 50 + a$.

6 The assumption behind the adjustment for willingness to agree by regression is that the index for the general willingness to agree $W$ is uncorrelated with the true attitude $t$ to item $i$ within country $c$. With this assumption, the regressions equation for the response
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$X_i$, to item $i$ within country $c$ is $X_i = a_c + b_i W$, where $a_c$ is an item-specific constant for the country and $b_i$ is the (country-independent) item-specific effect of willingness to agree on item $i$. The true value is estimated by $t_i = X_i - a_c (W - 50)$ i.e., the more the respondent’s willingness to agree $W$ deviates from the neutral value of 50 and the more strongly the item reflects willingness to agree, the stronger is the adjustment.

In East Asia, the expression is ‘A group without a strong leader is like sand’.

Inglehart implicitly suggested this technique (1997: 122) in his criticism of Bean and Papadakis (1994) who used the technique – according to Inglehart without appreciating the strength of it.

The relative ratings should be computed at the individual level by subtracting the average absolute rating across items for each person from the individual response to each item and adding 50. Thus, these substitutes for rankings can also be used in individual level analysis.

Voting as a means for making one’s voice heard has very high absolute ratings from 90 to 99 in the Nordic region, and the relative ratings from 105 to 110 extend the appropriate scale from 0 to 100. The country with the highest absolute rating for voting in East Asia is Korea, with an absolute rating of 77 that transforms to a relative rating of 110, since the Koreans score rather low on all the other means. This suggests an over-adjustment in Korea with the method for relative ratings in this particular case. One should probably introduce a ceiling on the relative ratings with a non-linear transformation of the absolute ratings to get a more appropriate scale, but since this item about voting is the only serious case, this is not done.

A narrow victory was won by the left-leaning female candidate, Tarja Halonen.

A positive response is more or less expected in the Nordic countries to a question like ‘How are you’. The same cannot be expected in East Asia where ‘so-so’ would be a more frequent answer.

In China: ‘How often do you discuss political issues with other people?’ This should be at least as frequent as with family members.

The items for institutional trust and for interpersonal trust were transformed to relative ratings. However, the average absolute rating across items for both kinds of trust was also included in the analysis.

Because of limited space in Figure 6.5 the items are shown in abbreviated format without the questions being numbered.

REFERENCES


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PART 2

EAST ASIA AND THE NORDIC WEST:
SPECIAL SUBJECTS
Chapter 7

NATIONAL STEREOTYPES RECONSIDERED:
REFLECTIONS ON POLITICAL CULTURE
IN CHINA AND SWEDEN

Torbjörn Lodén

INTRODUCTION

At the time of the early contacts between China and Europe, it was – as described in Chapter 2 – not unusual for Europeans to conceive of China as a model to emulate. Voltaire held that China was a country ruled by philosophers where, in contrast to Europe, wisdom and reason prevailed.1 He even wanted to see Chinese missionaries in Europe spreading the blessings of Chinese culture.

In a speech to the Swedish Academy of Sciences in 1772, a high-ranking Swedish civil servant, State Councillor Carl Fredrik Scheffer, said:

To the embarrassment of the so-called cultured and well-mannered peoples of Europe we have to admit that in the course of all the changes of our Laws and Customs, which in themselves contained the causes of their impermanence, the Chinese people have lived under a System of Government which remained stable for several thousand years and which turned the Chinese realm into the mightiest, most populous and most affluent ever heard of or described (Sirén 1947–49: 47).²

Others have contrasted the individualistic and democratically-minded ‘Westerner’ with the collectivistic and authoritarian-minded Chinese.³ While Voltaire and Scheffer, and a long list of prominent Enlightenment thinkers, admired China as a model to emulate, Montesquieu and other luminaries of the European intellectual world were concerned about the ‘oriental despotism’ which they found characteristic of China and other countries in ‘the Orient’ (Mackerras op. cit.: 35).
Two centuries later, Karl August Wittfogel characterized the oriental despotism of the Soviet Union, China and other totalitarian states as a deadly threat to Western freedom and democracy (Wittfogel 1957). In even more recent times we may hear echoes of Wittfogel in Samuel Huntington’s essay on the clash of civilizations (Huntington 1996).

In China, these ideas have been taken up by critical intellectuals and fighters for democracy. The TV series *Deathsong of the River*, which was broadcast all over China in 1988 and watched by hundreds of millions of people, contrasted the introverted, stagnant, despotic China with the extroverted, dynamic and democratic Europe:

In a society of ‘great unification’ composed of myriads of weak and insignificant individuals, organized together to hold up a supreme ruler, is not the social structure very similar to a great pyramid? Therefore, it is very difficult for things such as democracy, freedom, and equality to become ‘Asiatic’… As the land-based civilization daily increased in power in China, a ‘blue’ sea-faring civilization was gradually arising in the Mediterranean Sea.

Long ago in ancient Greece, the democratic ideology of Athens arose contemporaneously with the growth of Athens as a sea-power, and so it was sea-power that led to a democratic revolution (Su 1991: 111, 206).

This chapter will consider what the data collected in the surveys conducted in China and Sweden within the EPCReN project reveal about the political cultures of these two countries, and, specifically, to what extent these data give us reason to question some stereotypical notions of differences between the political cultures of China and the West.

In approaching the data, focus is on the two broad themes of (1) collectivism versus individualism and (2) democratic versus authoritarian culture. The political culture of China is often described in terms of the need for an authoritarian state and a strong leader to keep the country together, whereas that of Sweden is described in terms of a commitment to a democratic form of government – both on utilitarian grounds and as a value in itself.

These themes have been chosen since they are in focus in contemporary discussions on cultural differences and similarities between Asia and the West, and since they are central to the widespread thesis that essential cultural differences exist which divide Asia and the West.

**HISTORICAL LEGACY**

China is as much a civilization as a state and therefore in many ways comparable to Europe or the West rather than to one single Western country. European cultural
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tradition has been shaped both by indigenous intellectual currents such as Greek philosophy and Judaeo-Christian religion and by influences from other cultures, for example from the Arab world, India and East Asia. Similarly, the sources of Chinese culture are indigenous, manifested, for example, in intellectual currents such as Confucianism and Daoism, but also external. Suffice it here to mention Buddhism, which came to China around the time of the birth of Christ, and Christianity, which first reached China in the Tang Dynasty (618–907) and which began to exert considerable influence on Chinese culture in the seventeenth century.

The Roman Empire unified the greater part of Europe into one state, but the end of the empire came to mark the beginning of Europe’s division into many states with their own separate national languages and cultures within the larger European cultural context.

China became a unified state in 221 BC. After that the Chinese empire experienced several periods of division, but the notion of a unified celestial empire was upheld as an ideal for two millennia. During this period, 25 dynasties gained and lost the ‘mandate of heaven’ to rule ‘all under heaven’, and the Chinese accumulated an enormous reservoir of statecraft experience, which has been extremely important in shaping the consciousness of generations of scholars and officials. This reservoir of experience is reflected in thousands of classical Chinese texts: the 25 dynastic histories, hundreds of local histories and countless philosophical treatises, to mention some. Today, these texts still offer insights into political culture in imperial China.

One of the striking features of the Chinese empire was the centrality of political culture. The point of departure of Confucian philosophy, which was the basis of the official ideology of the empire, was the question of how to regenerate the world of peace and harmony which had existed, according to the legends, in ancient times. State Confucianism was at the centre of a rich political culture which provided, among other things, a discourse for dealing with issues of politics and statecraft.

It is not possible within the framework of this chapter to say much about the content of political culture in imperial China. Still, a few aspects or features of this culture that seem especially important to bear in mind when approaching the topic of political attitudes in contemporary China should be noted.

The first feature that should be noted is a cluster of attitudes and ideas with the notion of ‘moral rule’ at the centre. As the highest leader, authorized by the mandate of heaven, the emperor was at the same time a moral authority and a political leader. In theory, he was to exercise his political power by means of his moral example, rather than by coercive means. In practice, the imperial rule was by no means as mild or benign as this idea may lead us to believe; it has often been pointed out that state Confucianism absorbed and integrated elements from the philosophical
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school of Legalism to legitimate the use of harsh punishments by the imperial government. But the core of this idea of moral rule still had important practical consequences. For example, it meant that a correct moral standpoint was more important than professional competence. Furthermore, this notion was inimical to the idea of rule by means of impersonal, equally applied laws and regulations. The idea of rule by law was also incompatible with another core tenet of Confucian thought, namely the idea that different moral principles are applicable to different human relationships. Lastly, the notion of moral rule exercised by the emperor as an ultimate moral authority was also inimical to the idea of open and free discussion of moral and political issues. In statecraft and in ethics there was always a ‘correct’ line, and so an open exchange of views could hardly play any positive role.

As already pointed out, the central position of the notion of ‘moral rule’ and the concomitant idea that the emperor personifies the absolute political and moral authority in traditional political culture did not mean that governance in imperial China was especially mild or benign. As a matter of fact, one might take this one step further and ask if these notions did not in fact pave the way for the arbitrary exercise of the emperor’s absolute power. Since the emperor was the ultimate moral authority, his decisions and actions were ipso facto correct. These notions were key elements of an ideology which in practice offered no impartial or objective criteria of right and wrong or good and evil but rather an elaborate system of thought making use of lofty ethical language to allow the ‘Son of Heaven’ to act as though might truly made right. In other words, the notion of ‘moral rule’ could be used to legitimate immoral rule. This same observation has been made by social critics within China itself. It was an essential point in the criticism that the scholar and philosopher Dai Zhen voiced against Neo-Confucian philosophy more than two hundred years ago, when he argued that political rulers killed people in the name of the philosophical principle of *li*.

I believe that this insight also informed Lu Xun (1881–1936) when he wrote his famous short story ‘A Madman’s Diary’. A second salient feature of Chinese traditional political culture is the idea that China’s unity is a fundamental value which is always threatened by centrifugal forces, and that a major concern for leaders must be to keep the country together. This preoccupation, not to say obsession, with maintaining unity and preventing division easily lends itself to legitimization of autocratic rule. Examples of this can be seen in older China as well as in modern or even contemporary times.

I believe that these and other features of traditional political culture have been vitally important in the formation of present-day political culture in China. But this does not necessarily mean that the content of traditional political culture constantly reproduces itself. During the past century, China has undergone enormous changes, and it would be strange if these did not also manifest themselves in political culture.
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As a matter of fact, the radical intelligentsia of the early twentieth century, which set the agenda for much discussion in China since then, identified traditional culture in general, and Confucianism in particular, as incompatible with modernization. These intellectuals argued that Confucianism had to be rejected in order to ‘save China’. In many cases one can see that radicals – be they liberal or Marxist – have sought a position on different issues as far away as possible from the traditional Confucian views. The Communists have, for example, again and again castigated the Confucian idea of ‘moral rule’. However, the effort to get rid of the Confucian legacy seems quite often to have failed: when thrown out through the front door, it has returned again through the back door. One could perhaps theorize on this as an example of the power of discourse itself: the focus on rejecting Confucius has somehow kept his critics entangled in his discourse.

To take an example, in Confucian political culture ‘order’ is a central value and ‘disorder’ is thus something that must be avoided. Mao Zedong, who was very anti-Confucian, turned these values upside down and said: ‘there is great disorder under heaven, the situation is excellent.’ This is anti-Confucian, but this formulation means that Mao remained stuck within the boundaries set by Confucian discourse, even though he wanted to get rid of Confucianism altogether; and this logic carries relevance far beyond the one example.

Even though we know that traditional political culture has been essential in forming the political culture of today, this does not mean that we may simply assume that the traditional ideas are still adhered to. We must not assume that Confucius tells us all we need to know about people’s attitudes and ideas in China today.

In order to understand the political culture of today we must turn to contemporary sources, and therefore I share the conviction of my colleagues in the EPCReN project that asking people what they think and how they feel is one fruitful way of learning more about the situation today.

Undoubtedly, there are many methodological difficulties associated with surveys, and the results that our particular survey yields are indeed uncertain in different ways. But the data collected does provide fascinating insights, and at least it is much closer to present-day realities than those ancient texts that are often searched for insights into the Chinese mentality.

By comparison, Sweden is a small country in Europe with written historical records reaching back about one thousand years. The first Christian missionaries came to Sweden in the ninth century, but it took about three hundred years before Sweden could really be called Christian. Culturally, Christianization was, of course, immensely important.

In medieval times Sweden was not really a unified state, but rather a confederation. Central power was weak and did not exercise its rule over the entire nation. For a few
centuries the German Hanseatic League played a very important role for Sweden, especially in trade contacts with other countries. Contacts with the Hanseatic League were very important in bringing many cultural impulses to Sweden from what is today northern Germany.

Early during medieval times, laws came to be considered very important in the life of the country. In the late fourteenth century a unified national code of law was adopted. This should probably be seen as fertile soil for the cultivation of the notion of ‘rule of law’, which later became a central aspect of Swedish political culture. In the nineteenth century, one of the Swedish kings chose ‘the land shall be built by means of laws’ as his motto.

Sweden became an ‘independent nation-state’ in the sixteenth century, when the first king of the Vasa Dynasty, Gustav Vasa (reigned 1523–1560), ascended the throne and ended the union with Denmark and Norway. Gustav Vasa has often been described as ‘the father of Sweden’. In 1527, under his reign, and as a significant aspect of the formation of the Swedish nation-state, Sweden severed her ties with the Pope and the Catholic Church and turned Protestant. The Lutheran Church became the Swedish state church with the King at its head. The Bible was translated into Swedish, and this marked the beginning of the Swedish language’s acquisition of a central role in Swedish culture, although Latin continued to be used for academic writings.

Throughout the period of the Vasa Dynasty, which lasted into the early years of the nineteenth century, there was tension between the King and the Riksdag (parliament) as the two centres of political power. In the Riksdag the four ‘estates’ – nobility, bourgeoisie, clergy and peasantry – were represented, and conflicts often emerged among the estates as well. In a power game that was sometimes very intricate, the King cooperated with groups in the Riksdag to enact laws or make other political decisions which they considered to be in their common interest. During certain periods, the power of the King was almost absolute, but there was often a certain division of power between different groups in society.

Beginning in the early nineteenth century, Sweden became a constitutional monarchy, with a constitution that restricted the power of the King and regulated the competence of the different branches of government fairly clearly. Within a wider context, and more importantly, the new developments were linked with the industrialization process that was beginning at the time. The proliferation of industrialists strengthened the position of the bourgeoisie, and this new bourgeoisie wanted more freedom, especially in economic life. In cultural life, newspapers and magazines began to play an important role. Some writers and scholars addressed social and political issues in liberal terms. New associations were formed. ‘Free churches’ outside the state Lutheran Church emerged and became the carriers of
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liberal ideas. In short, we may say that this was an era of emerging modernity in Sweden. Towards the end of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century the trade unions, the Social Democratic Party and the Cooperative Movement emerged as three branches of the Labour Movement, which came to play an enormously important role in twentieth century Sweden in bringing about democracy and developing the welfare state.

But it was only in the early twentieth century that Sweden became a full-fledged political democracy. The process of democratization can perhaps be said to have been basically completed in 1921, when universal and equal suffrage for men and women was introduced. The liberals and the social democrats were the major political forces behind the democratization of Sweden. During a great part of the twentieth century, the Social Democrats held the majority in the parliament and formed the government. They implemented a political program which resulted in what has often been called ‘the Swedish welfare state’ or ‘the Swedish model’ (Childs 1936). A central feature of this model was to combine a market economy and mainly privately-owned enterprises with a progressive tax system and a social security system designed to make society more egalitarian than it would be if market forces alone were to determine the shape of the social structure. This system, which has sometimes been called ‘functional socialism’, tries to make use of the dynamism inherent in capitalism in balance with the use of a certain government control to ensure equality.

Another feature of this Swedish model was the emphasis on the importance of free trade. Economic growth in Sweden was largely driven by exports, and the leaders of the Social Democratic Party could agree with many industrialists and economists that free trade was in the interest of Sweden as an essential means to speed up economic growth.

A third feature of the emerging Swedish model was the application of Keynesian economics, which seems to have developed indigenously in Sweden. This policy meant that upholding consumer demand was considered of key importance for economic development, and that the government should thus in times of economic recession take measures to stimulate consumer demand.

A final feature of this model, which may be especially important to emphasize in a context where political culture is in focus, is the search for compromise and consensus, especially in the labour market, but to some extent also in political life. An elaborate process of negotiation between employers and employees developed, in which the final agreement was reached at the national level between the two central organizations representing employers and employees respectively. For several decades, this system was very successful in avoiding disruptive strikes while keeping pay-raises within reasonable limits which allowed a steady improvement
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in the standard of living of most people while limiting inflation. The ability to compromise and reach a consensus was long considered a hallmark of Swedish political culture.

In the wake of the oil crisis of the 1970s, the Swedish model started to show symptoms of disorder. Inflation became a serious problem, and currency devaluation became a recurring emergency solution to more fundamental economic difficulties. During the past couple of decades, rather drastic reforms have been carried out. These include a lowering of income taxes and levels of public assistance as well as an increase of fees in the social security system. The currency market has also been deregulated. With these reforms initiated and after becoming a member of the European Union – albeit not yet part of its common currency system – it is arguable to what extent such a thing as a Swedish model still exists.

In the perspective of the brief historical sketch that has been drawn here one may perhaps discern a few aspects of a Swedish political culture. Without pretending to possess the decisive expertise in the field, I would venture to suggest that at least the following aspects have been characteristic of Swedish political culture for the past century:

• A sense of commitment to basic democratic ideals, especially equality and justice.
• A positive view of compromise and consensus and the ability to reach a compromise without open conflict.
• A sense of commitment to the rule of law as a prerequisite for justice and equality.
• An awareness that Sweden, as a member of the international community, on the one hand has much to gain from trade and other contacts with other countries and, on the other hand, has a responsibility to make an effort to promote democracy and justice internationally.
• A perception of the democratic social system in Sweden as stable and basically unthreatened.

Because of the recent crisis of the Swedish model it is likely that several aspects of the country’s political culture, which earlier may have seemed rather constant, are now in flux. Seen from this perspective, the data collected in Sweden within the EPCReN project is actually also quite valuable for understanding contemporary Swedish culture.
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PROBLEMS IN COMPARING AND INTERPRETING THE DATA

The difficulties of analyzing and interpreting this type of survey data should not be underestimated. The only thing the answers tell us with certainty is what the respondents have decided to answer, but the data themselves do not tell us why they answered the way they did, nor how they really felt and thought about the questions.

Yet, we must not forget that with regard to both China and Sweden, it is hardly likely that there is one and only one internally consistent political culture. Rather, we must assume that differences between social classes and groups give rise to different subcultures. In Sweden we have recently noticed rather clear indications of systematic differences between the political attitudes of the political establishment and other groups. Still, one would expect this kind of discrepancy to be greater in a non-democratic political system such as the Chinese.

The Swedish survey is a national sample, while the Chinese is a sample survey of two cities, Shanghai and Xi’an. Since city-dwellers are in general better educated and more outspoken than their rural fellow countrymen, one could question if the comparison between the Chinese and the Swedish data could be generalized to a comparison between Chinese and Swedish political culture. However, as discussed in Chapter 6, since Sweden is an urbanized society we are controlling for the independent effect of urbanization when comparing the two countries. Further, we are also using information about the age and education of the respondent to control for these factors by statistical standardization. Finally, we also show in Chapter 6 that the two Chinese cities show very similar results compared with data from all the other countries, thus indicating that the results from the two Chinese cities reflect a common Chinese urban culture.

When comparing Swedish and Chinese survey results, we must keep in mind the very different political situations in the two countries. Sweden has a long tradition of opinion surveys, and most people know that the surveys are anonymous and that there are no sanctions involved if you give the ‘wrong’ answer. However, in this free and safe political environment where marketing and political issues are often surveyed, one risk is that prospective respondents refuse to bother to fill in questionnaires. This type of reluctance will obviously harm the quality of survey research. In China the situation is different. Opinion polls have become more frequent since the 1980s, but there are numerous examples of trouble that you can get into if you actually dare reveal your real opinions to the authorities. Anyone in China who has experienced the Cultural Revolution or other political campaigns would think twice before participating in a survey, even though our survey teams emphasized that they were independent, that there were no ‘correct’ answers, and that the respondent remained anonymous.
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The Swedish and Chinese regimes take different attitudes towards freedom of speech. In Sweden, this freedom constitutes a fundamental principle of the political system. The legitimacy of the regime is based on allowing people this freedom as a basic human right. The Chinese leaders find it necessary to limit freedom of speech severely, because they consider it a threat to the regime and to social stability. In a survey situation, it is likely that the Chinese respondent, much more than his Swedish counterpart, will try to give ‘the correct answer’, that is, the answer that the regime would expect him or her to give, rather than expressing his or her personal opinion.

However, we should not forget that people living under political conditions allowing freedom of expression may sometimes also give answers that they think are expected of them rather than answers that express their own innermost ideas and feelings. In his work, Swedish Mentality, Åke Daun refers to conflict avoidance as a characteristic Swedish trait. It is apparently very important for people in Sweden to maintain harmony with their surroundings, and one way of doing this is to avoid disagreement with the people one relates to. This attitude, acquired in childhood through conscious pedagogical and educational efforts, spills over into the political sphere, where the rule is that disagreements must not cause aggression and conflict. This can be called a cultural norm among Swedes (Daun 1996: 75–77). Daun says: ‘Swedes are never eager to express what they think about controversial issues if they have no idea what others’ views are on the subject’ (ibid.: 105). This cultural trait may well have affected the way our respondents answered our questions.

COLLECTIVISM VERSUS INDIVIDUALISM

‘Collectivism’ and ‘individualism’ are terms loaded with different meanings as used by different people and in different contexts. The differences have to do both with the meaning of the words ‘collective’ and ‘individual’ and with the view of the relationship between these two entities.

‘Collective’ refers to a group of people, as opposed to one individual, but the group may be, e.g., a family, a social class, a nation, a country, a state or even all mankind. In premodern China, the extended family was probably the most important collective, both for the individual human being, who belonged to the family more than to any other group, and for the state, for which the family was perhaps the most important pillar. In the ethical discourse upheld through the centuries by the Confucian ideological orthodoxy, the family was described as a microcosm of the world at large. Ethical principles were formulated in terms of ideal relationships between family members, and these relationships were models for all interpersonal relationships.10
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A few words of caution may be in order. When describing the culture of premodern China we all too easily fall into the trap of generalizing and simplifying so that the picture of two thousand years of imperial history appears much more homogeneous than it really was. While the characterization of the extended family as the main collective in premodern China is no doubt valid to a great extent, we must also be aware that, during this long span of the history of a huge geographical area that has always contained a considerable cultural diversity, there have also been many undercurrents when it comes to the views of the collective and the individual. Even within the dominating Confucian ideology, we may discern diverging tendencies in this respect.

In the Confucian discourse, one formulation has been central to the view of the relationship between individual, collective and state: ‘Cultivate the state, harmonize the family, bring about order in the country and let peace prevail all under heaven’ (xiuji, qijia, zhiguo, ping tianxia). But in explicating this formula, the accent has been placed differently: in some cases the role of the individual human being as the beginning of everything has been emphasized, in other cases the instrumental function of men as well as family and state for bringing about peace in the world has been emphasized, and again in other cases the order has been reversed so that the importance of peace, a well-ordered country and a harmonious family for the development of the individual human being has been emphasized (Schwartz 1959: 50–62).

Having added these words of caution, it still seems that at a certain level of abstraction we are still justified in saying that the extended family was a core collective in premodern China. As far as the individual human being was concerned, I also believe that it is true to say that his or her instrumental function was often emphasized to the extent that these roles tended to conceal the image of man as an end in himself. On the other hand, we must not forget that throughout the centuries millions of people in China have also internalized Confucius’ dictum ‘The gentleman is no utensil’, which seems to suggest that we should regard the individual human being fundamentally as an end rather than a means (Lunyu [The Analects] 2: 12).

Proponents of ‘modern new Confucianism’ seem quite justified in their characterization of Confucian philosophy as a particular kind of humanism focusing on how the individual human being may fully develop his or her potential. We must in this context distinguish between the serious philosophical discussion couched in Confucian terms, which has always addressed fundamental questions pertaining to the human predicament, on the one hand, and Confucian ideas as an ideological weapon used to legitimize the existence and actions of the imperial government, on the other hand. In the latter role it is probably true to say that Confucianism tended
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to reduce individual human beings not to cogs in the revolution – as Lenin wanted to see his fellow citizens – but to instruments for upholding the imperial order.

While we may recognize that serious Confucian thinkers throughout history have been preoccupied with the growth and development of individual human beings into ‘gentlemen’ who cannot be reduced to ‘utensils’, it seems that the premodern Confucian conception of the individual human being, and particularly of the gentleman, was still radically different from the individualistic conception of the human being that occupies a central position in European or Western culture, particularly since the Enlightenment. To become a Confucian gentleman meant, it appears, to get rid of the unique qualities or idiosyncrasies of that particular individual and become one with humankind, not to say with the universe. By comparison, according to a major current of post-Enlightenment thought in Europe, to realize one’s self has been taken to mean precisely the development of those unique features of one’s personality which make one different from any other individual.13

In the wake of the break-up of the Chinese empire there was a shift of focus – at least in that elite radical thinking which is most readily accessible for analysis – from the extended family to the state as the most important collective entity. Definitions of the means of transforming China into a rich, powerful and respected state in the world – the search for ‘wealth and power’ – run like a red thread through modern Chinese history.14 In that perspective we may perhaps understand that the individual human being was easily reduced to a means or a cog in the big wheel of revolution.15

With a broad generalization we may thus say that twentieth century Chinese thought, as we meet it in dominating political ideologies and elite culture, was collectivistic in tending to view the individual human being as a means to be used in building a wealthy and powerful China, and that this collectivism differed from the premodern variety in de-emphasizing the significance of the family, sometimes even suggesting a possible contradiction between loyalty to one’s family and to one’s country.

In post-Mao China we have witnessed a surge of rather extreme individualistic thinking, often emphasizing the importance of the uniqueness of the individual human being. Many intellectuals have addressed the problem of the relationship between the state and the individual. A widespread view among social critics in China maintains that in twentieth century China the individual has mostly been seen as an instrument for the state, and that this must now be reversed so that the state must find legitimacy in what it can do for the individual.16

It is important to distinguish between two forms of collectivism that at first sight may seem identical in the conception of the relationship between the individual
Reflections on Political Culture in China and Sweden

and the state. According to one form, which we may refer to as 'strong collectivism', the individual should be subordinated to the state, because the state as such is more important than the individual; China’s international prestige is more important than the welfare of Mrs. Li or Mr. Wang. The other form, which we may refer to as 'weak collectivism', argues that the individual should subordinate himself to the collective, since this will in the end be beneficial for the individual.

This distinction may be helpful in comparing Swedish and Chinese attitudes. We might assume that the ideological foundation of the welfare state, as it emerged in Sweden, contains elements that may be characterized as ‘weak collectivism’. But the welfare state is now breaking down and giving way to a social order where people will have to ‘take greater responsibility for their own lives’, to use the expression preferred by liberal critics of the welfare project. This may be seen as a sign of rising individualism, which we also encounter in the increasing emphasis on self-realization and self-fulfilment.

In China, on the other hand, the strong form of collectivism has been a major current of thought, but we are now witnessing how this conception has become the target of criticism of scholars and intellectuals. It is also my impression that it has been eroded among the general public and, among many people, been replaced by individualism. This individualism is sometimes combined with weak collectivism, and sometimes so extreme that it excludes all collectivism. As we shall see, the survey conducted within the research project behind this volume lends some support to the impression that strong collectivism is in the process of erosion.

SURVEY RESULTS

What, then, does the present survey tell us about collectivism and individualism in China and Sweden? I have selected 10 statements from the questionnaire which represent different aspects of this problem. Interestingly, the answers do not suggest any fundamental differences in terms of collectivism and individualism between the Chinese and the Swedish respondents. In my reading, the respondents in both countries express rather strong individualism, but underneath this individualism we also find expressions of weak collectivism.

INDIVIDUALISM

In response to the first statement, ‘I would rather depend on myself than on others’ (22a), the average agreement of the Chinese respondents is 73 while it is 65 for the Swedish respondents. For the second statement, ‘I enjoy competing with others’ (22b), the agreement is 65 and 49. Thus, with regard to these aspects
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of individualism, if there is any noticeable difference between the Chinese and Swedish respondents at all, it is that the Chinese appear rather more individualistic than the Swedes.

**Table 7.1** Selected statements on individualism and collectivism.
Average rating from 0 to 100 after standardization.¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire statement (abbreviated)</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P22a I would rather depend on myself than on others</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P22b I enjoy competing with others</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P19h Objective of good government: to ensure individual freedom</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P23b Qualities children should learn at home: independence</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P21b The ideal society is like a family</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P16f A leader should care for the people like a father</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P22d My duty is to maintain harmony among my friends</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P18d Rules should be followed even if not understood</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P23n Qualities children should learn at home: self-restraint</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P19c Objective of good government: to ensure no poverty</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ See Chapter 6 about the standardization procedure controlling for age and education.

In response to the third statement, ‘The objective of good government is to ensure individual freedom’ (19h), the average agreement is 66 for the Chinese and 75 for the Swedish respondents. These figures may be considered surprisingly high, as the political culture in both countries stresses the collective good as a primary goal. However, it is also the case that reforms are being carried out in both countries which challenge this emphasis on the collective good. It seems reasonable to assume that the answers to this question in both countries reflect a positive attitude towards these reforms.

Question 23 raises a series of questions concerning qualities that children should be encouraged to learn at home. A very interesting indication of the growing Chinese individualism is that the average agreement of the Chinese respondents on ‘independence’ (23b) is 92. The corresponding figure for Sweden is 72. It is interesting that the Chinese respondents stress this value more than their Swedish counterparts.

Not only is individualism more pronounced in the Chinese sample than the stereotype notion of Chinese collectivism would make us expect, but to a surprising extent the Swedish respondents give expression to attitudes that we, somewhat provocatively, could refer to as ‘Confucian’. For example, the agreement of the Swedish respondents is 66 with the statement ‘The ideal society is like a family’ (21b). Still, the Chinese respondents are obviously even more ‘Confucian’ in this regard with 74 in agreement. Nevertheless, it is surprising that all Nordic
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Respondents (from Sweden, Denmark and Finland) agree with the characterization of the ideal society as a family (see Chapter 10). This figure is about the same as for the Japanese respondents, while the Korean respondents have even higher agreement with this notion.

A similar issue emerges in the response to the statement ‘A leader should care for the people as parents care for their children’ (16f). This sounds like a standard phrase from a Confucian moral textbook. But the attitude to political leadership that this statement reflects is by no means restricted to the ‘Confucian’ states of East Asia. The agreement of the Swedish respondents is 71. This attitude, which is probably more widespread (not to say universal) than generally believed, seems to be even more widely accepted in China, where the average agreement is 89.

**HARMONY**

‘Harmony’ is a value that is often archetypically associated with Asian and Confucian culture, but also with the Swedish model. As noted above, ‘Swedish culture stresses sameness and conformity and plays down differences in encounters with others (Daun 1996: 105).’ With regard to the statement ‘It is my duty to maintain harmony among the people with whom I associate’ (22d), the agreement of the Swedish respondents is 76, while the corresponding figure for the Chinese respondents is 78. Thus, this attitude receives particularly strong support among the Chinese and Swedish respondents.

**RULES**

The Chinese and the Swedish respondents in some cases express rather authoritarian attitudes, which we associate with collectivism rather than individualism. For example, in response to the statement: ‘Rules are always there for a good reason and must therefore be followed even if you do not understand them’ (18d), the agreement of the Chinese is 74 and it is 57 for the Swedish. This must be interpreted as a sign of respect for authority, highest in China, but also widely accepted in Sweden.

**SELF-RESTRAINT**

‘Self-restraint’ is another prominent Confucian virtue. The agreement with the statement that children should learn this virtue at home (23n), is 85 for the Chinese and 74 for the Swedish. Again the similarities between respondents in the two countries are more striking than the differences.
The response to the tenth and last statement in Table 7.1: ‘The objective of good government is to ensure that nobody will have to live in poverty’ (19c), shows high agreement both in China (76) and in Sweden (81). The ideas behind the welfare state may be seen as expressions of what we call weak collectivism, and the data collected in the present survey tend to confirm that these ideas find strong support both in Sweden and in China.

CREATIVITY, AMBITION AND GOOD MANNERS

In the Confucian Analects, Confucius is quoted as saying: ‘Gentlemen never compete.’ Accordingly, personal ambition was generally regarded very critically in imperial China. A cultured person, especially, should not be overly extroverted, nor demonstrate his abilities ostentatiously. Significantly, the most common word for ‘ambition’ in Chinese (yexin) literally means ‘savage heart’. Even today, both among non-Chinese and the Chinese themselves, modesty combined with very good manners are probably considered as salient features of the Chinese people. In contrast, the Chinese often seem to consider Westerners as more aggressive and ambitious. Furthermore, traditional Chinese culture is often associated with reverence for tradition rather than for renewal and creativity. Even Confucius himself did not want to be regarded as an innovator. He said, ‘I have transmitted what was taught to me without making up anything of my own’ (The Analects, 7:1; trans. Waley, p. 123).

In our questionnaire the respondents were asked to rank which qualities were important for children to learn at home (Question no 23). The Chinese respondents ranked the following three qualities as most important: (i) responsibility, (ii) creativity and (iii) ambition. The Swedish respondents gave the following ranking: (i) good manners, (ii) responsibility, and (iii) ability to think for oneself. It may be surprising that the quality ‘good manners’ comes first for the Swedish respondents while the Chinese do not even put it among the top three. Some readers may even find it more surprising that the Chinese respondents ranked ‘creativity’ and ‘ambition’ as such important qualities to inculcate in children. Yet, if we consider some of the main trends of modern Chinese history, these results may not appear so surprising. Radicals in China, at least since the early twentieth century, have identified those traditional qualities that I have here referred to – modesty rather than ambition, reverence for tradition rather than creativity – as part of the explanation of China’s perceived ‘backwardness’. In order to save China, they have argued, Chinese people must manifest greater creativity and ambition. Here we have another example,
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I think, of the hazard of reifying some aspects of traditional Chinese culture as universal and constant Chinese traits.

To sum up, the stereotypical notion of a basic cultural difference between the collectivistic Chinese and the individualistic Westerner does not find much support in the data collected in China and Sweden. Rather, both groups of respondents come out as individualists with a rather strong sense of responsibility for their fellow citizens, a commitment that may be characterized in terms of ‘weak collectivism’. In both cases the observed attitudes seem to reflect a combination of traditional and contemporary values and norms, not much different in China and Sweden, although the traditional as well as the modern political cultures have different sources.

DEMOCRATIC VERSUS AUTHORITARIAN CULTURE

It will soon be one hundred years since Sweden became a full-fledged democracy with universal and equal suffrage, and for many decades Swedes have been taught in school to look upon ‘democracy’ or ‘democratic ideals’ as a basic ideology for all, which provides a framework within which political conflicts and controversies may be debated and resolved in a civilized manner. Among Swedes it is also a widely-held assumption that democratic ideals are deeply rooted among the population at large.

Democratic ideas were introduced into China more than a century ago. But a democracy with a multi-party system and universal and equal suffrage as its core was never established. During the years in which Mao Zedong ruled China, the official ideologues described this kind of democracy as ‘liberal’ and ‘bourgeois’, as ‘sham democracy’, and portrayed the system of ‘proletarian dictatorship’ and ‘democratic centralism’ in China as a more real form of democracy, which truly applied to ‘the people’, and not to ‘the enemies of the people’.

In post-Mao China, a significant change has taken place in the official ideology in that universal suffrage, a multi-party system, etc. are no longer characterized as evil in and of themselves, but, we are told, the situation in China is not yet ripe for their introduction. The present Chinese leadership makes it clear that it sees a contradiction between the need for political stability as a prerequisite for successful economic development, and democratic reforms.

As we know, great efforts have been made by the Chinese leadership to provide ideological legitimacy for the one-party system and for authoritarian rule. Imperial China also provided an elaborate ideology legitimizing its authoritarian political system. Against this backdrop it is, perhaps, not strange that many people have believed that Chinese culture is somehow essentially inimical to democracy. For my own part, I have never found these arguments convincing, and believe that we can
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point to the democratization of Taiwan as proof that they were wrong. Of course, this presupposes that we can regard Taiwan as a part of Chinese culture. To me this is evidently the case, but this does not necessarily mean that Taiwan politically must be a part of The People’s Republic of China.\(^{21}\)

In the perspective of the reforms carried out on mainland China and the democratization of Taiwan, we cannot know today to what extent democratic ideas have been internalized by people in China. But the present survey may at least provide some clues as to the actual situation.

What, then, does the survey tell us about views concerning democracy versus autocratic rule among respondents in China and Sweden?

VOTING

A telling difference between Chinese and Swedish respondents emerges with regard to the right to vote. (Question 9a) 94 per cent of the Swedish, but only 15 per cent of the Chinese respondents, said that they often or always make use of the right to vote as a means of making their voices heard in society, while 43 per cent of the Chinese made it clear that they never use voting as a method. It seems likely that this difference is largely determined by the fact that in Sweden elections are important and involve substantive issues, while this is normally not the case in China. With experiments in direct elections of village heads as well as members of representative bodies at the grassroots level, we may anticipate a growing interest in voting among the Chinese electorate.

TRUST

‘Trust’ is considered vitally important for democracy (Inglehart 1997: 163). I have selected two questions from the present survey which deal with interpersonal trust in order to shed some light on Chinese and Swedish views in this regard (Table 7.2).

Table 7.2 Selected statements on interpersonal trust. Average rating from 0 to 100.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire statement (abbreviated)</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P20a Most people can be trusted vs. Watch out for other people</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P20c Most people try to be fair to me vs. Take advantage of me</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results indicate a quite high degree of interpersonal trust among the Chinese respondents. The first question comparing the alternative that most people can be
trusted with the alternative that you have to watch out for other people (20a) shows
the same moderately high average agreement of 54 in both China and Sweden.
As for question comparing the alternative ‘Most people try to be fair to me even
though they are not close friends’ with the alternative that they take advantage
of me shows high agreement in both countries (71 and 63). Thus, our data does
not support the hypothesis that interpersonal trust is greater among Swedes than
Chinese. This is particularly interesting in view of the fact that interpersonal trust
is often regarded as a prerequisite for a democratic worldview. If our data in this
regard is valid, it demonstrates that at least on this point contemporary Chinese
culture is not inimical to democracy.

The other aspect of trust measured in the survey is trust in institutions. Question
number 12 asked the respondents about their trust in 10 important state, political
and non-governmental institutions. (See Table 7.3 below)

Surprisingly, on the whole, the Chinese respondents express greater trust in
the institutions than the respondents in the other countries which participated in
the survey. The only exception is that the Danish respondents express a somewhat
higher degree of trust in the police force than the Chinese respondents.

The Chinese figures for most institutions are very similar with an average trust
from 64 to 71. The exceptions are the army with the very high trust of 81 and major
companies with a more moderate trust of 55. For all institutions the trust is higher
in China than in Sweden.

Table 7.3 Selected statements on institutional trust.
Average rating from 0 to 100 after standardization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire statement (abbreviated)</th>
<th>Average rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P12a How much do you trust: the parliament</td>
<td>70 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12b How much do you trust: the political parties</td>
<td>70 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12c How much do you trust: the trade unions</td>
<td>64 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12d How much do you trust: the media</td>
<td>65 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12e How much do you trust: the legal system</td>
<td>67 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12f How much do you trust: public offices</td>
<td>67 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12g How much do you trust: the police</td>
<td>64 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12h How much do you trust: the armed forces</td>
<td>81 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12i How much do you trust: major companies</td>
<td>55 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12j How much do you trust: the educational system</td>
<td>71 58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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At first sight, this result is surprising. Are the Chinese respondents more satisfied with their political institutions than the respondents from the well-established Swedish democracy? This judgement cannot be totally rejected. After all, Chinese city dwellers are currently experiencing an economic boom which may reflect positively on their view of the political system. Another interpretation, however, would be to see the question as a rather challenging one in a political system where alternatives have not existed for quite a while. Thus, the trust may be more a question of acknowledging the existing reality. The following item in the questionnaire supports this assumption. When asked: ‘How well do you think your country’s political system is working?’ (Question no. 13), the average score for China was 52, while it was 57 for Sweden.

One way to interpret the high degree of trust in institutions expressed by the Chinese respondents would be to regard it as characteristic of a traditional society with an authoritarian political order. In the mature Swedish democracy, people express a much more critical attitude towards basic democratic institutions. Which, and this is important, does not undermine the same people’s confidence in their system.

TOLERANCE

With regard to the notion of ‘tolerance’ our survey shows a clear difference between Chinese and Swedish respondents. Among the Chinese respondents, the agreement with the statement, ‘Every political viewpoint should be tolerated’ (11a), was only 44, while it was 57 for the Swedish respondents. Furthermore, the agreement of the Chinese with the statement, ‘Strong differences of opinion may undermine the social order’ (11b), was 65 while the corresponding figure for the Swedish respondents was 53. With regard to tolerance we may thus conclude the Swedish respondents expressed a somewhat more democratic attitude than their Chinese counterparts. In order to understand this difference we should remember that Sweden has enjoyed a long period of peace in modern times, whereas the Chinese people have experienced several wars with foreign powers and also civil war. A prevalent desire for social harmony and fear of disorder may well influence the amount of tolerance among the Chinese.

While expressing a lower degree of tolerance with regard to articulated dissent than Swedes, the Chinese respondents also express opposition to forcing others to express their views. The agreement with the statement, ‘It is not a good idea to force people to articulate their opinions’ (Question no. 19g), is no less than 75, about the same figure as for the Swedish respondents (74).
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It seems likely that the attitude expressed by the Chinese respondents in this regard may also be understood against the background of recent Chinese history. During the history of the People’s Republic of China, and especially during the Cultural Revolution, it has not been uncommon for the party-state to force people to express their support for official policies. This has caused resentment among many people, so the right to be silent is something that many people in China treasure. Significantly, a Chinese intellectual published a book in the 1990s entitled *The right to be absent* (Zhang 1996). People in Sweden may sometimes experience pressure from friends or colleagues to express a politically correct point of view, but such pressure has not been associated with a perceived threat of government sanctions upon non-compliance, as has been the situation in China.

**DIMENSIONS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE**

According to the traditional Confucian conception, a ruler should, as we have seen, rule by his moral example rather than by law. While in actual practice the rule exercised by Chinese emperors can hardly be said to have been especially ‘humane’, it is true that law was not a central ingredient of governance in imperial times. The Confucian orthodoxy that was official ideology in China for many centuries actually combined elements from the classical philosophical schools of Confucianism and Legalism. This orthodoxy was used to legitimate the rule of the emperor and, not seldom, it was also used as a tool of oppression. The elements of Legalism that were part of this orthodoxy had actually very little to do with laws, but rather prescribed the application of harsh punishments to curb any opposition to official policies.

Mao Zedong rejected Confucianism as ‘reactionary’, but as a matter of fact he, like Confucius, gave higher priority to morality over law. To Mao the notion of a ‘rule of law’ was essentially ‘bourgeois’ and not in the revolutionary interest of peasants and workers. Mao did not use the word ‘benevolent rule’ to characterize the kind of governance he wanted, because this formulation was Confucian and therefore by definition ‘reactionary’. Instead, he kept referring to the importance of the correct ideas being in command. This meant not only that correct ‘thought’ was more important than laws but also that it was more important than professional competence. For Mao it was more important to be red than to be an expert. Towards the end of his life one could often read in the Chinese newspapers that ‘amateurs can indeed lead experts’. On the other hand, the reform program introduced by Deng Xiaoping identifies professionalism as a core value, and although one cannot say that the rule of law prevails yet in China, at least the concept has now acquired a positive charge.
In Sweden and other Western countries, on the other hand, we assume that the rule of law is widely considered to be a core value, while attitudes to professionalism may be more divided. Against this background, it seemed especially interesting to see how respondents answered questions related to morality, the rule of law and professional competence.

Respondents in both China and Sweden claim that they attach great importance to morality in politics. This becomes clear when we look at Table 7.4 below.

**Table 7.4** Selected statements on morality in leadership and politics. Average ratings from 0 to 100.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire statement (abbreviated)</th>
<th>Average rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P16b Moral qualities of a leader are more important than his ideas</td>
<td>72 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10a Candidate's party affiliation is important (for your vote)</td>
<td>50 71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10b Candidate's political ideas are important (for your vote)</td>
<td>69 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10c Candidate's moral character is important (for your vote)</td>
<td>90 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P18b More important with outstanding leader than democracy</td>
<td>62 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P18c Most leaders would abuse power without popular control</td>
<td>70 59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The agreement of the Chinese respondents with the statement that ‘the moral and human qualities of a political leader are more important than his ideas’ (16b), is no less than 72, which may be less surprising than the fact that the agreement of the Swedish respondents is as high as 55. But we should also bear in mind that the difference between the Chinese and Swedish respondents on this point is substantial. Similarly, a much higher agreement of 71 by the Swedes than the Chinese (59) is found for the statement that the party affiliation of the candidates is important in deciding for whom to vote (10a).

Respondents in both countries (69 by the Chinese and 86 by the Swedes) say that as voters they attach importance to the ideas of political candidates (10b). The reverse picture emerges (90 and 64) in what the respondents say about the importance of the moral character of the candidate (10c).

Thus, the survey seems to provide evidence that morality still occupies a central position in Chinese politics. It is possible that one reason for this is that this element of traditional political thought in China still holds its grip on many people’s minds. But another factor playing a possible role in directing the voters’ focus towards morality rather than ideas may be that in the local elections of members of the local People’s Congresses that have been introduced, candidates are often not very eager to present their political ideas, since the ideological truths are defined by the leadership of the Communist Party and are thus not really open to discussion.
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In this perspective it does not seem surprising that the moral character of the candidate, rather than his or her political ideas, will be in focus. In Sweden this is quite different. Generally rather little is known about the personal character of the candidates, who first and foremost represent the ideas and interests of the party they represent.

If the focus on morality appears traditional, it is on the other hand most likely that Chinese voters also focus on the competence, or professionalism, of the candidates in a way that cannot be considered traditional. Unfortunately, our data does not explicitly include references to the evaluation of the professional competence of political candidates.

Concerning perceptions of leadership the survey results appear contradictory. For example, the agreement of the Chinese with the statement ‘it is more important to have an outstanding political leader than political democracy’ (18b) is 62 while it is only 27 for the Swedish respondents. This result suggests, as expected, that there is stronger support for political democracy among Swedish than Chinese respondents. Confucianism may, after all, still affect most people with regard to the important issue of leadership. However, the agreement by the Chinese with the statement ‘Most leaders would abuse their power if they were not constrained by popular control’ (18c) is 70, compared to 59 for the Swedish respondents.

Perhaps the seemingly contradictory attitudes expressed by the Chinese respondents in this regard show that for them the most important quality of a political system is to have outstanding leaders. Even if the choice is between outstanding leaders and democracy, the former are more important. But in practice there is hardly a choice between the two, and so, popular constraints are necessary to prevent leaders from abusing their power.

Questions 8a, b, c and d deal with how the respondents conceive of their own role in the political system, i.e. political efficacy. The answers show that the Swedish and Chinese respondents do not differ much in their judgment of the extent to which they can influence politics. For example, the agreement of the Swedish is 59 and of the Chinese is 62 with the statement, ‘People like me do not have any influence on what the government does’ (8c). In democratic Sweden this figure suggests a degree of pessimism that may seem alarming; in authoritarian China, the even higher figure still provides some room for hope that change is possible.

It seems that the Chinese respondents tend to seek a morally upright strong leader whom they can trust, while the Swedish respondents rather put their trust in a well-functioning political system. The agreement of Chinese respondents is no less than 66 with the statement, ‘We can leave everything to a morally upright leader’ (18f). On the Swedish side the agreement with this statement is only 28.
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The attitudes expressed by the Chinese respondents in this regard do appear to be traditional and reminiscent of state Confucianism. One may also argue that these attitudes have been reinforced since the collapse of the empire. In twentieth century China, the focus has remained on the personal qualities of the leaders rather than on the importance of building a political system with checks and balances and popular control.

CONCLUSIONS

In studying the Chinese and Swedish data collected in the present survey I have concentrated on the two broad themes of collectivism versus individualism and democratic versus authoritarian culture. These themes were chosen because they are very much in focus in contemporary discussions about cultural differences and similarities between Asia and the West, and both themes are central to the widespread notion of essential cultural differences dividing Asia and the West.

The data collected for the present survey reminds us that political attitudes in China and Sweden do differ, both within the single country and between the countries. For example, democracy comes out as a core value in and of itself for the Swedish respondents, but not for the Chinese. Our Chinese respondents think that it is very important to have strong leaders, while their Swedish counterparts pay more attention to the structure and function of the political system. These differences should be understood against the background of different traditions, experiences and political systems. We may well say that the differences manifest differences in the political cultures of China and Sweden.

Yet, the most striking result of the survey of opinions and attitudes in China and Sweden is the high degree of convergence. The data that we collected does not support the thesis of essential cultural differences between China and Sweden. The Chinese respondents come out as more ‘individualistic’ and ‘democratic’, ‘Western’ if you will, than the stereotypical view of fundamental differences would have us believe, while the Swedish respondents appear somewhat more ‘collectivistic’ and ‘patriarchal’ – ‘Confucian’ – than Westerners are generally described according to the stereotype.

AUTHOR’S NOTE

I am greatly indebted to my colleague, Dr Oscar Almén, for his contributions to the research on which this chapter is based, as well as for many fruitful discussions in the course of writing. However, I am solely responsible for the ideas and arguments presented in the chapter.
NOTES

1 Concerning perceptions of China in Europe, see Mackerras (1989). See also Donald F. Lach’s monumental Asia in the Making of Europe (1965-1993).

2 Translated from the Swedish original as quoted in Osvald Sirén (1947-1949).

3 The literature on collectivism as characterizing Chinese culture is extensive, in the Western world as well as in China. For some representative Western examples, see Wittfogel (1957), Hansen (1992), Pye and Pye (1985). The contemporary image of the Western World in China is discussed in Chen (1995).

4 Concerning the position of the democratic ideals in Chinese culture, see Nathan (1985). Concerning Swedish mentality and democracy see Daun (1996).

5 For an excellent introduction to the sources of Chinese history, see Wilkinson (2000).

6 ‘Moral rule’ or, as it is often translated, ‘benevolent rule’ (ren zheng) is a key concept in Confucian philosophy. For a classical explication of this notion, see Mencius, 1A. For an excellent translation, see Mencius (1984). Confucius himself said: ‘He who rules by moral force is like the pole-star, which remains in its place while all other stars do homage to it.’ See The Analects of Confucius (1949).

7 Concerning Dai Zhen (1724–1777), see e.g. Lodén (2001).

8 For a brief overview of Swedish history, see Nordstrom (2002). For the modern period, see also Hadenius (1985).

9 See also Peterson (1999).

10 For an introduction to Confucian thought see, e.g. Liu (1998) and Yao (2000).

11 This idea is explicated in the Chinese classic Daxue [The Great Learning]; English translation in Chan (1969).


13 Concerning the concept of man in China, see Munro (1969) and Idem (2000). Concerning the concept of man in European tradition, see Taylor (1989) and Toulmin (1990).

14 Concerning important trends in early 20th century Chinese thought, see Chow (1969), Lin (1979) and Schwartz (1964).

15 On this point, see especially Gu (1992).


17 The statement in 16f is actually borrowed from a Korean moral education textbook from the 1990s with texts highly coloured by Confucian moralism.

18 Concerning the idea that collectivism and authoritarianism go together see Friedrich von Hayek’s classic The Road to Serfdom (1944).

This conception of democracy was formulated in Sweden by the influential political scientist and newspaper-man Herbert Tingsten in Tingsten (1965).

For a collection of interesting articles dealing with the question of the cultural identity of Taiwan, see Lung (2003).

Chapter 6 suggests a technique to adjust for this phenomenon by computing relative ratings.

Cf, e.g. Inglehart (1997: 79).

However, one may also question whether the trust expressed by the respondents really corresponds to what they feel. It has struck many of us who have visited China in recent years that people in private conversations often express lack of trust in different kinds of institutions, and it cannot be helped that these impressions, no matter how subjective they are, cast some doubt on the validity of the response that we received to this question.

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Chapter 8

DEMOCRACY, LEADERSHIP AND POLITICAL CULTURE IN KOREA: POLITICAL EFFICACY AND TRUST

Uichol Kim, Byung Man Ahn and Geir Helgesen

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 1960s, despite substantial US aid, South Korea had all the problems of a resource-poor, low-income, under-developed nation. The vast majority of people were dependent on agricultural products produced on scarce farmland. The literacy rate and educational level were among the lowest in the world. Korea’s per capita GNP in 1961 stood at a meagre $82, and she was considered one of the poorest nations in the world. In the early 1990s, Samuel P. Huntington came across economic data on Korea and Ghana for the 1960s. Korea’s economy then was quite similar to that of Ghana, with the same economic distribution between primary products, manufacturing and services, and both were receiving about the same amount of foreign aid. From 1965, however, Korea experienced a phenomenal transformation in the economic, education and social sectors. At an average annual rate of over eight per cent, Korea became one of the fastest growing economies in the world. The per capita GNP increased to $1,640 in 1981 (and by 1997, it had increased to $10,000). ‘No such changes had occurred in Ghana, whose per capita GNP was now about one-fifteenth that of South Korea’s. How could this extraordinary difference in development be explained?’ asks Huntington (2000: xiii).¹

Although our focus is not the economic but the political field, we confront a similarly difficult task. Here, too, great changes have taken place at an even faster pace than in the economy. And while a country’s economy can be measured by its GNP, growth rates, living conditions, etc., the political fields are more difficult...
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to measure. Let it be no secret: Huntington points at culture in explaining the dramatic differences between Ghana’s and South Korea’s development. We tend to agree, but are fully aware of the many inherent pitfalls in subscribing to this explanation. To use culture as the final residual answer where all others have failed to give meaning is not our goal. To us, the cultural approach denotes a set of tools, a method for perceiving reality and a guideline in searching for relevant answers. This approach presupposes an historic dimension, as well as societal and psychological dimensions.

It is not always easy, though, to distinguish between legacies from the past versus modern aspects of society and the political process. To characterize something as ‘traditional’ in the sense of ‘rooted in the past’ may disregard the fact that some ‘traditions’ are actually modern constructions, invented for certain – often political – purposes. Moreover, traditions – even when they are ‘genuine’ – may not only consist of contemporary links to an indigenous past, as the impact of all things foreign, from philosophies and religions to technological inventions, obviously contribute to what are called traditions. Having said this, we still find it both necessary and highly relevant to deal with Korean politics within the given cultural context. It makes little difference whether parts of this culture are artificial and have shorter roots – or roots to somewhere else – than the ‘genuine’ ones. What counts is whether most people regard certain ideas, values and norms as part of their tradition, as belonging to their culture. This we can test using appropriate value surveys. Before entering this stage, however, we need to identify what we choose to call the cultural tradition, followed by a discussion of its impact in contemporary society.

With the establishment of the Yi Dynasty (1392) Confucianism became the sole guideline for the central political system in Korea. Confucianism also saturated education and the organization of community affairs, and thus also had a strong impact on people’s daily lives. (Yang and Henderson 1958, 1959, Hahm 1982, Slote 1986, Helgesen 1998) During the nineteenth century, as a staunch neo-Confucian state, Korea resisted all attempts to modernize and internationalize until she was forcefully colonized by Japan in 1910. Korea was subsequently liberated from Japan by the Allied forces in 1945, and arbitrarily divided by the same forces. The ideological demarcation line between the Soviet Union and the USA became a real border along the 38th parallel, dividing the Korean Peninsula from coast to coast. Politics in both parts of Korea were thereafter deeply enmeshed with the Cold War mentality, and this mentality still persists on the peninsula.

To understand the worldview predominant among South Koreans (henceforth South Korea will be abbreviated as Korea) one has to include both the traditional culture especially as it has been transferred from generation to generation into the
modern era and the recent political history, which utilized cultural traditions and, at the same time, broke with them. In the following, we shall first summarize the country’s political culture and then briefly sketch the post-war political development. In the light of this, we shall then present and discuss survey results from studies in 1990, 1995 and 2000.

A RESILIENT TRADITION

One insight gained from the political culture approach is that values, feelings, norms and rules of conduct are all important aspects in creating and ordering people’s ‘political lives’, and that these aspects are communicated from generation to generation in the process of socialization and education. (Greenstein 1965, Pye 1985, Eckstein 1992) Thus, the family and formal schooling – and hereby Confucianism – enter center stage.

In a review essay in *The China Quarterly*, ‘The Historical Significance of the Confucian Discourse’ Tu Weiming writes: ‘The trouble with Confucianism, in the traditional Judaic-Christian and modern liberal-democratic perspectives, is its manifold absences: in its overall spiritual orientation, it lacks a strong commitment to individualism; in its basic belief, it lacks ideas of radical transcendence, positive evil and transcendent rationality; in its political philosophy, it lacks concepts of liberty, human rights, privacy and due process of law; in its institutional practice, it lacks the mechanism of checks and balances against autocracy, the adversarial division of labour within a constitutional framework, loyal opposition and total political participation; and in its social praxis, it lacks traditions of social contract, civil society and the public sphere’ (1994: 1140).

Please note that the author writes, ‘… in the traditional Judaic-Christian and modern liberal-democratic perspectives’. He continues with the observation that since Confucianism moreover was seen as incompatible with both science and democracy, two of the defining characteristics of the modern West, it was since 1919 deemed irrelevant to modernization by all the many different groups in China working for change (ibid.). Here, ‘China’ could be replaced with ‘Korea’, and the statement would still be relevant. In the light of fairly recent developments in East Asia, however, Tu Weiming suggests a reconsideration of this understanding. It is hard to maintain a uniformly negative picture of Confucianism, when the Confucian cultural zone seems to have performed a huge economic miracle, and it is easy to turn the argument upside down, as the ‘Asian values’ proponents did. A more balanced view would be to consider an alternative model of modernity with space for both tradition and modernity, and the possibility of a modernization process assuming different cultural forms. With some hesitation, Tu mentions a Confucian
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form of modernity informed, among other aspects, by ritual, kinship and learning of the mind-and-heart (ibid.: 1140–1141).

In this brief introduction to the cultural context of our Korean respondents we will endeavour to maintain a relevant perspective, and that cannot be the traditional Judaic-Christian and modern liberal-democratic one. We will seek to produce a fair picture of tradition in modernity, and finally at least suggest some ideas concerning a different form of modernization.

In a recent work on Confucianism in East Asia, the renowned Korean anthropologist, Kim Kwang-ok, deals with ‘The Reproduction of Confucian Culture in Contemporary Korea’ (Kim 1996). Here he writes: ‘Confucian culture in Korea is represented by familism, intellectualism or literati elitism, and the importance of ritual or moral life.’ (ibid.: 226) Elaborating on this, he explains that familism means that family and society are seen as interdependent entities, which leads to a strong communal feeling and a deep sense of history among the people. As the extended family or clan has a past, present and future dimension, these dimensions are interwoven with the history of the country. The second aspect, the stress on intellectualism, creates the basis for the strong aspiration towards education and promotes the social responsibility of the intellectuals. Third, by stressing the importance of ritual and social morality in the family and society, the Confucian culture has an eye for what is deemed necessary for social order and harmony (ibid.). From this perspective, with the purpose of maintaining social order, social life must be based on the following five moral imperatives: ‘Righteousness between sovereign and subject; proper report between father and son; separation of functions between husband and wife; proper recognition of the sequence of birth between elder and younger brothers; and faithfulness between friends’ (Yang 1999: 218) In addition to these relations, basic tenets are loyalty and filial piety, which make up the moral aspect of all ideal (hierarchical) relationships, that is, both between individuals and between individuals and institutions.

To properly understand the consequences of this, it is important to take the character of the Confucian vocabulary into consideration. Here we will concentrate on the three concepts used above: family, education and morals.

‘Family’ is, as stressed by Chaibong Hahm, ‘a culturally relative term’ (1998: 79). In the West it is seen as a repository of the private. Here ‘the distinction between ‘private’ and ‘public’ has been the starting point of political theory itself’ (ibid.). In East Asia, however, according to Confucian understanding, the family is seen ‘as the training ground for public spiritedness.’ (ibid.: 82) and what is learned here impacts interpersonal relations on all levels. Morality is basically manifested by adherence to (Confucian) tradition: a certain sense of order and hierarchy and elaborate codes of behavior and language (ibid.: 83). This, according to the author, explains the
great emphasis placed on rituals, a behavior expected not only in ancestor worship, but in everyday life as well. Ritualistic behavior reflects moral behavior, and among the moral sentiments promoted by Confucianism are gratitude, self-abnegation and the power to yield.

Moral training is also provided for by the educational system. At the basic level, moral education is an important part of the curriculum throughout the educational system. It is noteworthy that the morals transferred from generation to generation in the family sphere in the case of Korea correspond to the morals taught in formal moral education at school. This overlapping – or correspondence – between family and societal values and norms obviously contributes to strengthening the significance of these moral principles. Moreover, the role of a father and that of a teacher are perceived to be functionally identical – this role is also seen as the model for a (political) leader. The intellectual ideal of this tradition is the scholar/bureaucrat: a person who through education and self-discipline realizes and thus behaves according to the moral ideal.

As with every moral tradition, there is obviously always a certain distance between ideal and practice. As the hierarchical and patriarchal family is the ideal model for all other social institutions and organizations, personal relations may come to dominate public life as well as politics. Yun-Shik Chang claims, ‘The failure of constitutionalism to take root in Korean political soil has a lot to do with the prevalence of the predominantly person-orientated rule of interpersonal behaviour’ (1998: 594). This personalism has a rural origin, writes Chang, and a Confucian articulation. It operates as mutual obligation and indebtedness between people or groups of people. It is expected that debts be reciprocated (‘The art of reciprocating a favour is to return a favour in a spontaneous way rather than in a way calculated to repay a favour received previously’ (ibid.)) In such a system, maintenance of personal relationships often becomes an end in itself, and moral behaviour may take on a utilitarian character. Following this line of thinking, it may be difficult to disengage from personalized relations without violating the moral of mutual obligations, not least because affectivity looms large in such relationships (Lew et al. 2003). Of course, the problem becomes acute when ‘[P]ersonalism inevitably penetrates into formal organizations, be they government offices, banks or schools, where the notion of human association is expected to be contractual’ (Chang: 596).

‘In the organizational setting’ claims Chang, ‘people rarely respond only to the task defined in terms of the organization, but to the people themselves’ (ibid.).

We have above dealt with the ethics of social relations within the Confucian culture, and with their widespread side-effects. A pressing question now is whether these side-effects are inherent and inevitable (and the culture thus unfit for the modern world) or whether we should be more critical of the impersonal and
contractual basis upon which the imported political institutions are built? It may not be that this basis is wrong or unfit for the institutions, but rather that the institutions, with their basis, may be unfit for the given culture. Chaibong Hahm maintains this position (1999: 42) and advises us to look at both the character of the Korean family and that of the state in a different light. In the West, the state is seen as the realm of formal rules and laws, in East Asia, the realms of the family and the state are merged. ‘The king or the political leader looks after the people in the same way as a father looks after his family, the point being that the Confucian family is itself already highly public in nature’ (ibid.: 45). Can this be taken at face value, or are we confronted with a deceptive ideology of the powerful? According to Hahm the Confucian literati ‘.. dreamed of a state where political power and moral imperatives became one,’ although they were well aware that they would never have a perfect king to serve (Hahm 1999/2000: 53). Neo-Confucianism, the state ideology of the Korean Yi dynasty (1392–1910), saw the true scholar, cultured through education and self-discipline – as worthy of rulership and government – and certainly worthy the position as tutor of the ruler. Hereby scholarship became highly valued, it gave the Confucian literati a sense of mission and obviously also a sense of self-importance (ibid.: 55).

The Confucian era in Korea lasted a little more than 500 years, and although Confucianism was both a state ideology and a social morality, there were in this period other, competing moral creeds, religions and belief-systems. In 1910, Japan made Korea its colony, a relationship that lasted for 35 years. Thereafter followed another foreign occupation, a division of the country, and in 1950 a war that lasted for three years with 3 million people killed and many more wounded, dislocated and suffering all kinds of atrocities. Today, Buddhism and Christianity are the two main religions, and the Western impact on lifestyle is clearly visible. Why, then, this preoccupation with Confucianism?

According to a Korean Galup survey reported in 1996, less than two per cent of the respondents claimed an affiliation with Confucianism. This number corresponds with figures from the 1983 census (Koh 1996). However, in-depth interviews with the respondents revealed that Confucian values and practices permeated all the (other) religions. Almost all of those reporting ‘no religion’ in the survey (about 50 per cent of the respondents) turned out to be Confucians based on a series of items gauging conviction and practice (ibid.: 198). Those who called themselves Christian (predominantly Protestants – almost 80 per cent) could be regarded as Confucian according to their convictions and practices. This held true for all the Buddhists as well (ibid.: 199). Although the author suggests that these figures be used only with great care, he concludes that 90 per cent of all Koreans – ‘for all practical purposes’ – are Confucians (ibid.).

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If this is so, can it be attributed to the vitality of the Confucian tradition? To the fact that this creed dominated social and moral thinking in Korea for more than 500 years, and thus lingers on due to the force of inertia? We believe that there is another aspect that must be taken into serious consideration in order to understand the extent and depth of Confucianism in Korea.

Political socialization was evidently an important aspect of efforts of the previous regimes to gain popular support, or at least consent, among their subjects (Carles 1888, Osgood 1951, Kang 1977). In traditional Korea, a scholar was a person well-versed in the Confucian classics, and schooling meant an introduction to the Confucian moral precepts. In modern, post-war Korea political socialization has still, to a considerable degree, been based on this traditional philosophy (Helgesen 1998, 2003). A modernized neo-Confucianism has imbued the subject of moral education and affected both political and citizenship education throughout the entire educational system. Because of the division of the country and the hostile relations between the two parts, political socialization in the South included anti-communism and the ideology and theory of liberal democracy, which was the political system ascribed to by post-war regimes no matter what their political practice. Since 1954 there have been seven different versions of government authorized national moral education curricula. Although the focus has changed repeatedly – anti-communism in particular has been more or less prevalent (and basically it has been less and less prevalent) in the texts until 2000, the morals taught have clearly been influenced by Confucianism. This notwithstanding the fact that for the last 25 years, Korean educational authorities have spoken of the need to ‘uproot tradition’ in order to thoroughly modernize the country (ibid.).

At the time of writing, the educational system is undergoing reforms with the legitimate goal of preparing pupils and students for a future as citizens with conditions of life determined in the real world. As formulated by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources: ‘the ultimate goal of education reform lies in helping learners develop abilities, character, and the world view necessary for leading self-directed lives’ (Education in Korea 2001–2002: 134). However, a focus on future demands should not ignore present conditions. These conditions are also described in the same official publication. They may not exactly fit with ideals about the information society of the future:

Korean youths appear to be troubled by such problems as the lack of the sense of community and the awareness that they should live together with others; the lack of democratic citizenship; and the dramatic increase in juvenile delinquency. Meanwhile, the generation gap between students and teachers is getting wider and the ‘school collapse,’ or ‘classroom collapse’ is getting more serious, threatening the basic order of formal schooling. These problems have been caused in part by
the knowledge-centered, entrance examination-centered nature of Korea’s present education, plus the prevalent negligence of character and moral education (ibid.: 131–132).

Although individualism, or rather increasing individualism, is seen as a positive cultural change, and although technical skills related to the demands of the information society are prioritized, good old moral education seems difficult to dispense with.

Efforts to modernize the curriculum might still, as has been the case in the entire post-war period, be divisive (Helgesen 1998)1. On the one hand, the authorities are convinced that globalization and the new information society demands new skills of the people. On the other hand, they can see that this development presumes, even more than before, or perhaps for different reasons, moral guidelines for people to live as members of a community. Whether this paradox can be dealt with remains to be seen. Currently, individualism and communalism seem to be promoted simultaneously, and in some instances this is reflected in official statements, as in 'Education in Korea 2001–2002', where it is stated that in a unified Korea, interdependence of citizens will increase, and:

As the awareness that the individuals live in a community with their neighbors is disseminated broadly, citizens will perceive the entire nation as sharing a common destiny and nourish a rational sense of national brotherhood (ibid.: 130).

One might sense a return to national sentiments in the above formulation, a sentiment alien to visionary proponents of globalization, but probably realistic in a Korean social and ideological context.

To summarize, Confucianism was the traditional political ideology cum social morality in Korea. Reluctantly (because it was seen as a hindrance to development and modernization), this traditional creed was induced in the new generations through childrearing and moral education. A main reason for this was an effort to create national cohesion. According to Confucian reasoning, there is a biological link between the patriarchal family, clan and society in principle, the whole country. Filial piety and ancestor worship give patriotism a sacred dimension and lend authority and power to the supreme leader, but also convey a high expectation regarding his benevolence. With this ‘biological nationalism’, salient national crises tend to strengthen solidarity and create a widespread feeling of us against them.
A PERIOD OF TRIAL AND ERROR

Aside from childhood education and experience - which is obviously modified by individual adult experiences - political culture has another general source, beyond the experience of most individuals, but of great importance for the individual's political beliefs. This source is the historical experience of the nation (Verba 1965: 554). It is the impact of the past in forming current political beliefs. Of special importance for the study of transitional societies undergoing rapid modernization seems to be the idea of political identity (ibid.: 529). In this respect the individual's identification with the nation is significant. Experiences from other parts of the world suggest that the lack of a viable cultural framework erodes national self-confidence, which in turn leads to social fragmentation, producing westernized elites and poor, alienated majorities (Serageldin 1991: 10). Huntington's comparison in the case of Ghana comes to mind.

In accordance with Verba's finding that 'it is the salient crises that are most likely to form a people's political memory' (Verba 1965: 555), we do not need to search long to find salient crises in Korean history that have contributed to forming a national identity. Due to its geo-political location between Japan, China and Russia, Korean history is full of traumatic memories and experiences. In the past century alone, the list comprises the abolition of the monarchy (i.e. the traditional political order), 35 years of Japanese occupation and colonization, liberation (partly by foreign forces) and division of the country, civil war (triggered by super-power interests) and a post-war cold-war period that still hampers normal development in both systems.

Taking a stock of half a century's political development in Korea, Yun-Shik Chang wrote:

There have been eight constitutional amendments, two major coup d'état, the rise and fall of some five hundred political parties, no local autonomy, many assassinations (and assassination attempts) of eminent political leaders, countless election improprieties, never-ending student demonstrations, numerous political dissenters, many declarations of states of emergency and martial laws, the development of a less than complete (what one political scientist called 'one and a half') political party system and no peaceful succession (Chang 1998: 588).

The above quote lacks mention of the division of the country, the US presence and influence, the economic miracle and the peaceful succession that actually did happen in 1988. Still, it summarizes a period of trial and especially error that stem, according to Chang 'from the fact that the kind of political life or political culture that democratic polity required was not the one to which Koreans had been accustomed' (ibid.).
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In the following, we will broaden the above picture somewhat in an effort to establish the political context for subsequent empirical analysis and discussion. Post-war political development in Korea is bound up with the US presence in the country. Although the USA publicly supported democratization in South Korea, in reality, the US military government (1945–48) placed anti-communism as its top priority and the creation of a market economy as its second priority. The institutionalization of a liberal democratic state came relatively low on the list (Ahn et al. 1988). In 1948, the USA supported the authoritarian rule of Rhee Syng-man as the first president of South Korea and enacted the National Security Law to control the proliferation and ascendancy of left-wing groups. The National Security Law gave the US military and the South Korean government the right to use coercion against any Korean citizen who challenged their authority (Choi 1993).

For the five years after liberation, the Korean peninsula became a battlefield for ideological supremacy, leading to the Korean War in 1950. The Korean War lasted for three years, during which more than three million people lost their lives and 10 million were dislocated and separated from their family members. With the tentative armistice agreement signed in 1953, the Korean peninsula continued the legacy of Cold War politics. After the Korean War, the Rhee government was totally dependent on US for support, with 70 per cent of its total revenue coming from the USA as foreign aid.

In the spring of 1960 there were massive student protests against a rigged election, political corruption and ineffectiveness. Rhee declared martial law and police were mobilized to suppress the student demonstrations. When the troops refused to take action against the demonstrators, Rhee was forced to resign.

One year later general Park Chung-hee led a coup d’etat and declared martial law. Yun Bo-sun, the interim leader elected by the National Assembly, was forced to resign and Park appointed himself as the acting president. In the subsequent election, Park narrowly defeated Yun and became president. Upon taking office, Park criticized Western democracy and supported a ‘guided democracy’ that would limit freedom of speech and the press for the greater good of society. Park pointed out that a strong leadership was essential in transforming a backward South Korea and supported the idea of a ‘Korean democracy.’ He was thus one of the first Asian leaders to use cultural relativism to criticize Western democracy and to defend his authoritarian regime. Park rejected the forced dependency created by the USA and lashed out against its neo-colonialist and expansionist policy (Park 1962).

The USA attempted to block his coup d’etat in 1961 and rejected Park’s five-year plan, which he outlined in 1963. Park believed that reliance on light industries would not transform the Korean economy and he pushed for the development of heavy industries such as car manufacturing, steel industry, shipbuilding, and
construction. Since the USA was unwilling to support these initiatives, Park turned to Japan for a normalization of diplomatic relations between the two countries. For damages incurred during their 35 years of colonial occupation, the Japanese government paid the Korean government $200 million as compensation and $300 million as investment loans (Federation of Korean Industries, 1991).

For Park, the Japanese society and economy provided an ideal model for Korea. As early as 1963, he stated that ‘the case of the Meiji imperial restoration will be of great help to the performance of our own revolution’, and ‘my interest in this direction remains strong and constant’ (Amsden 1989: 52). Korea adopted Japanese technologies and followed the example and direction laid out by Japan, which became Korea’s most important trading partner after 1965. Thousands of managers, engineers, skilled workers and company executives went to Japan to learn about modern Japanese technology and management style (Sakong 1993).

Park’s strong leadership was a double-edged sword, however, leading to the same type of large-scale corruption, incompetence and nepotism that had also plagued the previous government. Nevertheless, his support of controlled and guided development and of the Jaebols (large conglomerates) on a contingency-based model transformed Korean economy. Park used the threat of North Korea to justify dictatorship and ruled the country with an ‘iron fist’. With the use of the National Security Law, political dissidents such as Kim Dae-jung and Kim Yong-sam (both later became presidents) were arrested, harassed and tortured. Park ruled Korea for nearly 20 years (1961–1979), until he was assassinated by the director of the Korean CIA.

General Chun Doo-hwan then initiated a bloody military coup d’état, took military control and declared martial law. Around 30 political leaders (including Kim Dae-jung and Kim Yong-sam) were put under house arrest, and the National Assembly dissolved. All political activities were banned, and Chun appointed himself as president. As soon as he took office, he replaced the National Assembly with 81 appointees and subsequently dismissed 937 editors and journalists forcing newspapers, radio and TV stations to consolidate under government control. Although Chun was hated for the oppressive and authoritarian rule during his term, he is recognized for controlling the high level of inflation and for stepping down after just one term.

Chun appointed General Roh Tae-woo (who assisted in the 1979 coup d’état), as his presidential successor in June 1987. Over a million people demonstrated in cities across the country to protest the move to prolong dictatorial rule, widespread nepotism and corruption. At this juncture, with the ousting of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines by a popular uprising, the US government made it clear to Roh that it did not support the imposition of martial law. Roh was now forced to accept
politic reforms, hold presidential elections, and restore civil rights. Still, in 1988, with the breakdown of the coalition between opposition leaders Kim Yong-sam and Kim Dae-jung, Roh was elected as the new president. This, however, represented the first peaceful transfer of power in modern South Korea. Roh’s major accomplishment was his ‘Northern Policy’, which paved the way for opening diplomatic relations with Korea’s former enemies (i.e., the Soviet Union and communist China).

Before the 1993 election, Kim Yong-sam joined his former enemies in the government party and, as their candidate, he was elected the first civilian president. Initially he enjoyed more than 90 per cent of popular support with his anti-corruption drive. This support, however, gradually waned with his failure to control corruption and with the failing economy, which collapsed in 1997.

Kim Dae-jung’s election in 1997 marked the first peaceful transfer of political power to an opposition leader. When Kim Dae-jung took over the country, the economy shrank by around 30 per cent. He led the country from economic collapse to economic recovery. His Sunshine Policy received international attention when he traveled to Pyongyang on June 15, 2000, for a historic summit meeting with Kim Jong-il, the supreme leader of North Korea. Later that year he received international recognition when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. However, during the closing years of his presidency, his government also was marred by charges of corruption and nepotism.

Looking back over the past 50 years, it is ironic that under authoritarian regimes, the Korean economy grew at a dizzying rate and corruption was under control. With the election of the first civilian government, however, corruption and mismanagement nearly destroyed the country. With the election of the first opposition leader as president, hopes for a flowering democracy and re-unification with North Korea blossomed. When talks with North Korea stalled and charges of corruption and nepotism were made against the government, people’s optimism faded and turned into cynicism and alienation. Regardless of the type of regime, however, post-war Korean political history presents a parade of leaders who acted acting more or less successfully based upon ideas, values and norms which are meaningful within a Confucian context, but often counterproductive to liberal-democratic development.

**ELITE PERCEPTIONS OF POLITICS IN THE 1990s**

The following section presents survey results from studies conducted towards the end of the period described above, in 1990 and 1995 (Helgesen 1998). The surveys over-sampled for educated urban elites (i.e. politicians, civil servants, journalists, professors and teachers). The vast majority in both surveys affirmed the basic ideas
of democracy. For example, 95 per cent of the respondents agreed that ‘people's participation in politics is essential to democracy,’ and 99 per cent agreed that, ‘without respect for human rights (there is) no democracy’. However, when asked whether they would characterize their country as democratic, only 31 per cent in 1990 and 49 per cent in 1995 agreed. These results indicate that although respondents aspired to democratic ideals, they realized that these had not been fully realized or institutionalized in Korea.

Two important aspects of democracy as defined by Diamond et al. (1990) are political parties and political representation. Politicians are elected to represent the people. Civil servants, on the other hand, are hired as government officials to implement policies. In the two surveys, only two per cent (1990) and five per cent (1995) of the respondents felt that ‘politicians in Korea act as true spokesmen of the people’, while 79 per cent (1990) and 70 per cent (1995) felt that ‘civil servants act more as masters than as servants’. The lack of trust in politicians and bureaucrats reveals either a serious problem in the Korean political culture or the political system, or perhaps a discrepancy between the political culture and the political system, as suggested in the introduction to this chapter. If there is little practical (i.e. evidence-based) justification for the lack of trust in elected representatives and bureaucrats, then the problem might reside in the political culture. If, however, there is good reason to distrust politicians and bureaucrats, then what we have found here may be a basis for further democratization; namely a critical public opinion.

In addition to questions about politicians and bureaucrats, the eight questions presented in Table 8.1 were asked to assess attitudes towards various issues, ideas and institutions pertaining to democracy.

Table 8.1 Results 1990 and 1995. Response in per cent agreement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>1995</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Radio and TV are now independent media</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Today we have freedom of speech</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Political parties represent different social classes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Electorates are familiar with party programs and ideologies</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Split among parties is a matter of animosity between political leaders</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. No political party represents my interest.</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Big companies have more political power than the people.</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Political parties are mainly gatherings for leaders.</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only around five to 12 per cent of the respondents saw the media as independent institutions (q.1), while less than 30 per cent felt that there was freedom of speech
Very few respondents perceived political parties as class representatives (q.3) or were familiar with party programs and ideologies (q.4). Two-thirds of the respondents saw the split between political parties as a matter of animosities between leaders (q.5). Three-quarters of the respondents rejected the idea that political parties represent their interests (q.6). More than 90 per cent of the respondents in both surveys agreed that large companies (Jaebols) were more powerful than the people (q.7), while a strong majority (over 80 per cent) felt that political parties were mainly gatherings for political leaders (q.8). From a participatory as well as a representative perspective, these results point to the problem of political alienation.

In the 1995 survey we checked the respondents’ general confidence in basic democratic institutions, in the press and in major companies. On a scale of four response alternatives (not at all; somewhat; quite a bit; very much) the results indicated that there was a generally low confidence in this kind of institution. A majority had little or no confidence in the National Assembly (53 per cent not at all, 40 per cent only somewhat) or in the political parties (46 per cent not at all, 43 per cent somewhat), very little in major companies (32 per cent not at all, 51 per cent somewhat), and only slightly more confidence in the press (18 per cent not at all, 54 per cent somewhat) and in civil servants (23 per cent not at all, 50 per cent somewhat). Lack of trust in leaders and very little confidence in public and private institutions bodes ill for the development of a democratic polity. According to a national poll conducted by Donga Ilbo (2001), the situation had not changed five years later.

While trust in leaders seemed a scarce commodity and very few expressed confidence in democratic institutions, Korean respondents were not indifferent towards democracy. Both participation and human rights were seen as preconditions for democracy, and more than 80 per cent agreed that any political party should have the opportunity to contest for political power. Even when the division of North and South Korea was brought forward, more than 75 per cent maintained that democracy could be realized despite this division. There is little doubt that a strong majority of the respondents were familiar with democracy and wanted it realized in Korea (Helgesen 1998). The problem seems to be a conflicting relationship between liberal democratic ideals and some basic social and moral values. To solve, or rather bypass, this apparent contradiction, Korean authorities have argued for a cultural revolution to ‘uproot’ the culture so as to thoroughly modernize the country. As mentioned above in the section on moral education, these radical initiatives have not yet had the desired effects. A more realistic approach would probably be to focus on the political ideals and see whether anything here could be adjusted.

The following section examines what kind of democracy the respondents support. The statements presented in Table 8.2 below list various opinions that were prevalent in the public debate at the time, in moral education textbooks, in
Democracy, Leadership and Political Culture in Korea

newspaper editorials, and in public discussion. The first statement affirms the belief that Western individualism and materialism are perceived as threats in Korea (1). In terms of traditional values, there was a near unanimous agreement that morality is the foundation for Korean society (2). Most people disagree with the idea that the tension between generations is a simple reflection of traditional versus modern ways of thinking (3), and they also disagreed that the patriarchic family structure hinders a democratic development (4). They believed that respect for ancestors would remain strong (5); and consequently that the ideal society is like a family (6). Further that the objective of democracy is the maintenance of harmonious social relations (7). Instead of adopting Western democracy, the respondents believed that the traditional culture should be taken as the basis for developing Korean democracy (8); consequently they also agreed that the core political tradition in Korea comes from Confucianism (9).

Table 8.2 Traditional values in a modern context: Response in per cent agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>1995</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The ideologies and lifestyle of the West such as individualism and materialism threaten to destroy Korean society.</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Only a morally strong society without political and economic corruption can shape a better future for all its members.</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Tension between tradition and modernity in Korea is only a tension between generations.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The patriarchal family system of Korea forms a hindrance to a democratic development.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Respect for one’s ancestors is a part of the Korean tradition that will survive modernization.</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The ideal society is like a family.</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The objective of democracy is harmonious social relations.</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Korean democracy must take the traditional culture as its point of departure.</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The core of political traditions in Korea comes from Confucianism.</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Helgesen (1998)

In terms of leadership, consistent with Confucian teachings, a strong, moral and upright leader is preferred. The vast majority of respondents (92 per cent in 1990 and 86 per cent in 1995) agreed to the statement ’good morals and humanistic attitude are the most important qualities in politics’. Similarly, more than 70 per cent of the respondents in the two surveys agreed that the ‘personal sincerity of a political leader is more important to society than his political ideas’. A similar number of respondents
agreed to the statement that ‘Korean democracy will always be characterized by strong presidential power’.

The two surveys in 1990 and 1995 approached the educated urban elites, who were most likely to have been affected by Westernization. The respondents, however, rejected the simple adoption of a Western model and supported a model that would integrate Korean traditions, values, and customs with (Western) democratic ideals. The problem, however, resides in the implementation of these ideals in Korean society, especially when the general public does not trust the politicians, bureaucrats, or institutions. This indicates that even among the educated urban elites, political alienation was a serious problem hindering the realization of democratic ideals in Korean society.

In conclusion, although most spheres of Korean society have been modernized, practical experiences with modern democracy have been rather limited. After the oppressive colonial rule under Japan, which was replaced by an authoritarian government (supported by the US) for the next 40 years, civilian governments, which have been in place for the past 10 years, have been plagued by incompetence, nepotism and corruption. As a result, at the turn of the century optimism for democracy had waned and distrust of the government and its institutions were very high (Shin 1999, Dong-A Ilbo 2001, Helgesen 2001). Another interesting aspect is that although the Koreans have had a fair share of tough leadership, they still seem to see leadership as synonymous with governance.

CULTURAL VALUES AND POLITICS: SURVEY FINDINGS FROM 2000

We have seen that the basic characteristics of democracy (i.e. political freedom, participation and representation) among Korean respondents were widely accepted. Nevertheless it has been difficult to establish a democratic political practice in the post-war period. To follow up on the 1990 and 1995 studies (Helgesen 1998), an empirical study was conducted in 2000 as a cross-cultural values survey to examine whether and how cultural values affect people’s perceptions of good government, tolerance, rights and duties, leadership, citizenship and democracy.

In the following we will first present a general overview of the results from the Korean sample survey. Then we will focus on those results that can throw some light on political efficacy and trust. The purpose of this, which will be clear from the later part of the chapter, is to suggest a categorization of the respondents that might be helpful in understanding the political culture in South Korea.

The survey offers the following general picture: a majority of respondents claimed that they were part of the middle class, with middle incomes, and that they belonged to the middle of the political spectrum, with a slight leaning to the right.
In terms of how well they found that the political system functioned, a majority felt that it was not working well. In terms of life satisfaction, the respondents were divided into three almost equally sized blocks. On a scale from zero (very bad) to 10 (very good) thirty per cent scored from zero to four, another thirty per cent scored five and 40 per cent scored from six to 10. Satisfaction with political rights was rather low. With regard to their (political) information level, the respondents were likely to spend time reading newspapers (58 per cent over 15 minutes) and watching the television news (82 per cent over 15 minutes) every day.

With regard to government policy, the respondents strongly supported active government, pollution control and environmental protection. They moderately supported the idea of a welfare state and were lukewarm in supporting aid to developing nations. Support for the free market was divided, with a slightly higher number of people preferring strong government.

In terms of political participation, the respondents were likely to discuss political issues with their colleagues and in-group. In case of a disagreement, they were more likely to keep silent or pretend to agree than try to convince the other part. The overall mean for political efficacy was low. In attempting to influence the government, both formal and informal influence was perceived to be low. These results suggest that the respondents did not feel that they had much influence in the political sphere.

Table 8.3 Cross-tabulation of birthplace with party preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of birth</th>
<th>Grand National Party</th>
<th>Millennium Democratic Party</th>
<th>United Liberal Democrats</th>
<th>Democratic People’s Party</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>No preference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoul/Gyunggi</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choongchung</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honam</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngnam</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kangwon</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>(386)</td>
<td>(271)</td>
<td>(46)</td>
<td>(66)</td>
<td>(49)</td>
<td>(174)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cross-tabulations between party preference and sex, education, employment status, type of occupation, income and religion did not provide a clear pattern of meaningful results. The only cross-tabulation that provided a clear pattern was that of party preference and birthplace. Table 8.3 presents the results. There is clear and strong
evidence supporting the influence of regionalism in party politics. A majority of respondents from the Youngnam district supported the Grand National Party. A majority of respondents from Honam district supported the Millennium Democratic Party. Finally, a majority of the respondents from the Choongchung province supported the United Liberal Democratic Party. These results lend empirical support to the conventional wisdom – already supported by numerous studies – that in Korea, regionalism dominates party politics, and social class, education, occupational status and religion have hitherto played a very minor role.8

In terms of leadership, respondents reported that the candidate’s moral character was very important, while the candidate’s party was only somewhat important. The respondents favoured moral and strong leadership. In terms of trust, they had very low trust in institutions, especially political institutions. Although the respondents trusted their in-group members, they were less likely to trust their colleagues, and not at all likely to trust strangers. Regarding values of importance in the upbringing of children, the respondents strongly supported the value of responsibility, followed by determination. They were not likely to support the values of submissiveness, but believed that parents have to earn respect from their children. Finally, in terms of political beliefs the respondents strongly supported the importance of rights, although most respondents also endorsed the idea that the ideal society is like a family. The respondents had a balanced view of other people; in general they saw them as basically cooperative but at the same time also as selfish. Similarly, they did not believe that people were either basically trustworthy or basically exploitive.

Before continuing with a more focused discussion, we make the following general observations:

• The middle ground is seen as an attractive space and position to most Koreans.
• Despite negative experiences with politics and political leaders and a widespread feeling of political alienation, active government and strong leaders still hold a positive connotation.
• The main reason for political division has been regionalism, and the main agent on the political scene has been the leader. Trust and distrust have been linked to this double affiliation.

These three general characteristics may appear surprising when 50 years of modernization are taken into consideration, but they make sense from a political culture perspective. Put in a more direct way: because a basically Confucian ethos still informs the general political culture in Korea the above pattern has not been modernized, rationalized or democratized, as it could be expected if a similar economic and political development had taken place within the Western hemisphere. In other words, the difference is cultural.
Democracy, Leadership and Political Culture in Korea

CORE PROBLEMS: EFFICACY AND TRUST

Political efficacy and trust influence political allegiance, political participation, and good governance (Almond and Power 1978, Boyer and Ahn 1991, Sigelman and Feldman 1983). Campbell, Gurin and Miller (1954) define political efficacy as the feeling that the individual’s political action does have, or can have, an impact on the political process. Political efficacy relates to people’s views and beliefs about the effectiveness of their participation in influencing the political system (i.e. the input process).

Easton and Dennis (1967) note that feelings of powerlessness and ignorance of existing political arrangements represent political inefficacy. Political efficacy is thus measured by negation of the following three statements in the 2000 survey:

• Bureaucrats don’t care much what people like me think.
• People like me don’t have any influence on what government does.
• Politics seems so complicated that people like me can’t really understand what is going on.

Political trust, on the other hand, examines people’s views or perceptions about the outputs of the system, such as trust in politicians, the political system, and institutions. Gamson (1968) defines political trust as the feeling that the government is acting on behalf of the individual’s or the public’s interest, whether or not individuals or the public participate in the political input process. Hardin (1998) cites an anonymous Greek philosopher who states, ‘The first result of lawfulness is trust, which greatly benefits all people and is among the greatest goods. The result of trust is that property has common benefits, so that even just a little property suffices, since it is circulated, whereas without this even a great amount does not suffice’ (9). Similarly, John Locke pointed out that ‘the relationship of citizens to government is one of trust, not one of contract’ (Hardin 1998: 9). This concept is also highly relevant in East Asia, as Confucius, when questioned about the relative importance of the different aspects of governance considered trust the single most important basis: ‘if there is no trust, the common people will have nothing to stand on’ (1979: 113 (XII.7)).

In order to measure levels of political trust, respondents were asked how much they trusted the following institutions: the national assembly, political parties, the media, the legal system, public offices, the police, the armed forces, the educational system, major companies and trade unions. By combining political efficacy with trust, Paige (1971) identified four political orientations: *allegiant* (high efficacy and high trust), *dissident* (high efficacy and low trust), *subordinate* (low efficacy and high trust), and *alienated* (low efficacy and low trust). (See Table 8.4).
Table 8.4 Combinations of Trust and Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Efficacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Allegiant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Dissident</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the *allegiant* orientation, individuals feel that ‘the government will be run in their interests and that they can influence it when necessary’ and thus they ‘will be active supporters of the existing political structure’ (ibid.: 811–813). *Alienation*, on the other hand, is characterized by withdrawal from active political participation: ‘Despite the fact that this group regards the existing political structure as unfair, their low level of political interest and information will prevent them from supporting even radical political movements’ (ibid.). In the *dissident* orientation, ‘the government is regarded as untrustworthy and there is a feeling that something can and should be done about it’ (ibid.). Finally, *subordinates* believe that the government is operating in their best interests, hence demands are seldom made. Only a passive adjustment is required from time to time and this ‘leads to a loyal, unquestioning faith in the existing political structure’ (ibid.).

The cluster analysis gives the following results. A total of 28 per cent of the respondents belong to the *alienated* group, which is represented by low scores on both political efficacy and trust. The *subordinate* group, which is characterized by high trust and low political efficacy, consists of 23 per cent of the respondents. The *dissident* group, with 22 per cent of the respondents, also has low trust; but their overall mean for political efficacy is slightly below the middle value 2.5 of the scale from one to four. In an absolute categorization, the dissident group could be classified with the alienated, but the political efficacy for the dissident group is much higher than that for the alienated group. Thus, a separate category for the dissident group is maintained. A total of 27 per cent belong to the *allegiant* group. Respondents belonging to the allegiant group experience political efficacy, but their trust score is below the middle value of 2.5. However, since the overall trust score is much higher than that of the dissident group, a differentiation between the two groups is acceptable. Although the categories for the dissident and allegiant groups did not fit the absolute criteria, the relative scores on political efficacy and trust were significantly different from one another and thus the four categories are maintained. The four groups represent relative rather than absolute categories.
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A Duncan post-hoc analysis shows that the alienated group, compared to the other groups, is more likely to consist of younger males with a moderate degree of education, income and social status. They are less likely to support the government policies of welfare, active government, aid to developing nations, and environmental protection, but more likely to stress economic growth. They are most likely to belong to the center of the political spectrum and to feel that the political system is not functioning well, they are neither satisfied with their rights, nor with their lives. They feel that they cannot influence the government and are less likely to have voted in the last presidential election. They view the candidate’s integrity as being important and the candidate’s party as being less important. They are likely to support a disinterested leader and less likely to support a strong leader. They are likely to view people as being basically selfish.

The subordinate group, in contrast, is the oldest, with the lowest level of education, income and social status. They are most likely to feel that the political system is functioning well. They are satisfied with their lives and with their rights. They support the government welfare policies, economic growth, pollution control and an active government. They read newspapers but are not likely to discuss political issues with colleagues. They feel that they can influence the government formally and are likely to have voted in the last presidential election. They emphasize the candidate’s integrity and party, and support leaders who are moral and strong, but also tolerate leaders who are disinterested or manipulative. They are likely to trust all people, including strangers, colleagues, and in-group members. They believe that people are basically cooperative and strongly support the family ideal.

Although the dissident group has moderate income, social status, and education, they express the greatest discontent with the political system, have the lowest life-satisfaction, are least satisfied with their rights, and least likely to trust other people. They are likely to support the government’s welfare policies, but less likely to favor economic growth, pollution control, active government or aid to developing nations. They are likely to discuss political issues with their colleagues, but less likely to feel that they can influence the government either formally or informally. They emphasize the importance of a candidate’s integrity but not candidate’s party. They support moral and disinterested leaders, but do not support strong or manipulative leaders. They are least likely to trust all people, including strangers, colleagues, and in-group members. They are also least likely to believe that people are basically cooperative and to support the family ideal.

The allegiant group has the highest education and social status. These people are likely to be professionals, and they are more likely to be younger and male. They feel that the political system is working moderately well and have a moderate level of life-satisfaction and satisfaction with rights. They support the governments’ welfare
policies, aid to developing nations and environmental protection, but are less likely to support economic growth, pollution control and active government. They are also likely to discuss political issues with colleagues, and in a disagreement with ingroup members, they will try to convince them. They feel that they can influence the government both formally and informally and are likely to have voted in the last presidential election. They are less likely to emphasize a candidate’s morality and less likely to support leaders who are moral, disinterested, manipulative or strong. They are likely to trust strangers and colleagues and less likely to support the family ideal.

A correlation analysis shows that respondents with higher political efficacy are likely to be younger, men, with higher education, income and social status. They are less likely to read newspapers daily but likely to support the governments’ welfare policies, aid to developing nations and environmental protection. They are less likely to stress economic growth, pollution control and active government. In terms of political participation, they are likely to discuss political issues with in-group members and colleagues and more likely to try to win over others in a disagreement. They feel that they can influence the government, both formally and informally. They are less likely to feel a candidate’s morality and party to be important and less likely to support any type of leadership. They are likely to trust both strangers and colleagues. They are less likely to endorse the values of responsibility and determination, and also less likely to believe in the family ideal and see people as basically cooperative. The results indicate that respondents with higher political efficacy are actively engaged in politics. They are independent minded people who are less influenced by others or by leaders.

Those people who trust institutions and the political system are older, with lower education. They feel that the political system is functioning fairly well, are satisfied with their rights and have higher life-satisfaction. They are likely to have voted in the last presidential election and they accept aid to developing nations. They support an active government and are likely to discuss political issues with colleagues, but try to keep silent in case of a disagreement. They feel that they can influence the government, both formally and informally. They are less likely to support a disinterested leader and more likely to support a moral, strong and even manipulative leader. They are also likely to trust strangers, colleagues, and in-group members. They support the family ideal and believe that people are basically cooperative. The results indicate that people with high trust of the political system and institutions have a compliant and conforming attitude. They are fairly satisfied with their lives and with the political system and they want strong leadership.

The correlation analyses provide an interesting contrast between political efficacy and trust. People with high political efficacy are relatively independent
minded individuals who want to change the existing system to make it better. The respondents with a high level of trust in the political system and in institutions have a more compliant attitude and are willing to accept the system as it is.

**DISCUSSION**

Although the Korean respondents value the basic ideas of democracy (i.e. political freedom, participation and representation), the type of democracy they strive for is different from the Western model. A majority of the Korean respondents want strong, moral and paternalistic leadership. In terms of discussing political issues and resolving disputes, the respondents are likely to discuss with colleagues, but in a disagreement, they are likely to keep silent or to pretend to agree.

In line with the above-mentioned two surveys and other studies (Shin 1999), the present one also shows a lack of trust in political parties and in the national assembly. Trust in other institutions was also low. This is consistent with the fact that the Korean respondents feel that the political system is not functioning well and that they are dissatisfied with their rights.

- A majority of the Korean respondents feel that they cannot change or influence the government and thus they feel alienated from the system.
- The views of the Korean respondents do not present a different democratic ideal, but the results suggest that implementation of a different form of democracy should be considered.

The EPCReN study was not launched to measure which of the countries involved was most democratic and which was the opposite. We did not even sharply define democracy, although in our approach to the respondents we borrowed several elements from standard definitions of democracy. What we have stressed as our basic assumption, however, is that in our perspective, democracy is more than voting, specific institutions and formal procedures. But we do not believe that democracy can be defined universally in detail, because politics and culture are interconnected, and culture tends to be the more determining factor of the two. We have seen that our respondents were clearly supportive of democratic ideas (as these are formulated in the West), but also that they still feel attached to basic central values and norms related to Confucianism. In another, similar study, Doh C. Shin put it this way: ‘Among the Korean population, sharp increases in the preference for democracy as an ideal have not brought about parallel declines in the preference for the authoritarian mode of governance. Nor have remarkable increases in college education over the past decade reduced popular attachment to the age-old practice of authoritarianism’ (1999: 256). He found, as we did, that Koreans are imbued
with Confucian values, and that they are ambivalent to say the least toward Western values such as individualism and pluralism (ibid.: 259).

So far, we agree, but we differ when it comes to how to tackle this problem. In his work he clearly favors some sort of cultural change, an uprooting of the traditional, authoritarian, Confucian culture. Here he argues in line with mainstream Korean intellectuals who also cover the official government policy. There is, according to this thinking, something wrong with fundamental values and norms, and this something is related to ‘the authoritarian political habits into which Koreans and their institutions have long been socialized’ (ibid.: 263). What is seen as wrong are both the Confucian heritage and the legacies of the military authoritarian regimes. No question is put to the ideal model of liberal democracy. Consequently, a realistic time-frame for democratic development in Korea is set, not at years or decades, but at generations. In the author’s own formulation: ‘At the deepest and most important level, remolding authoritarian cultural codes, fostering democratic behaviors, and liberalizing Confucian values may take several generations’ (ibid.: 264).

This estimation may well be realistic. One wonders, however, why liberal democracy is seen as the stable aspect and culture and tradition as the changeable one. As long as military authoritarian rule is seen as equivalent to traditional, Confucian social morality, one can easily understand the negative connotations. And yet, even Korean military rulers differed from their counterparts in Latin America and other parts of the world by being – after all – more benevolent. Fewer casualties, and much more economic gain, not only for the few (ibid.: 248). Even though the recent history of military rule can hardly be pointed at as the ideal state of affairs, we need to ask why they did so much better (ibid.: 249), and why there were restrictions on their potential bad behavior?

Having said this, we feel it is timely to turn the focus to the other part of this culture and politics relationship. Isn’t there any reason to question Western liberal democracy as a cure-all political model for the world at large? Are the free choice and the unabated rights of the individual a sustainable basis for governance now and in the future? Can we survive without seeing the individual as a part of a larger entity? Can society survive without severely restricting the individual with regard to both the free choice and unlimited rights. Is the law a better instrument for guiding people than morals? Can culture be uprooted at all, and if so, can we envisage living in a world governed by universally valid laws and rules? Or is there a Confucianism for the modern world?10
NOTES

1 The figures for GNP per capita are not directly comparable with the figures in Chapter 5, where the material standard of living is measured by GDP per capita in 1990 purchasing power parity (see Chapter 5, footnote 2).

2 Since comparisons are made with previous studies and comparisons are not made between countries, the results from the 2000 survey are not standardized in the same way as described in Chapter 6.

3 The Park Chung-hee regime (1961–1979) was an exception, though, in that the president-turned-general, who had once been a schoolteacher, propagated a form of guided democracy which actually took cultural values as its point of departure. Whether he actually practiced what he preached is another matter.

4 UNESCO SOURCES No. 25, 1991, p. 10 ‘Banking on Culture’ by Ismail Serageldin. The author bases his analysis on extensive experience with countries on the African continent.

5 The amount of US aid given to South Korea in 1948–1959 was about US$ 2.5 billion. In 1961, US aid made up about 50 per cent of the total budget and 72 per cent of the defense budget. US aid was terminated in 1971, see Kim 1975: 129, 147, 160, 172, 225-226, 233, 341.

6 The 1990 survey had 500 respondents and the 1995 survey had 838 respondents.

7 Data collected by the Hyundai Research Institute, Seoul, Korea.


9 Here we understand disinterested as impartial.

10 This question is taken up in the recent work: Confucianism for the Modern World, Daniel A. Bell and Chaibong Hahn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

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Chapter 9

JAPAN: EAST–WEST, OR UNIQUELY UNIQUE?

Geir Helgesen

INTRODUCTION

During the preparation stage of the EPCReN study, several pilot surveys and focus-group interviews were conducted. Our aim was to develop a survey instrument with questions that made sense both in East Asia and in the Nordic European countries. To reach that ambitious goal we needed to know how potential respondents in each area perceived the other area. One question used for that purpose in East Asia was: ‘Do you feel that Western ways these years are threatening your own culture and way of life?’ The Japanese response differed from that in China, Taiwan, and Korea, where strong majorities answered in the affirmative. In Japan, however, a clear majority replied in the negative. In the focus-group interviews this difference was addressed, and the unanimous explanation, summarized in the following sentence, came as a surprise: How can we feel threatened by Western ways when we are ourselves Westerners?

Was this only the result of a confused self-image among (Westernized) Japanese university students? Apparently not. In her Rethinking Japan’s Identity and International Role, Susanne Klein states that, taken as a whole, Japan’s current attitude towards Asia seems clearly similar to the general Western view. ‘This is what makes the Japanese case so paradoxical: [she continues] although geographically and culturally, Japan does belong to Asia, its self-perception is a mixture of genuinely Japanese and Western perspectives’ (2002: 30). In the following, we will take a brief look at some important aspects of Japan’s historical development – including the country’s international relations.
BEFORE WESTERNIZATION

China was traditionally the central power in East Asia, and its influence dominated the smaller countries in the region culturally as well as economically and politically. ‘From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, however, Japan began to turn towards the United States and Europe; modernization was equated with westernization’ (ibid.: 177). Nobody studying Japan would claim that modernization developed as a fully-fledged Westernization process. A lot of things remained Japanese, which is why internal conditions shaping modernization attract interest. According to Tipton (2002) it is generally acknowledged today that the Tokugawa period (1603–1867), preceding the Meiji restoration, shaped the modernization process (ibid.: 1).

It was in the Tokugawa period, in response to Western pressure, that Japan virtually closed itself to foreigners, with the exception of ‘the Protestant Dutch after they demonstrated that their interests were confined to trade and not religious proselytizing or politics’ (ibid.: 3). The period was characterized by the strong influence of the Neo-Confucian order, not only in politics but also as a guideline for socio-economic order. It was not, as is often believed, only an ideology for the ruling elite. Although it became the basis for the education of the samurai, it was diffused to the larger population as well in a popularized form, even to both sexes (ibid.: 5). The main idea propagated was that to maintain a harmonious social order, each person had to perform duties and fulfill obligations according to his or her place in society. Seen from this perspective, it is understandable that Western missionaries were regarded as subversive and dangerous elements.

The reason why education became a paramount concern of the samurai was that their duties, in a more peaceful era, turned from those of warriors to those of civil servants. In these circumstances Chinese teachings were necessary, and it was thus important ‘to absorb the Confucian ethic of dutiful obedience to superiors and conscientious concern for those below [him] on the social scale’ (Schirokauer 1993: 147). It was thus the Neo-Confucian morality and social order that samurai-turned-bureaucrats during the Tokugawa period were taught to promote and protect. This ethic became known as bushido. This samurai ethic was seen as a special way of life that contributed to the careful regulation of the hierarchical social system. Specific characteristics of bushido were self-denial and unquestioning loyalty. One lasting influence of this was that loyalty became impersonal and was directed towards the role or institution. According to Tipton, it is here that we find the basis for the strong nationalism which developed later (2002: 15). The samurai class were not pillars of the social order without exception, however. They were genuinely divided during the Tokugawa period, when a minority ‘monopolized the important offices of government, while several hundred thousand families of samurai origin were cut off from all opportunities of appointment, high or low’ (Bendix 1973: 44). Towards
the end of the Tokugawa period there was growing and widespread discontent. Natural disasters and famine gave rise to rural rebellions and urban uprisings. It was mostly individuals from the samurai class, having lost their former status and power, who articulated this discontent. ‘The pride and arrogance of these samurai even in their state of destitution suggests the potential political effects resulting from the decline of the class’ (Tipton 2002: 17). Interesting in this respect is the fact that the criticism in most cases was based on traditional values. ‘Few called for a restructuring of the political system, but rather a return to Neo-Confucian moral standards and frugality through the recruitment of “men of talent”’ (ibid.: 20).

THE MEIJI RESTORATION, THE POINT OF DEPARTURE FOR JAPAN’S MODERNIZATION

In his *Japanese Political History since the Meiji Renovation*, Richard Sims claims that ‘The year 1868 marks a turning-point in Japanese history comparable with 1789 in France or 1917 in Russia’ (2001: 1). The overthrow of Tokugawa by discontented samurai in 1868 and the restoration of the emperor as the source of legitimacy for the political system, if not in the position of actual power, was a shift from feudalism to bureaucratic centralism according to the Chinese model. The main thrust was to use the old to justify the new (Shirokauer 1993: 188, 193, Sims 2001: 12).

The regime change was thus not intended to be a return to the good old days. To signal the direction of the reform, a Charter Oath was issued in the name of the emperor. In this charter it was stated that public opinion, regardless of class background, should be taken into consideration from now on in managing state affairs; that people should be free to pursue their own aspirations; that evil customs of the past should be abolished and replaced by the principle of international justice; and finally, of especial importance, that knowledge should be sought throughout the world in order to invigorate and strengthen the foundation of the empire (Shirokauer 1993: 189, Sims 2001: 15). The Charter Oath was drafted by people familiar with Western thought, and although the realization of its principles became a long-term project suffering several setbacks along the way, it did convey the message that the new era would change the arbitrary and despotic behavior of those previously in power, induce respect for the people and encourage positive relations with the world at large.

Whether it was the continued external pressure on Japan to open its ports to foreign traders or the internal turmoil due to the breakdown of the feudal structure that was the most important cause behind the eventual collapse of the regime is still a matter of discussion among historians (Sims 2001: 5–12, Klein 2002: 50). Nonetheless, the outcome of the political change marked a turning point in
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Japan’s development, when the elite – although employing an outdated traditional model of Chinese origin – now turned to the West for further inspiration and military technology (Klein 2002: 49). Envoys were sent to the West, particularly to European countries, to gather information about different systems of rule and to bring back technological innovations. Both were very important to the Japanese modernization process.

During the following 50 years, Western technology was introduced and the industrialization process gave rise to urbanization and the development of a modernized infrastructure. Different European ideas of governance were employed on an experimental basis while others were rejected by ‘the meiji oligarchs’ (Hendry 1995: 16). The borrowing of ideas and inventions from Europe was not confined to technical or organizational aspects. Although the slogan ‘Japanese spirit, Western techniques’ was used, the Meiji leaders initially ‘encouraged the adoption of Western social customs and cultural styles to reach the goal of “civilization and enlightenment”’ (Tipton 2002: 44). Only 10 years later, however, there developed a growing discontent with indiscriminate borrowing of Western ways, and this reaction ‘prompted the search for a peculiar cultural and national identity which could be called Japanese’ (ibid.: 56).

In Japan, as in all modern nation states, the government regarded education as the primary means of developing the sense of nationhood. This was attempted by combining traditional cultural values with modern nationalism. The Imperial Rescript on Education, recited by schoolchildren every morning from 1890 until the end of World War II, incarnates the essence of the social and moral teaching. The middle paragraph reads:

Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents; affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be harmonious, as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation; extend your benevolence to all; pursue learning and cultivate arts, and thereby develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers; furthermore advance public good and promote common interests; always respect the Constitution and observe the laws; should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth. So shall ye not only be Our good and faithful subjects, but render illustrious the best traditions of your forefathers (ibid.: 60).

The Rescript is clearly traditional in following Confucian values. It is also affected by Shinto myths in its legitimization of autocratic power, but it opens up for a more modern and Western inspired idea of governance and state by referring to the Constitution (that must be respected) and the law (that must be observed). In
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the last resort, however, should emergency arise, the state still comes before the individual.

Developments during the Tokugawa and Meiji periods make up the foundation for Japan’s modernization, a process highly influenced by a selective import of Western ideas and norms. In this cursory introduction to Japan, we have already stretched our ‘mandate’ and can certainly not chronologically follow the development process in all its complexity. We will leave untouched the country’s development into a military and militarized power, say nothing of the impact of the wars with China (1894, due to disagreement over the status of Korea) and Russia (1904, the first time a non-white country achieved victory over one of the great white powers) or the ‘Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere’, a coded label for Japanese colonial ambitions in Asia. Our purpose in this chapter has been to draw a picture of Japanese ways as a context within which we can interpret survey data gathered around the turn of the twentieth century. We will thus leave the historical field and return to the scholarly discussion of this topic.

PARTICULAR JAPANESE TRAITS?

Although Japan geographically is obviously a part of East Asia, and despite the fact that Confucianism there – as in China and Korea – has played a significant role in forming traditional values and norms (and, as we will show, also plays a significant role as the basis of contemporary ways), there are also particularly Japanese cultural traits which need to be briefly discussed.

Sociologist Sugimoto Yoshio in his An Introduction To Japanese Society writes that: ‘While every society is unique in some way, Japan is particularly unusual in having so many people who believe that their country is unique’ (2003: 2). The author refers to a substantial number of volumes focusing on the uniqueness of Japanese society and its people, also called Nihonjinron (theories on Japanese uniqueness). Sugimoto maintains that this ‘overwhelming preponderance of Japanese publications arguing for its uniqueness is, in itself, unique’ (ibid.).

A doyen in Western studies of Japan, Edwin O. Reischauer, writes ‘the Japanese have changed over time as much as any other people, and considerably more than most’ (1988: 125). They ‘are no more bound by the patterns of feudal warriors, Tokugawa samurai bureaucrats, or prewar militarists than Swedes are bound by Viking traditions’ (ibid.) he continues, and distancing himself from scholars who have sought simple keys to the Japanese mind, he emphasizes that much of what is said about the Japanese in general ‘would not be true of many and might be flatly contradicted by some’ (ibid.: 126). It is clear that for a person with lifelong experience in Japanese studies and deep insight into the ways and means of the
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Japanese, stereotypes are often worse than ignorance. It is therefore encouraging for us who seek to depict political cultures in East Asia and Nordic Europe that Reischauer writes:

Still, when all is said and done, the Japanese do remain a very distinctive people with norms in some fields quite different from those that prevail in the West. Significantly, some of these norms have behind them long historical antecedents and therefore may be all the more likely to persist into the future (ibid.: 127).

The fact that Japan was the first non-Western country to modernize its economic and political system obviously made it interesting and special, and the extraordinary economic success that placed Japan as the second strongest economy in the world made foreign observers wonder how they did it, and what to learn from the Japanese experience – although after 1997, manuals revealing the Japanese way (in production, management and business) have become less frequent. There is still a strong expectation, however, that when dealing with Japan what we find is different, and difficult if not impossible for outsiders to comprehend. The Nihonjinron literature may not have been particularly helpful in assisting outsiders in their efforts to understand Japan. We would nevertheless like to stress that since such ideological works exist in abundance, and obviously also have ulterior motives, all efforts to ‘explain’ Japan should not be disregarded. We are aware of the risk of committing the essentialist fallacy, a risk that is imminent in the case of Japan, where studies and explanations of particularly Japanese ways have become a flourishing industry. It is a basic tenet of political culture studies, however, that ideas and attitudes rooted in cultural values and norms and transferred to children through upbringing and education are likely later to influence their worldviews and therefore also their ways of life. When dealing with such traits in a short introduction to the nation, the intent is of course to establish a framework within which our survey data can be interpreted and understood.

In the following, we will first be dealing with existing religious creeds and their possible social and moral impacts. We will then take a look at the institutional transmission of values and norms to the younger generation. Finally, referring to social scientists who have made significant contributions to the field, we will touch upon what are generally seen as characteristic attitudes and social values and norms in modern Japan. After this we will test some of these characteristics on our own survey data.

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MAJOR JAPANESE RELIGIONS

In the edited volume Religion in Japanese Culture (1996) Shigeru Matsumoto notes that although the modern Japanese apparently take little interest in religion, statistical information gathered by state authorities from religious organizations reveals that the official number of worshippers exceeds 200 million in a country with about 125 million people (ibid.: 13–14). Obviously, in many cases more than one religion claims the affiliation of the same individual. This is perfectly acceptable in a nation in which no main religion claims suzerainty, as Christianity does in much of the West. The main religions in Japan are Shinto (92 per cent of the population affiliated) and Buddhism (72 per cent of the population affiliated) (ibid.). The cross-fertilization of these two major religions, in combination with the strong influence of Confucianism, makes up the traditional cultural matrix of the Japanese society.

The use of the word Shinto became common only in the twentieth century in order to distinguish indigenous Japanese beliefs from Buddhism (introduced in the sixth century AD). Shintoism has no founder, no official sacred scriptures, and no dogma, but it has preserved its ethos through the ages. However, ‘For most of its history what we call in retrospect Shinto was mainly Buddhism, with generous helpings of Taoism, Yin-Yang philosophy, Confucianism, folk religion and more recently European-style nationalism’ (Bocking 1996: viii).

The ideal relationship between the gods and humanity is seen as a parent-child – or ancestor-descendant – relation (Matsumoto 1996: 16). In an overview of Shinto in the same volume, Ueda Kenji stresses that it has important socio-cultural dimensions: ‘Assuming that any culture possesses an undergirding value orientation, and that the uniqueness of Japanese culture is attributable to such an orientation, I would tentatively identify what may be called “basic Shinto” with the fundamental value orientation of the Japanese people’ (ibid.: 27). As an indigenous creed, some form of Shinto has existed in Japan from time immemorial. What, then, is basic Shinto?

A summary of the principles of Shinto was formulated in 1956 by an organization representing a majority of the shrines. Based on these principles, a person who chose to live according to Shinto should:

Be grateful for the blessings of the gods and the ancestors,
Be helpful to others, without thought of reward,
Bind oneself together with others in a harmonious acknowledgement of the will of the emperor, praying that the country might flourish and that other peoples, too, might live in peace and prosperity (ibid.: 31).
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It seems clear that Shinto is indeed this-worldly, and that it is primarily group-oriented, seeing the self as part of a whole and beginning with the family but comprising the entire people, and in the last resort, all people on earth. The most controversial part of the principles is obviously the mention of the Emperor, whose symbolic role has consciously been downplayed in post-war Japan. In his capacity as a non-issue, for instance, in politics, there is a lot of space for speculation on his real impact. However interesting, we will refrain from such speculation here.

Although Buddhism, which came to Japan in the sixth century, was transcendental and world-negating, in contrast to Shintoism, the indigenization of this faith (a continuous process taking place over centuries) brought it much closer to the family and state-centered creeds promoted by Shintoism and Confucianism. Noriyoshi Tamaru (1996), in dealing with the Japanization of Buddhism, claims that this process took place on four levels:

• In the beginning a religion of the aristocracy, it gradually became a popular creed. (What was taught was thus a Japanese version of the foreign religion.)
• A close relation between Japanese Buddhism and the state developed.
• Buddhism in Japan became a family religion. (In particular, it took charge of funeral and mortuary rites).
• The transcendental aspects of Japanese Buddhism developed into a sort of magic which was more preoccupied with this-worldly problems than with matters of the afterlife (ibid.: 46–48).
• In sum, Buddhism’s encounter with Japanese culture and the ensuing modifications it underwent transformed it from a world-denying to a world-affirming religion (ibid.: 59).

Confucianism, which can be characterized as a secular, social morality, merged with aspects of Shintoism and made up the basis for pre-modern education and the pre-democratic hierarchical political order. Religious syncretism (which in effect means the coexistence of Shintoism and Buddhism) has obviously strengthened certain social and moral traits; of these ancestor worship, social hierarchy and group-ism are essential. These traits made up the basis for a worldview and a way of life that in the past had a strong impact on people living in Japan. Thus, they also form the backbone of contemporary culture. As Reischauer writes: ‘Almost no one considers himself a Confucianist today, but in a sense almost all Japanese are’ (1988: 204).

This does not imply that we see the Japanese as more religious than other peoples of the modern world. In contrast to the information given by religious organizations, claiming numbers of followers totalling about 60 per cent more than the total population and testifying to the religious syncretism of Japan, ‘[S]tatistical surveys show that adults who claim to believe in or belong to a religion form only
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thirty to thirty-five per cent of the population sampled. Yet of those who admit to no religious affiliation, over seventy per cent affirm that religious sentiment is important’ (Matsumoto 1996: 26). Except for the syncretism, a similar pattern has been found in Denmark, sometimes labelled a post-Christian society. About 86 per cent of the population are ‘born’ into the state Church. A substantially lesser number regard themselves as true believers and active participants, but when asked about the importance of the spiritual dimension, the number affirming is about 70 per cent, which is much higher than contemporary rationalists and secularists tend to believe (Andersen and Riis, in Gundelach 2002: 83–89).

Currently, religion may everywhere face a threat of decline due to ongoing processes of modernization, uprooting of traditional lifestyles by extensive urbanization, and the rationalization and scientific development that accompany a higher educational level. The spiritual dimension, however, is probably found to be important by a majority of people everywhere. In Japan, this dimension is still informed by values and ideas rooted in the traditional religious universe of Shintoism, Buddhism and Confucianism.

There are general and universally acknowledged tendencies, and there are specific patterns due to the way tradition and modernity interact. In describing the traditional Japanese value system Takeshi Ishida says that while Western traditions are based on a belief in a transcendent God, traditional Japanese (and Korean and Chinese) beliefs are based upon and fused with the worldly order. In essence, says Ishida, values are ‘principally centered on the maintaince and furtherance of the group’ (1983: 4). This is apparently not only a traditional trait. In his Religions in Contemporary Japan (1991) Ian Reader writes that: ‘Religion has always had an intensely social nature in Japan, providing, and being used to provide, a sense of social cohesion, continuity, community and identity on many levels at once, from local and familial to regional and national’ (ibid.: 55). This, he maintains, has not changed due to modernization, which on the contrary ‘tends to stimulate rather than diminish interest in spiritual matters and the world of the irrational’ (ibid.: 236). Therefore, the author concludes, ‘the religious arena remains a vital and alive element in contemporary Japanese life’ (ibid.: 237).

FROM MORAL VALUES TO SOCIAL GUIDELINES: MORAL EDUCATION

There is obviously no simple and direct causal relation between religiously-based morals and values and people’s attitudes. One important arena, though, for the establishment of such a link is education – especially ethical, social or moral education. In a chapter on education and democracy in Japan, Edward Beauchamp (1989) writes, with reference to the country’s educational practices: ‘The process
and content of education constitute some of the major means by which societies socialize their young to important shared values and behavior, including political values and behavior’ (ibid.: 226). Since this theme is beyond doubt important (not least for understanding Japan’s political culture), we will briefly touch upon some of its aspects of particular relevance for our study.

The subject of moral education has been controversial in post-war Japan. The American occupational administration in Japan regarded it as an important facet of the aggressive Japanese nationalism exhibited in the war, and thus ordered it to be abolished. Based on a similar argument, the teaching of Shinto ideology was also stopped. Although the Japan Teachers Union has performed a watchdog role in trying to keep these subjects out of the curriculum since then, strong forces have worked for the reintroduction of moral education to the school curriculum. There is an obvious political conflict between these two positions, the one representing the progressive left and the other the conservative right. Aside from this, however, practical experience of growing amounts of egotistic and anti-social behavior among pupils at school comprise a strong argument for including social guidance in the curriculum (Nakano Akira 1989).

While contemporary moral education in Japan is not a simple reintroduction of the former ideology, neither does it follow the blueprint of the American efforts to westernize this part of Japanese schooling. The Fundamental Law of Education (1947) reflected the recommendations of the United States Education Mission to Japan. The Mission had spent a month in the country to examine its educational system and make recommendations for reform. In the paragraph on moral education, the post-war law stipulated that

Education shall aim at the full development of personality, striving for the rearing of the people, sound in mind and body, who shall love truth and justice, esteem individual values, respect labour and have a deep sense of responsibility, and be imbued with the independent spirit, as builders of the peaceful state and society (Ikemoto 1996: 5, quoted in Passin (1965) Society and Education in Japan).

One can clearly sense the optimistic and positive approach of the ‘twenty-seven prominent American educators’ (ibid.), in Japan for the sake of democracy and human rights, seeing education as the obvious and necessary point of departure in reforming a system that hitherto had promoted submissiveness. A recent account of this leaves no doubt about the results the occupational forces sought to achieve or the obstacles they faced:

Democratizing Japan, as a social engineering experiment, involved the transplantation of American constitutionalism and values to a nation whose elite core possessed a
very different view of democracy. The Japanese elites operated under a very different belief; they believed that they could manufacture the consent of the governed through traditional culture (Compton 2000: 121).

Ikemoto maintains, in line with the above, that the 1947 law was promoted as a general guide, and that it was based on the assumption that each school should freely develop its curriculum to meet the needs of the children and the community. This did not happen, he claims, because it did not fit with people’s ideas about education, and this is why moral education was reintroduced to the social studies curriculum in 1955 (ibid.). The argument here is that moral education is an inevitable aspect of education and a natural response to societal needs.

Although moral education is a subject in the curriculum, it ideally permeates all school activities and has priority over all other subjects, writes Ikemoto (1996: 11). A central function of the efforts gathered under the heading ‘moral education’ is, through education, to transmit traditional culture with its values and knowledge from generation to generation. As such, moral education could be termed social virtue education. Emphasis is put on interpersonal skills and life in the group: cooperation, courtesy, responsibility, diligence, self-improvement and friendship are highly regarded. Although the teaching of any specific religion in schools is prohibited in Japan, moral education reflects values rooted in Shintoism, Buddhism and, even more relevant, Confucianism, which for centuries exercised a tremendous influence on Japanese education (Ikemoto 1996, Luhmer 1990, Nakano 1989, Cummings 1980).

Moral education still remains a controversial topic in Japan. In the 1980s, while the Japan Teachers Union pointed at societal ills as the reason for children’s misbehaviour in the schools (Nakano 1989: 56), the Ministry of Education suggested strengthening moral education in order to deepen the students’ Japanese identity and patriotism, as well as to promote adaptation to group life and the cultivation of a voluntaristic spirit (ibid.: 59). In her Understanding Japanese Society (1995) anthropologist Joy Hendry writes: ‘Courses in morals and social studies form part of the curriculum, and at the primary level children all over Japan are being socialized through this education in a rather uniform way’ (ibid.: 98). This uniform socialization does not produce uniform citizens, however. The human mind is not a computer hard disk that can be programmed, and socialization is not a one-way programming. Besides, there exists a host of other influences, notably those outside the reach of the authorities. It would be more than strange, though, if socialization and education had no impact whatsoever. When dealing with the impact of socialization, the idealized Western image of the independent individual may disturb our view. To paraphrase Reishauer: as Westerners we want to see ourselves as ‘alone before God, the law, and society’, but ‘[W]e have so idealized
this that we see ourselves as free and isolated individuals far more than the facts warrant’ (1988: 128). One of the effects of socialization that Reischauer observes is that ‘[G]roups of every other sort abound throughout Japanese society and usually play a larger role and offer more of a sense of individual self-identification than do corresponding groups in the United States’ (ibid.: 134). One reason for this difference between Japan and the US is of course to be found in the different values and norms that are promoted in the two countries. In Reischauer’s words: ‘Cooperativeness, reasonableness, and understanding of others are the virtues most admired, not personal drive, forcefulness, and individual self-assertion’ (ibid.: 136).

Reischauer emphasizes time and again that the differences we observe in general are differences in degree, not in kind. It is, however, of paramount importance for a society whether the individual or the group is taken as the point of departure. Even more important is to grasp the idea of group-ism. It does not mean the iron law of subordination, where the individual disappears within the group. A Japanese would rather see the ideal group member as a person with firm self-control, managing to master his more anti-social instincts. ‘He is not a weak-willed yes-man, but the possessor of great self-discipline. In contrast to normal Western perceptions, social conformity to the Japanese is no sign of weakness but rather the proud, tempered product of inner strength’ (ibid.: 166).

A TYPICAL JAPANESE?

Yoshio Sugimoto, a sociologist and a stern critic of what he calls the cultural nationalism approach, in An Introduction to Japanese Society (2003) rejects stereotypical accounts and bases his judgements on hard data. In response to the question: Who is a typical Japanese? Sugimoto claims that the image one gets through the media is: male, university graduate, career employee in a large company (with guaranteed lifetime employment). Demographic facts (the 2002 census) present another picture, however. The typical Japanese is: female, without a university degree, if in the workforce employed in a small enterprise (no guaranteed lifetime employment) and not in a union (only one in five is a member) (ibid.: 1). Sugimoto’s message is of course that the Japanese people do not correspond to simplified stereotypical models, and are not more mutually similar than any other national group of people on earth. This he stresses in pointing out the complexity of Japanese society and the diversity of the people, ‘more diversified, heterogeneous, and multicultural’ than suggested by students of Japanese-ness (ibid.: 5).

While we agree that mono-causal explanations are superficial, the opposite, a denial of the importance of common cultural traits, is highly problematic. The obvious existence of individual, social and cultural differences says nothing about
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basic beliefs and attitudes among the Japanese, or about basic and generally acknowledged modes of behavior (those observable by any visitor to the country). It is our assumption, based on the political culture approach, that individuals are likely to hold ‘stereotypical’ ideas about themselves and their countrymen. How such views influence people is described (by accident, presumably) in a recent article attacking the continual ‘navel gazing’ engaged in by conservative Japanese politicians and scholars. ‘All these self-images are based on a conviction which a large majority of Japanese share without a second thought’ (Mishima 2000: 6). This unambiguous statement is forcefully underlined by another claim, that the ideas promoted by ‘cultural apologists’ (ibid.: 5) ‘are so popular and widespread that one might well say that they have entered the flesh and blood of the Japanese’ (ibid.: 6).

Values and ideas about reality and how to cope with it that are ingrained in people within a certain space and time are exactly what we call ‘culture’. Kenichi Mishima seems to be unaffected by this fact – he presumably knows better. It is not particularly interesting, though, that one elite (radical academics) accuses another elite (conservative politicians and their supporters) of utilizing certain values and norms for their own benefit. Politics distancing itself from culture is at most an academic construction.

In the following we will turn to scholars who have studied contemporary attitudes and behavior among the Japanese. The first account, by a famous foreign anthropologist, formed a school for foreign as well as indigenous observers of Japanese society. Ruth Benedict’s (1989) *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword. Patterns of Japanese Culture* was first published in 1946. Benedict has been criticized for establishing the idea that Japan is a homogeneous country with a cultural pattern that can be grasped as a whole. Although this probably is impossible (at least within the confines of a small book) and although her efforts necessarily resulted in a rough sketch rather than a detailed and sophisticated exposition, the sketch presents guidelines for understanding attitudes and behavior that otherwise might be difficult to appreciate. From her position as an American observer she found hierarchy and order to be as important to the Japanese as freedom and equality are to the Americans (ibid.: 43). ‘Behavior that recognizes hierarchy’, she writes, ‘is as natural to them as breathing’ (ibid.: 47). This behavior is learned in the family, and what every Japanese ‘learns there he applies in wider fields of economic life and of government’ (ibid.: 55–56). This description is particularly appropriate because it refrains from presenting ‘their way’ judged from ‘our perspective’. Instead, the author makes a comparison with something cherished (although not always realized) in her own culture. Furthermore, she depicts the different traits as things one is socialized into, and not things which are imposed on unprepared individuals.
Another trait emphasized by Benedict is ancestor worship. This, she writes, is not seen solely as a religious belief and practice, in which case one would hardly grasp the full meaning. Her view is that ‘[m]uch of what Westerners name ancestor worship is not truly worship and not wholly directed towards ancestors: it is a ritual avowal of man’s great indebtedness to all that has gone before’ (ibid.: 98). This indebtedness (in which the relationship between mother and child stands as the basic model) includes ‘both one’s forebears and one’s contemporaries’ (ibid.: 99). It is the basis of a sense of loyalty binding individuals to their in-groups as well as to the country as such. It seems obvious that the strength and importance of such bonds will affect social relations in general and, not least, the political level of such relations. The following quote from Benedict may serve as a relevant example. She explains how differently people in the USA and Japan react to laws imposed by the political authorities (in the USA with resentment, as an infringement on the individual’s liberty, and in Japan with obedience, as a loyal repayment of their highest indebtedness). Then she writes: ‘The Japanese judge therefore that we are a lawless people. We judge that they are a submissive people with no ideas of democracy. It would be truer to say that the citizen’s self-respect, in the two countries, is tied up with different attitudes; in our country it depends on his management of his own affairs and in Japan it depends on repaying what he owes to accredited benefactors’ (ibid.: 130). Bearing in mind that Benedict’s work dates back to the immediate post-war period, when Imperial Japan stood clear in people’s memories, one should not see the above as directly relevant in today’s political climate. Her observations regarding hierarchy, indebtedness and loyalty may still be significant markers for the present. This will be clarified by consulting more recent accounts of Japanese ways.

Social anthropologist Chie Nakane (1970/1990) finds social hierarchy to be the most important characteristic of Japanese society. She does not see this structure as a remnant of traditional ways, but as a particular and stable Japanese feature. Although change takes place, in Japan as everywhere else, the author distinguishes between what we might call the surface and the basics. In her own words: ‘It is Japanese nature to accept change with little resistance and, indeed, to welcome and value change; but a superficial change of outlook, as facile as changes in the fashion, has not the slightest effect on the firm persistence of the basic nature and core of personal relations and group dynamics’ (ibid.: 153). Further, to stress this point, she claims that while ‘the outlook of Japanese society has suffered drastic changes over the past hundred years, the basic social grammar has hardly been affected’ (ibid.: 154). How can ‘the social grammar’ be so persistent? What makes it defy the changes accompanying modernization? We have already dealt with moral education, and it seems obvious that institutional socialization that carries on what has been initiated...
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in the family proves effective. How then is the modern family organized, and what goes on in the family that reinforces hierarchical social structures?

One thing that differentiates the average Japanese family from the average Western family is the proportion of three-generation families. Although the rate has declined since World War II, still almost 60 per cent of Japanese live in three-generation families (Kumagai 1995: 152). This family structure may facilitate the survival of traditional values and norms more than the nuclear family. It might be tempting to seek the reasons for the survival of the traditional three-generation family in material circumstances: expensive land and housing, an under-developed social security system and thus few, if any, institutions for the aged. Kumagai reports, however, that several surveys in the 1980s and 1990s revealed that young people particularly preferred the traditional family system (ibid.: 154).

According to the law, the Japanese family structure is egalitarian and promotes ‘horizontal ideals,’ writes Kumagai, who continues: the legislative revolution of the family was never implemented, thus the modern family in many ways resembles the traditional family, in which ‘children, status, and the fulfillment of a social and economic function in society are regarded as the central objective’ (ibid.: 152).

A leading Japanese psychiatrist, Takeo Doi (1973/1989), has dealt with the emotional relations in the family and developed a theory of dependence. His key concept is *amae*, meaning the dependence felt by the infant at the mother’s breast. To presume and depend on others benevolence, says the author, is a trait created in early childhood, which affects people throughout their lifetime. Doi perceives it as the psychological makeup of the individual Japanese, and maintains that it is the model relationship for society as well (ibid.: 28). There is a tendency, claims Doi, to see the parent-child relationship as the yardstick in judging all other relationships (ibid.: 36).

In her *Japanese Patterns of Behavior* (1976) anthropologist Takie Sugiyama Lebra expands the idea developed by Doi by pointing at the missing but necessary complementary social role: if a craving for indulgence and emotional dependency is an accepted role, there must also be a role accepting this craving. Lebra says that there is, and that such a relationship ‘is a desirable and often irresistible one’ (ibid.: 54). Recent research on the effects of (family) socialization in Japan has revealed that children at an early stage learn ‘the importance of conformity to group norms rather than individual assertiveness, even at the individual’s short-term detriment’ (Compton 2000: 46).

In reading Benedict, Doi, Lebra, Nakane and Kumagai, one finds a host of overlapping descriptions and interpretations. These researchers base their conclusions on field studies of various kinds, and can hardly be rejected as *Nihonjinron* conscripts. Their findings, however, can be doubted, and Kosaku Yoshino accuses his colleagues

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of typically relying in their qualitative methods on convenient examples and personal
experiences of everyday episodes in support of their views (Yoshino 1995: 3). While
this may be so, we cannot resist presenting a quote from Benedict in response to such
accusations. Explaining the goal of her study (which was to explain deeply entrenched
attitudes of thought and behavior), she writes:

In such a study one quickly reaches the point where the testimony of great numbers
of additional informants provides no further validation. Who bows to whom and
when, for instance, needs no statistical study of all Japan; the approved and customary
circumstances can be reported by almost any one and after a few confirmations it
is not necessary to get the same information from a million Japanese (Benedict

In the present study, which, unlike Benedict’s, is quantitative, we do not have a million
respondents. But we do have about one thousand. In interpreting their responses to
our questions, we need to understand the cultural context, and that is best provided
for by qualitative research. Ideally, qualitative and quantitative research should be
combined to secure the best possible results. In reality this seldom happens, mainly
due to the mutual suspiciousness of the two ‘camps’. It may, however, not be the
qualitative approach as such, or even the stress on cultural traits, that provokes
opponents, but rather the findings that are presented.

In his Asian Power and Politics, Lucian W. Pye (1985) claims that the bifurcation
of Japanese politics has always embarrassed the intellectuals. On the one side there is
the manifest and formal level, where power was seen as ‘based on ethical principles
of striving constantly for greatness and perfection’ (ibid.: 163). On the other side
there is the informal understanding of power, which continues to be based on
‘emotional attachments associated with the traditional concepts of indebtedness
and mutual obligations’ (ibid.: 164). And then he continues: ‘The intensity of
the reaction against Ruth Benedict’s study of the Japanese was in no small part
provoked by Japanese intellectuals, who were strangely embarrassed because she
publicized attitudes and practices that they associated with “feudal” Japan and
therefore regarded as past and properly forgotten’ (ibid.). Pye’s observations about
the ambiguous character of Japanese politics make sense. We are not claiming,
however, that a discrepancy between a formal and a real, informal, practical
understanding of reality is something exclusively Japanese. It is rather a general
condition making social science a difficult and risky activity always and everywhere.
It is striking, though, that when a Japanese colleague known for his critical views
on ‘the cultural nationalism approach’ gives advice to observers of the Japanese
scene, what he points at is the difference between appearance and reality.
In his latest book, Sugimoto (2003) deals with the double codes that ‘are legitimized in many spheres of Japanese life, thereby creating a world behind the surface’ (ibid.: 28). In his wording there is ‘the sanitized official appearance and hidden reality’ (ibid.). Three pairs of surface versus reality phenomena are mentioned:

- Established principle versus true feelings and desires;
- Surface/front door activities versus hidden/back door activities; and
- Outside(r) versus inside(r) with regard to social relations in general.

Studies of Japanese society are incomplete if researchers only examine one of the above-mentioned pairs, says Sugimoto, and continues: ‘To be Japan-literate, researchers should not confuse outward appearances with inside realities when examining a society in which double codes play significant roles’ (ibid.: 30). If this is so – and this is also one of Pye’s insights (1985: 175) – it seems obvious that it creates a complication for a study using a quantitative approach, and thus further underlines the importance of establishing a cultural and political context for interpretations of the survey results.

In the last pages of this chapter we will limit ourselves to present survey data underpinning our general account, holding that it is justified to generalize certain important aspects of country’s political culture.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SURVEY DATA

Scholars critical of the picture of Japan as a particularly homogeneous country suggest that such observers only pay attention to obvious similarities within the country. In Japan as elsewhere, they maintain, gender, age, region and occupation – to mention the most common differences – all exist and play a role. We will look into the three first-mentioned differences in this chapter to see whether our data support the authors’ assumptions.

First, gender: ‘Women show much more commitment than men to welfare, medical, educational, consumer, and other community activities’ writes Sugimoto with reference to a report from the Economic Planning Agency (ibid.: 9). The male/female ratio in our survey is 44/56, (population 49/51). Adjusting for this over-sampling we will test the above-mentioned assumption of the existence of a gender bias towards welfare aspects.

The first question in the EPCReN questionnaire asks: ‘How important is it, in your opinion, that the government pay special attention to each of the problems listed below?’ The problems listed in question 1) are: providing welfare, securing
economic growth, and fighting pollution. In Table 9.1 below we are testing whether there is any gender difference with regards to the importance of welfare. In the following five tables the two negative (not at all and somewhat) and the two positive response options (rather and very) are combined.

**Table 9.1 Sex and social welfare**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.1a ‘Providing a high level of social welfare’</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all or somewhat important</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rather or very important</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
<td>76.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen, there is no gender-related bias, as about a quarter of the respondents think this is not so important, while about three quarter have the opposite view. In the following we will check the difference-due-to-gender assumption with regards to three other aspects of welfare. The main question reads: ‘To what extent are you willing to pay taxes so that the state can provide each of the following programs?’ The questionnaire then lists: equal educational opportunities for all (Table 9.2), social security for the elderly (Table 9.3), unemployment benefits (Table 9.4). Three additional programs are mentioned, namely aid to poor countries, environmental protection and fighting crime. These are not seen as strictly welfareistic, and will therefore not be included here.

**Table 9.2 Sex and educational opportunities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.3a ‘Equal educational opportunities for all’</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all or somewhat important</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rather or very important</td>
<td>65.3%</td>
<td>61.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although these figures show a little more difference due to sex, the two blocks, the rather negative and the rather positive are quite similar between male and female respondents.

**Table 9.3 Sex and social security for the elderly**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.3b ‘Social security for the elderly’</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all or somewhat important</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rather or very important</td>
<td>74.8%</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dealing with social security one cannot overestimate the importance of care for elderly people, no matter whether we see it as the family’s or the society’s responsibility.
The interesting thing here is that there is virtually no gender difference at all, the figures are almost identical.

**Table 9.4 Sex and unemployment benefits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.3b ‘Unemployment benefits’</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all or somewhat important</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rather or very important</td>
<td>53.1%</td>
<td>44.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although a majority of the male respondents finds it important that the state provides unemployment benefits, while a majority of the female respondents finds this less important, the gender related difference is less than 10 per cent. To us the relative similarity of opinion is still more interesting than the slight difference.

The table below shows a response to a statement about the obligations of good government. Question 19 focuses on politics and aspects of good government. It asks the respondents: ‘Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements’, and lists 10 different but related issues.

**Table 9.5 Sex and good government**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.19c ‘The objective of good government is to ensure that nobody will have to live in poverty’</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree or disagree*</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree or strongly agree</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
<td>79.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The four given response options here denote level of agreement.

Although the differences tend to lean towards Sugimoto’s gender assumption (that women have more commitment than men to different aspects of welfare), the differences are only about five per cent. It is not possible to see a general gender-related tendency in the tables above. At least according to our data it seems impossible to maintain the assumption that there is a gender-bias in the Japanese society with regards to welfare.

Age was the second issue taken up by Sugimoto. Age is everywhere supposed to be a strong indicator of differences in attitudes among a population. Reischauer characterizes Japanese youth as marked by ‘a pervasive restiveness and constant straining for change’ (1988: 160). This is of course an important observation, as the younger generations carry the future on their shoulders. They are expected to be modern, more susceptible to new ideas and ways, and to change in general. Often this is sought to be verified by pointing at visible things such as fashion and forms of expressive lifestyles, where the youth clearly differ from their parents.
and grandparents. One can easily get an impression of this by walking down any shopping street in Tokyo or Osaka. Whether attitudes and basic ideas about oneself and society change as fast as fashion is quite another matter. In the following we will test whether there is a difference of opinion with regards to political tolerance among Japanese respondents due to age.

If one assumes that age strongly influences the level of political tolerance, Table 9.6 below must be rather disappointing. On the other hand, if one assumes that political culture in general overrules gender and age, the figures are interesting and encouraging.

Table 9.6 Age and political tolerance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q11a Every political viewpoint should be tolerated</th>
<th>Age groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>15–24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To the statement in Table 9.6 above claiming that *every political viewpoint should be tolerated* in average rate of agreement in the four age groups from 15 to 64 years of age is 85 per cent, while the group over 65 years of age has an agreement rate of 77 per cent. It seems fair to maintain that both younger and older respondents express a viewpoint hailing tolerance, while the majority marking tolerance is slightly smaller among those over 65 years of age. It is thus warranted to claim that respondents in both Tokyo and Osaka representing Japanese urban dwellers clearly favour political tolerance.

We will not leave the discussion about similarities and differences before having looked into the assumed regional particularities, as we conducted the surveys in the heart of two distinct regions of Japan. Sugimoto writes that: ‘Regional variation is perhaps the most obvious form of diversity in Japan. The nation is divided into two subcultural regions, eastern Japan with Tokyo and Yokohama as its center, and western Japan with Osaka, Kyoto, and Kobe as its hub. The two regions differ in language, social relations, food, housing, and many other respects’ (ibid.: 7). The EPCReN survey was conducted in Tokyo and Osaka, hence we are able to test whether the assumed regional differences are reflected as a response pattern in our study. We compared all the questions in our questionnaire with a response rate from one to four, which is a majority of the 133 questions. A cluster analysis shows
that the difference between Tokyo and Osaka is very small, and much smaller than the difference between any two countries (see Figure 6.2 in Chapter 6).

KEY FEATURES OF JAPANESE POLITICAL CULTURE

We will finally seek to test a claim about the key features of Japanese political culture made by Pye in referring to results from survey research reported by Bradley M. Richardson back in 1974, when he found the following pattern: ‘high voter turnout and strong partisan identification coupled with minimal understanding of the political world, and a low degree of satisfaction with politics but a high sense of personal efficacy in influencing politics’ (Pye 1985: 166). We do not have questions exactly matching the above description, but we will discuss Pye/Richardson’s view based on survey results from very similar questions.

Voter turnout could be characterized as high in Japan compared with US data, and it was higher in the 1970s (roughly 70 per cent) than in the late 1990s and 2000, (around the period when the EPCReN survey was conducted), when it was just below 60 per cent. The EPCReN survey asked ‘How do people like you make their voice heard in society?’ (Q.9) and presented eight alternatives of which voting was the first one. In Japan 19.3 per cent responded that they often or always voted, compared to 16.1 per cent in China, 59.1 per cent in Korea, and about 90 per cent in the three Nordic countries. In a follow-up question we then asked the respondents to express how important they found different democratic rights to be (Q.14). Presenting the same eight alternatives with the right to vote as the first one, 59.4 per cent of the Japanese respondents marked very important (Q.14a), compared to 58.7 per cent in Korea and again around 90 per cent in the Nordic countries. In this comparative perspective we disagree with the claim made by Richardson and later Pye, holding that Japan’s political culture is characterized by high voter turnout.

Regarding the alleged strong partisan identification we have combined the responses to the rest of the eight alternatives in (Q.9) ‘How do people like you make their voice heard in society?’ The alternatives were the following: b) contacting government officials directly; c) contacting a member of the parliament; d) working through a political party; e) working in other formal groups; f) participating in voluntary associations; g) using family and personal networks; h) contacting the media. The average positive response rate to all these seven questions (collapsing sometimes and often/always) shows that the Japanese respondents are the most organized/active of all the samples with a 59 per cent positive response. Sweden comes next with 48 per cent, and then Denmark 44, China 36, Finland 35, and Korea 12 per cent.
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But identifying may not be the same as a desire to take part in politics, which is why we asked how important the respondents found ‘The right to participate in any kind of organization’ (Q14b) to be. A quarter of the Japanese respondent marked very important as compared to 30 per cent in Korea and above 60 per cent in the Nordic countries. Asking about their satisfaction with this right, around 13 per cent in both Japan and Korea marked very satisfied, as compared to about 50 per cent in the Nordic countries. We admit that this is a meagre base for coming to a conclusion about partisan identification, and so we will briefly add a few other results that may illuminate this issue. To the question ‘How often do you discuss political issues with people close to you’ (Q.6), we listed five categories: one’s family, superior, close colleague, neighbour, and close friend. There seems to be no substantial difference in the response from the six countries: the closer the relation the more open the communication. However, Japan differs with regard to neighbours. In all the countries a majority is reluctant to take up political matters with their neighbours, but Japan has the highest score with as much as 85 per cent never or only seldom discussing political issues with neighbours. A clearer picture is revealed when we look into the reaction to disagreements. The question asks: ‘How do you usually react when you disagree with people close to you?’ (Q.7) The response options were: 1) Try to win them over; 2) Keep silent; 3) Pretend to agree. Between 66 and 83 per cent select the first option regarding family. But when shifting to ‘a superior’ about 40 per cent in the two Nordic countries still try to win them over, while only about 20 per cent express the same opinion in East Asia, with Korea as low as 10 per cent. And when the disagreement occurs with a neighbour still about 40 per cent in the Nordic countries pick the first choice, while only 12 per cent in Japan would venture to win them over. In Korea 15 per cent would do that, and in China 25 per cent. Although we cannot present a convincing case here, we hesitate to accept the allegation that strong partisan identification is an important trait in Japan’s political culture. If it is, it is definitely not expressed in any assertive way.

The third allegation was that Japanese political culture was characterized by a ‘minimal understanding of the political world’. It is interesting in this respect that Japanese respondents reported an ‘average’ (in comparison with the five other samples in the study) use of time reading newspapers and following daily news programs in TV. To a direct statement phrased as follows: ‘Politics seems so complicated that people like me cannot really understand what is going on’ (Q.8d), 68.1 per cent of the Japanese respondents agreed, but this was not much different from the majorities of the other country surveys, where only Denmark deviated with 29.2 per cent agreement. A low level of understanding politics may be a rather general trait in modern societies.
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Regarding the level of satisfaction with politics we have a series of questions that can shed some light on this aspect of political culture. The allegation made by Richardson and later by Lucian W. Pye was that there was a low degree of satisfaction with politics in Japan. According to our data, this may be right as 38 per cent marked no trust in the Parliament (Q.12a), only surpassed by 53 per cent of Koreans expressing clear distrust. The number of respondents with similar distrust in the Nordic countries was eight, 10 and 17 per cent in Sweden, Denmark and Finland respectively.12 Asked about their trust in public offices 35.6 per cent in the Japanese sample marked no trust, with 22.8 per cent in Korea and 10 per cent or less in the Nordic countries (Q.12f). Confronted with a statement claiming that ‘The people we elect stop thinking about the interests of the people after taking office’ (Q.16a) as much as 72.6 per cent of the Japanese respondents agree, but the number of disappointed respondents are at a similar level in the other countries, with only the Chinese differing, with a majority of 60 per cent disagreeing to this critical statement.13 We did actually ask the respondents about their opinion about the political system as follows: ‘How well do you think your country’s political system is working?’ (Q.13) On a scale from zero (very bad) to 10 (very well) 56.6 per cent of the Japanese marked from zero to four, 14.5 per cent marked five, which is here ‘the golden mean’ and 28.9 per cent marked from six to 10. Only the Korean respondents expressed a more negative attitude, with 60.4 per cent marking from zero to four, while the negative block in the Nordic countries and China amounted from 20 to 29 per cent. It seems thus verified that the Japanese respondents in a comparative perspective are characterized by showing a low degree of satisfaction with politics.

The last of the five aspects of Japanese political culture as characterized by Richardson/Pye was ‘a high sense of political efficacy in influencing politics’. In the EPCReN survey we made the following statement to measure the respondent’s perception of their political efficacy: ‘People like me do not have any influence on what the government does.’ (Q.8c) In the Japanese survey 71.1 per cent agreed to this statement, showing a relatively low level of political efficacy. But comparing this with the five other surveys, the Japanese case is not in any way exceptional as the following figures (per cent agreement) show: Korea: 65.3, China: 71.1, Sweden: 57.1, Finland: 78.1, Denmark: 63.3. Seen in this context, we seem to have a general problem of lack of efficacy, overruling political system as well as culture.

In conclusion we find little evidence in support of the alleged difference due to sex, and the same goes for age and region. None of these aspects seems to significantly affect basic ideas and attitudes about life, people and society. Regarding the particular features found to characterize Japanese political culture according to survey research conducted in 1974, our survey data do not confirm the picture.
Politics, Culture and Self

Out of five aspects only two found support in our data, namely a low degree of satisfaction with politics and a perception among the respondents that they lack understanding of the political world. But this second aspect did not differ much from the five other country surveys, which is why it cannot be seen as a particular Japanese trait.

In questions relating to social welfare the Japanese respondents are closer to Korea and China. In many cases where social relations are in focus results from Japan and Finland are very close. Dealing with trust in societal institutions, however, Japan and Korea are close and both groups express considerably less trust than is seen in the Nordic samples. As mentioned above more than one third of the sample marked no trust at all in the Parliament. This, combined with similar figures for political parties, trade unions, and public offices, may imply a problem for representative democracy, and for the people’s perceptions of good government. It is also interesting in this connection that freedom of speech is rated as very important by about 85 per cent in all Nordic countries, but only 56 per cent of the Japanese respondents express the same view. Entering the field of political leadership, however, the Japanese respondents are closer to the Nordic samples. The statement claiming that ‘A group of people without a strong leader means chaos’ (Q.18a) is strongly supported by the Chinese (96) and the Koreans (82), but ‘only’ 65 per cent in the Japanese survey accept the claim, which (surprisingly) is close to the Nordic samples. A similar but even clearer statement holds that ‘It is more important to have an outstanding leader than political democracy.’ (18.b) From 17 to 27 per cent of the Nordic respondents agrees, 34 per cent of the Japanese sample likewise, while 57 and 67 per cent in Korea and China respectively agree. And the ultimate rejection of representative democracy: ‘We can leave everything to a morally upright leader’ (Q.18f) attracts 75 per cent support in Korea and 80 per cent in China, 18, 28 and 38 per cent in Sweden, Denmark and Finland respectively, and 42 per cent of the Japanese sample support the statement.

When considering the survey data presented above, which aim to characterize fundamental aspects of a country’s political culture, the response from the students in the pilot study referred to initially in this chapter becomes less surprising. If, as Susanne Klein argues, the self-perception of the Japanese ‘is a mixture of genuinely Japanese and Western perspectives’ (2002: 30) our survey data seem to confirm exactly that. Sugimoto may still be right in stating that there is a world behind the surface. There is also a perceived world, however, not necessarily identical with the real one. To us it is important that we capture reality as perceived by our respondents. As always in survey-based research we hope that our respondents have expressed their own views in reaction to the questions and statements presented in the questionnaire. With this as our precondition we find that the results from the
Japanese survey place Japan midway between East Asia and Nordic Europe with regards to the dominant political culture. This indicates that, beside traditional ideas, values and norms transferred from generation to generation in the upbringing and education processes, strong external influences have also contributed to forming the Japanese people's worldview and self-perception. An East-West combination – as Japan exemplifies – may be a preferred option to a clash of civilizations.

**NOTES**

1 Both surveys and focus group interviews were conducted at different universities among university students and teachers.

2 The image of Japan as a closed country should not be exaggerated, writes Tipton, as the notion’s relations with other East Asian countries remained active (2002: 3).

3 At the beginning of the Tokugawa era, the samurai were the warrior class. They have often been compared to the knights of European barons (Japanese *daimyo*). During the Tokugawa era the samurai for the most part became bureaucrats (Tipton 2002: 13).

4 *Bushido* means ‘the way of the samurai warrior’ (Hendry 1995: 13).

5 The author deliberately uses the concept of *renovation*, as he sees the more commonly-used *restoration* as reflecting pre-1945 official historiography, which stressed the formal return of power to the emperor. Others talk of the Meiji Revolution (Tipton 2002: 36). In this chapter we will stick to the most commonly used concept. Meiji means ‘enlightened government’ (Sims 2001: 1 [footnote 1]).

6 Shinto was proclaimed the ideological basis of the Meiji government in 1868 (Shirokauer 1993: 193).

7 In the 1970s Congressional elections in the US had an average voter turnout of 45 per cent, and the two Presidential elections 1972 and 1976 around 55 per cent (see: www.idea.int/voter_turnout/northamerica/usa.html)

8 The late 1990s and 2000 elections in the USA had a turnout below 50 per cent. Per cent of votes compared with the population of voting age, according to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Stockholm.

9 This question was not included in the Chinese questionnaire.

10 In the case of China the six categories were collapsed into one in the following question: ‘How often do you discuss political issues with other people?’ A considerable part of the Chinese respondents (51.1 per cent) marked never or seldom, which may reflect the political situation in the country.

11 This question was not asked in Finland.

12 Only 1.8 per cent of the Chinese respondents express this downright negative of the parliament, which in the Chinese survey was ‘The People’s Congress/NPC’

13 A cynic would say no, they have never expected those people to think about the interests of the people in the first place.
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Japan: East–West, or Uniquely Unique?


Comparing the long-term as well as the recent history of Denmark and Sweden, as well as a few genuine differences, we find a striking number of similarities with regard to external cultural impact, development of class relations and political solutions to major challenges. However, the historical timing of similar solutions to similar problems has often been different. The original tradition for cooperation and for negotiation of decisions at ting meetings (Petersson 1986) and the introduction of the Roman Christian cultural ‘package’ at the end of the first millennium AD are probably important common base points for Denmark and Sweden. After the Lutheran reformation in the sixteenth century, a major difference is the period of strong absolutism in Denmark 1660–1848. At this time, Sweden maintained the influence of the powerful estates, an influence that was gradually transformed into democracy. Traditionally, the political influence of the peasants was stronger in Sweden than in Denmark, but the more favorable conditions enjoyed by the Danish peasants from the end of the eighteenth century created a strong class of farmers and a political movement that is still influential in Danish politics.

In both countries, the development of a strong and competent state apparatus was initiated beginning in the seventeenth century, in Denmark by recruitment of the king’s civil servants out of the bourgeois class, and in Sweden by the organization of the entire country behind a strong army. In both countries, industrial growth from the end of the nineteenth century created a working class and a strong Social Democratic party. However, in Sweden the working class was larger and the Social Democratic party stronger and eventually more integrated into the state. The more unquestioned legitimacy of the state in Sweden has probably made the elite less receptive towards popular tensions in Swedish society and more prone to adherence to elitist ‘politically correct’ values.
Political Culture in Denmark and Sweden

The approach in this book is to understand culture as shared values and rules for behavior that have been internalized in the minds of the members of a society. Sometimes these cultural elements are modified by individual inventiveness or by diffusion from another society, for example, in a crisis, or if the overall conditions of the society have changed. But mostly, a process of upbringing and education transfers the cultural elements relatively unaltered from generation to generation. In this way, traditional habits can sometimes be preserved for centuries.

Those in power will have a clear interest in controlling this process, but it can be difficult to control upbringing within the family. Instead, they will have an obvious interest in regulating moral education in the school system.

THE ROOTS OF POLITICAL CULTURE

Denmark and Sweden have a common background as far back as the Viking Age, when decisions were negotiated among free men, and, since the end of the first millennium AD, when Christianity and rule by law spread to the Nordic countries. It is difficult to say how far back this common experience still can be traced, but it may well have founded the tradition for bargaining and consensus-seeking in political decisions that is so prominent in Scandinavia. Common to both Denmark and Sweden is also the influence of strong popular social movements that created a firm basis for democracy and social welfare.

A difference between the two countries is the stronger tradition in Sweden for cooperation between social movements and the state, and thus the more unquestioned legitimacy of the state, whereas in Denmark the state apparatus is put under greater public scrutiny, and is thus more secluded and legalistic.

An institutional crisis at the end of the nineteenth century left its marks on Denmark. During this crisis, the civil servants suffered from problems of legitimacy and were forced to develop a neutral, non-political attitude to an unusual degree. The consequence was that the Danish state developed a pragmatic, mild, and flexible style of intervention carried out by a civil service marked by caution, neutrality and a high ethical standard (Knudsen 1993: 283).

The pressure on the civil service also led to a closing of ranks and a stronger *esprit de corps* than in Sweden. To protect itself from suspicion, for example, as expressed by people in the countryside towards decision-makers in Copenhagen, the Danish state administration remained closed and veiled itself off from public insight until the most recent decades, when the influence of Sweden’s long tradition of open administration made itself felt (ibid.).

Another Danish historical heritage is a remarkable respect for local, rural interests. Examples are: adaptation of the infrastructure to local interests, decentralization,
Politics, Culture and Self

and respect for local government. Coordination between central and local interests relies heavily on a culture of informal and consensus-seeking negotiation and bargaining. This is also a general characteristic of the Scandinavian political culture. However, in Denmark, strong egalitarian and consensus-seeking norms (which are shared with Sweden) are combined with strong respect for individuality and liberality (which is not shared to the same extent with Sweden) (ibid.: 290).

SOCIAL CAPITAL

The economic growth and welfare of a society is highly determined by its economic capital. However, human capital such as education and skills is also important, and education is an important resource for political involvement and participation. The importance of a third form of capital, social capital, has recently been much discussed because of its importance for political culture and democracy. Social capital can be understood as the quality of the social networks in a society, i.e. the degree to which people are willing to cooperate without necessarily receiving immediate rewards, because they expect to benefit in the long run (Coleman 1988). Hence, trust in other people and trust in the society and its institutions are important indicators of social capital. The degree of interpersonal trust is a basic and enduring trait of political culture, while institutional trust is probably more dependent on recent institutional performance (Norris 1999).

Because of the voluntary character of social capital, the degree of participation in voluntary organizations is a measure of social capital (Putnam 1993). From a historical point of view, the development of voluntary organizations, forming a part of the civil society, was an important breeding ground for social capital in Denmark and Sweden. In particular, the development of popular mass movements (in Danish: Folkelige bevægelser; in Swedish: Folkrörelser) during the nineteenth century played an important role here. In Denmark, Christian revivalist movements and the free churches predate the farmers’ movements and the labor movement (Gundelach 1998). The same happened in Sweden, but for certain reasons, to which we later shall return, the temperance movement was much stronger in Sweden than in Denmark.

It is characteristic for the popular mass movements in Scandinavia that they originally saw themselves as protest movements against the elite, that they consisted of an entire network of organizations with different purposes, that each movement as an entity linked individuals and strong local branches to the nation as a whole, that they stood in sharp contrast to the charity organizations dominated by the middle and upper classes, and that they functioned as training grounds for development of organizational skills and democracy. Unique to Scandinavia is the development of
Political Culture in Denmark and Sweden

a close collaboration between the state and the popular mass movements without destruction of the autonomy of the latter (Rothstein 2002: 295–296). Corporatist cooperation with the state is especially strong in Sweden. In both Denmark and Sweden, participation in a rich network of voluntary organizations such as trade unions, sport clubs, study circles, tenants’ organizations, etc. has, as a whole, shown no decline (Rothstein 2002, Torpe 2003). This stability is contrary to the findings of declining social capital in the US during the last two decades (Putnam 2000). Most likely, the continuously high level of participation in Denmark and Sweden can explain the stable high level of interpersonal trust.

Institutional trust has been volatile in the Nordic countries. In Denmark, a surge of mistrust in politicians and the political system occurred in the early 1970s. It was probably triggered by poor performance of the parties and by splits both within the leadership of the major parties and between traditionally cooperating party-constellations on such subjects as left-right orientation, taxation, moral policy and the European Economic Community (EEC). These problems resulted in the notorious 1973 election in which three new parties obtained 25 per cent of the vote, an occurrence never seen before. However, recently a comprehensive project on power and democracy in Denmark could report increasing satisfaction and trust towards authorities and institutions, and an experience among citizens of less distance between them and the elite (Togeby et al. 2003). In Sweden a similar surge of mistrust in politicians occurred in the 1990s, concurrent with the economic setback and the rise in unemployment.

DRINKING AND MORAL CHARACTER

A subject that often comes up when discussing the difference between Danish and Swedish culture is the different drinking habits in the two countries. While the Danes have a relaxed attitude to the use of alcohol, in Sweden drinking is limited to special occasions. The difference in official policy towards drinking is well illustrated with the fact that in Sweden spirits are expensive and can only be bought from the State Liquor Monopoly stores, while in Denmark they can be bought almost everywhere. In the popular mind the Danes see the Swedish drinking habits as one indication that Swedes in general are more self-righteous, moralistic and submissive to the state while the Swedes see the Danes as joyful and careless free riders.

No doubt the differences in drinking habits can be traced to the fact that the temperance movement was much stronger in Sweden than in Denmark. Why this is so is a more difficult question to answer. Eriksen (1990) has forwarded an interesting explanation related to the religious and temperance movements in the
Politics, Culture and Self

nineteenth century with permanent consequences for cultural differences between the two countries.

After the Reformation the state church in both Denmark and Sweden was Evangelical Lutheran. In the German-inspired Lutheranism salvation is God-given so in principle the believer can do nothing to improve his chance of salvation. In contrast, Anglo-American revivalist Christianity (such as Methodism and Baptisms) gave hope for eternal bliss to the drunkard who was able to renounce the bottle, and Anglo-American revivalism originated the nineteenth century temperance movement in both Denmark and Sweden. This religious movement was in conflict with the Lutheran view that all active striving for personal improvement could lead to heretical self-righteousness.

In Denmark the temperance movement was mostly rejected by the adherents of the dominant Lutheran Grundtvigianism, a form of Lutheran Christianity that believed in the potential for good in all people. In Sweden the temperance movement was much more influenced by Anglo-American revivalism.

Interestingly, according to this historical account differences in moral character between Danes and Swedes to this very day, not only concerning drinking habits, can be explained in a religious-ideological context.

[...] here we have a clue to the difference between Danish and Swedish folk cultures: they can be understood in terms of the penetration of, respectively, the Anglo-American and the Lutheran views of Christianity in the two countries. In Sweden, there evolved in conjunction with the Anglo-American view of Christianity a greater tendency to place pressure on the individual for self improvement, among other things by forsaking alcohol. In Denmark, in the Lutheran fashion, there predominated the idea that there must be no restriction to the individual’s possibility of action. Genuine human improvement could only come from [unrestrained] change from within, which was expressed in a healthy and natural moderation, also in relation to alcohol (Eriksen, 1990: 90–91).

Eriksen attributes this difference between Denmark and Sweden to incidental causes, such as different strength of connections to Britain and America, but we think that the stronger tradition for corporate solutions and consensus seeking in Sweden than in Denmark might also be contributing factors.

MORAL EDUCATION

Since we assume that culture is transferred from generation to generation through the process of upbringing and education, we expect that the teaching guidelines in the educational system tend to reflect the values that those in power find most
Political Culture in Denmark and Sweden

important to be transferred to the next generation. A brief survey of education acts and curricula for the public schools (called folkeskoler – people’s schools) in Denmark and Sweden gives the following picture.

In Denmark, seven years of compulsory schooling for the general public was introduced in 1814. Until 1933, the local pastor was a member of the school board, and his duty was to see to it that the pupils were taught proper Christian values. In the 1937 Education Act, the goal was still to stress ethical and Christian values, love for one’s nation, one’s fellow countrymen and one’s home, and deference to nature and humanity. Further, the school was to encourage good behavior, truthfulness, a sense of duty, orderliness and discipline. These values were seemingly so fundamental that they were repeated in the new Government notice of 1960 (Zolner 2000: 15–16). They were associated with religion, the family, the nation-state, and with respect for authorities; a mixture of traditional values and values associated with the modernization process.

The Education Act of 1975 introduced the promotion of a very different set of values: all-round development, imaginativeness, joint responsibility, intellectual freedom, democratic engagement, participation in decision-making, the desire to learn, independence and community (ibid.: 16). These were post-materialist values associated with individual growth, social involvement and democratic participation. They reflected important developments in the society such as; less routine work and fewer authoritarian relations in the workplace, and more political participation from the younger generation (the Vietnam War protest movement and the youth rebellion). Now, Christian values were not something that one should learn, but something one should learn about in a special series of lessons. Values were definitely ‘progressive’, reflecting the ideals of the increasingly influential left-wing/intellectual elite, mostly employed in the growing public sector.

The 1993 Act coming shortly after the breakdown of the East European communist countries, revised the values in a conservative direction. Participation in decision-making, joint responsibility and intellectual freedom were repeated. Democratic engagement was changed to democracy; all-round development was changed to personal development; independence was changed to self-confidence and freedom. New values mentioned were: rights and duties, equality, enterprise, absorption, and drive. These new values moved closer to bourgeois economic liberalism and away from left wing socialism. ‘Desire to learn’ and ‘community’ were no longer mentioned. The statement ‘The public school should see that the pupils are familiar with Danish culture and that they understand other cultures and the interactions between humans and nature’ reflects the presence of different cultures in the school environment. Although Christian values are not explicitly mentioned in the object clause, the commentaries to the law make it clear that
Christian values are very much a part of Danish culture (ibid.: 18). The change in values reflects the reaction in Danish politics against left wing, socialistic values and the increasing problems with integration of immigrants from other cultures.

The Swedish public school system was founded in 1842. As in Denmark, Luther’s ‘Little Catechism’, teaching the principles of reformist Christianity in a question and answer format, created the basis for values education. From 1919, the Bible was used instead (Hedin and Lahdenperä 2000). As late as in 1992 the curriculum proposal for the public elementary school was formulated thus: ‘[…] the value basis of the school is […] deeply rooted in Christian ethics and Western humanism’ (Hagström 1995: 61). This formulation was much debated in public and criticized by the left and the Social Democrats, who were outside of the government in 1991–94, while the Christian Democrats, who took part in the bourgeois government, were much in favor of the reference to Christian ethics. The final 1994 report on the curriculum which was rejected by the socialist opposition, maintained that ‘the value basis is rooted in Christian ethics and Western humanism’ (ibid.: 78).

This is remarkable, since the Swedish Education Act of 1985, passed under a Social Democratic government, did not refer explicitly to Christian and Western values at all. The values here were harmonic development, responsibility, democracy, self esteem, respect for the environment and gender equality. Although these are Western values developed out of a Christian past, the socialist parties feared that by being explicit on this, doubts could be raised about other more important values mentioned. These values were: individual integrity and freedom; the equality of all human beings; solidarity with the weak and the vulnerable; justice, generosity and tolerance (ibid.: 78–100). An important amendment in 1999 to the Education Act of 1985 was the statement: ‘Especially, whoever works within the school should […] actively counteract all types of offensive treatment such as bullying and racist behavior.’ This was clearly meant to denounce any kind of ethnic discrimination – which became an important policy in Sweden at the end of the 1990s during the period of Social Democratic government. This policy was close to the ideals of the intellectual elite in Denmark, ideals whose support within the Danish population in general was waning.

This short survey shows that important political developments were reflected in the official guidelines for public schools in Denmark and Sweden. It also shows that those values that were close to the left-oriented position of ‘New Politics’ eventually had stronger political support in Sweden than in Denmark. This might also reflect that the Danish system could better accommodate popular opposition against the elite. One indication of this was that electoral turnout in Denmark did not decline in the 1990s, as happened in most of Western Europe, including in Sweden.
Political Culture in Denmark and Sweden

In light of the historical development, we can now draw up the following overview of political culture in Denmark and Sweden: A tradition of local cooperation and of public decision-making and bargaining in the Nordic societies is possibly a legacy from the past. The influence of Roman-Christian culture may have strengthened a sense of community, individualism and a certain measure of equality between genders and classes. In the period after the reformation, the intense military competition in Europe resulted in a strong centralized state and a rather efficient and non-corrupt state bureaucracy in both Denmark and Sweden. The nineteenth century brought nationalism, but also mobilization and voluntary organization of the common people, first through religious revival and later through social class-movements. The creation of economic, human, and social capital created a solid basis for economic growth, parliamentary democracy and social welfare. At the end of the twentieth century dominant modernization values started to be replaced by post-materialistic values and the old economic left-right political cleavage was supplemented by a ‘new politics’ left-right cleavage.

EPCReN RESULTS

Now it is time to test whether the asserted similarities and differences between Denmark and Sweden are confirmed by the findings of the EPCReN surveys. We will especially concentrate on the overall similarities and differences between the Danish sample as a whole and the Swedish sample as a whole. In Chapter 6 we have discussed whether it is at all possible to make direct comparisons between the different country samples. To control for differences in demographic composition between countries each sample was weighted to the same standard population concerning age and education. Further, graded responses, mostly between four categories were transformed to a rating scale from 0 to 100 and the average rating (between 0 and 100) across all individuals for each item in each country sample was computed. Closer investigations revealed a certain response set in several countries, most notably in China. However, since the response set was weak in Denmark and Sweden, the average response on an item can be directly compared. As a point of reference we will throughout this chapter also refer to the East Asian results, bearing in mind that the compatibility might be more problematic.

COOPERATION AND SOCIAL HARMONY

Table 10.1 shows the average rating on some items that should reflect the fundamental social orientations of the six countries. The first item is labeled P21a, where P refers to the fact that the average rating is given as a percentage (on a scale from 0 to 100).
and 21a refers to the item a in question no. 21. The ratings 70 for Denmark and 65 for Sweden indicate that both Danes and Swedes tend to believe that ‘Human nature is fundamentally cooperative’ and that Danes on average believe so slightly more than do Swedes.\(^1\) Further, there is little difference between Denmark – Sweden on the one hand and all the other countries on the other hand.\(^2\)

**Table 10.1 Fundamental social orientations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average rating</th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Fin</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Kor</th>
<th>Chi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P21a Agree: Human nature is fundamentally cooperative</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P22d Agree: My duty is to maintain harmony among the people I associate with</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P19b Agree: Good government is to maintain harmonious social relations</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P16c Agree: Political leaders should maintain harmony in society</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P21b Agree: The ideal society is like a family</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P16f Agree: A leader should care for the people as parents for their children</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What we can conclude is that belief in a cooperative human nature is probably not specific only to Denmark and Sweden. It might be a universal value throughout the world, or, simply reflect a quite strong collective orientation both in the Nordic countries and in East Asia.

Item P22d shows that the Swedes, with an average rating of 80, are even more oriented towards maintaining harmony with close associates than people from any other country. The contrast to the Danish rating of 65 is quite substantial, confirming the expected higher conformity in Sweden than in Denmark. It is, however, an unexpected result that the duty to maintain harmony among close associates is even more strongly felt in Sweden than in all the East Asian countries, although it gives substance to the claim of Daun (1986) that the Swedes are ‘the Japanese of the north’.

If we look at the norms concerning the more political relations in item P19b and P16c the quest for harmony attains the same high level in all countries. It is only the typically Confucian formulations about modeling the society after family relations in item P21b and P16f which give markedly higher ratings for Korea and for China. Interestingly, Japan is on a level with the Nordic countries concerning ‘The ideal society is like a family’ (P21b) and the Japanese agreement with ‘A leader should care for the people as parents for their children’ is considerable lower (52) in Japan.
than in all other countries. This indicates that this typical Confucian formulation has little support in Japan, even though the collective orientation is still strong.

Contrary to expectation, the overall impression is that the search for harmony is quite strong both in Nordic Europe and in East Asia. One explanation could be that the collective orientation in the Nordic countries is also high because of strong cooperative traditions. The substantial difference between Denmark and Sweden, when harmony is also regarded as a duty, might further be explained with higher conformity in Sweden. Finally, the expected difference is actually found between the most Confucian countries Korea/China and the rest of the countries when relations in the society are equated with family relations. In the next section we shall look more closely at the quality of the social network.

**SOCIAL CAPITAL**

As previously mentioned revivalism and social movements in Scandinavia created a lasting high level of social capital. We also noted that trust in other people and trust in society and its institutions are important indicators of social capital. Table 10.2 (p. 220) shows the level of the two kinds of trust according to the EPCReN surveys.

As discussed in Chapter 6, the validity of cultural comparisons is probably enhanced when the respondents are asked to put a relative priority on different statements rather than to make an absolute rating of a single statement. For this reason, item P20a is particularly interesting, since it makes such a relative comparison. It shows that the inclination to trust other people rather than to show caution is much stronger in the Nordic countries than in Japan and Korea. If we further assume that the rather high rating of trust in China is partly caused by the response set, we can infer that the level of social capital is substantially higher in the Nordic countries than in East Asia. Obviously, this does not mean that networks are unimportant in East Asia. On the contrary: while social relations in East Asia are characterized by a formal and binding mutual obligation; such relations are more informal and voluntary in the Nordic countries.

If we look at the amount of trust in different social relations it is, as expected, universally high in family relations (P24a), but higher in the Nordic countries in most other personal relations. This holds particularly true in relations to friends and to strangers. Interestingly, trust for a person one went to school or university with – the typical obligatory mutual relationship in East Asia – rates as high in the North as in the East.

Table 10.2 further indicates that trust in institutions is generally higher in the Northern Europe than in East Asia, granted the impact of a response set in the China
figures. The clearest difference between Denmark and Sweden concerns trust in the legal system and in the police, where the trust in Denmark is somewhat higher than that in Sweden. This response may reflect certain notorious cases, such as the murder of Prime Minister Olof Palme and some more recent murder cases, in which the judicial system and the police did not perform optimally in the eyes of many Swedes.

Table 10.2 Trust in people and trust in institutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average rating</th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Fin</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Kor</th>
<th>Chi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trust in people</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>P20a Most people can be trusted vs. Watch out for other people</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P24a Trust my family</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P24b Trust my friends</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P24c Trust my neighbors</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P24d Trust my colleagues</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P24e Trust a person I went to school or university with</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P24f Trust my superior</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P24g Trust strangers of my own nationality</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P24h Trust foreign strangers</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trust in institutions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12a Trust the parliament</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12b Trust political parties</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12c Trust trade unions</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12d Trust the media</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12e Trust the legal system</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12f Trust public offices</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12g Trust the police</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12h Trust the armed forces</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12i Trust major companies</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12j Trust the educational system</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other indicators of the quality of networks are the frequency of political discussions and the level of sincerity when disagreeing, shown in Table 10.3. The inclination to discuss politics with different contacts (P6a to P6e) is about the same in the East as in the North. Political discussion with superiors, however, (P6b) seems to be more frequent in the East. However, as expected, the strain such discussions put on social relations, indicated by the degree of pretension to agree (P7a to P7e) seem stronger in East Asia. Item P11b also confirms the common understanding that Asians tend
to find that strong differences of opinion are harmful to the social order. However, the Japanese are not as extreme on this position as is usually claimed (see Chapter 9). In comparison with Denmark, it should be noted that Swedish respondents discuss politics significantly less, with all the contacts mentioned. Except within the family setting, they also tend to pretend to agree to a somewhat greater extent. These results confirm other data indicating that Swedes are more prone to agreeing simply in order to maintain a harmonious interaction. Consensus is very much sought after in conversation among Swedes (Daun 1996).

**Table 10.3 Discussion of politics and sincerity of communication**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average rating</th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Fin</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Kor</th>
<th>Chi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P6a Discuss politics how often: My family</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6b Discuss politics how often: A superior</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6c Discuss politics how often: A close colleague</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6d Discuss politics how often: A neighbor</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6e Discuss politics how often: A close friend</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7a Pretend to agree: My family</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7b Pretend to agree: A superior</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7c Pretend to agree: A close colleague</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7d Pretend to agree: A Neighbor</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7e Pretend to agree: A close friend</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P11b Agree: Strong differences of opinion undermine social order</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the whole, with proper methodological reservations, we found the expected high quality of social capital in the Nordic countries including Finland. Relations to strangers and institutions seem more problematic in East Asia, although a different methodological interpretation could instead attribute high institutional trust to China (see Chapter 7).

**AUTHORITY**

Since social equality is an important characteristic of the Nordic countries, one should expect authoritarian values to be less frequent here than in Asia, where a belief in benevolent patriarchal leadership is a part of the political tradition. It is harder to predict whether there should be any difference between Denmark and Sweden in this respect. On the one hand, greater submissiveness to the state in Sweden could create more authoritarian attitudes, but on the other hand the stronger conformity concerning the dominant value of social equality could lead
Politics, Culture and Self

to less acceptance of strong leadership than in Denmark. Table 10.4 shows average ratings of attitudes towards leadership and views on what qualities are considered important for candidates for political positions.

**Table 10.4 Leadership values**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average rating</th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Fin</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Kor</th>
<th>Chi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P18a Agree: A group without a strong leader means chaos</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P18b Agree: An outstanding political leader is more important than democracy</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P18f Agree: Leave everything to a morally upright leader</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P16b Agree: That a political leader’s morality is more important than his ideas</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10a Important candidate quality: Party affiliation</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10b Important candidate quality: Political ideas</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10c Important candidate quality: Moral character</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10d Important candidate quality: Strong leader</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is little difference between Denmark and Sweden both with regard to the importance of strong leadership and regarding policy versus morals. However, where the differences are noticeable (P18b, P18f, P16b, P10c), the Danes seem to be slightly more in favor of outstanding and moral leadership than the Swedes. This seems to indicate that the dominant value of social equality makes Swedes slightly less favourable to moral leadership than the Danes. In Sweden the word ‘leader’ has a somewhat negative connotation and leaders are only accepted as a necessity.

The results largely support the notion that strong leadership is more approved in East Asia than in the Nordic countries. However, the difference between Japan and the North is quite small. By contrast, strong leadership in a group or in politics (P18a and P10d) is more favored in Korea and China than in the rest of the countries. Item P18b is especially interesting because the respondents are asked to choose either an outstanding political leader or democracy. As discussed above, cultural value contrasts are revealed more clearly when the respondents have to establish priority between different alternatives. When this choice is put forward a clear majority in Korea and China prefers outstanding political leadership to democracy while a clear majority in the North prefers democracy to outstanding leadership. Japan holds an intermediate position. A similar pattern occurs concerning agreement with the statement ‘leave everything to a morally upright leader’ (P18f).

These results probably sum up an important East-West cultural contrast – countries with a longer experience of democratic institutions are prone to attach more importance to the system as such than to the individual leaders, no matter
how outstanding they might be. This can also explain why Denmark and Sweden give greater importance to party affiliation and political ideas (P10a and P10b) while Korea and China give greater importance to a political leader’s moral fibre (P16b and P10c). Both Finland and Japan seem to hold an intermediate position – Finland is sometimes more like the East and Japan is sometimes more like the North. The lower figures in Finland for party affiliation also reflect a greater stress on political pragmatism. Such a trend has long been reflected in Finnish coalition governments which have included several diverse political parties.

CONFORMISM VERSUS INDIVIDUALISM

By conformism we mean the phenomenon of individuals trying to accommodate themselves to common norms within groups and the society at large. By contrast, individualism means that people follow their personal convictions no matter what their social surroundings expect. Thus, greater tolerance should go hand in hand with individualism. In the literature, individualism is an important trait of Western culture, although the Nordic countries are seen to be somewhat more communitarian (Hofstede 1991: 26, 99, Daun 1998: 123). Further, the Confucian-infused culture in East Asia inspires conformism (Pye 1985: 326–330). As discussed above, as far as a difference can be noticed between Denmark and Sweden, the Swedes would be expected to be more conformist than the Danes because of the stronger corporate traditions in Sweden and because of the stronger impact of Lutheran Grundtviganism in Denmark.

Table 10.5 shows several indicators that reflect different degrees of conformism, individualism and tolerance. Especially, strong conformism is reflected in items P18d, ‘Rules must be followed even if you do not understand them’. The expected higher conformism in Sweden as compared to Denmark is only found for the first, more extreme statement. As expected, high endorsement of this is found in China with an average rating of 74, but surprisingly, support for the statement is very low in Japan (41), even lower than in the Nordic countries. That this pattern is not merely a random result is confirmed by the reactions to the reverse statement ‘It is acceptable to break a rule if you find that it is unjust’ (P18e). Here the ratings are also reversed, although less pronounced, with the highest support in Japan (58), the lowest support in China (42), and the rest of the countries in an intermediate position. This also indicates that the high support in China for the first item is not only caused by the response set.

The third item ‘A Political leader should follow public opinion rather than his/her own conviction’ (P16d) refers to the representative aspects of politics, but can also be seen as stressing conformism. Interestingly, as expected, the support is also
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higher in Sweden than in Denmark. The difference between the two countries on this item is actually quite high considering that the average ratings in the two countries are usually quite similar. The tendency is that there is higher support in Korea and China than in the rest of the countries.

Item P23m asks whether children should learn the ability to think for themselves, as an expression of individualism. It is one of the so called ‘valence issues’ that it is difficult to disagree with (Stokes 1963), but even so, as expected, the willingness to agree with the statement is higher in the Nordic countries than in East Asia. Item P20b, ‘Good and evil apply at all times vs. it depends on circumstances’, is more difficult to interpret, but one possibility could be to see it as the contrast between a situation where the individual sticks to his own values vs. a situation where the individual accommodates to the group, hence individualism vs. conformism. As expected, the average rating is higher in Denmark than in Sweden and lower in Korea and China.

Table 10.5 Conformism, individualism and tolerance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average rating</th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Fin</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Kor</th>
<th>Chi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P18d Agree: Rules must be followed even if you do not understand them</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P18c Agree: Acceptable to break a rule if you find that it is unjust</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P16d Agree: A political leader should follow public opinion rather than his/her own conviction</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P23m Children should learn: Ability to think for oneself</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P20b Good and evil apply at all times vs. it depends on circumstances</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P23f Children should learn: Tolerance</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P19a Agree: Even extremist parties should run in elections</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P11a Agree: Every political viewpoint should be tolerated</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P19d Agree: Political decision not fair if minority view is disregarded</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The last four items in Table 10.5 are all about different kinds of tolerance. The general valence item, P23f, stating that children should learn tolerance at home has, as expected, higher support in the Nordic countries than in East Asia. Item P19a, about allowing extremist parties to run in elections has provoked a rather strong difference between a majority in Denmark and a minority in Sweden, that are ready to accept extremist parties. This difference could explain why a xenophobic party
such as the Danish People’s Party has been accepted in Denmark as part of the present government’s parliamentary support basis. One could also see disagreement with item P19a as an expression of tolerance, because extremist parties tend to be intolerant to certain groups, but this only stresses that the limits of tolerance are narrower in Sweden than in Denmark. The agreement between Danish and Swedish respondents with regard to less extreme items such as ‘Every political viewpoint should be tolerated’ (P11a) and ‘A political decision is not fair if the minority view is disregarded’ (P19d supports this interpretation.

All in all, the EPCReN results tend to confirm the expectations that conformity is higher in Sweden than in Denmark, and higher in East Asia than in the Nordic countries, while it is the other way around concerning individualism and tolerance. However, Finland and Japan tend to hold a more intermediate position. In some cases Japan even appears more nonconformist than any other country in the EPCReN study.

MODERNIZATION AND POSTMATERIALISM

According to the cross-cultural World Value Studies two major value dimensions describing cultural differences between the countries of the world are the modernization or materialist dimension and the post-modernization or post-materialist dimension. The first dimension describes differences between countries on the road from the poor, traditional to the modernized, industrialized society characterized by material well-being. The second dimension describes differences between countries after they have reached economic affluence in the development towards postmaterialism characterized by a high quality of life (Inglehart 1997). Recent work indicates that different countries follow different paths in this development depending on the civilization to which they belong (Inglehart and Baker 2000). The Nordic welfare states belong to the most advanced countries, with high ratings on both dimensions, while the East Asian countries have high ratings on the first dimension but relatively low ratings on the second dimension. Our expectation would be that Denmark is most advanced towards postmaterialism, since Denmark was not exposed to the same economic crises that occurred in both Sweden and Finland during the 1990s.

Table 10.6 shows the ratings on different indicators for material and postmaterial motivation. The first item, P1b, indicates how important it should be for the government to maintain high economic growth. It shows high ratings for Denmark, Sweden, Korea and China and somewhat lower ratings for Finland and Japan. This universal tendency of attributing importance to a government policy that maintains economic growth is surprising, at least in relation to the post-materialism paradigm.
### Table 10.6 Modernization and postmaterialist values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average rating</th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Fin</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Kor</th>
<th>Chi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1b Important for government: Maintaining high economic growth</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P19c Agree: Good government is to ensure that nobody will live in poverty</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1a Important for government: Providing a high level of social welfare</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3b Pay taxes: Social security for the elderly</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3c Pay taxes: Unemployment benefits</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3a Pay taxes: Equal educational opportunities for all</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P17 Satisfaction with quality of life</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P22c Agree: Spending time with others is pleasure to me</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3f Pay taxes: Fighting crime</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3d Pay taxes: Aid to poor countries</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3e Pay taxes: Environmental protection</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1c Important for government: Fighting pollution</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When it comes to social welfare, whether the government should ensure that nobody will live in poverty (P19c), the three Nordic countries all have higher ratings than the East Asian countries. Approximately the same result is obtained in asking directly whether the government should provide a high level of social welfare (P1a).

The difference between Sweden and Denmark is further increased in Sweden's favor when asking the respondents if they are willing to pay more taxes for specific welfare programs such as social security for the elderly (P3b), unemployment benefits (P3c), and equal educational opportunities for all (P3a). The question is, however, whether this larger difference between Sweden and Denmark can be explained by a higher endorsement of welfare services in Sweden, or whether the Swedes simply were more willing to pay higher taxes than the Danes at the point in time when the surveys were conducted in the two countries. Our tentative answer is the last alternative. In the fall of 2000 the Swedish social democratic government had introduced tax cuts in the budget for next year with the reluctant approval of the left wing. This happened just before the Swedish survey was conducted.3 By contrast, the leading party of the Danish opposition, the Liberals, was strongly criticizing the ever-increasing taxes in Denmark and had proposed a complete stop on all tax rises just before the Danish survey was conducted in the late fall of 1999.
Political Culture in Denmark and Sweden

The rest of the items in Table 10.6 have less to do with social welfare and more to do with post-materialist values. P17, measuring the degree of satisfaction with life, was found by Inglehart (1997) to be the single best indicator of post-materialist or post-modernization values. Clearly, here all Nordic countries score higher than all East Asian countries, thus confirming Inglehart’s result. It also seems that Denmark, as expected, is slightly more advanced towards post-materialism, with an average rating of 80 compared to 73 and 74 for Sweden and Finland. This last result is also confirmed when considering the next item; ‘Spending time with others is a pleasure to me’, which is a post-materialist value. Here, Denmark scores 84 compared to 79 and 76 for Sweden and Finland respectively. Additionally, spending time with others is a far more emphasized cultural value in Denmark as compared to Sweden and Finland, thereby indicating a closer mental relationship to the more urban-verbal sociability found southwards on the European continent. This difference has a long history, longer than that of post-modern values.

The last four items do not measure post-materialism as such, but rather different positions on the left-right – ‘new politics’ value dimension that is important in postmaterialist countries. Willingness to pay higher taxes in order to fight crime (P3f) is a typical right-wing new politics position, and here Denmark, with a score of 78, approaches Sweden with 83, even though the Danes in general are not as willing to pay taxes as are the Swedes. In contrast, the score on a typical left-wing new politics position ‘Aid to poor countries’ (P3d) is much higher in Sweden (50) than in Denmark (37). This larger difference could be explained by the combination of both stronger xenophobia and less willingness to pay taxes in Denmark. A less salient new politics left-wing position, ‘Environmental protection’ (P3e), also shows a difference between Sweden (76) and Denmark (66). That most of this difference can be explained through the lack of willingness to pay taxes in Denmark is confirmed by the fact that when the environmental cause ‘Fighting pollution’ (P1c) is not connected to the tax issue, most of the previous difference between Sweden and Denmark disappears. The slightly higher rating of this item in Sweden (85) than in Denmark (81) can be explained by the previously mentioned fact that the left-wing new politics position eventually rallied stronger support in Sweden than in Denmark.

In summary, as expected, we found that the Nordic societies are clearly post-materialist welfare societies in terms of values, while the value pattern in the East Asian countries, despite internal differences, belongs to the modernization stage. Post-materialist values might be slightly stronger in Denmark than in Sweden, and it is quite clear that Denmark is more right-wing oriented than Sweden on the ‘new politics’ dimension that holds increasing importance in many postmaterialist countries.
As a final subject we will consider that part of the culture that is specifically oriented towards the political system. We will consider values concerning the overall performance of the political system, the democratic performance of the system, and possible problems with political efficacy. The overall expectation is that the Western legal tradition and the longer and more stable experience with democracy will have contributed to a higher evaluation of the political system and the democratic institutions, and to higher efficacy in the West as compared to East Asia. Within the Nordic countries, because of the recent economic crisis in Sweden, we expect that Denmark will perform slightly better in all these respects.

The first indicator, P13 in Table 10.7, shows the evaluation of the overall performance of the political system in each country. The Nordic countries show clearly higher ratings than East Asia. The evaluation in Denmark is only one point higher than in Sweden, which is not statistically significant. One interpretation of the similarity here between Denmark and Sweden is that the crisis in Sweden, after all, was not so serious as to damage the evaluation of the overall performance of the system. Another interpretation could be that the evaluation in Sweden was previously higher than that in Denmark, because of the success of the world-famous ‘Swedish Model,’ and that that evaluation had now been brought down to the same level as that of Denmark.

Table 10.7 Performance of the political system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average rating</th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Fin</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Kor</th>
<th>Chi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P13 How well the political system is working</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P19f Agree: Quality of politicians more important than laws and institutions</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2a More active government vs. less government</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2b Free market vs. strong government</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next item, P19f, measures whether the respondents think that the quality of the politicians is more important than laws and institutions. Given the importance of rule by law and democratic institutions in the West, it is no wonder that all Nordic countries, in comparison with all countries in East Asia, give less relative importance to politicians than to laws and institutions. However, the Danes are closer to the Asians than the Swedes. One hypothesis would be that Danes, in comparison with Swedes, tend to trust individual thinking more than rules and institutions, and thus have relatively more ambiguous attitudes towards laws and
Political Culture in Denmark and Sweden

institutions. That would also be consistent with the stronger Danish support for the moral quality of leaders (Table 10.4, P16b and P10c).

The two last indicators in Table 10.7 indicate how active the government should be (P2a) and whether it should leave regulation to market forces (P2b). Denmark stands out in relation to all the other countries as less in need of a strong government. This indicates a stronger economic liberal tradition in Denmark, but the explanation could also be that all countries except Denmark were seriously hurt by the recent economic crises in Asia and in the former European communist countries, and thus were more in need of government intervention. An increasing vulnerability due to globalization is indicated by the skepticism shown by all countries towards regulation by market forces.

Table 10.8 Democratic performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average rating</th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Fin</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Kor</th>
<th>Chi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P14a How important: The right to vote</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P14b How important: Right to participate in any organization</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P14c How important: Right to gather and demonstrate</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P14d How important: Fully informed about government</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P14e How important: Freedom of speech</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P14f How important: Right to criticize government</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P15a How satisfied: The right to vote</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P15b How satisfied: Right to participate in any organization</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P15c How satisfied: Right to gather and demonstrate</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P15d How satisfied: Fully informed about government</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P15e How satisfied: Freedom of speech</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P15f How satisfied: Right to criticize government</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P19h Agree: Good government is to ensure individual freedom</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P19i Agree: Political discussions are a natural part of classroom instruction</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P19j Agree: Political discussions are an obligatory part of children’s upbringing in the family</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P19e Agree: Good government is promoted by competition for power</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9a Make voice heard: By voting</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10.8 lists the importance of, as well as the satisfaction with, several defining traits of a democratic system, such as the right to different forms of participation and access to information and debate. The Nordic countries stand out as overwhelmingly
in support of democratic rights and also as very satisfied with the state of these rights. The only example in which importance and satisfaction do not lie above 75 on a scale from 0 to 100 in all the Nordic countries concerns information on government (P15d). On this point the average satisfaction level lies between 61 and 70. The importance attached to democratic rights is also quite high in Japan and Korea (the Chinese were not asked). Satisfaction with democratic rights is considerably lower in East Asia than in the Nordic countries. The importance assigned to different rights does not differ much between the Nordic countries. However, satisfaction with democratic rights is consistently slightly higher in Denmark than in Sweden by three to five points. It is difficult to say whether these minor differences can be explained by slightly better democratic conditions in Denmark or by higher ambitions in Sweden.

Four different items covering bases for better democracy such as individual freedom (P19h), political discussions (P19i and P19j), and competition for power (P19e) rated quite high in all countries, without any obvious pattern. Denmark rates the first three items a little higher than Sweden. The last item P9a, in Table 10.8, shows that the opinion of nearly all respondents from the Nordic countries is that they make their voices heard by voting, while this is less common in East Asia. The extremely high rating of 99 in Denmark compared to 96 in Sweden and 90 in Finland could be explained by the tradition in Denmark for letting even extremist parties participate in elections. This might also explain why turnout has not declined in Denmark as it has in most other Western countries.

Table 10.9 Political efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average rating</th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Fin</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Kor</th>
<th>Chi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P8a Agree: No difference between political parties</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8b Agree: Bureaucrats don’t care what I think</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8c Agree: I have no influence on government</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8d Agree: Politics is too complicated for me</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P16a Agree: Politicians stop thinking about people’s interests after taking office</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Political efficacy refers to the degree to which people think and feel that they can influence political decisions, and Table 10.9 shows some indicators. One condition for political efficacy is that the political parties have different policies so that the voters can manifest their different political views through voting. Item P8a shows the degree to which respondents think that there is no difference between the political parties. Interestingly, the biggest difference in ratings of this item is between Denmarks 31 and Swedens 61. This is the greatest difference occurring
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between Denmark and Sweden for any item in the entire EPCReN study. This great difference is at least partly influenced by current special conditions in the two countries, such as the presence of a strongly xenophobic party in Denmark and the recent move of the Swedish Social Democratic Party towards the center. But these conditions probably also reflect a higher degree of political conformism on the elite level in Sweden than in Denmark.

Other indicators supporting this finding are the ratings 65 versus 58 concerning ‘Bureaucrats don’t care what I think’ (P8b) and 49 versus 36 concerning ‘Politics is too complicated for me’ (P8d) for Sweden versus Denmark. However, the same contrast does not appear for ‘I have no influence on government’ (P8c, 59 versus 60) and for ‘Politicians stop thinking about people’s interests after taking office’ (P16a, 55 versus 61). We must conclude that there is no strong case for claiming higher efficacy in Denmark than in Sweden apart from that caused by current special conditions. More noticeable in Table 10.9 are the tendencies towards relatively low efficacy in both Finland and Japan.

CONCLUSION

From a global perspective, the political cultures of Denmark and Sweden have many similarities simply because both countries have belonged to the same Western European Christian civilization for more than a thousand years. Many differences in comparison to East Asia, especially to Korea and China, such as less authoritarian values, less conformism versus stronger individualism and a stronger belief in democracy versus benevolent leadership, are explained by their membership of different civilizations. Other differences in comparison to East Asia, such as stronger social capital, higher endorsement of social welfare and stronger post-materialist values might be specific to the small Northern European countries. More successful economic modernization and management of political conflicts, even compared to other Western countries, might explain these differences.

In spite of the many cultural similarities between Denmark and Sweden compared to all the other countries dealt with in our study, we also found a few striking cultural differences that might be traced to the different experiences of the two neighboring countries. The long tradition for more corporate solutions in Sweden might explain the higher stress placed on consensus seeking and conformism versus individualism as compared to Denmark. These differences might have been further enhanced by the different character of social movements in the two countries during the nineteenth century. Stronger norms in Sweden than in Denmark concerning social equality might also explain the slightly stronger skepticism in Sweden towards political leadership. These norms might also help to explain why the Swedes are
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more left-oriented on the post-materialist new-politics scale than the Danes, who are more permissive – even when it comes to xenophobic right extremism – than the Swedes. However, a potential problem of political efficacy in Sweden could be that the opinion of a clear majority is that there is no difference between the political parties, while a strong majority in Denmark thinks that there is.

A note of caution must be made on top of all the cultural differences that have been listed here. The contrasts between the different countries in our study are actually not as strong as we initially expected. As a matter of fact, in most cases a majority in all of the countries seems to have a similar opinion on the different subjects. Therefore, the many differences should not obscure the fact that a strong element of universal values appears in all the countries studied. In a crisis, however, which forces people to choose between strong leadership and lawful democracy, the outcome in East Asia might be very different from that in the Nordic European countries. In that sense, the insights into the basic political culture traits of the two regions may offer useful and important information.

NOTES

1 Because of the rather large samples a difference between two countries of about two per cent is statistically significant. However, due to other statistical uncertainties, we will usually only be interested in more substantial differences of least at five per cent.

2 The higher average rating of 73 for China is probably mostly produced by the response set, i.e. the tendency to agree no matter what the subject.

3 According to a study recently published by Statistics Sweden a majority of 60 per cent would be prepared to pay higher taxes for a better social security for the elderly, and a similar majority would accept higher taxes to secure education for all (Svallfors 2003).

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Chapter 11

POLITICAL CULTURE
AND ‘SOCIAL CAPITAL’:
EASTERN AND WESTERN PERSPECTIVES

Ken’ichi Ikeda

‘Social capital’ is one of the concepts that have recently been well investigated in political science, and it has become a keyword for understanding how democracy functions. It is a kind of umbrella term; it connotes variables such as interpersonal trust, social participation and the dynamism of horizontal groups, all of which are closely interrelated. Affluence in social capital contributes to high performance in democratic institutions and, as a result, allows people to have trust in such institutions. Both these elements are essential for a positive spiral in the development of democracy. In accordance with the aim of the EPCReN Good government project, we will investigate social capital in a political culture perspective without taking for granted that findings in a Western context can be replicated in other cultures.

In this chapter, we will present a conceptual model and some hypotheses for the interplay between key social capital variables. This model will then be used in an analysis of data from different countries. Our aim is to see if there is any consistency despite cultural differences, or systemic differences between cultures. The analysis is based on random-sampled survey data from the general population in Denmark (nationwide), Sweden (nationwide), Japan (Tokyo and Osaka), and Korea (nationwide) that were collected in 2000 for the EPCReN Good Government Project.¹
According to Coleman (1988), ‘human capital is created by changes in persons that bring about skills and capabilities that make them able to act in new ways.’ At the same time, ‘social capital comes about through changes in relations among persons that facilitate action.’ The idea is that more productive activities can be created when there are trusting personal relationships, than when these are lacking. Trust as social capital serves as a precondition for further socially important activities, such as financial dealings.

In his book on local politics in contemporary Italy, Putnam (1993) argues that the differences in the level of performance between local governments are the results of the differences in civic communities, not the results of different levels of economic development. He emphasizes ‘associational life’ which is at the heart of activities in civic communities. Participation in a variety of associations, even such as sports clubs, cultivates one’s cooperative skills as well as a shared sense of responsibility for collective endeavors.

Individual experiences deriving from discussions or from the coordination of voluntary organizations can cultivate a person’s management capacity, which can then be generalized and applied to many other social activities. Associational life matures people’s judgment of who to trust and with whom to cooperate, and enables them to evaluate the competence of others. Generalized trust should be distinguished from undifferentiated blind trust to everyone, and it is a developed sense of trust based upon one’s judgment of who can be trusted in associational life. This allows the social system to be less sanction-based and, as a result, helps to reduce the social cost of surveillance.

The citizen’s cost of surveillance can also be cut down when institutional trust is developed. Institutional trust motivates the workers in the institution, which in turn influences the citizens to grant higher evaluation to the institutions, and thus creates a positive feedback loop.

The components of social capital mentioned above, i.e. the high level of activity and interaction in voluntary associations, the reduction of social cost, and the social effectiveness derived from trust in institutions and people, all contribute towards the enrichment of democracy.

FURTHER INQUIRIES ON SOCIAL CAPITAL

Mondak (1998) argues that too much focus has been placed upon voluntary associations in regard to the concept of social capital, and calls for more attention to social interaction itself. Since social capital can be generated in a diverse range.
of social interactions, as Coleman suggests, other forms of social interaction should also be investigated.

In daily social interactions, we have a variety of chances to discuss topics that are related to politics. Talking about politics enables people to get political information at a relatively low cost, for it allows the exclusion of otherwise necessary investments, such as time spent reading newspaper articles. It also reduces the risk of exposing one’s ignorance and losing face; when interacting with close others, the result of such embarrassment would be less consequential (Huckfeldt, Ikeda and Pappi 2000, Ikeda and Huckfeldt 2001). This kind of daily conversation is very different from formal discussions in public; nevertheless, it still cultivates the political sense and knowledge of ordinary citizens and it forms one of the essential starting points for civic life.

Kim et al. (1999) argue that daily casual conversation does contribute to democracy; the more people talk politics, the more politically sophisticated they become. He shows in his survey from 1996 that people, through political conversations, crystallize their own political attitudes and positions, which in turn enable them to be more politically active, for example by participating in campaign activities or petitions to governmental institutions.

Moreover, Scheufele (1999) claims that ‘willingness to speak out’ in public places is one of the necessary elements of the public opinion process. Without this willingness, public opinion can hardly exist; or it would just be a result of a pressure to conformity coming from the majority side (Noelle-Neumann 1984). Scheufele showed that both the amount of interpersonal discussion regarding politics and a fear of isolation contribute to the willingness to speak out. He also showed that the effect of mass media is mediated by interpersonal communication; unless people interpersonally discuss what has been in the media, media use will not contribute to expression of opinion.

In their detailed analysis of political knowledge among Americans over 50 years, Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) claim that political knowledge is an integral part of informed citizenry, and that political conversation is an important determinant of political knowledge. Neuwirth (2000) also reports the same pattern for a Mexican sample, as well as in Bennett et al. (2000) for an American and a British sample. Given the importance of political discussion in enhancing democratic processes, we will proceed to an analysis of the determinants of this variable from our East-West comparative perspective.
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CULTURAL / PHILOSOPHICAL FACTORS

Although the importance of social capital for democracy has been widely confirmed, this certainly does not mean that the actual forms of democracy are the same in Asia or Scandinavia as in Italy or in the United States. The EPCReN study is a comparative project between the countries of Scandinavia and East Asia, and therefore adequate to examine how far the notion of social capital is applicable to these countries. The cultural factors in focus are general values, ideas about political leadership and authority, and general philosophy on interpersonal relationships.

Worldwide value studies indicate two important dimensions in general values: modernization and postmodernization values (Inglehart 1997). Especially, postmodernization values are crucial to democracy since they emphasize participation as well as tolerance of dissent (freedom of speech) (Inglehart 1990, Clark 1998). On the other hand, modernization values emphasize more basic societal stability, i.e. healthy economic development and the maintenance of social order. Concerning social capital, people who are inclined toward postmodernization values are expected to be more supportive of participation and tolerance of dissent compared to those who prefer modernization values. This implies that daily political conversation; a premise for ‘willingness to speak out’ as shown by Scheufele (1999), is more welcomed by postmodernization values than by modernization values.

The second cultural factor concerns the essence of politics: the authoritative allocation of scarce resources. When comparing cultures of the East and the West, one can expect huge differences in the idea of authority, or in ideals about political leaders.

The moralistic, paternalistic and harmony-oriented leader is a prototype of Eastern political culture in contrast to the bureaucratic official in the West. In the East, emphasis is on the personality and the morally upright character of the leader (Chu 1998, Hofstede 1991). Moreover, paternalistic leadership is regarded as important in the East in order to coordinate and manage different interests; for example, suppressing dissent in the name of societal harmony. In the West, dissent is negotiated in democratic institutions and even encouraged in public debate.

Authoritarian leadership is more emphasized in the East than in the West, and this may well affect the function of social capital. In the East, authoritarian attitudes tend to stress social participatory values (in horizontal organizations) and to suppress possible dissent even in close relationships, such as in the family (that in itself often connotes a vertical relationship). Existing institutions might also be perceived as indispensable for society, and therefore to be trusted. In the West, especially in voluntary associations, the stress is on freedom of choice and on non-authoritarian leadership style; the workings of the more powerful institutions are under permanent public scrutiny.
Hofstede (1991) introduces a scale called the PDI (Power Distance Index). It measures the preference for authoritarian leadership, using expressions of dissent and acceptance towards superiors. He shows PDI scores in the following order from high to low authority: Hong Kong (score 68), Korea (60), Taiwan (58), Japan (54), Norway (31), Sweden (31), and Denmark (18). These results clearly indicate that the authoritarian leadership style is more common in the East than in the West.

In the East, attitudes to political leadership and authority may affect the political conversations people have, especially when one is talking to a person who holds higher position in a vertical relationship; for example, superiors or older family members. In such relationships, the number of conversations about politics is expected to be fewer because of the above mentioned cultural factors, though this expectation seems yet to be warranted by social survey findings.

Ordinary patterns of interpersonal relationship can also be very different in the East and the West. They can either be harmony-centered or competition-oriented, as well as collectivistic or individualistic, depending on the culture of the society. These basic premises of daily interaction may have an effect on the promotion or suppression of political conversations, which take place as a part of daily communication.

In Eastern culture, harmony with other people is often emphasized. It may not only cultivate trustful relationships among significant others, but also work as a pressure to avoid dissent, or even to suppress political conversation which carries a potential for revealing dissent. Moring and Fiske (1999) stress ‘harmony control’ as a primary means to control the environment. ‘Harmony control’ is what requires an adjustment within oneself instead of a change in the environment. They show that harmony control orientation is stronger in cultures that stress interdependence than in the ones that stress independence. Generally speaking, the East tends to emphasize harmony control more than the West.

However, when comparing Japan and the US, Uleman et al. (2000) found that harmony orientation is not always stronger in the East than in the West. It depends on the context: for example, harmony is more stressed by Americans than by Japanese when interacting with family members. Although this finding contradicts expected cultural differences, we will still expect that the greater emphasis on harmony in the East will in general restrict political conversations.

### BASIC MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

The analysis will focus on the role of social interaction in relation to participation and trust, taking cultural differences into account. All in all, the basic model consists of two parts (Figure 11.1). The first part concerns processes generating social capital (shown inside an oval in the figure) and the second concerns the possible cultural
factors surrounding it. These cultural factors are assumed to be exogenous to the production of social capital. By treating them separately, we expect to find some variations in the relationships that are conditioned by the exogenous factors.

Figure 11.1 Conceptual framework for social capital analysis

As mentioned above, the key variables of participation, trust, and social interaction are inter-correlated. They are the sources of effective government. For the purpose of analyzing the whole configuration of social capital, all relationship between the key variables should ultimately be considered simultaneously. However, in this chapter we will focus on social interactions (political discussion) as dependent on participation and trust. The hypotheses investigated are the following.

Hypothesis 1.1: Social interaction, i.e. political conversation, is positively related to the perceived efficacy of social participation.

Wyatt et al. (2000) report that political conversation is positively related with the quality of political opinion as well as with political participation. Similarly, La Due Lake and Huckfeldt (1998) find that, in the election campaign period, the more political conversation the respondents have, the more they are committed to political participation in the form of campaign activities. Presumably, the same logic can be applied to the perceived efficacy of social participation.

Hypothesis 1.2a: Social interaction is positively related to generalized trust. However, it is uncertain if this also holds for interactions within close social relationships such as between family members or friends where personalized trust is more crucial.
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Hypothesis 1.2b: There is a weak positive effect of institutional trust on political conversation.

While Putnam claims that social trust in terms of generalized trust in people is cultivated through civic engagement, Newton (1999) makes the following counter-argument. Most people do not spend much time in voluntary associations; even the Dutch, one of the peoples in the world with the highest participation in voluntary organizations, spend only four to five hours per week on average on this activity. Newton also contends that although social trust is often based on personal knowledge of others, political trust is mediated especially by the mass media. This means that the sources of social trust and of political trust are different. Still, there are some indications that a weak positive relationship is found between the two kinds of trust, as well as between social trust and political participation (Newton and Norris 2000, Norris 1999). Furthermore, using the world value survey (including Sweden, Norway, Taiwan, mainland China, and Japan), Norris (1999) finds a weak positive relationship between institutional trust and political conversation, and between social trust and political conversation. Although the hypothesized relationships can be stronger or weaker, depending on the culture in question, the basic configurations are expected to remain the same.

Dissidence, defined as disagreement with others, is an important aspect of political conversation in relation to tolerance. Political conversation in everyday situations has a high potential for creating disagreement (Ikeda and Huckfeldt 2001), thus tolerance is relevant to political conversation.

In a social situation where conflict is possible, if one experiences an atmosphere of tolerance of dissent, one will feel more comfortable in trying to convince others rather than keeping silent or even pretending to agree. We asked about this kind of behavior in relation to different kinds of persons such as family members, superiors, close colleagues, neighbours, and close friends.

Hypothesis 2: The more tolerance the respondents perceive in daily interactions, the more it is likely that they will engage in political conversations.

Through the correlation expected by hypothesis 2, tolerance makes social capital. The amount of political conversation will be a positive function of tolerance of dissent as well as of other social capital variables. And in turn, tolerance of dissent is also expected to be a positive function of social capital variables such as trust or participation.

Cultural variables presumably promote or suppress the interrelationship between social capital variables. We should pay close attention to East-West differences in these cultural interventions. It is not yet possible to predict the exact direction of cultural influences. The analysis here is quite exploratory, though some predictions
were introduced in the section on cultural/philosophical factors above. Thus, it is an open research question to what extent interrelationships among social capital variables can be affected by cultural factors, i.e. general values, ideas about political leadership and authority, and a general philosophy on interpersonal relationships.

METHOD

To construct psychological scales that could be compared across countries a principal component analysis of the items in each scale were conducted for each country. If between-country consistency was identified, scales were constructed with the same variables for all the target countries. If not, instead of scales, key variables would be used separately.

The main independent variables concern ordinary political conversation and ways of coping with dissent. The former directly refers to political discussion, whereas the latter refers to a more general situation in which people disagree, no matter the subject. However, general ways of coping with dissent are relevant to an essential element of social capital as tolerance. Both are investigated in various settings: with family members, superiors in the workplace, close colleagues, neighbors and close friends, respectively.

The amount of political conversation is quite similar between countries concerning discussions with family members. The same almost holds true for discussion with close colleagues and close friends, except in Japan. Most respondents in Denmark, Sweden and Korea answer that they ‘sometimes’ discuss politics in such situations, but the Japanese discuss less. As for discussion with neighbors, this tendency is even clearer for the Japanese. Though people in the other three countries talk less with neighbors than they do with close others, the frequency is far lower in Japan. An interesting observation is that Danes and Swedes relatively seldom discuss politics with superiors when compared to Japanese and Koreans. It is against our expectation that cultural differences in the authority role between the West and the East would have these effects on social interactions.

The national results concerning dissidence reveal that attempts to overcome dissent are made more often in Denmark and Sweden than in Japan and Korea in all situations, which is consistent with cultural expectations. When comparing Japan and Korea, attempts to overcome dissent are more often observed in Japan, especially with family members, close friends and colleagues. Since two of these relationships (close friends and close colleagues) are non-vertical in nature, the origin of this difference could be sought in the wider prevalence of post-modernization values in Japan than in Korea.²
One question asks the respondent: ‘How do people like you make their voices heard in society?’ This question is followed by eight possible actions that people can take in order to make their voices heard, such as voting or contacting the media. The respondents were asked to respond on a four-point scale. The answers do not directly reflect social participation; but measure perceived efficacy. In the analysis, the answers are used as a substitute for social participation. The fewer the affirmative answers, the more the society is perceived as closed by ordinary citizens.

In the initial analysis, we noticed that the first option, i.e. ‘voting’ (Q9a), was interpreted quite differently from country to country. When voting was included, a principal component analysis in each country did not show a consistent pattern, whereas when it was excluded, two consistent components across countries were found, with the exception of the option, ‘contacting media’ which belonged to a different component depending on the country. Thus, two scales were constructed by excluding the options; ‘contacting media’ and ‘voting.’ The first component is the ‘official’ path of social participation, consisting of ‘contacting government officials directly’, ‘contacting a member of the parliament’, and ‘working through a political party’.

The second component indicates a less formal path of social participation, consisting of ‘working in other formal groups (e.g. trade union)’, ‘participating in voluntary associations’, and ‘using family and personal network’.

In order to measure generalized trust, we presented a pair of contrasting expressions to the respondent and asked which of the two were closest to his/her opinion by using a four-point scale; e.g. from ‘watch out for other people’ to ‘most people can be trusted.’ The scale is widely used in longitudinal studies such as the GSS (General Social Survey in the US).

As for institutional trust, the question reads: ‘How much do you trust each of the institutions listed below?’ using four-point scales from ‘not at all’ to ‘very much’. The list of institutions included parliament, political parties, trade unions, the media, the legal system, public offices, the police, the armed forces, major companies and the educational system.

The principal component analysis of the four countries shows that the first component weighs more or less strongly on all the listed institutions. Therefore we adopted this first component as the measure of institutional trust.

In order to measure modernization and postmodernization values, we asked the respondent the following question: ‘Are you willing to pay tax for each of these governmental policies?’; and then listed six different policies: equal educational opportunities for all, social security for the elderly, unemployment benefits, aid to poor countries, environmental protection, and fighting crime. After evaluating the legitimacy of each policy, respondents were also asked which policy was the
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most and the second most important. Using these results including the rank of importance, we constructed scales for modernization and postmodernization values. Postmodernization values consist of social security for the elderly and environmental protection, and modernization values consist of unemployment benefits and fighting crime.

There are three different concepts about political leaders that might be expected to vary from the East to the West. The first idea concerns the morality of politicians measured by agreement on a four-point scale with the statement: ‘The moral and human qualities of a political leader are more important than his ideas.’ As anticipated, this opinion is more strongly supported in Korea than in Denmark and Sweden. However, unexpectedly, the Japanese turned out to be more similar to the respondents from the Nordic countries.

One statement attempted to measure a preference for harmony-oriented politics: ‘Good political leaders should maintain harmony in the society’. Unexpectedly, the strongest support for this opinion came from Denmark, followed by Korea, Sweden, and then Japan.

The statement used to measure support for political paternalism was: ‘A leader should care for the people as parents care for their children’. Korean respondents eagerly supported this, followed by Denmark and Sweden; whereas in Japan, those who answered ‘strongly support’ counted only 14 per cent (vs. 48 per cent in Korea).

In order to find consistent patterns in the respondents’ views on strong political leadership among the countries, we conducted a principal component analysis using the following six items (four-point scale) in each country: (a) ‘A group of people without a strong leader means chaos’; (b) ‘It is more important to have an outstanding political leader than political democracy’; (c) ‘Most leaders would abuse their power if they were not constrained by popular control’; (d) ‘Rules are always there for a good reason and must therefore be followed even if you do not understand them’; (e) ‘It is acceptable to break a rule if you find that it is unjust’; (f) ‘We can leave everything to a morally upright leader’.

The results did not show clear consistency between countries. We chose a, b, d, and f to be added to a scale of political authoritarianism (c and e were not always on the first principal component across the countries) (Cronbach’s alpha is .69). The strongest support for authoritarian leadership is given by Korea (11.6), followed by Japan (9.7), Denmark (9.4), and Sweden (9.2).

Emphasis on personal harmony was measured using the two items: ‘Spending time with others is a pleasure to me’ and ‘it is my duty to maintain harmony among the people with whom I associate’. We simply added both variables (the Pearson correlation between items was .339). The scale shows that the strongest emphasis
on harmony is found in Sweden (6.8), followed by Denmark (6.5), Japan (6.1), and Korea (5.9).

Some factors that are exogenous to social capital or cultural variables can be associated with dependent variables, and should therefore be controlled statistically. Such factors are: ideological strength, media exposure and demographic variables. It is expected that the stronger the attitudes that respondents hold about politics, the more frequently they are inclined to talk about politics (Huckfeldt and LaDue Lake 1998, Straits 1991.) This inclination is caused not by social capital, but by the strength of their political conviction. As a measurement of ideology, we asked the respondents: ‘in terms of political ‘left’ and ‘right’, how would you place yourself on the scale below?’ An 11 point-scale was given to measure ideological conviction: if a respondent answered five (mid-point), the ideological conviction was placed at zero; if he/she placed him/herself at either end (zero or 10), then the ideological conviction was placed at five. Mass media exposure is an important source of political information; the expectation here is that exposure to TV news creeps into political conversation (Delli Carpini and Williams 1994). Mass media exposure in this analysis is a variable composite of newspaper and TV news exposure ratings. Demographic variables were also used as control variables; i.e. gender, age, education, perceived family income, and perceived social status.

The procedure used in the main analysis was to conduct a regression analysis for each country based on the social capital model described above. The purpose was to see whether the pattern of significant effects was as expected from the social capital theory, as well as from the cultural-comparison viewpoint. The effects were measured by standardized regression coefficients.³

The procedure used for each regression analysis was as follows. First, we placed social capital variables as well as control variables as independent variables, i.e. without cultural variables. If a consistent effective pattern of social capital is detected across countries, then a trans-cultural social capital effect exists. If some variations between countries are found, they can be attributed to cultural factors.

The second step is to add cultural variables to the equations to check whether this causes some systematic change. If the effect of independent social capital variables (participation and trust) diminishes after the addition of cultural variables, some interactions between these variables and cultural factors should be suspected. This procedure is not entirely sufficient for the detection of cultural influences on social capital, since statistically we were forced to give up a direct cultural comparison (see footnote 3). Nevertheless, we can examine whether the pattern of social capital determinants is trans-cultural, and we can see the influential cultural factors on this pattern within each country, thus allowing some inference regarding the origin of cultural differences.
RESULTS

The effects on political conversation are shown in Table 11.1 for each country. The effect of each variable is measured by the standardized regression coefficient (Beta). It is apparent that both social participation variables (official and less formal) promote and increase in political conversations in Denmark and Sweden after controlling for other variables. The same is not as clear for Japan and Korea; however, a promotional effect of less formal participation is also found in the East. As this latter efficacy perception is on participation through mainly voluntary association and personal network, the finding is entirely consistent with Hypothesis 1.1 and with the concept of social capital, which stresses less formal activities. However, official means of participation were still positively related to political conversation even in the East, although the effect did not reach a statistically significant level.

Table 11.1 Regression analysis of effects on political conversation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Kor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intolerance of dissidence</td>
<td>-0.21 ***</td>
<td>-0.17 ***</td>
<td>-0.13 ***</td>
<td>-0.11 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social participation: Official</td>
<td>0.17 ***</td>
<td>0.13 ***</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.05 +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social participation: Less formal</td>
<td>0.23 ***</td>
<td>0.16 ***</td>
<td>0.06 *</td>
<td>0.14 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional trust</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalized trust</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.08 *</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological strength</td>
<td>0.06 *</td>
<td>0.10 **</td>
<td>0.07 *</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media exposure</td>
<td>0.17 ***</td>
<td>0.23 ***</td>
<td>0.28 ***</td>
<td>0.16 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.07 *</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.06 *</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.09 *</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.07 *</td>
<td>0.11 **</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative income</td>
<td>0.09 **</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.07 +</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived social status</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1220</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>838</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-square</td>
<td>0.2583</td>
<td>0.1927</td>
<td>0.1872</td>
<td>0.0763</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Levels of significance +: (p < 0.1); * (p < 0.05); ** (p < 0.01); *** (p < 0.001)

Thus, Hypothesis 1.1 was strongly supported in the West, but only partially supported in the East. One can speculate upon whether it is not precisely the case that the norms of the political culture in the East weaken the association between participation and political conversation. If the general norms dictate that one should suppress
disagreement, especially in more formal relations, this could explain the weaker effect of participation on political conversation on the individual level within each country, and especially the weaker effect of participation in more formal situations. We will return to this point when considering the effects on intolerance of dissidence.

Hypothesis 1.2a concerns generalized trust. Except in Japan, this hypothesis was not supported. In Japan, the more generalized trust one has, the more eagerly one commits him/herself in political conversations. In a further analysis, looking at political conversation with different kinds of discussion partners, the generalized trust variable is effective for close colleagues and close friendships in Japan. This is contrary to theoretical expectations. If generalized trust merely means a generalized expression of trust towards anyone, the variable should be more effective for neighbors than close others. It may be the case that since the question did not deal with discussions with strangers (who are even less close than neighbors), differences in the effect of generalized trust became difficult to interpret.

The effect of institutional trust was still further removed from theoretical expectation; hypothesis 1.2b was not supported in any country. By contrast, intolerance of dissent or close-minded attitudes towards discussion in daily life were, as expected, consistently negatively related with political conversation throughout all the countries. This result supports hypothesis 2 and the idea that tolerance is another important element in the formation of social capital.

Almost the same results were obtained after introducing cultural variables (Table 11.2). When comparing the two tables, the effects (the Beta values) of social capital variables do not change significantly. This means that the social capital variable (even when the interrelationship is weak) is not affected by cultural factors within each country. However, the individual level effects of cultural variables within each country, that are studied in this analysis, might be different from the aggregation level effects between countries that could reflect the more pervasive cultural differences between the countries.

The next question is whether the cultural factors are directly related to the amount of political conversation. As we can see from Table 11.2 (p. 248), not many expectations are supported. Personal harmony is significant only in Denmark and Korea, and this pattern is difficult to interpret from the East-West perspective. Some results are significant in the opposite of the expected direction; thus, modernization values and personal harmony variable promote discussion.

As for the other variables, clear and expected results are found for media exposure and ideological strength. The more one is exposed to mass media, the more one is likely to talk about politics. This holds true throughout the four countries. The stronger the partisan attitude, the more one talks about politics. (Korea, however, is an exception).
Table 11.2 Regression analysis of effects on political conversation, cultural variables included

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable:</th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Kor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>sign</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>sign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intolerance of dissidence</td>
<td>-0.20 ***</td>
<td>-0.16 ***</td>
<td>-0.13 ***</td>
<td>-0.10 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social participation: Official</td>
<td>0.16 ***</td>
<td>0.13 ***</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social participation: Less formal</td>
<td>0.22 ***</td>
<td>0.16 ***</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>+ 0.14 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional trust</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalized trust</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>* -0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postmodernization values</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modernization values</td>
<td>0.05 *</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.09 **</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political harmonism</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political paternalism</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarianism</td>
<td>-0.07 **</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on personal harmony</td>
<td>0.07 **</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.08 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological strength</td>
<td>0.06 *</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.09 **</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media exposure</td>
<td>0.17 ***</td>
<td>0.22 ***</td>
<td>0.28 ***</td>
<td>0.16 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>+ -0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.06 *</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>* 0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.07 *</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>* -0.03</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative income</td>
<td>0.09 **</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived social status</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1220</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>838</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-square</td>
<td>0.2708</td>
<td>0.2029</td>
<td>0.2081</td>
<td>0.0872</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: See note to Table 11.1 about levels of significance.

Table 11.3 shows the results for intolerance of dissidence as a dependent variable. In this analysis, politically related variables are removed, as are ideology and institutional trust, since the dependent variable relates to general dissidence, not political dissidence.

First of all, the explanatory power of the model (R-square) differs considerably in the East and in the West. In the West, the independent variables for dissidence explain more than 13 per cent of the variances in the dependent variable. On the other hand, in Japan this level of explanation lay at only five per cent, and in Korea at only two per cent. This implies that in Japan and Korea, intolerance of dissidence
Political Culture and ‘Social Capital’

occurs due to the power of some variables not included in this model. Keeping this in mind, we shall proceed to examine each effect.

**Table 11.3** Regression analysis of effects on intolerance of dissidence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Kor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intolerance of dissidence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social participation: Official</td>
<td>-0.10 ***</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social participation: Less formal</td>
<td>-0.15 ***</td>
<td>-0.21 ***</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.10 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalized trust</td>
<td>-0.11 ***</td>
<td>-0.11 **</td>
<td>-0.08 *</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media exposure</td>
<td>-0.05 +</td>
<td>-0.08 +</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.04 +</td>
<td>-0.02 +</td>
<td>0.10 **</td>
<td>0.08 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.27 ***</td>
<td>0.13 **</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.11 ***</td>
<td>-0.15 ***</td>
<td>-0.09 *</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative income</td>
<td>-0.08 *</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.08 +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived social status</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1220</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>846</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-square</td>
<td>0.1828</td>
<td>0.1316</td>
<td>0.0464</td>
<td>0.0227</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: See note to Table 11.1 about levels of significance.

The effect of participation, especially the effect of less formal participation is stronger in the West than in the East. As mentioned above, this could indicate that intolerance of dissidence is decided by individual participation in the West, while intolerance of dissidence is a more general norm in the East. Thus the individual-level effect of participation disappears or is weakened in Japan and Korea.

Generalized trust is effective in the West, and slightly less so in Japan: the more generalized trust one has, the more one tends to show a dissident attitude. This means that the effect of generalized trust on political conversation in the West impacts indirectly through tolerance of dissidence, while political conversation is directly positively related to generalized trust in Japan (as was shown in Table 11.1). Neither effect is found in Korea.

After adding the cultural variables into the equation, the results for social capital variables remain the same again (Table 11.4). In this table, the most consistent effect is that of authoritarianism; the stronger the authoritarianism, the less dissidence in all the countries, which indicates a trans-cultural effect.

All in all, a clear effect of cultural variables on the individual level within each country was not found. The only effective cultural variable is authoritarianism, and its effect was stronger in the West than in the East. However, the weaker effect of
participation variables and authority in the East than in the West might indicate that individual behavior in the East is more guided by general norms regarding political conversation and intolerance of dissidence, while this behavior is more guided by individual-level differences in the West.

Table 11.4 Regression analysis of effects on intolerance of dissidence, cultural variables incl.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable:</th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Swe</th>
<th>Jap</th>
<th>Kor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intolerance of dissidence</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>sign</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>sign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social participation: Official</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social participation: Less formal</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalized trust</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postmodernization values</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modernization values</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>***</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>***</td>
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<tr>
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<td>+</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
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Note: See note to Table 11.1 about levels of significance.

**SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION**

The assumption of the analysis in this chapter was that the function of social capital was universal for every society. Unless it is warranted by empirical data, such an assumption is dangerous because it can lead to the formulation of yet another invalid stereotype based in the cultural-universalist views of Western political science. Thus, the task of this chapter was to check the validity of the assumption of the universality of the function of social capital by including countries from both the East and the West in the analysis.
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Expectations about the effect of participation in political conversation on the individual level within each country derived from social capital arguments were supported to a reasonable extent, but were confirmed more strongly in the West than in the East. However, an expectation about the effect of trust variables on political conversation was not confirmed, apart from a weak association in the Japanese data. Further, strong effects of participation, generalized trust and an authoritarian attitude on tolerance of dissidence in daily discussions were found only for the Western countries.

These results might indicate that individual behavior in the East is guided more by general norms, while it is guided more by individual-level differences in the West. The finding that the overall level of tolerance of dissidence is clearly higher in the West than in the East corroborates this interpretation. However, this chapter concentrates on differences in the covariation within each country instead of making direct comparisons between countries on each variable. An alternative method of detecting cultural differences would be an aggregate analysis that regards each country as a unit as done in Chapter 6.

NOTES

1 Although Finland and China were included in the EPCReN study, they were excluded from the following analysis because some of the important questions concerning social capital were not asked in the two countries.

2 The difficulty here is that in Korea, questions regarding discussion or dissent with superiors/bosses had not been asked for those who did not actually have superiors, whereas in other countries they were solicited to answer these questions as if they had superiors. Thus, when constructing scales on political conversation and dissent in daily life, missing values are replaced by the mean value for each question in the Korean data. The following analysis was also conducted excluding those without superiors, but the results did not differ greatly from those of the whole sample, thus, only the results from the latter are reported.

3 Although we tried to pool the data from all countries into one dataset after standardization of all variables within each country and to estimate the country-specific effects with interaction variables, the results were not very stable. Thus the analyses were instead carried out separately for each country.

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Political Culture and ‘Social Capital’


Chapter 12

TOWARDS A MORE SOLID EAST-WEST UNDERSTANDING

Geir Helgesen

INTRODUCTION

East and West are, for most people, ‘worlds apart’. This is so despite the fact that space and time seem to have been compressed due to the revolution in the means of transportation and communication, and even though the two areas have given each other mutual inspiration at different periods of time throughout history, as discussed in Chapter 2. East and West are different, and they are still far from forming the ideal brotherhood of man. The question is: how different are they and in what way are they different? In this final chapter, we will try to clarify what might be our contribution to the ongoing effort to build a bridge of understanding between Asia and the West.

The ambitious aim of the present study has been to challenge the pervading stereotypes in the East–West political dialogue concerning right and wrong, good and evil: with regard to different ways of running a society and especially with regard to the underlying reasoning. Our assumptions, which have been confirmed by this study, are that differences certainly exist, but then, so do similarities. The characteristics attributed to a given culture, however, can easily come to be based on preconceived opinions. Observations are not and can never be objective in the sense of being independent from the cultural context within which they are made. From the viewpoint of cognition, culture is not so much something we have, as it is something we are. Hence we have made an effort to utilize the insights of scholars from different cultures in our interpretations of data, as well as in our characterizations of both traditional and modern cultures in this East–West study.

The link between culture and politics is the leitmotif of this book. This link is eloquently described by Lucian Pye in the preface to his Asian Power and Politics
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(1985), where he states his basic thesis that ‘political power is extraordinarily sensitive to cultural nuances, and that, therefore, cultural variations are decisive in determining the course of political development’ (ibid.: vii). If politics are comprised of a cultural pattern, however, and subjugated to this pattern, is it then possible to speak of political development? Obviously, it is not, in the sense that was common in the last century, in which the cultural dimension was basically ignored. In including this dimension, culture can be seen as a guiding force: not determining politics but contributing to an explanation of its ways and directions.

What, then, of culture? Does it not change over time? Obviously it does, and this change is caused by economic and technological developments as well as by political alterations. The trick is to see these processes as dynamic and inter-dependent, which is a tough task, since our main tools in explaining this dynamism are of a rather static kind. One has to presuppose a certain imagination on the reader’s side. This is not all a question of imagination and theoretical abstractions, however. In their ‘Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values’ Inglehart and Baker (2000), based on empirical evidence from 65 societies, maintain that cultural change is ‘path dependent’. By this they mean that although economic development promotes change in values and norms, a society’s cultural heritage continues to be reflected in the new values and norms (ibid.: 19, 49). The present study has demonstrated this as well.

Is it still necessary to continue the effort to document differences and similarities between people belonging to different cultures? Do we need more bridge-building? The answer is yes, because, unfortunately, stereotypes die hard. The Asian values debate, or, more correctly, the Asian values–Western values debate of the 1990s is a good example. It took place as an ideological battle between the proponents of the two positions. From the perspective of the Asian combatants, Western ways were: domineering, provocative and arrogant, and thus resembled the old colonialist and imperialist ways. On the contrary, adherents of Western ways saw Asian values as a mere disguise and excuse for non-democratic, authoritarian leaders who exploited culture as a means to avoid being branded as dictators (Wang 2000, Milner 1999, Tu 1998, Fukuyama 1998, Inoguchi and Newman 1997). Confucius – and contemporary, living Confucianism – were enrolled in the Asian values team, while the proclaimed universality of liberal democracy (including likewise universal human rights) became the best and most frequently used cards of the Western side. Empirical evidence did not bother the value combatants much. Stereotypical views, unwarranted claims and strong accusations – but few verifiable facts and no hard data – have characterized the post-cold-war East–West quarrels. In our opinion, this has been and still is an unfortunate weakness in the debate, and has made it more ideological and antagonistic than is necessary.
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Discussion between participants in this cultural-ideological strife, which has included political leaders, bureaucrats, media people and academics, has not aimed at convergence, but rather at conversion. East Asia and the West were both perceived and presented as success stories, the one new and the other more settled, and both parties appeared to have a good case. Only the financial crisis that hit Asia in 1997 dampened the combatants for a while, since Western critics obviously found it less urgent to attack because it now seemed evident that the astonishing East Asian development success rested on a weak foundation after all. For their part, Asian values advocates, without giving in to Western positions, subdued what initially was a somewhat inflated idea about the comparative excellence of their value platform (Barr 2002: 9). Although the conflict seems to be cyclical, the lack of understanding underlying the conflict is apparently continual. Thus, the conflict has not been solved, and therefore a renewed East-West discussion of ways to organize and manage societies, with acceptable ways of maintaining and exercising authority and power, has been taken up. Here the bridge-building metaphor becomes relevant.

THE PROSPECTIVE BRIDGE

One positive outcome of the values debate has been the creation of a dialogue forum between the governments of Asia and Europe: the Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM). It was established in 1996, and was most likely propelled by the aborted values debate. In a folder with official documents prepared for the first summit in Bangkok the need for a better understanding between the dialogue partners was included in the list of tasks to be taken up. (Asia-EU Dialogue, Asia-Europe Meeting, Bangkok 1996, Official documents).

In the introductory pages of the above-mentioned documents it is stated: ‘The common interests uniting Europe and Asia far outweigh the issues that draw them apart. They both believe in sustainable development, nuclear non-proliferation, poverty alleviation and other global concerns; for the most part, they believe in democracy, human rights and the rule of law: [...]’ (ibid., section I, p. 1) These common interests have not been amply reflected in relations between the two regions, and this, the document states, is in part due to ‘[d]istorted perceptions of each other’s cultures, [...] which, ‘is surprising, given that contacts between Asia and Europe stretch back many centuries’ (ibid.).

In Chapter 2 we discussed the impacts of early East–West relations and focused on the fact that images of the other culture inspired the work of social philosophers and practitioners in the West to a considerable degree. The later impact of Western ideas and practices in Asia is well known. Still, as exemplified by the recent values
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debate, the two regions maintain their own perspectives on society and politics. This is acknowledged when in the ASEM documents it is stated that the [Asian] partners for the most part believe in democracy, human rights and the rule of law. In another page in the folder it is said more explicitly: ‘The goals [democracy, human rights, the rule of law] need to be approached carefully, though, since there are differences of interpretation between Europe and Asia regarding individual versus collective rights and the imperatives of economic growth versus social equilibrium in the newly industrialized countries’ (Section III, p. 6).

Although the establishment of the dialogue forum signals a willingness to tackle pending divergences, at the same time it is clearly acknowledged that the participating governments in this dialogue forum have different views regarding fundamental political issues. How fundamental may not yet be clear to the partners, but the differences at stake are probably more basic than those pertaining to different political ideologies, which does not, however, imply that we are confronting insurmountable dissimilarities. What is needed is to identify the differences, to understand their sources and implications, and to exhibit willingness to compromise. Practitioners in the field of cross-cultural communication have valuable experience to share.

What are hinted at as delicate problems in the ASEM documents quoted above are more directly confronted by the Danish ambassador to Singapore, in his reflections upon ASEM in the context of the breakdown of the present world order. Pondering over how to create a sustainable international order, he maintains as a point of departure that we must understand the simple fact ‘that what is best for us may not necessarily be best for others’ (Ørstrøm Møller 2002: 10). A key word is tolerance, he claims, and continues: ‘Understanding is the key to tolerance. And communication is the key to understanding how 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’ (ibid.). In other words, with cultural fundamentals as the point of departure, mutual understanding seems as difficult as if the contesting parties represented different religious creeds.

The Asian values debate draws our attention towards an important issue, namely the continuing existence of different political cultures in Asia and in the West. This debate has no future if the aim is to reach a deeper and more profound understanding between the two regions. Transgressing the debate does not imply turning away from the issues it has raised, however. What needs to be changed is the approach. Value-free politics are non-existent. One cannot argue about the
essence of power, authority, governance, etc. without referring to a particular set of basic values. On the other hand, one cannot claim to maintain a universally valid position, without disregarding the existence of other sets of basic values. The problem has been that both sides in this debate have taken their own set of basic values for granted. Even worse, they have universalized and simply seen the other side as a defective image of themselves. In our perspective, a reasonable approach would be to acknowledge the existence of different values, and in a cross-cultural setting examine the present-day impact of basic values on people’s attitudes towards society and politics.

In other words, the debate and the ever greater proximity in relations between Asia and the West need to be based on a more realistic, i.e. context-relevant, picture of existing similarities and differences in the two major regions than has been the case until now. Empirical evidence from survey research is one necessary contribution towards this end.

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We have revealed our findings throughout the book by allowing each chapter to focus on particular aspects of political culture in one or several of the countries in the study. The comprehensive, complex and unorthodox approach in this book is revealed by the seriousness with which we have dealt with culture combined with the level of sophistication with which we have handled our quantitative data. Was it worthwhile? Did we find what we were looking for? More important, can our findings contribute to establishing a better and more solid East–West understanding?

We did not always find what we expected. We were often astonished and puzzled to find that respondents in the Nordic European countries actually expressed views generally held to be typically East Asian, while East Asian respondents responded in the same way as typical Westerners on several questions. We take this to be a good sign, because it reveals the fact that the stereotypes that we ventured to challenge may be less solid than expected. This does not imply that culture as an important context is exhausted, or that it is less relevant than initially expected. Below we will take up some of the issues with which the previous chapters have already dealt, and which may help us understand similarities and differences in the political cultures of East Asia and the Nordic European countries. These insights may further convey important aspects of the fundamentals that shape the political systems of the two regions. One such issue is trust.
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TRUST AND ITS IMPACT

As a particular theme of interest trust is rather new to the social sciences. In effect, it has always been part of broader concept couplets such as social solidarity (Comte); conscience collective (Durkheim); Gemeinschaft (as opposed to Gesellschaft) (Toennies); social interaction or interactionalism (Weber, Parsons); and symbolic interaction (Mead), to mention but a few. It was the pioneers of the political culture approach in political and social science (Almond, Verba, Pye and others) who introduced trust as a central and highly meaningful concept in political science. Furthermore, concepts such as civil society or civic community (Putnam) and social capital (Coleman) encompass trust.

Of particular interest is the possible connection between trust on the individual level and on the societal level. Erik H. Erikson, one of the most influential voices ever to stress the social significance of childhood, wrote about the infant:

In his gradually increasing wakening hours he finds that more and more adventures of the senses arouse a feeling of familiarity, of having coincided with a feeling of inner goodness. Forms of comfort, and people associated with them, become as familiar as the gnawing discomfort of the bowels. The infant’s first social achievement, then, is his willingness to let the mother out of sight without undue anxiety or rage, because she has become an inner certainty as well as an outer predictability (1950: 247).

Erikson’s description of trust as a social achievement of the infant underlines what a fundamental feeling this must be. If trust is seen as a sense developed from infancy through childhood years which regulates social relations, as well as a learning process regarding predictable social behaviour, it is bound to have a significant social impact. This is stressed by Francis Fukuyama (1995) who in his Trust. The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity writes that it is a generally agreed-upon fact that political and economic institutions depend upon a healthy civil society. He further explains that this civil society, which includes a host of intermediate institutions such as businesses, voluntary associations, educational institutions, clubs, unions, media, charities and churches, builds in turn ‘on the family, the primary instrument by which people are socialized into their culture and given the skills that allow them to live in broader society and through which the values and knowledge of that society are transmitted across generations’ (ibid.: 5). What we want to highlight here is that any civil society, healthy or not, has a foundation, and that the processes of producing and transmitting culture take place at this level. With the family as the primary institution of socialization, it appears quite clear that trust, as developed in childhood socialization, is bound to influence social life – and thus society and politics.
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In adult life – for the individual – trust may be linked to (self-)confidence. In this respect, trust may mean a clear and realistic self-perception, social confidence, which usually implies a good grasp of the cultural codes of the surrounding social environment, an ability to act and react within a given frame of expectation. What, then, is the relevance of the above to a more generalized trust in the broader society and in the world as such? Only if people can count on a certain degree of predictability is it possible for them to act as a part of the society. In this sense, trust and tradition are interconnected. Fukuyama describes this when he writes that ‘human beings feel an acute sense of unease’ (referring to Durkheim’s concept anomie) ‘in the absence of norms and rules binding them to others’ (ibid.: 7). What influence can this have on the political process?

Lucian W. Pye, who has dealt with the problem of culture and politics since the late 1950s, identified a precondition for political development as ‘the extent to which the socialization process of a people provides them with the necessary associational sentiments so that they can have considerable conflict without destroying the stability of the system’ (Pye 1962: 52). This precondition includes the issue of trust, and what may happen if it is not there:

The problem is broader and deeper than just the prevalence of distrust among individuals. It colours people’s feelings about their relationship to their surrounding world, to the unfolding of events, and it affects their time perspective. The feeling of basic distrust leaves people unsure of their control over their world and hence fearful that the world is either against them or indifferent to them. Distrusting others, they must distrust their own capacity to influence others, and hence they have the feeling of impotence. Unsure about the meaning of events, they are prone to distrust time, to believe that dreaming is dangerous and that nothing good is likely to come out of the future. Without a sense of basic trust and faith, political promises and even the most glowing plans for future development are likely to arouse suspicions on the part of the public. When basic trust is replaced with cynicism, a people will suspect that behind the screen of political promises their leaders are really ‘out to get everything for themselves’ (ibid.: 55).

The main message is that problems at the level of interpersonal relations will be reflected in a more general form. In a phrase borrowed from Pye, it is presumed that the problems will be reflected ‘in the spirit of the society’s political life’ (ibid.: 53). This may sound archaic. Much has happened in the world since the early 1960s. The fundamental conditions of life have not been totally altered, however. Physiological and psychological needs are rather stable. The most important issue in the social sciences of all times, and not least at this juncture, concerns the link between the individual and society. The way in which society responds to individual needs, and in which individuals interact as social beings follows certain patterns, dependent
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on time and place. A general spirit of the times may be observable, however. In one of the first widely read works on globalization, Ulrich Beck (1992) wrote that further development in already highly developed and complex societies promotes individualization – and thereby an disembeddedness from family, locality and social class. By being freed from tradition and social bonds, the individual is left to shape his own identity, and is only linked to others by market relations.

Here the link, or the dialectical connection, between individual and structure is touched upon. What happens on the micro-level, to the individual, affects the macro-level, the system and its institutions. And obviously, as described by Beck above, changes at the macro-level promote individual change as well. Anthony Giddens, who also for some time has been preoccupied with the challenges of the new world order, describes a personality that might be able to cope with the reality of a risk society. Such a self is one with an inner confidence which comes from self-respect, and one where a sense of ontological security, originating in basic trust [italics added], allows for the positive appreciation of social difference. It refers to a person able to translate potential threats into rewarding challenges, someone who is able to turn entropy into a consistent flow of experience’ (1994: 192). In a modern society, where tradition has ceased to form a well-known context for social action, workable interpersonal relations depend on the assumption that others can be trusted, can be relied upon, and that this reliance is a mutual obligation (ibid.: 127). Thus, even the ‘free individual’ in a globalized world (left to shape his own identity) can hardly escape his own childhood. In present-day individualized societies without binding, traditionally-derived moral rules or religious prescriptions, the social significance of childhood may be even more important than it was in the past.

Globalization may be seen as a new external precondition affecting every society on earth. Before nullifying the importance of place, however, it is important to stress that although tradition to a large extent has been replaced by modernity and post-modernity, in which the new information and communications technologies add global influence to local upbringing and educational ideas and practices, we are dealing with a tendency, not a totally new reality. Simple observations testify that cultural ways survive. In the following, based on the response patterns at the national level, we will look into aspects of trust, leadership, life satisfaction and satisfaction with the political system in order to identify possible common traits in the two regions under study.

RADIUS OF TRUST

Whether traditional, modern, or a mixture of the two, we have seen that every society seems to assume some kind of trust between people, and trust in institutions
is also of vital importance. ‘All societies’, writes Fukuyama, ‘have some stock of social capital; the real difference among them concerns what might be called the “radius of trust”’ (2000: 99). Below we will look at the radius of trust in East Asia and in the Nordic European countries.

In Chapter 6 we reported national results from our EPCReN study about trust in different people and social groups, beginning with their own family and ending with a foreign stranger. When these results were adjusted for differences in age, education and response set they tended to show that there was no great difference between the countries concerning trust in personal relations such as family, friends, colleagues, neighbors, fellow students, and superiors in descending order. Only when it came to such distant relations as foreigners and ‘people’ in general the degree of trust was somewhat lower in East Asia than in the Nordic West.³

What we can sense here may be explained as the difference between inclusive and exclusive social relations. In the Nordic region, trust in family and friends seems to spill over to include others as well, although to a lesser extent. In East Asia, on the other hand, the strong family and friendship bonds tend to exclude others. This is one of the central ideas in Fukuyama’s work (1995) on trust: strong trusting relations in the family prevent trust from developing beyond the confines of that group. Based on the above figures we will add that it may not be the strength of the relationship in itself, but probably the particular way in which trust is developed and nurtured inside as well as outside the family that produces this East–West difference. A comparative study on trust in Japan and the USA (Yamagishi, Cook and Watabe 1998) reported in the American Journal of Sociology supports this view, saying that both survey and experimental research indicate that ‘intense group ties, often observed in collectivist cultures, prevent trust from developing beyond group boundaries’(ibid.: 166). In other words, the radius of trust appears to be smaller in East Asia than in the Nordic countries.

Similar results were found concerning trust in political and other public and private institutions. Here we found considerably higher trust in Denmark, Sweden, and Finland than in Korea and Japan.⁴ These results indicate a certain connection between interpersonal trust and trust in institutions, notwithstanding the fact that the level and sequence of basic trust seems to be universal: the closer the relationship the greater the trust. We will now return to the political implications of this.

POLITICAL POWER, EAST AND WEST

It is generally assumed that the Western perception of power is that power corrupts and hence must be checked and balanced, while the East Asian notion is that power is basically a moral phenomenon and can therefore be trusted in the hands of a
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good leader. A statement in our questionnaire that goes to the core of this issue is ‘It is more important to have an outstanding political leader than political democracy’. Even after adjustment for response set the average level of agreement with this statement is about 50 in China and Korea (on a scale from 0 to 100), while it is 27–29 in the Nordic countries. Japan is closer to the West than to the East with an agreement of 36. This result may reflect the extent to which democracy is perceived to be rooted in the different countries.

A similar result is obtained when two items are combined to measure the willingness to leave control to a moral leader. Here the willingness to leave the control to the leader is 44 in Korea and 50 China, while it is 34–35 in all Nordic countries and Japan. In her ‘Public Trust and Democracy in Japan’, Susan J. Pharr writes that: ‘Data collected over a fifty-year period by the Clean Election League reveal that citizens have moved steadily away from a belief that leaving things to leaders is preferable […]’ (Pharr 1997: 246). This groups Japan with the Nordic countries regarding stable democracy, and China and Korea in a class with a more personalized perception of politics. The close similarity between the results from Korea and China makes a case for the cultural argument. What else would make respondents from two such contrasting political systems within the same cultural region answer in such a similar way?

With the already stated reservation regarding internal differences in the two regions being compared, we have found that politics are more person-oriented in East Asia and more policy-oriented – but not necessarily impersonal – in the Nordic countries. When Chaibong Hahm writes in Chapter 3 that traditional politics in East Asia are synonymous with an education which leads to a politics of virtue and to a political order run by wise leaders, he depicts a pattern which, according to our data, appeals to a majority of his contemporaries. Although a rule of virtue may appear to be an unattainable ideal, it is still an ideal that influences the hopes and aspirations, as well as the voting behavior, of people in East Asia. A strong leader is even seen by many as more important than political democracy, preferred by those who wish to be able to express their opinions. This stands in stark contrast to the Nordic respondents, who clearly prefer democracy to a strong leader. On this level, the quarrel begins. Differences have been detected, and from opposing positions, arguments and counter-arguments are hurled back and forth. Let us look into some probable explanations instead.

The notions of trust and power are different in East Asia than in the Nordic European countries. It is important to acknowledge that these two notions are interconnected. In East Asia, strong interpersonal trust and weak generalized trust points to a preference for a personalized notion of (political) power. In the Nordic European countries, on the other hand, strong interpersonal trust and strong
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generalized trust point to a preference for impersonal (or institutional) power. This interconnectedness suggests that the East–West difference is due, to a considerable degree, to different ideals and practices in upbringing and education. In other words, the differences are related to patterns of culture. Do we then have a set of antagonistic and insurmountable contradictions, or are there cracks in the wall of the East–West difference?

SATISFACTION WITH LIFE AND THUS WITH THE POLITICAL SYSTEM?

As has been discussed above, it seems clear that social life highly influences perceptions of authority and political leadership. According to Inglehart’s findings, satisfaction with life is even more conducive to political legitimacy than satisfaction with the political system. ‘On reflection,’ writes Inglehart, ‘it makes sense that satisfaction with one’s life as a whole is a stronger predictor of stable democracy than is satisfaction with the political system. For politics is a peripheral aspect of most people’s lives; and satisfaction with this specific domain can rise and fall over night. But if one feels that one’s life as a whole has been going well under democratic institutions, it gives rise to a relatively deep, diffuse, and enduring basis of support for those institutions’ (1997: 176).

Satisfaction with life is seen as relatively stable and consequently, while political satisfaction is linked to the current incumbents, life satisfaction is linked to the political system (ibid.: 177). It can thus be added that overall satisfaction with life would probably legitimate other successful political systems as well. In our study the average satisfaction with life (on a scale from 0 to 100) is 47–80 in the Nordic countries while it is 51–57 in East Asia. Satisfaction with life is apparently more widespread in the Nordic countries than in East Asia. Will this then colour the level of satisfaction with the political system? Here we find the average satisfaction with the political system is 57–58 in the Nordic countries while it is 40-52 in East Asia.

Thus, a similar profile appears when comparing satisfaction in life and satisfaction with the political system. Obviously, these results are open to interpretation. If we take the satisfaction with life issue first: here, as with all other statements, the respondents express an opinion or view which may – or may not – cover the actual state of affairs. However, in cross-cultural surveys one has to consider ‘path-dependent’ response patterns. It is possible that people in the Nordic European countries in general – no matter what – are more positive and optimistic than people in East Asia. If you are expected to respond: ‘I’m fine, thank you’, to the greeting: ‘How are you?’, then this does not necessarily reflect your actual state of mind. We suspect that this adds a bias to our results. In some cultures, you are supposed to be generally happy
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and positive, and to express it. ‘In Japanese society’, writes Takashi Inoguchi, ‘this demand to be positive does not seem to exist. Given the relative homogeneous setting and the ease with which trust can be nurtured among Japanese in a specific and concrete bilateral and organizational setting, Japanese tend to start off with a rather cautious, awkward, or skeptical attitude toward remote social institutions and unknown persons (unless the stranger turns out to be associated with persons, groups, or institutions they know well)’ (2002: 284). Given that Inoguchi may have a point here – and we think that he has – it is obviously an issue for Inglehart (and others following his path) to seriously consider.

Then there is the expressed satisfaction with the political system. The same argument as put forward above may apply here. It is also possible, however, that there is a closer relationship between the Nordic political culture and its political systems than that seen in East Asia. The Nordic European model of democracy apparently has an organic link to the past, which contributes to an image of solidity and home-made-ness. The political systems in East Asia are all imported and, to some extent, they have been imposed on people by external and internal pressure. The organic link between the political culture and the political system does not exist in East Asia. This might be a problem that will fade as time goes by, but it might just as well be a problem of finding the right balance between culture and politics. This question will be dealt with below.

A COMMON DESIRE, AFTER ALL?

It is probably true that for most people, politics is a peripheral aspect of their life (Inglehart 1997: 176). The more technical aspects of the political system can hardly command much interest among the public in general. What counts is their immediate surroundings and daily life. Political leaders, however, are visible, and, since most people know that those in power may well affect their daily lives, it is therefore common to have opinions about leaders – how they ought to be and what they should achieve. Besides, despite a lack of political interest, it is generally assumed that people have their own ideas about the ideal society. These assumptions make up a framework. In Table 6.3, we presented a response to three statements which demonstrated that respondents in East Asia, particularly in Korea and China, are more inclined to attribute importance to leadership rather than to laws and institutions, and that for many people in that area, leaders are even more important than democracy. We also observed, however, that substantial minorities in the Nordic European countries shared this person-centered approach to politics. Going through the questionnaire, we found five statements dealing with good government, leadership and the ideal society which received strong support
in all six countries. The total average support is added in parenthesis after each statement.

‘Good political leaders should maintain harmony in the society.’ (90 per cent)
‘The objective of good government is to maintain harmonious social relations.’ (90 per cent)
‘The objective of good government is to ensure individual freedom.’ (87 per cent)
‘The ideal society is like a family.’ (78 per cent)
‘A leader should care for the people as parents care for their children.’ (80 per cent).  

All the statements above but one have a certain Confucian flavour. We had expected to see a clear cultural divide in the response, but found a surprisingly similar pattern across the presumed dividing line. The statements appealed to Nordic and East Asian respondents alike. Overwhelming majorities in all countries favour social harmony, and almost as many accept a viewpoint of society as the family writ large. The deviating statement concerns individual freedom, a concept alien to traditional East Asian culture, but most likely a value that is by now accepted and cherished in modern East Asia. We do not see this as a contradiction, as it might have been in a liberal context in which individual freedom is characterized by the individuals being liberated from social and cultural burdens. Seen in the context of the other four statements, the one regarding individual freedom cannot be defined independently of close and binding social relations. Here we may have an important common denominator between East Asia and the Nordic European countries.

The challenge confronting both regions in the twenty-first century is a democracy rooted in American liberalism which hails individual freedom as the highest value, promotes the principle of aggregating individual choices and circumscribes limits for political power. Free trade in a free market is a precondition for this system to operate. Although liberal democracy stands victorious after the collapse of the communist alternative, critical voices are pointing at globalization as the real challenge, in that it seems to be devoid of democratic politics (Bauman 1998, Beck 2000). We are still standing on the threshold of the twenty-first century without a manual, based on which we would be able to navigate unknown waters. Whether such a tool will ever be created remains to be seen. What stands firm, however, is that the future has to be based on the past, and it is our task in the present to make the best possible judgements.

With common stable family- and community-oriented political ideas, the two regions may turn out to have more in common than previously acknowledged. This communality needs to be acknowledged, explored and developed in order to meet
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the ever-growing challenge from a liberalist, rights-centred political order which leaves the reins to market forces and thus, in reality, accepts that might makes right.

What would be the popular response, if any, to the global challenge? It seems as if people in both East Asia and the Nordic European countries operate with some sort of restricted individualism, accepting that human beings are social beings characterized by social mores and fundamental physiological and emotional needs that can only be fulfilled in a collective setting. Few base their reflections on the good society on active political experiences, and even fewer think about society in terms of the language of the social sciences, attempting to analyse reality objectively with theoretical tools. It is thus quite natural that society – and even the political system – is understood as an extension of primary and secondary groups within which individuals have their social experience. The word natural is not used without hesitation, as we have time and time again emphasized that most ‘naturals’ in cross-cultural studies turn out to be ‘culturals’. However, in this context it seems acceptable to use that word, because we want to underline that it is the modern, liberalist view of the individual as a free agent that is unnatural. In a liberalist context, both culture and society are seen from the individual’s point of view as a hindrance to the unlimited exercise of the individual’s free will. Both the idea of the individual as a free agent and that of culture and society as mere hindrances to individual freedom are seen as unbecoming by most people both in East Asia and in the Nordic European countries.

It is a far cry from the modern liberalist version of political order described by Hahm in Chapter 3 as artificial, impersonal, mechanical – and hence neutral – to a ‘family-society’ striving for social harmony. The former is usually labelled modern or, more recently, post-modern, the latter is called traditional – if not backward. Nevertheless, the notion of an ideal society that is not all that different from an ideal family attracts the support of a strong majority among our more than 7000 respondents, Eastern and Western alike. The path-dependence of the Confucian cultural tradition in East Asia and the pre-modern community-related values in Nordic Europe are clearly reflected here. In both cases, the family and the local community are ideal models; what is different is the structure of the family and that of the community. Hence, the structure of the larger system should obviously be different as well, in order to achieve a similar goal: a harmonious society managed by good government and led by good and caring leaders.

However, is it reasonable to stick to a model that quite obviously is pre-modern and is seen by many as a hindrance to development, especially in the economic field? From what we have presented in this book we feel it safe to reiterate the statement: culture matters. In his fascinating and highly recommendable book The Geography
of Thought. How Asians and Westerners Think (2003) Richard E. Nisbett writes: ‘The Greeks, more than any other ancient peoples, and in fact more than most people on the planet today, had a remarkable sense of personal agency – the sense that they were in charge of their own lives and free to act as they chose.’ (ibid.: 2) ‘The Chinese counterpart to Greek agency was harmony’ (ibid.: 5), Nisbett continues, and describes life in China as based in different collectives with no ‘me’ in isolation, but only a ‘me’ as the totality of roles in relation to specific others. We will not take another turn on this topic, but only add what we find interesting in relation to the above discussion, namely that basic socio-psychological differences between people of different cultures show a remarkable continuity. Most of the East–West differences that can be observed today are, claims Nisbett, ‘much the same as the differences that characterized the ancient Chinese and the Ancient Greeks’ (ibid.: 77). Political sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset, in his comparative studies, has reached a strikingly similar conclusion. Referring to a study of Japan and the USA (Lipset 1993), the author states: ‘They vary from each other in much the same way as they did a century ago’ (ibid.: 159). To prevent the usual accusation that he is simply seeing culture as a static phenomenon and disregarding historical developments, Lipset offers a nice analogy that he first used to describe similarities and differences between Canada and the USA: ‘The two are like trains that have moved thousands of miles along parallel railway tracks. They are far from where they started, but they are still separated’ (ibid.: 159–160).

The above quotations highlight and summarize what we have found in the EPCReN study. And although we also have found and presented evidence that undermines cultural stereotypes, we have in this concluding chapter taken up findings concerning trust and leadership pointing at the strength and longevity of some basic values and attitudes which play a crucial role with regard to how societies are organized and politics are performed. We have suggested that this ‘cultural conservatism’ may reflect fundamental human needs. If so, it does not seem rational to subscribe to some form of developmentalism, forming society and political structures according to what might be good for the market or what might be possible based on the latest technological inventions. As is evident from polls in old as well as new democracies in different parts of the world, indifference towards politics is growing. Ulrich Beck (2000) has presented convincing arguments showing that globalization is undermining democracy by removing the foundations that make such a system possible (ibid.: 54–63). Even if this threat is imaginary, if a majority imagines it to be true, then it is a reality. What seems rather solid, however, is the basis of each country’s political culture, especially concerning the social fabric and ‘natural’ hierarchies, or the opposite, a ‘natural’ egalitarian structure.
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Modernization was once seen as a developmental process moving in one particular direction towards one particular point, which had already been reached by the most developed countries. Implicit in this thinking was the idea of convergence. With regard to the economy, politics, values and norms, convergence was seen as the natural outcome of development. Some scholars, and many other individuals, still harbour such ideas. More and more scholars with experience from comparative research are quite convinced of the opposite, however. They can present empirical evidence demonstrating that differences survive and colour social relations in all fields and on all levels of society. Or, as formulated by Tu Wei-Ming: ‘traditions continue to exert their presence as active agents in shaping distinctive forms of modernity’ (2000: 259). If the political system and the political culture are in conflict, the road to good government may be long and stony. In some respects, East Asia exemplifies this. The present development in the Nordic European countries away from a society based on principles of solidarity (because it proves difficult to finance) may have the same consequences.

Both regions are recommended to seriously consider the impact of tradition in present and future ways of organizing society, and to conduct politics with popular consent. In this process, the two regions could join forces for the first time in history on an equal footing, using the forum already established for such an East–West dialogue. In doing so, surprising similarities and unexpected differences would be uncovered, as we have found in the present study. By working together in a cross-cultural effort and making use of the advantages provided by comparative studies – which also implies seeing oneself through the eyes of others – international understanding would increase. Through this collaborative work, the bridge connecting East and West can be built; word by word, deed by deed, and stone by stone.

NOTES

1 The concept ‘liberal’ is tricky, as it is defined in different ways in different parts of the world. An American liberal is seen in relation to conservatives, and thus ‘liberal’ may include notions such as progressive, welfare-oriented, etc. In the Nordic European countries, on the other hand, liberals are opposed to social democrats, and are seen as particularly keen on defending individualism, private business and the free market economy, and thus are in support of as little state intervention as possible. When we use the words liberal, liberalism and liberalist we use them in the Nordic European sense.

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3 See Chapter 6, Table 6.10 and 6.11.
4 The special problems in interpreting the Chinese results are discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.
5 See table 6.3, item A18a.
6 See Table 6.2, item D18fc.
7 See Table 6.11, item P17.
8 See Table 6.11, item P13.
9 Japan was the exception – there ‘only’ about half of the respondents accepted this fifth claim.
10 Whether markets and trade are free is highly contested. This discussion, however, is outside the scope of this chapter.
11 As a psychologist, Nisbett bases his evidence ‘in good part on laboratory research that I have conducted with students and colleagues using a variety of tests to examine how people perceive, remember, and think’ (p. xxi).

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