

INTRODUCTION: AN OVERVIEW OF THIS BOOK

People's values and behavior are shaped by the degree to which survival is secure. For most of the time since humans first appeared, survival has been precarious. This dominated people's life strategies. Population rose to meet the food supply, and most people lived just above the starvation level. When survival is insecure, people tend to close ranks behind a strong leader, forming a united front against outsiders – a strategy that can be called the Authoritarian Reflex.

In the decades following World War II, something unprecedented occurred in economically advanced countries: much of the post-war generation grew up taking survival for granted. This reflected (1) the unprecedented economic growth of the postwar era in Western Europe, North America, Japan and Australia; (2) the emergence of welfare state safety nets that guaranteed that almost no one died of starvation; and (3) the absence of war between major powers: since World War II, the world has experienced the longest such period in recorded history.

Unprecedentedly high levels of economic and physical security led to pervasive intergenerational cultural changes that reshaped the values and worldviews of these publics, bringing a shift from Materialist to Postmaterialist values – which was part of an even broader shift from Survival values to Self-expression values. This broad cultural shift moves from giving top priority to economic and physical safety and conformity to group norms, toward increasing emphasis on individual freedom to choose how to live one's life. Self-expression values emphasize gender equality, tolerance of gays, lesbians, foreigners and other outgroups, freedom of expression and participation in decision-making

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in economic and political life. This cultural shift brought massive social and political changes, from stronger environmental protection policies and anti-war movements, to higher levels of gender equality in government, business and academic life, and the spread of democracy.

Long before this happened, substantial cross-cultural difference already existed that can be traced to geographically shaped differences in vulnerability to disease and hunger. Various analysts, working from different perspectives, have described these cultural differences as Collectivism versus Individualism, Survival versus Self-expression values, or Autonomy versus Embeddedness, but they all tap a common dimension of cross-cultural variation that reflects a society's level of "existential security" – the degree to which survival seems safe or insecure. During the decades since World War II, growing existential security has been propelling most of the world's societies toward greater emphasis on Individualism, Autonomy and Self-expression values.

Countries that rank high on Self-expression values are much likelier to adopt legislation favorable to gays and lesbians than societies that emphasize Survival values. They also tend to rank high on the UN Gender Empowerment Measure, which reflects the extent to which women hold high positions in political, economic and academic life. Survey data demonstrate that the underlying norms have been changing for fifty years, while these societal changes are relatively recent. The cultural changes preceded the institutional changes and seem to have contributed to them.

High levels of existential security are also conducive to secularization – a systematic erosion of religious practices, values and beliefs. Secularization has spread among the publics of virtually all advanced industrial societies during the past fifty years. Nevertheless, the world as a whole now has more people with traditional religious views than ever before, because secularization has a strong negative impact on human fertility rates. Practically all of the countries in which secularization is most advanced now have fertility rates far below the replacement level – while many societies with traditional religious orientations have fertility rates two or three times as high as the replacement level.

Mass attitudes toward both gender equality and homosexuality have been changing in a two-stage process. The first phase was a gradual shift toward greater tolerance of gays and greater support for gender equality, which took place as younger generations replaced older ones. Eventually, this reached a threshold at which the new norms

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were seen as dominant in high-income societies. Conformist pressures then reversed polarity and began to support changes they had formerly opposed, bringing much more rapid cultural changes than those produced by population replacement. By 2015, a majority of the US Supreme Court supported same-sex marriage: even elderly judges wanted to be on the right side of history.

This “feminization” of cultural norms in developed societies has also contributed to declining rates of violence and declining willingness to fight for one’s country. Moreover, countries that have high levels of Self-expression values are much likelier to be genuine democracies than countries that rank low on these values. But do Self-expression values lead to democracy, or does democracy cause Self-expression values to emerge? The causal flow seems to move mainly from Self-expression values to democracy. Democratic institutions do not need to be in place for Self-expression values to emerge. In the years preceding the massive global wave of democratization that occurred around 1990, Self-expression values had emerged through a gradual process of intergenerational value change, not only in Western democracies but also in many authoritarian societies. Accordingly, once the threat of Soviet military intervention was withdrawn, countries with high levels of Self-expression values moved swiftly toward democracy.

Cultural change reflects changing strategies to maximize human happiness. In agrarian societies with little or no economic development or social mobility, religion makes people happier by lowering their aspirations in this life, and promising that they will be rewarded in an afterlife. But modernization brings economic development, democratization and growing social tolerance – which are conducive to happiness because they give people more freedom of choice in how to live their lives. Consequently, although *within* most countries religious people are happier than less-religious people, the people of modernized but secular countries are happier than the people of less-modernized but highly religious countries. Thus, though religion is conducive to happiness under pre-modern conditions, once high levels of economic development become possible, the modern strategy can be even more effective than the traditional strategy as a way to maximize happiness.

But *can* human happiness be maximized? Until recently, it was widely held that happiness fluctuates around fixed set-points (possibly determined by genetic factors) so that neither individuals nor societies can lastingly increase their happiness. That claim is not true, as

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this book demonstrates. From 1981 to 2011 happiness rose in 52 of the 62 countries for which substantial time-series data were available, and fell in only 10; during the same period, life satisfaction rose in 40 countries and fell in only 19 (3 showed no change). The two most widely used indicators of happiness rose in an overwhelming majority of countries. Why?

The extent to which a society allows free choice has a major impact on happiness. During the three decades after 1981, economic development, democratization and rising social tolerance increased the extent to which people in most countries have free choice in economic, political and social life, bringing higher levels of happiness. The shift from Survival values to Self-expression values seems conducive to greater happiness and life satisfaction.

In recent decades, globalization has transferred massive amounts of capital and technology to other parts of the world, bringing rapid economic growth especially in East Asia, Southeast Asia and India. Half the world's people are escaping from subsistence-level poverty. In the long run, this is likely to produce cultural and political changes similar to those it has already produced in high-income countries. But outsourcing now puts the workers of high-income countries in competition with the workers of low-income countries, exporting jobs and undermining the bargaining power of rich countries' workers. Automation has played an even greater role in reducing the number of industrial workers, who are now a small minority of the workforce in developed countries.

Initially, their jobs were replaced by large numbers of well-paid jobs in the service sector. But high-income societies such as the USA are entering a new phase of development that we refer to as Artificial Intelligence Society. It has the potential to abolish poverty and extend human health and life expectancy, but if left to market forces alone it tends to produce a winner-takes-all society in which the gains go almost entirely to those at the very top. In high-income countries, inequality of both income and wealth have been rising sharply since 1970. In 1965, the CEOs of major corporations in the USA were paid 20 times as much as their average employee. By 2012, they were paid 354 times as much. Unless offset by appropriate government policies, this winner-takes-all tendency undermines long-term economic growth, democracy and the cultural openness that was launched in the postwar era.

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Artificial intelligence makes it possible for computer programs to replace not just industrial workers but also highly educated people, including lawyers, doctors, professors, scientists and even computer programmers. In high-income countries such as the USA, the real incomes of industrial workers have declined since 1970 and the real incomes of those with college degrees and post-graduate degrees have declined since 1991.

In Artificial Intelligence Society, the central economic conflict is no longer between the working class and the middle class, but between the 1 percent and the 99 percent, as Nobel prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz has put it.¹ Secure, well-paid jobs are disappearing – not just for the working class but even for the highly educated.

High levels of existential security are conducive to a more tolerant, open outlook – but conversely, declining existential security triggers an Authoritarian Reflex that brings support for strong leaders, strong in-group solidarity, rigid conformity to group norms and rejection of outsiders. This reflex is currently bringing growing support for xenophobic populist authoritarian movements in many countries, from France's National Front, to the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union, to the rise of Donald Trump in the USA. But – unlike the xenophobic authoritarianism that emerged during the Great Depression – this does not result from objective scarcity. These societies possess abundant resources. Insecurity today results from growing inequality – which is ultimately a political question. With appropriate political realignment, governments could be elected that restored the high levels of existential security that were conducive to the increasingly confident and tolerant societies that emerged in the postwar era.

Pushing the Envelope

This book presents a new version of modernization theory – Evolutionary Modernization theory – which generates a set of hypotheses that we test against a unique data base: from 1981 to 2014, the World Values Survey and European Values Study carried out hundreds of surveys in more than 100 countries containing over 90 percent of the world's population.² Figure I.1 depicts these countries. The data, together with the questionnaires and fieldwork information, can be downloaded from the WVS website at www.worldvaluessurvey.org/

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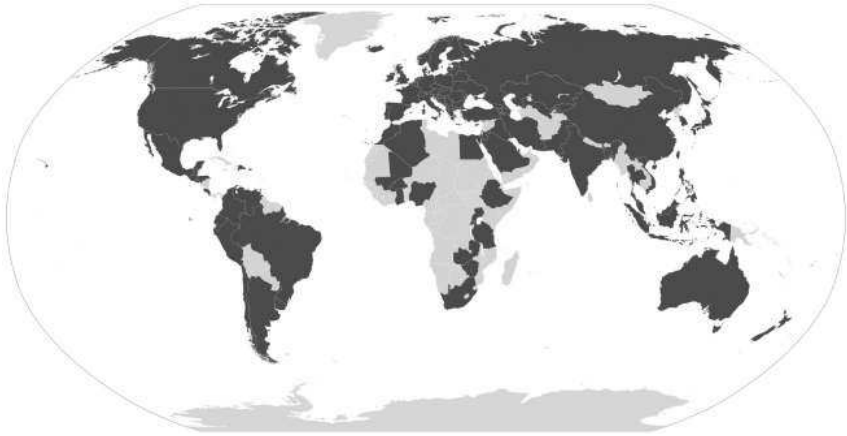


Figure I.1 Countries that have been surveyed at least once in the Values Surveys are darkly shaded. These countries contain over 90 percent of the world's population.

Some cross-national survey projects limit themselves to conducting surveys in countries with long-established survey research organizations. This is intended to ensure that they obtain high-quality fieldwork, but it largely limits them to doing research in high-income societies. From the start, the World Values Survey has endeavored to cover the full range of variation, including low-income countries. Two effects work against each other here: (a) the presumed increase in measurement error that comes from including lower-income societies with less-developed survey research infrastructure – which tends to weaken the correlations between attitudes and predictor variables; and (b) the increased analytical leverage that comes from including the full range of societies – which tends to strengthen these correlations. Which effect is stronger? The results are unequivocal. If the presumably lower quality of the data from lower-income countries outweighed the analytical leverage gained from their inclusion, including them would weaken one's power to predict relevant societal phenomena. Empirical analysis reveals that the predictive power from analyzing all available societies is considerably stronger than that obtained by analyzing only the data from high-income countries:³ the gains obtained by analyzing the full range of variation more than compensates for any loss of data quality.

7 / Graphs but No Equations

Graphs but No Equations

Although I've spent many happy hours poring over detailed statistical tables, it's clear that this is not a universal taste. Unless they're specialists in the field, most readers tune out when they encounter a series of regression equations. I think the ideas discussed here will interest a broad audience if presented in a non-technical way. Consequently, this book contains no regression equations and no complex statistical tables – but it does report the *findings* from many quantitative analyses. And it contains quite a few graphs, which can summarize relationships based on vast amounts of data in simple, vivid patterns – showing, for example, that as countries get richer, their level of gender equality increases.

This book is designed to help the reader understand how people's values and goals are changing, and how this is changing the world. I hope you enjoy it.