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Chapter Author(s): RONALD F. INGLEHART and YANG ZHONG

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ONE | Introduction

RONALD F. INGLEHART AND YANG ZHONG

As the twenty-first century enters its third decade, China is poised to become a world power and possibly to replace the United States as the dominant power in the world in the foreseeable future. The most important world event between 2020 and 2022 is no doubt the Covid-19 pandemic. In the first phase of the pandemic, between 2020 and 2021, China had done what most other countries could not. After the initial weeks' confusion and denial at the beginning of the pandemic, China had moved decisively to bring the situation under control and become the only major economy that had returned to steady growth by the end of 2020. In contrast, the performance of the United States in dealing with the pandemic in the spring of 2020 was disappointingly less effective. There is no question that the Chinese government, by adopting extreme measures, had been more successful in controlling the spread of Covid-19 cases and Covid-related death than most countries in the world. By February 2022, the U.S. Covid-related death toll reached 921,984, while Covid-19 had killed 5,726 in China (even though this fatality number is questionable).¹

Yet, the pandemic story is an unfolding and evolving one. The tables began to turn at the beginning of 2022. As the rest of the world decided to coexist with the virus and returned to more or less normal life, the Omicron variant crept up in China in March 2022. This led to lockdowns and partial lockdowns in forty-five cities, covering one third of the Chinese population and including Shanghai and Beijing, two of the most important megacities in China. The lockdown areas count for 40 percent of the Chinese annual GDP.² China's strict Covid control measures,

including lockdowns, mass testing, and restriction of movement, caused a huge amount of suffering, anxiety, frustration, and anger throughout the affected Chinese population—not to mention economic slowdowns.³ People also began to question the effectiveness of the Chinese government's Zero Covid strategy. As a result, the Chinese government unexpectedly and suddenly gave up the Zero Covid policy in November 2022 without much preparation, which led to massive infections and a large number of deaths.

Nonetheless, its success in the first phase of the pandemic did give a lot of people the impression that China was in a stronger position than ever before to challenge the United States economically, politically, and diplomatically, and that China could serve as a model for other countries to follow. China's approach emphasizes a relentless drive for results and relies on an acquiescent public. In mastering the pandemic, the Chinese Communist authorities suppressed speech, individual freedom, and mobility, but its leaders felt vindicated. Other societies, like New Zealand and Taiwan, had also succeeded in containing the virus in the first phase of the pandemic without China's heavy-handed measures—but their impact on global opinion is somewhat limited due to the fact that they are dwarfed by China's population of 1.4 billion people.

This book explores the potential soft power of a rising China by examining the political and social values of Chinese citizens. What values do the Chinese people hold, and how are they evolving? How different are they from the prevailing values of other countries? In answering these questions, we will draw on the World Values Survey (WVS) database, which provides several waves of surveys that enable us to track changes and continuities in the political and social values of Chinese citizens and to interpret them in cross-national comparison. The findings from this edited volume will reveal whether a distinctive set of values has emerged that could enable China to become a leader and set an example for the rest of the world.

China's Lead in the World

When *Japan as Number One* was published forty years ago, it drew widespread attention.⁴ Since the end of World War II, the United States had dominated the world economically, politically, and culturally, and seemed to be a model for other countries. However, after decades of spectacular economic growth, Japan had become the number-one automobile manufacturer and, with impressive social harmony, had very low crime rates, as well as—for a time—a higher per capita GDP than the

United States. Japan seemed to be an alternative model for the world. Ironically, Japan was about to experience decades of economic stagnation. By the start of the twenty-first century, Japan no longer looked like a world model—demonstrating the fragility of forecasting the future.

But China's potential to become number one has a broader base. Already the world's leading manufacturing power, China has had the world's largest economy (based on purchasing power parity estimates) since 2016 and is rapidly catching up with the United States technologically. Currently the world leader in such fields as artificial intelligence, solar energy, 5G, biotechnology, and quantum computing,⁵ China recently surpassed the United States in the number of published academic research papers.⁶ China is second to the United States in terms of total research and development (R&D) spending, accounting for 20 percent of the world's R&D expenditure.⁷ China's scientific and technological advances during the past forty years has been encouraged by concerted government encouragement of scientific and technological innovation, as well as massive government funding of scientific activities and international scientific cooperation.

China has transformed its agriculture-based economy to a world industrial power in a few decades. The country has a comprehensive industrial system that enables it to produce everything from the most insignificant household goods to highly sophisticated items such as huge ships and telecommunication equipment. In fact, China, being the largest exporter in world trade, is the producer of so many consumer and industrial goods that it has significant control of world supply chains, as evidenced in the world supply chain crisis during the Covid-19 pandemic.⁸ China has seven of the ten busiest ports in the world.⁹ Much of China's industrial success has to do with its quick and massive infrastructural expansion. China has the most mileage of high-speed railways in the world. Moreover, China is expanding its infrastructure of connectivity with the rest of the world through its "One Belt and One Road" initiative.

In educational performance, China shows great long-term promise. Since 2000, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has conducted the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which measures fifteen-year-olds' ability to use their reading, mathematics, and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges. Table 1.1 shows the latest available results. Students in four Chinese cities and provinces (Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang) took the PISA tests—and earned the world's top scores. These scores are only available for four areas that are among the best-educated

Table 1.1. Average Score on Mathematics, Science, and Reading (PISA 2018)

1	China (4 cities)	579
2	Singapore	556
3	Macao	542
4	Hong Kong	531
5	Estonia	525
6	Japan	520
7	S. Korea	520
8	Canada	517
9	Taiwan	517
10	Finland	516
11	Poland	513
12	Ireland	504
13	Slovenia	503
14	United Kingdom	503
15	New Zealand	502
16	Netherlands	502
17	Sweden	502
18	Denmark	501
19	Germany	500
20	Belgium	500
21	Australia	499
22	Switzerland	498
23	Norway	497
24	Czech Rep.	495
25	United States	495
26	France	494
27	Portugal	492
28	Austria	491
29	Latvia	487
30	Russia	481
31	Iceland	481
32	Lithuania	479
33	Hungary	479
34	Italy	477
35	Luxembourg	477
36	Belarus	472
37	Croatia	472
38	Slovakia	469
39	Israel	465

Table 1.1. (*Continued*)

40	Turkey	463
41	Ukraine	463
42	Malta	459
43	Greece	453
44	Serbia	442
45	Cyprus	438
46	Chile	438
47	United Arab Emirates	434
48	Malaysia	431
49	Romania	428
50	Bulgaria	427
51	Moldova	424
52	Uruguay	424
53	Brunei	423
54	Montenegro	422
55	Albania	420
56	Jordan	416
57	Mexico	416
58	Costa Rica	415
59	Qatar	413
60	Thailand	413
61	Colombia	405
62	Kazakhstan	402
58	Azerbaijan	402
64	Bosnia	402
65	Peru	401
66	Brazil	400
67	Macedonia	400
68	Argentina	395
69	Georgia	387
70	Saudi Arabia	386
71	Indonesia	382
72	Lebanon	377
73	Morocco	368
74	Panama	365
75	Kosovo	361
76	Philippines	350
77	Domin. Rep.	334

Source: <http://factsmaps.com/pisa-2018-worldwide-ranking-average-score-of-mathematics-science-reading/>.

regions of China; the country as a whole would almost certainly rank lower. But Confucian-influenced societies do exceptionally well on these tests, which suggests that even China as a whole might score relatively high: Students in China, Singapore, Macao, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan earned seven of the nine top scores on the PISA tests. All of these societies have Confucian-influenced cultural heritages and, as we will see, they have relatively similar cultural values today. For centuries, it was possible to attain power and prestige through diligent study for written examinations that enabled one to advance in Confucian bureaucracies. No other culture, with the possible exception of Judaism, placed as much emphasis on education, and it seems to have had a lasting impact: Students with a Confucian cultural heritage have showed outstanding academic performance throughout the world. The role of education has become so crucial to both economic and technological development that this enhances China's likelihood of becoming an influential world power.

Militarily, China is rapidly catching up with the United States. According to a 2020 report titled *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China*, prepared by the Pentagon, China has reached military parity or exceeded the United States in areas such as naval ships (China already has the largest navy in the world), land-based conventional ballistic and cruise missiles, and integrated air defense systems.¹⁰ China already has the world's largest military force, with 2.8 million personnel. According to this report, China has made significant strides in military readiness and nuclear deterrence. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) has a growing presence around the world, and China has two aircraft carriers and is planning to build eight more.

The Role of Culture

As mentioned earlier, China's successful control of the spread of its Covid-19 cases in a short period of time in 2020 was probably most impressive in the eyes of the rest of the world. The Chinese government's effective handling of this worldwide disaster seemed to have raised Chinese people's confidence in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and was a watershed event in improving the Party's legitimacy. What the Chinese government boasted most was the country's low Covid-related death rate, even though, conceivably, this data could be underreported. However, even if we were to assume that China's actual death toll was **five times** the reported rate, it would still mean that the United States had suffered fifty-four times as many deaths per capita as China. Covid-related

death rates in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore were also very low compared with many other countries and had per capita death rates about one *fiftieth* as high as the U.S. rate.¹¹ The people of Confucian-influenced societies showed relatively high levels of trust in government and willingness to conform to recommended policies, which could contribute to their remarkably low death rates—though clearly this is only part of the story. For example, both Australia and New Zealand also responded effectively to the pandemic, with New Zealand showing an even lower per capita death rate than Japan, South Korea, or Singapore.

Table 1.2 shows China's initial success in minimizing the confirmed Covid-related deaths per 100,000 people compared to another 171 countries for which reliable data was available between the beginning of the pandemic and the end of 2020. This provides an indication of the relative success that given governments had in dealing with the pandemic; however, we also need to take into account the fact that some countries show low death rates simply because they are less developed, such as Burkina Faso, Benin, Papua New Guinea, and Tanzania, which had escaped contagion at that point simply because they had relatively little contact with the rest of the world. On the other hand, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand all had high rates of interaction with the rest of the world, but nevertheless managed to have strikingly low death rates—while the United States, Brazil, and Mexico not only had the world's highest absolute numbers of deaths, but also high per capita death rates.

What explains some countries' success and other countries' failure in controlling the spread of Covid-19 during the first phase of the pandemic in 2020? While leadership and policies are obvious factors, culture also seems to play an important role, with all of the Confucian-influenced societies, including China, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore (shown in bold face on Table 1.2), showing relatively low death rates in the initial phase of the pandemic presumably due to more effective virus control measures. A country's cultural heritage is only one of many factors shaping public confidence in the civil service, with its actual performance being at least equally important, but the people of Confucian-influenced societies tend to manifest relatively high levels of confidence in their civil service. Thus, the publics of China, Singapore, South Korea, Macau, Hong Kong, and Taiwan all express above-average levels of confidence in their country's civil service, with their median level falling in the top quintile among 111 countries. Japan's public—after decades of economic stagnation—rates their country's civil service in the third quartile, for performance does matter. During Japan's glory years, up to

Table 1.2. Coronavirus Deaths per 100K Population on December 29, 2020

Country	Deaths	Deaths/100K *
San Marino	57	169
Belgium	19,234	168
Slovenia	2,595	126
Italy	72,370	120
Bosnia, Herzeg.	3,942	119
North Macedonia	2,456	118
Peru	37,474	117
Montenegro	675	108
Andorra	83	108
Spain	50,122	107
United Kingdom	71,217	107
Czechia	11,152	105
Bulgaria	7,251	103
United States	334,836	102
Mexico	122,855	97
Argentina	42,868	96
France	63,235	94
Armenia	2,775	94
Hungary	9,161	94
Panama	3,892	93
Liechtenstein	35	92
Brazil	191,570	91
Croatia	3,739	91
Chile	16,443	88
Switzerland	7,362	86
Colombia	42,374	85
Moldova	2,909	82
Ecuador	13,994	82
Sweden	8,279	81
Bolivia	9,106	80
Luxembourg	487	80
Romania	15,334	79
Poland	27,147	71
Kosovo	1,317	71
Austria	5,931	67
Iran	54,814	67
Portugal	6,677	65

Table 1.2. (*Continued*)

Country	Deaths	Deaths/100K *
Georgia	2,418	65
Netherlands	11,135	65
Belize	236	62
South Africa	27,071	47
Lithuania	1,269	45
Ireland	2,205	45
Malta	215	44
Bahamas	170	44
Serbia	3,073	44
Greece	4,672	44
Costa Rica	2,144	43
Ukraine	18,555	42
Canada	15,169	41
Albania	1,164	41
Tunisia	4,518	39
Jordan	3,778	38
Russia	54,559	38
Germany	31,145	38
Israel	3,256	37
Slovakia	1,879	35
Iraq	12,791	33
Honduras	3,066	32
Paraguay	2,202	32
Oman	1,495	31
Latvia	578	30
West Bank, Gaza	1,332	29
Guatemala	4,773	28
Azerbaijan	2,538	26
Turkey	20,135	24
Domin. Republic	2,404	23
Kuwait	932	23
Bahrain	351	22
Libya	1,440	22
Kyrgyzstan	1,349	21
Guyana	164	21
Suriname	120	21
Denmark	1,204	21

(Continued)

Table 1.2. (*Continued*)

Country	Deaths	Deaths/100K *
Cabo Verde	112	21
Lebanon	1,409	21
El Salvador	1,313	20
Morocco	7,272	20
Saudi Arabia	6,196	18
Estonia	213	16
Kazakhstan	2,689	15
Eswatini	167	15
Belarus	1,394	15
Rep. of Congo	579	11
India	148,153	11
Jamaica	298	10
Finland	546	10
Cyprus	113	10
Maldives	48	9
Trinidad, Tobago	125	9
Qatar	244	9
Philippines	9,124	9
Norway	429	8
Sao Tome Principe	17	8
Indonesia	21,452	8
Iceland	28	8
Namibia	193	8
Monaco	3	8
Egypt	7,466	8
Mauritania	330	7
U. A. E.	660	7
Equatorial Guinea	86	7
Nepal	1,832	7
Algeria	2,737	6
Djibouti	61	6
Afghanistan	2,174	6
Gambia	123	5
Antigua Barbuda	5	5
Myanmar	2,618	5
Pakistan	9,992	5
Uruguay	160	5

Table 1.2. (*Continued*)

Country	Deaths	Deaths/100K *
Bangladesh	7,479	5
Syria	686	4
Australia	909	4
Venezuela	1,018	4
Sudan	1,468	4
Kenya	1,664	3
Gabon	64	3
Saint Lucia	5	3
Nicaragua	164	3
Japan	3,152	2
Senegal	390	2
Zimbabwe	354	2
Barbados	7	2
Lesotho	51	2
Guinea-Bissau	45	2
Zambia	384	2
Yemen	607	2
Haiti	236	2
Uzbekistan	613	2
Cameroon	448	2
Botswana	40	2
Ethiopia	1,912	2
Liberia	83	2
South Korea	859	2
Malaysia	455	1
Cen. African Rep.	63	1
Mali	256	1
Angola	403	1
Cuba	143	1
Ghana	333	1
Malawi	188	1
Madagascar	261	1
Sierra Leone	76	1
Tajikistan	90	1
Sri Lanka	194	1
Togo	68	1

(Continued)

Table 1.2. (*Continued*)

Country	Deaths	Deaths/100K *
Somalia	127	1
Comoros	7	1
Mauritius	10	1
Brunei	3	1
Chad	104	1
Nigeria	1,264	1
Guinea	80	1
Rwanda	75	1
Uganda	248	1
South Sudan	62	1
Mozambique	162	1
Côte d'Ivoire	137	1
Singapore	29	1
New Zealand	25	1
Niger	99	.44
Burkina Faso	78	.39
Benin	44	.38
China	4,775	.34
Dem. Rep. Congo	107	.13
Papua New Guinea	9	.10
Thailand	60	.09
Tanzania	21	-.04
Vietnam	35	.04
Taiwan	7	.03

Source: Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/data/mortality>.

* Rounded to nearest whole number except when that number would be zero

1990, its civil service, particularly the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), was widely credited with playing a key role in directing the country's success. Subsequent decades of relative stagnation seem to have tarnished that reputation. Nevertheless, the Confucian-influenced societies, including Japan, share a long-established cultural tradition of a merit-recruited Mandarin bureaucracy through which talented people, even from low-income backgrounds, could rise to positions of prestige and power by passing a series of examinations. This cultural heritage seems to make people relatively likely to comply with government directives. Thus, when the SARS pandemic broke out in 2003, the people

of these societies readily complied with quarantines and wearing face masks in public—and when the Covid crisis subsequently erupted, many people in Hong Kong and Taiwan spontaneously began wearing masks without any government prodding. One downside should be pointed out, however: A compliant culture is not conducive to an environment in which leaders' choices, especially wrong decisions or mistakes, can be challenged and corrected, as evidenced by the Chinese government's seemingly irrational Zero Covid policy in 2022.

A large body of survey evidence indicates that China is part of a Confucian-influenced cultural zone, in which the various countries have relatively similar values. From 1981 to 2020, the World Values Survey (WVS) and European Values Study (EVS) have carried out hundreds of surveys in more than one hundred countries containing over 90 percent of the world's population.¹² These surveys cover the full range of cultural, economic, and political variation. Factor analysis of data from the forty-three countries covered in the 1990 WVS indicates that just two dimensions—a Traditional/Secular-rational values dimension and a Survival/Self-expression values dimension—account for over half of the cross-national variance in people's responses to scores of questions.¹³ When this analysis was replicated with data from successive surveys, these same two dimensions again emerged—although the new surveys included dozens of additional countries.¹⁴ Using these two dimensions, one can construct a cultural map on which the responses to many questions are boiled down to a mean score for each country, making it possible to place each country on a cultural map, and to examine broad patterns of cross-cultural variation on one compact figure.

Figure 1.1 shows where each of the forty-three countries surveyed in 2017–2019 fall on this global cultural map. It sums up the cross-national differences in people's views on a wide variety of topics, from religion to politics to sexual norms to attitudes toward work. As this figure indicates, the various Confucian-influenced countries have relatively similar locations—and this has been true in wave after wave of World Values Surveys.¹⁵

The vertical dimension of Figure 1.1 reflects the transition from agrarian to industrial society, which brings secularization, bureaucratization, urbanization, and rationalization; these changes are linked with a polarization between Traditional and Secular-rational values. Societies whose people have traditional religious values fall toward the bottom of Figure 1.1; those with Secular-rational values fall near the top. The people of traditional societies emphasize religion, consider large families

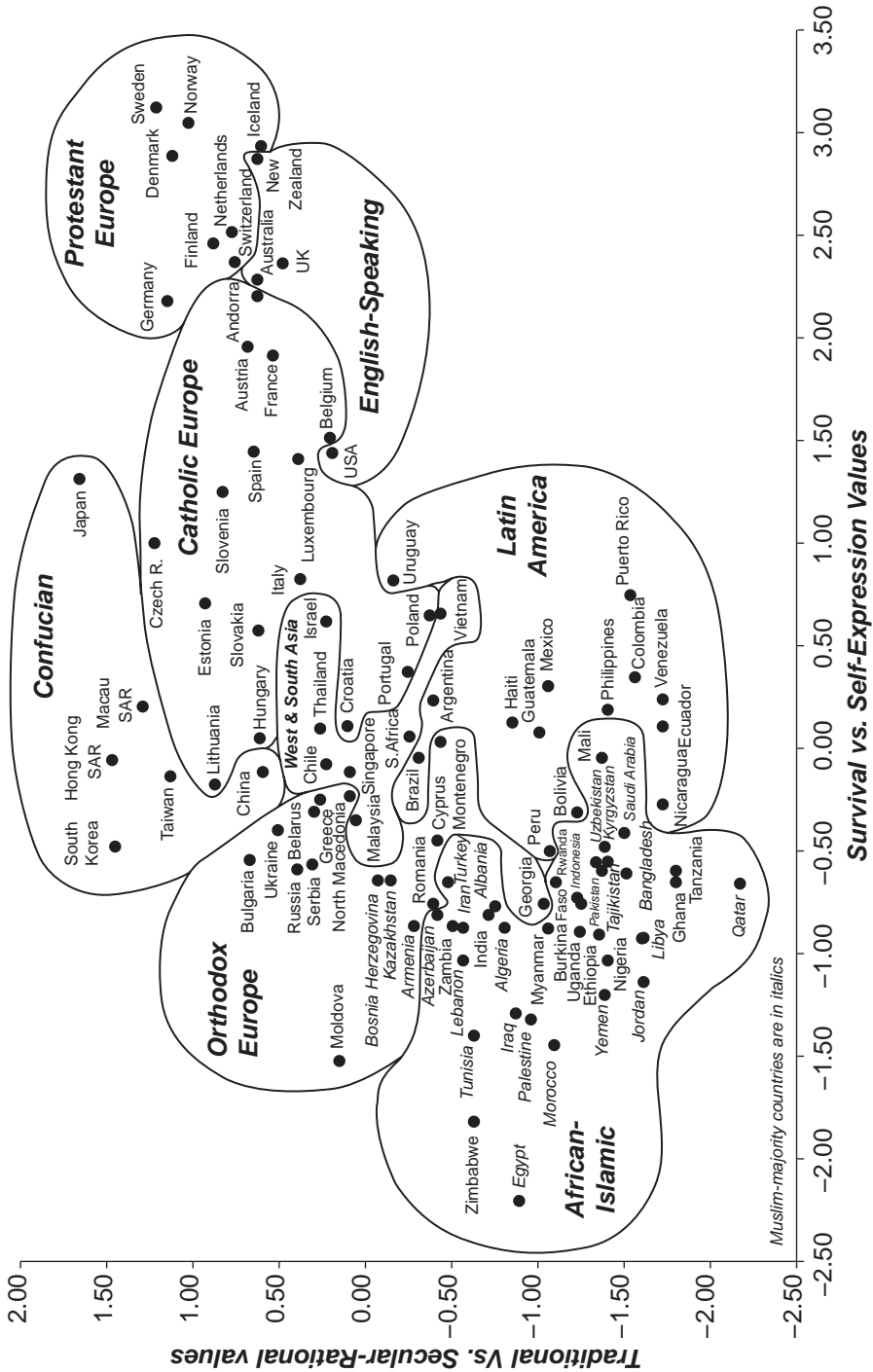


Figure 1.1. Global Cultural Map in 2017–2020
 Source: Data from the 7th wave of the World Values Survey and European Values Study carried out between 2017–2020 (fieldwork was interrupted in early 2020 because of the Covid19 pandemic).

Table 1.3. Percent Saying God Is Very Important in Their Lives

Confucian-influenced	8
Protestant Europe	11
Catholic Europe	21
English-speaking	25
Orthodox	43
South Asia	53
Latin America	58
African/Islamic	74

desirable, and support showing more respect for authority; they also rank relatively low on achievement motivation and oppose divorce, abortion, and homosexuality. The people of other societies fall toward the opposite end of the spectrum on all of these orientations. There is a huge gap between the values of societies near the top of the map and those near the bottom: As Table 1.3 demonstrates, the percentage saying that God is very important in their lives ranges from 8 percent among the Confucian-influenced countries and only 3 percent in China (part of the Confucian zone but also shown separately) to 78 percent in the countries in the African-Islamic cultural zone.

Traditional values are negatively linked with a society's level of economic development, but positively linked with high fertility rates. Societies with Traditional values tend to emphasize maintaining the family and having many children, and it is not just a matter of lip service.

The transition from industrial society to knowledge society gives rise to another major dimension of cross-cultural variation on which a wide range of orientations are structured. The horizontal dimension of Figure 1.1 reflects the degree to which a society emphasizes Survival values and Materialist values (toward the left of the figure) or Self-expression values and Postmaterialist values (toward the right). Societies that emphasize Self-expression values and Postmaterialist values support gender equality and environmental protection and are far more tolerant of foreigners, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and other outgroups compared to those that emphasize Survival values. This tolerance of diversity is linked with the fact that these countries tend to be democracies.

The peoples of the various cultural zones also show a wide range of values across the horizontal dimension. As Table 1.4 indicates, the people of the Confucian-influenced countries have the highest percentage of Materialist values found in any cultural zone, with China being

Table 1.4. Percent Having Materialist Values

Protestant Europe	15
English-speaking	20
Catholic Europe	24
Latin America	25
African/Islamic	38
South Asia	41
Orthodox	42
Confucian-influenced	44
China	(50)

slightly more materialist than the other Confucian-influenced countries. Although these countries are relatively prosperous today, this reflects the fact that for the past several decades, they have had the world's highest growth rates—and Materialist/Postmaterialist values largely reflect the degree of existential security experienced during one's preadult years. Consequently, there is a substantial time lag between the point at which a country reaches a high level of economic and physical security, and the point at which the adult population as a whole shows a high percentage of Postmaterialists. Protestant Europe and the English-speaking countries had already attained high levels of existential security by the 1970s, but China is still in the process of doing so. Nevertheless, as Table 1.5 shows, the Confucian-influenced countries (including China) show slightly higher levels of support for gender equality than the Orthodox or South Asian countries, and considerably higher levels than the African-Islamic countries. In keeping with the fact that China has a considerably lower income level than the other Confucian-influenced countries,

Table 1.5. Percent Saying Men Make Better Political Leaders than Women

Protestant Europe	14
English-speaking	17
Latin America	22
Catholic Europe	27
Confucian-influenced	48
China	(50)
Orthodox	52
South Asia	58
African/Islamic	70

the Chinese show somewhat more traditional values in Tables 1.5 and 1.6, but the difference is modest: In global perspective, the Confucian-influenced countries have relatively similar values.

As Table 1.6A indicates, Confucian-influenced societies—along with Protestant Europe—have relatively high levels of interpersonal trust, but as shown in Table 1.6B, they are relatively unwilling to engage in protest activities, such as signing a petition.

The main framework for this edited volume is modernization theory, especially evolutionary modernization theory. Evolutionary modernization theory holds that rising levels of existential security encourage a shift from Traditional values to Secular-rational values, and from Survival values to Self-expression values.¹⁶ Accordingly, virtually all of the high-income countries rank high on both dimensions, falling into the upper-right region of the chart—while virtually all of the low and lower-middle-income countries rank low on both dimensions, falling into the lower-left region of the chart.

Table 1.6A. Percent Saying “Most People Can Be Trusted”

Protestant Europe	58
China	(64)
Confucian-influenced	48
English-speaking	43
Catholic Europe	28
Orthodox	19
African/Islamic	17
South Asia	14
Latin America	13

Table 1.6B. Percent Saying They Have Signed, or Might Sign, a Petition

English-speaking	93
Protestant Europe	86
Catholic Europe	71
Latin America	65
Confucian-influenced	59
China	(49)
Orthodox	44
South Asia	36
African/Islamic	30

But the evidence also supports the Weberian view that a society's cultural-religious heritage leaves a lasting imprint. Thus, the publics of the Confucian-influenced societies show relatively similar values across scores of questions—as do those of Protestant Europe, Catholic Europe, the Orthodox societies, the English-speaking countries, Latin America, and the African-Islamic zone. These clusters do not necessarily coincide with geographic proximity. Thus, the English-speaking zone extends from Great Britain to the United States to Australia, while the Latin American zone extends from Tijuana to Patagonia.

For those whose top priorities are gender equality, tolerance of out-groups, environmental protection, and democracy, the Nordic countries look like a desirable example to follow. But for the people of low-income countries, the impressive recent performances of the Confucian-influenced countries in economic growth and life expectancy may make China a more immediately attractive model.

As Table 1.7 indicates, the Nordic countries include six of the twelve top-ranking countries among the 189 countries included on the UN Human Development index. The Nordic countries also rank high on numerous other indicators of well-functioning societies, from low homicide rates and high economic equality to environmental protection and democracy. This largely reflects the fact that the Nordic peoples have had the good fortune to grow up under a combination of circumstances, including prosperity and high life expectancy, that produce a relatively strong sense of existential security. And one of the enduring realities of human behavior seems to be that secure people tend to behave better than desperate ones. The most prosperous Confucian-influenced societies—Hong Kong, Singapore, and Japan—also rank high on the Human Development index.¹⁷ Countries with high Human Development scores tend to have much higher levels of gender equality, more tolerance of foreigners and ethnic minorities, higher levels of environmental protection, lower levels of corruption, and a higher likelihood of having democratic political institutions.

Though the Confucian-influenced countries have relatively similar basic cultural beliefs, they have widely differing political institutions, as Table 1.8 demonstrates. Freedom House uses expert ratings to evaluate the state of freedom in countries around the world. Each country is assigned between 0 and 4 points on a series of twenty-five indicators, including (1) Elections to executive, (2) Elections to legislature, (3) Full political rights for minorities, and (4) Freedom from pervasive corruption. These scores are used to rank countries from most free to least free.¹⁸

Table 1.7. UN Human Development Rankings in 2018

	Life Expectancy	Expected Years of Schooling	GDP/Capita (PPP \$)
1 Norway	82.3	18.1	\$68,059
2 Switzerland	83.6	16.2	59,375
3 Ireland	82.1	18.8	55,660
4 Germany	81.2	17.1	46,946
5 Hong Kong	84.7	16.5	60,221
6 Australia	83.3	22.1	44,097
7 Iceland	82.9	19.2	47,566
8 Sweden	82.7	18.8	47,958
9 Singapore	83.5	16.2	83,793
10 Netherlands	82.1	18.0	50,013
11 Denmark	80.8	19.1	48,836
12 Finland	81.7	19.3	41,779
13 Canada	82.3	16.1	43,602
14 New Zealand	82.1	18.8	35,108
15 United Kingdom	81.2	17.4	39,507
16 United States	78.9	16.3	56,140
17 Belgium	81.5	19.7	43,821
18 Liechtenstein	80.5	14.7	99,732
19 Japan	84.5	15.2	40,799
20 Austria	81.4	16.3	46,231
86 China	76.4	13.8	15,270
158 Nigeria	54.3	9.7	5,086

Source: United Nations, Human Development Report, 2019, <http://hdr.undp.org/en>.

Table 1.8 shows Freedom House's 2018 democracy rankings for the fifty highest-ranked countries plus a number of others. As it indicates, Nordic countries get the three highest rankings, with Finland, Norway, and Sweden rated as the world's most democratic countries. Among Confucian-influenced societies, Japan ranks 12th and Taiwan ranks 22nd, placing them above such long-established democracies as the United Kingdom and France, and far above the United States, which by 2018 had fallen to 33rd place, not far above South Korea, which ranked 40th. On the other hand, China ranked 145th and North Korea ranked 152nd out of 159 countries with populations over one million. The fact that both Japan and Taiwan now rank among the world's stable democracies

Table 1.8. Freedom House Democracy Rankings in 2018, Based on Combined Political Rights and Civil Liberties Scores

1 Finland	31 Greece
2 Norway	32 Latvia
3 Sweden	33 United States
4 Canada	34 Croatia
5 Netherlands	35 Mongolia
6 Australia	36 Argentina
7 New Zealand	37 Panama
8 Uruguay	38 Poland
9 Denmark	39 Ghana
10 Ireland	40 South Korea
11 Belgium	41 Trinidad
12 Japan	42 Romania
13 Portugal	43 Bulgaria
14 Switzerland	44 Benin
15 Chile	45 South Africa
16 Cyprus	46 Israel
17 Estonia	47 Jamaica
18 Germany	48 Brazil
19 Slovenia	49 India
20 Spain	50 Namibia
21 Austria	72 Indonesia
22 Taiwan	89 Singapore
23 United Kingdom	91 Nigeria
24 Costa Rica	102 Bangladesh
25 Czech Rep.	105 Pakistan
26 Lithuania	115 Turkey
27 France	129 Russia
28 Italy	145 China
29 Mauritius	152 North Korea
30 Slovakia	159 Syria

Source: Freedom House, *Freedom in the World*, 2019, 16. This page only shows countries with populations of one million or more.

undermines the claim that the values of Asian societies are incompatible with democracy. On the other hand, Singapore demonstrates that, despite the strong tendency for prosperity to be linked with democratic institutions, it is possible for an extremely prosperous society to function with an

authoritarian government. And finally, the extremely low scores of China and North Korea demonstrate that less prosperous Confucian-influenced societies are compatible with extremely authoritarian institutions.

China's success in handling the pandemic reinforced its leaders' conviction that an authoritarian capacity to quickly mobilize people and resources gave China a decisive edge over other major powers like the United States. This is part of the story, but only part of it: A crucial element was the fact that for decades China adopted market-driven economic reforms and opening up. China's recent success was not inevitable. It had been badly governed for most of the past two centuries. And China's success did not happen because authoritarian governments are more effective than democracies. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union also had an authoritarian government that penetrated every sector of society, but under Leonid Brezhnev it fell further behind the West every year—not only in consumer goods, but in top-priority areas such as computers and intercontinental ballistic missiles. It got to the point that when Mikhail Gorbachev took power, he realized that the Communist Party had become a self-interested ruling class that was preventing much-needed reforms. This tendency is typical of authoritarian governments, which from Zimbabwe to Venezuela have been textbook examples of mismanagement—and China under Mao suffered disasters that cost millions of lives. China's recent success reflects the adoption of a distinctive version of authoritarian rule developed by Deng Xiaoping that incorporated some of democracy's key advantages, such as collegial rule for limited terms and political decentralization.

What China has accomplished since then is remarkable, but it doesn't necessarily reflect the superiority of authoritarian rule. China's recent economic miracle largely reflects Deng's policies of pragmatic market-oriented reforms and a regionally decentralized authoritarian system that made local experimentation possible and gave the Chinese people much freedom to pursue a better economic life. A large portion of credit for China's economic success should go to the Chinese people, who are hardworking and industrious, and who seized the opportunity to improve their economic circumstances. Deng's credit was that he transformed the Chinese economy from an ideologically driven system to a pragmatic one in which Deng and his colleagues experimented to see what worked. The results led them to move away from a state-run economy toward a market-driven economy, bringing annual growth rates of close to 10 percent for more than two decades—and rescuing hundreds of millions of Chinese citizens from desperate poverty.

Given its successes and relatively new international status, will China be successful in offering an attractive alternative set of values to compete with the United States and become the world's most influential power? Findings from this edited volume may provide some hints to answer this question. A key feature of this edited volume is that all the authors use World Values Survey data, which allow us not only to track the trends of social and political value changes and continuities inside China, but also to compare China with its neighbors and countries in other regions.¹⁹ Our substantive chapters cover just about all the questions asked in World Value Surveys. If China is going to be a true world model, hardware such as economic might and military prowess will certainly not be enough. In other words, China must have sufficient soft power to be true challenger to the dominant position of the United States. According to Joseph Nye, who introduced the concept of soft power, the United States still has enough soft power to sustain American superpower status in the world.²⁰ The United States had won the Cold War without firing a shot, he argued. The collapse of the Soviet Union was largely due to its failed performance and unattractive official ideology.

The triumph of Western liberalism and the Third Wave of democratization in the 1990s led to Francis Fukuyama's claim that democracy was "the only game in town." But not long afterward, this liberal euphoria disappeared and democratic decline became evident, even in established Western democracies. It is uncertain how lasting this democratic backsliding will be, and it remains unclear whether a viable non-democratic alternative ideology has yet emerged.

This edited volume consists of eight chapters, which cover virtually all WVS questions in different waves of the WVS conducted in China over the past three decades. Wenfang Tang examines democratic or authoritarian political culture in the Chinese population in Chapter 2. Tang's analysis of how the Chinese people understand freedom, democracy, and human rights concludes that China has a democratic authoritarian political culture. He presents evidence that a majority of the Chinese people feel free and believe that they live in a democracy. But their understanding of democracy differs from the prevailing Western definition, which views the right to choose the country's leaders through elections that offer a choice between freely competing alternatives as an essential component of any democracy. Tang's view of democracy emphasizes social justice rather than competitive elections, and his evidence indicates that a majority of the Chinese public today prefer a strong leader who can

ensure their economic well-being. As of 2018, they seemed to be satisfied with their country's level of democracy.

In Chapter 3, Lingnan He and Dali Yang explore the extent to which a participant political culture has emerged in China. Analyzing survey data covering the years 2007 to 2018, they find that online participation has taken shape and flourished over this period. However, they also find a decline in the percentage of people reporting that they are interested in politics, with growing numbers of people claiming that they are not. This holds true despite the fact that income and education—both of which are positively linked with political activism—have been rising rapidly during this period. Xi Jinping's contemporaneous rise to power may have had a dampening effect on this measure.

In Chapter 4, Yu Yan focuses on how growing feelings of security are reshaping the Chinese people's values, in particular, examining whether China's phenomenal economic growth is producing an intergenerational value shift toward postmaterialist values. In keeping with Inglehart's theory, Yan finds that the Chinese are less postmaterialist than the people of more affluent societies in both East Asia and the West, and that every Chinese age group holds values that are more materialistic than those of their counterparts in more developed countries. Nevertheless, survey data from 1995 to 2018 indicate that the younger generations are likelier than their elders to hold postmaterialist values, and that the Chinese public as a whole has become increasingly postmaterialist over time. But the rise of postmaterialism has weakened in recent years, suggesting the presence of a strong period effect that might be linked with the impact of Xi.

In Chapter 5, John James Kennedy examines changes and continuities in the social values of Chinese citizens over the past three decades. He finds that a growing share of the Chinese people are coming to hold such liberal values as the acceptance of homosexuality, divorce, and gender equality—though they are not yet as far advanced in this respect as their more prosperous Confucian-influenced neighbors in South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Kennedy's analyses also show that younger people tend to hold more liberal social values than their elders, and that more educated and higher-income respondents have more liberal values than their less educated and less prosperous compatriots. This pattern is also observed in South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Thus, as China experiences modernization and industrialization, it seems to be following trends similar to those found elsewhere in the world. But Kennedy also finds rising support for certain

traditional values in the latest Chinese survey in 2018, leading him to suspect that Xi Jinping's increasing emphasis on traditional Chinese culture may contribute to this new conservative trend—which does not change the fact that younger people continue to hold stronger socially liberal and postmaterialist values than older people.

In Chapter 6, Alfred Wu, Eduardo Araral, and Biao Huang investigate public trust in contemporary China. Analyzing data from successive waves of surveys carried out from 1990 to 2018, the authors find that generalized interpersonal trust has increased over the past two decades. They also find that trust in strangers, people of another religion, and people of another nationality has increased during the last five years (though trust in the family showed a slight decline). The absolute percentage of Chinese saying most people can be trusted is significantly higher than in other Asian and Western societies. This is also true of the Chinese public's trust in government and governmental institutions. Moreover, the most recent (2018) WVS in China indicates that public confidence in political and public authorities has increased in recent years, perhaps due to better public services at the local level and the massive anti-corruption campaign of Xi Jinping's era.

In Chapter 7, Yang Zhong examines the Chinese public's level of religiosity and their attitudes toward science and technology. Evidence from surveys carried out since 1990 consistently indicates that China is one of the world's least religious countries, with an overwhelming majority of the public claiming to be non-religious. Nevertheless, starting from a very low base, religion has gained some ground. The latest WVS (2018) shows that 16 percent of the Chinese people hold religious beliefs, a substantial increase from the 5 percent found in 1990. During this period, the number of people claiming to be atheists dropped from 42 percent in 1990 to 34 percent in 2018. The citizens of both Hong Kong and Taiwan are more religious. On the other hand, survey evidence consistently demonstrates that an overwhelming majority of the Chinese people are strong supporters of science and technology, though a sizable segment of the Chinese population is worried that science may break down people's ideas of right and wrong. Nevertheless, when facing a potential conflict between religion and science, an overwhelming majority of mainland Chinese choose science. The people of Hong Kong and Taiwan are more critical of science and technology than those of mainland China, which may reflect intense Chinese official efforts to promote science and technology as key factors in enabling China to become a stronger country and a world power.

In Chapter 8 that concludes the book, Zhong and Inglehart summarize the major findings of the previous chapters and offer their observations and assessments of Chinese culture in the context of evolutionary modernization theory. They argue that the social, political, and economic values of the Chinese people are not drastically different from other countries, including China's neighbors. Most importantly, Chinese people's values are in line with the trajectory of a modernizing society impacted by crucial factors such as economic development level, education, and age. Zhong and Inglehart further argue that China still lacks a credible official ideology and an alternative set of social, political, and economic values and culture at the popular level to challenge the dominant soft power position of the United States. Due to its lack of soft power projection around the world, China still has some way to go to make itself a Number One power in the world in the foreseeable future.

Notes

1. Figures are cited from World Health Organization. See <https://covid19.who.int/>.

2. See <https://www.wenxuecity.com/news/2022/05/02/11530809.html>.

3. See Jessie Yeung, "180 Million People Impacted by China's Covid Lockdowns. Here's What You Need to Know," *CNN*, April 29, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/28/china/china-covid-lockdown-explainer-intl-hnk/index.html>.

4. Ezra Vogel, *Japan as Number One: Lessons for America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).

5. Julian Baird Gewirtz, "China's Long March to Technological Supremacy: The Roots of Xi Jinping's Ambition to Catch Up and Surpass," *Foreign Affairs*, August 27, 2019, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2019-08-27/chinas-long-march-technological-supremacy>.

6. Yanfei Li, "Understanding China's Technological Rise: The Three Factors Underlying China's Transformation into A Rising Technology Powerhouse," *The Diplomat*, August 3, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/08/understanding-chinas-technological-rise/>.

7. Reinhilde Veugelers, "China Is the World's New Science and Technology Powerhouse," *Bruegel*, August 30, 2017, [https://www.bruegel.org/2017/08/china-is-the-worlds-new-science-and-technology-powerhouse/?utm_content=buffercdgdc&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer+\(bruegel\)](https://www.bruegel.org/2017/08/china-is-the-worlds-new-science-and-technology-powerhouse/?utm_content=buffercdgdc&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer+(bruegel)).

8. Bonnie S. Glaser, "The Impact of China's Dominant Position in Global Supply Chains: A Conversation with Wang Tao," *CSIS*, September 8, 2020, <https://www.csis.org/podcasts/chinapower/impact-chinas-dominant-position-global-supply-chains-conversation-wang-tao>.

9. See Daniel Ren, "China Has Seven of the World's 10 Busiest Container Ports, Spurred by Booming Trade and a State Coffer That Invests in Public Works," *SCMP*, April 13, 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/business/companies/article/3005945/china-has-six-worlds-10-busiest-container-ports-spurred-booming>.
10. See *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China: Annual Report to Congress* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2020), 9, <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF>.
11. "Mortality Analyses," Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center, December 28, 2020, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/data/mortality>.
12. The data, together with the questionnaires and fieldwork information, can be downloaded from the WVS website at <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>.
13. For greater detail on how the two dimensions were constructed, see Ronald Inglehart, "Value Systems: The Subjective Aspect of Politics and Economics," in *Modernization and Postmodernization: Culture, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
14. Inglehart, "Value Systems"; Ronald Inglehart and Wayne Baker, "Modernization and Cultural Change and the Persistence of Traditional Values," *American Sociological Review* 65, no. 1 (2000): 19–51; Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, "Changing Mass Priorities: The Link between Modernization and Democracy," *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no. 2 (2010): 551–67.
15. In most respects, Singapore is part of the Confucian-influenced cultural zone, but its position on this map is drawn down from the Secular-rational pole by the fact that 39 percent of its resident population is Christian, Muslim, or Hindu.
16. For a full presentation of evolutionary modernization theory, see Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization*.
17. Taiwan is not ranked by UNDP.
18. For complete information on the methodology, see <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2018/methodology>.
19. All the WVS data and survey methodology (including survey design and questionnaires) can be found on WVS website at <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp>.
20. Joseph Nye, *Bound To Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).

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