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Values and democracy in East Asia and Europe: a comparison

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Abstract

This article deals with values and democracy in East Asia and Europe, comparing them. Based on the data collected by the WVS, we address the following questions: *To what extent does cultural-religious background, such as Confucianism in the case of East Asia, affect the direction of value change? Is this influence even stronger than structural settings? Is there a link between value change, ethic-religious background, and democracy?* We clearly distinguish between the value change that occurred in the 'first' or 'simple' modernity, and that during the 'second' modernity. According to Western value change discourse, the 'first' modernity witnessed a value change from traditional-religious to secular-rational values, but this did not necessarily lead to democracy. For the 'second' modernity, a shift from material to post-materialist values and an intensifying of the demand for self-expression values was predicted. Triggered by rising education levels, this leads to a rising demand for democracy. The researches of the WVSs also found a paradox: that people in authoritarian nations also tended to support liberal democracy, which is why it has been argued that it is more important to research support for authoritarian notions of democracy. Our analysis shows that the Confucian countries rank high concerning the level of secular-rational values. Concerning self-expression values, in contrast, these countries show only low change levels. Therefore, democracy finds relatively low levels of support among these countries. Specifically, in Japan, where education levels are as high as in Germany, the support for liberal notions of democracy was comparatively low, what can be called the 'second paradox'. Thus, the expectations of Western value change discourse, which predicts a general shift to more democracy in the 'second' modernity, are unfulfilled. Overall, our analysis revealed that the ethic-religious background plays a key role in value change and seems to be as influential as structural setting.

Keywords: Values, Democracy, Confucianism, Second modernity, East Asia

Introduction

The study of values is a key area in social science research. Inspired by Ronald Inglehart's writings on cultural change in advanced industrialized societies,¹ it has attracted social scientists since the early 1970s. Under the auspices of Inglehart and others, the World Values Survey (WVS) was initiated in 1981 as a global network of social scientists who study changing values and their impacts on social and political life. Over the years, the WVS has demonstrated that people's values play a key role in the flourishing of democratic institutions and the extent to which societies have effective governments.

Initially, industrial development and rising living and education standards were seen as the primary driving force for value change in modern societies. However, reflecting on the work

of Max Weber, it was later acknowledged that a society's ethic-religious background plays a key role in understanding the change in the beliefs, values, and motivations of people across the world and their understandings of democracy (Inglehart and Welzel 2010: 551).

According to the Western value change discourse, societies first witnessed a value change from traditional-religious to secular-rational values, but this did not necessarily lead to democracy. In contrast, for post-industrial societies, researchers have predicted an intensifying demand for self-expression values, accompanied by a growing desire for democracy (Inglehart and Welzel 2010: 552 f.).²

This chapter deals with values and democracy in East Asia and Europe, comparing them. Based on the data collected by the WVS, we address the following questions: *To what extent does cultural-religious background, such as Confucianism in the case of East Asia, affect the direction of value change? Is this influence even stronger than structural settings? Is there a link between value change, ethic-religious background, and democracy?* We clearly distinguish between the value change that occurred in the 'first' or 'simple' modernity, and that during the 'second' modernity (Beck et al. 2001: 13 f.).

We first introduce the main findings and hypotheses of Western value change research. We then turn to the interaction between value change and the desire and support for democracy. Based on this, we deduce hypotheses for East Asia, shedding light on the region's shared cultural background (Confucianism) and the related value system; here, we limit our analysis to Japan, China, and South Korea. Next, we empirically test our hypotheses concerning value change, based on the WVSs. Besides structural settings and the cultural-ethical background, we acknowledge different paths to modernity, as suggested by S.N. Eisenstadt (2000).

Modernization and value change: The main findings of western value change research

Value change in modernity and during the 'second' modernity

Modern society, which increasingly replaced the traditional societies from the seventeenth century onwards, was characterized by two processes: the national and the industrial revolutions (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Both processes triggered bureaucratization, centralization of political authority, and industrialization, i.e. a shift from the primary sector to the secondary one. Industrialization was accompanied by migration to the cities and accelerated urbanization. At the value level, traditional-religious values were increasingly replaced by secular-rational or modern values. Since Christianity in Europe split owing to the Reformation, Max Weber ([1905] Weber 2009) has argued that there is a link between the ethics of ascetic Protestantism and the emergence of the spirit of modern capitalism as well as a modern, rational work ethic. Further, the intellectual movement of the Enlightenment questioned religion, tradition, and the related hierarchies; it also pushed the use and celebration of reason. The application of reason to religion fostered skepticism and a materialistic and atheistic value orientation.

According to the WVS, traditional values emphasize religion, parent-child ties, deference to authority, and traditional family values. People with a traditional-religious value orientation also tend to reject divorce, abortion, euthanasia, and suicide. It is further argued that these societies have high national pride and a nationalistic outlook. People with secular-rational values tend to have the opposite preferences concerning

traditional values. They place less emphasis on religion, traditional family values, and authority. Divorce, abortion, euthanasia, and suicide are seen as relatively acceptable.³

However, notably, the level of modern or secular-rational values is not directly measured, but is based on the rejection of traditional-religious values (Schwartz 2007: 172). Thus, a person low in religious-traditional values is considered to be high in secular-rational values. The researchers of the WVS based the traditional/secular-rational dimension on five items: the importance of God, the importance of obedience and religious faith for children, the justifiability of abortion, and a sense of national pride and respect for authority, loaded together in a factor analysis (Inglehart and Baker 2000).

The 'second' modernity, starting in the late 1970s, is characterized by economic globalization, accompanied by a shift from the secondary sector to the tertiary one, and by cultural globalization and 'denationalization' (Zürn 2002: 215). In the economic sphere, globalization processes have led to the increased interdependence of nation-states, mainly supported by transnational corporations (TNCs) that operate across borders – and thus increasingly against national ideologies (Gill 1995: 405). New technologies, especially the Internet, play a key role in this process (Rosenau 1990). In this new economic context, neo-liberalism has become the new political guiding principle in many countries across the world. Simultaneously with rising education levels and the relocation of production to low-income countries, advanced industrial countries have witnessed a sharp decline in their second-sector workforce. To date, approximately 75% of workforces in post-industrial countries are employed in the tertiary sector.

Increasing cross-border exchanges have led to an increase in intercultural contacts, intensified by the new media. This has not only fostered a universalist, cosmopolitan worldview but also a pluralization and individualization of lifestyles. However, this cultural opening is also generating strong defensive reactions by those who want to 'safeguard' their national culture and 'shield' their nation from the outside world (Kriesi et al. 2012). Many of the new right-wing populist parties in Europe mobilize along this cleavage. This value cleavage may encourage new forms of authoritarianism in Europe, – especially among those who consider themselves the economic losers of globalization (Schmidt 2015).

Rising levels of social security and education along with processes of pluralization and individualization are said to have driven a value change from survival (or material) values to self-expression (or post-materialist) values since the 1970s.⁴ According to the WVS, survival values emphasize economic and physical security; such an attitude is linked to a fairly ethnocentric outlook and low trust and tolerance. Self-expression values prioritize environmental protection, growing tolerance of foreigners, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, as well as gender equality, and rising demands for participation in decision-making in economic and political life. The survival-self-expression axis has the following factor loadings: Respondents prioritize self-expression and quality of life over economic and physical security; they self-describe as very happy; homosexuality is sometimes justifiable; they have signed or would sign a petition; and they don't think one needs to be careful about trusting people.⁵ According to the WVS researchers, the correlates for this dimension across the WVS are very strong, even though it has only five variables (Ronald and Welzel 2005).

Democracy, value change, and cultural background

In our context, the ‘first’ modernity project, namely nation-building and industrialization, could have been carried out without the presence of democracy. Even so, many have pointed to the correlation between industrial development and democracy (e.g. Lipset 1959); yet, modernity could have been executed by various forms of political government, such as fascism in Germany during 1933 to 1945, ‘ultra-nationalism’ (Maruyama 2007) in Japan, especially between 1930 to 1945, or military dictatorship in South Korea from 1961 to 1987.⁶ In contrast, during the ‘second’ modernity, citizens’ demands for more democracy and participation are expected to intensify. This is due to the shift from survival to self-expression values, induced by increasing economic security. Further, it is argued that the knowledge society cannot function without educated workers, who are becoming accustomed to thinking for themselves. Thus, mass publics increasingly want democracy. Rising education levels can be seen as an ‘Enlightenment force,’ which triggers the change to self-expression values (Inglehart and Welzel 2010: 552–53).⁷ At the same time, education provides the most powerful antidote to authoritarian notions of democracy. Accordingly, survey data show that high-income countries ranked high on this dimension of value change. However, the analysis’ outcome also supports the Weberian view that cross-national differences also reflect a society’s sociocultural history (Inglehart and Welzel 2010: 552).

Based on the assumption that structures and culture determine value orientations, Inglehart and Welzel (Inglehart and Welzel 2010: 554) presented a ‘global cultural map’ based on the analysis of the WVS data. The outcome for 2014 can be seen in Fig. 1. The Y-axis represents the value change during the ‘first’ modernity: from traditional-religious to secular-rational or modern values. The X-axis represents the value shift during the ‘second’ modernity from survival to self-expression values. The countries are grouped according to their cultural backgrounds, such as Confucian, Protestant Europe, or Catholic Europe. Movement upwards on the Y-axis over the time represents the respective countries’ shift to secular-rational values; movement to the right on the X-axis reflects the shift to self-expression values.

Confucianism and hypotheses for East Asia

Confucianism and modernization in East Asian societies

To build hypotheses for value change and democracy in East Asia, we must shed some light on Confucianism, the shared cultural background of all East Asian countries. In contrast to Europe, it is not a religion, more a worldview, a social ethic, a political or state ideology, a scholarly tradition, and a way of life (Rozman 2002: 13). Traditionally, all East Asian countries are influenced by Confucianism, even though there were and are local adaptations.⁸

This system of philosophical and ethical teachings was founded by Confucius (551 to 479 BC), who wished to restore the hierarchical feudal yet harmonious society he believed to have existed at the start of the Zhou dynasty (1027 to 256 BC). This gave his teachings a generally conservative orientation. Confucius’s basic teachings center around the ‘five constant virtues’: humanity, righteousness, propriety, wisdom/knowledge, and faithfulness. There are five basic human relationships and principles: loyalty and duty (between sovereign and subject or master and follower), love and obedience (between father and son), obligation and submission (between husband and wife), seniority (elder and

younger brothers), and trust (between friends, the only non-hierarchical relationship). The humanism these principles suggest was reflected in Confucius's lack of interest in metaphysics and religion.

Confucius's teachings were developed and advanced by various disciples, such as Mencius (around 370 to 290 BC). Confucianism was transmitted to the kingdoms of Korea during the fourth century. It is claimed that it was introduced to Japan via Korea with the arrival of scholars from the kingdom of Paekche in 404 to 405. However, its influence vanished in all countries over time. After Buddhism entered China, Confucianism regained great importance as Neo-Confucianism, to counter this new philosophical system, which – in contrast to the indigenous Confucianism – was foreign. In response to Buddhist concepts, Neo-Confucianism stressed rational principle and strong force (Levi 2013: 8 f.). It represented a 'second revitalization' (Freiner 2012: 41) of Confucian thought during the Song dynasty (960 to 1279) in China and developed in Japan over the Edo period (1603 to 1868). In Korea, Neo-Confucianism has been adopted as a state ideology since the rule of King Sejong (1418 to 1450).

Besides stressing human hierarchies, there is a strong relationship between Confucianism, bureaucracy, and education. Japan and Korea introduced a Chinese-style bureaucratic system to govern their countries. Government officials were selected via a civil service examination system, testing a candidate's knowledge. Studies appear to have been rigidly formalized and to have stressed copying and memorization.

As was the case in China, there is a link between Neo-Confucianism and ethnocentrism. Specifically, the philosophical school of national learning (*kokugaku*) in Japan emphasized national pride and favored removing Chinese influence and replacing Chinese literature with Japanese ancient texts. Thus, Confucianism stresses the nation's importance and is

therefore suitable to function as a civil religion in the sense of Rousseau (Schmidt 2016) or as a part of national identity (Rozman 2002: 32).

In short, Confucianism emphasizes hierarchies in social relationships, specifically between men and women, stressing authority; it further stresses responsibility vs. individual rights and the nation, which makes it suitable as a basis of national identification. According to Fan (Fan 2000: 6), Confucianism stresses the importance of family, education, proper manners, and paternalistic structures in families, society, business, and management in present East Asian societies. Thus, it encourages a traditional and conservative value orientation.

Simultaneously, Confucianism embraces modern values and principles, which is why it has been considered the 'Protestant ethic' of the East (Bellah 1971; Trommsdorff 1983: 339). It is secular, because it is not a religion, and it is characterized by bureaucratization, which means it is a rational system – at least at the state level. Education functions as the main principle of elite recruitment. In all traditional Confucian countries, the national bureaucracy was selected via strict exams that tested a candidate's knowledge. As Max Weber pointed out, bureaucratization and selection by achievement instead of on a hereditary basis (as in traditional societies) are characteristics of modern, rational societies. However, as is the case in the modern system of elite universities in East Asia,⁹ this did not mean equal opportunities for all. In Japan, for instance, the bureaucracy was selected from the Samurai class, which had a hereditary basis for holding public office. In the case of Korea, the most successful candidates came from well-known aristocratic families (Palais 1984: 427). Further, Chan (Chan 1999: 237) has argued that Confucian principles such as community or respect for the elderly are compatible with the Western idea of human rights.

With the fall of the pre-modern order, Confucianism collapsed throughout the region in some sense; in other ways, it has survived (Rozman 2002: 13). Thus, Confucianism's influence varied markedly between the countries in the region during modernization. In Japan, it was mixed with Shintôism and nationalism, and Confucian ideas were seen as a means to achieve the ideological mobilization of the nation from the Meiji Restoration in 1868 onwards.¹⁰ Of specific importance was the Imperial Rescript on Education (*Kyôiku chokugo*) issued in 1890.¹¹ The basis of the Rescript was that Japan's unique form of government, the *kokutai*, was based on a historic bond between benevolent rulers and loyal subjects, and that the fundamental purpose of education was to cultivate virtues, especially loyalty and filial piety. Many observers noted that the Rescript was of Confucian origin, especially concerning human hierarchies, which established a sound basis for proper relationships among people. Another notable example of this ideology was the *Kokutai no hongi*, the Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan (1937), which presented the emperor as a Confucian ruler who enjoys loyalty and filial piety. This allowed Japan's government to mobilize people and to legitimately demand extraordinary achievement for both the national and the industrial revolution. Individual well-being was sacrificed for national progress (Trommsdorff 1983: 339).

After defeat in WWII, Japan introduced a democratic constitution upon pressure from the Allied Forces, specifically the U.S. However, Japan relied heavily on its traditional value system to rebuild the country and to gain a leading position among the advanced industrial nations (Nakane 1985; Vogel 1979). Especially the practice of 'administrative guidance' enabled the bureaucratic elite to manage the state and to run the economy with

long-term planning (Sugimoto 2010: 226), which was said to be behind Japan's 'economic miracle' of the 1960s and 1970s (Johnson 1989). There was a real decline of bureaucratic power with the burst of the so-called 'bubble economy' in 1991, when Japan's economic growth ended abruptly, as well as the unchallenged one-party dominant rule by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in 1993. Many scandals involving high-ranking bureaucrats led to a severe loss of trust in the national bureaucracy, but also to the enactment of several laws, which amongst others prohibited the acceptance of gifts and hospitality (Schmidt 2005: 31 f.) The politics of neo-liberalism led to a further decline in bureaucratic power since the number of bureaucrats declined greatly owing to the politics of privatization (Schmidt 2006: 14 f.).

Following their victory in the civil war in 1949, the communists in China turned away from Confucian principles, which were seen as feudal and reactionary, specifically under Mao's politics of the Cultural Revolution. It was not before the 1980s that communist leaders sought to revive some Confucian principles, as communism had lost most of its integrative power. After the economic reforms under the auspice of Deng Xiaoping that started in 1978, in which market principles were introduced, China's leaders increasingly acknowledged the need to learn from the past – the cultural and moral tradition stemming from Confucianism (Chan 1999: 214).

Korea was colonized by Japan from 1910 to 1945, which ended feudal society on the Korean peninsula. Thereafter, it suffered greatly in the Korean War. However, during the economic boom from the 1960s onwards, Confucian precepts combined with nationalism formed a new ideology to boost modernization in South Korea; this new ideology sought to unite the public behind rapid industrialization and to create an environment of rapid development (Kim and Park 2003: 37, 40). Simultaneously Christianity has experienced an unprecedented growth from the 1960s onwards. Today around one-fourth of the population are Christians, whereby the Protestant churches, represent by far the largest share (Kim 2000: 117 f.).¹² Thus, Christianity could have a greater influence on the value system of the younger generations in South Korea.

In all countries, the Confucian examination system was canceled during modernization and was replaced by nation-wide exams, leading to higher education and prestigious careers. In China, however, schools and universities were closed under Mao's policy of Cultural Revolution. Since the middle of the 1980s, a modern education system was introduced, and by the early 1990s, the Confucian ethic was incorporated into the curriculum and into the 'behavioral guidelines' for secondary and primary school students (Chan 1999: 214). Nowadays, in China, South Korea, and Japan, there is a hierarchical order of elite universities; entry into such a prestigious university guarantees a future top position in politics, the economy, or the bureaucracy.¹³ Entrance examinations are crucial in many pupils' lives, and many people become 'obsessed' (Rozman 2002: 14) with these examinations.

Overall, Confucian values such as the emphasis on education, loyalty, diligence, and respect for authority are believed to have played a key role in the industrialization process in all East Asian countries (Kim and Park 2003: 38). It can be shown that, when the tiger states of the East Asian region gained confidence from economic success, they drew heavily on Confucianism as a source of national identity. Rozman (Rozman 2002: 14) argues that the resulting national loyalties strongly focused on catching up with the West by accepting state leadership.

Confucianism and value change in East Asia: Hypotheses

Since Confucianism defines what can be seen as traditional values in East Asia, persons with a traditional (Confucian) value orientation will most likely prioritize the family, and will support authority, social hierarchies, and traditional family hierarchies; thus, they will likely reject gender equality.

If we further reflect on the correlation between Confucianism and modernity, we can argue that the fact that Japan between 1868 and 1904, South Korea between 1961 and 1987, or China at present have rapidly developed from feudal or underdeveloped societies to modern nations without any form of Enlightenment; this can be traced back to the presence of bureaucratic structures. It can also explain the elite-directed modernization¹⁴ under different forms of political regimes, such as ultra-nationalism and democracy in Japan, a military dictatorship in South Korea, or a Communist regime in China.

Concerning the value change from survival to self-expression values predicted to occur during the 'second' modernity, Confucianism may be seen as a hindrance to this change. First, it stresses social hierarchies, which can be seen as contradictory to democracy. Hierarchies generally stress social distinctions, while democracy stresses the equality of all. Second, Confucianism stresses authority and responsibility rather than individual freedom and civil rights.¹⁵ It stresses an elite-directed government via the bureaucracy rather than an elite-directing government via civil society. Finally, it stresses the nation vs. a cosmopolitan worldview. Since the 'second' modernity is characterized by denationalization (Europeanization in the European context) and the process of cultural globalization, national pride can be seen as a counterforce to the formation of post-national communities such as the EU in East Asia.

In the case of the 'first' modernization, Confucianism helped to promote the modernization of East Asian societies. Thus, we must look for possible positive effects of the transformation of societies during the 'second' modernity. First, we can argue that the principle of elite-directed modernization remains a success story – at least in the case of China. Considering key technologies of the 'second' modernity, namely renewable energies and high-speed trains, China has already become the global market leader. Concerning the world share in the production of high-speed trains, China held a share of 14% in 2007; in 2016, this had increased this to 69%. In Germany, in contrast, Siemens's share fell from 12% to 3% during the same period (Doll 2016).

Although the fairly nationalistic outlook of Confucianism seems to run counter to a cosmopolitan worldview required in the 'second' modernity, it is debatable whether Confucianism can be elevated into a source for regionalism. Owing to intensified global competition, there is a need to build regional identities, which gives East Asia the possibility to rely on shared Confucian identities. However, any effort to revive Confucianism in the next future is likely to come from anti-globalization forces (Rozman 2002: 33, 35–36).

Concerning the connections between Confucianism and the value change in the 'first' and the 'second' modernity, we found a strong connection between Confucianism and bureaucratic and rational principles of the 'first' and the 'second' modernity. On the other hand, however, Confucianism fosters traditional family relationships and social hierarchies, which stands in sharp contrast to the principles of democracy, specifically equality. Confucian values can further be seen as a hindrance to self-expression. Since the change from survival to self-expression values can be seen as a precondition for increased support for democracy, we can hypothesize that support for democracy

should be lower in Confucian countries, even though education and the education system is highly esteemed in either, China, Japan, or South Korea. In Western discourse, it is assumed that the higher the education level, the higher the preference for self-expression values and thus for democracy. However, education's role in the Asian context remains unclear. The system is hierarchical and is based on strict entrance examinations. We may hypothesize that Confucian education, which is based on learning by heart and copying rather than on reflection and argument, plays a different role to Western education.

Value change and democracy in East Asia

Testing the hypothesis concerning support for democracy

As can be seen in the Inglehart-Welzel cultural map in Fig. 1, the countries in Protestant Europe occupy a high position on the Y-axis and a right-hand position: this means a high level of secular-rational values and strong preferences for self-expression values in these countries. Since a high level of self-expression values is a precondition for support for democracy, we can assume that democracy finds most support among people in Protestant Europe, specifically in Sweden, the Netherlands, or Norway.

The Confucian countries rank high concerning the level of secular-rational values, with Japan ranking highest among all surveyed countries. However, concerning self-expression values, the Confucian countries are positioned more or less on the left-hand side: this means preferences for survival rather than self-expression values. However, according to the theory, we should have expected a strong desire for self-expression values at least in Japan, whose structural settings mostly resemble those of Germany. Notably, there was a strong correlation between economic development, the spread of education, and the preference for self-expression values (Inglehart and Welzel 2010: 558). Since self-expression values stimulate the desire for democracy, the preference for democracy in Confucian countries should be much lower than in Protestant Europe.

Figure 2 shows the importance of democracy in Confucian countries and in Protestant Europe, in comparison. The analysis shows that in Protestant European countries, democracy is valued much higher than in Confucian countries. Thus, we can confirm our abovementioned assumption. However, the time series analysis shows that support for democracy has shrunk in all countries from the 5th to the 6th wave, with the exception of the Netherlands. Since we have no earlier data, we cannot say whether or not this can be seen as a trend yet.

Looking closely at the figure, we see that, among the Confucian countries, democracy is valued highest among the Chinese and lowest among the Japanese. We might have expected a reverse relationship, since China is still communist, while Japan has been a democracy since 1945 and is a highly developed country in terms of industrial structure and education. However, notably, the notions of democracy vary between countries, since democracy is also embedded in each culture.

Liberal and authoritarian notions of democracy

According to the latest research on values (Welzel and Kirsch 2017), it makes sense to distinguish between liberal notions of democracy (LNDs) and authoritarian notions of democracy (ANDs). There is a paradox in the fact that support for

democracy coexists with the absence of the latter. If people misunderstand democracy in an authoritarian way, this lends legitimacy to non-democratic systems and explains their stability.

The analysis of the WVSs data showed that support for LNDs was high in many authoritarian countries, such as Egypt, Turkey, or China. This suggests that, in many nations, people agree on what is defined as LND: gender equality, human rights, and fair elections. However, at the same time, people in non-democratic countries simultaneously tend to support ANDs: authoritarian redefinitions of democracy.¹⁶ Thus, it has been argued that it is more important to research support for ANDs than support for LNDs (Welzel and Kirsch 2017: 3). Concerning supporting ANDs, 'Enlightenment forces' (i.e. education) were the most effective antidote against authoritarianism and had an even stronger effect on support than democratic traditions (Welzel and Kirsch 2017: 18 f.).

Figure 3 shows the support for ANDs in relation to the World Bank's Knowledge Economy Index (KEI), which summarizes several country-level data thought to represent the pillars of the knowledge economy, such as education and training or information and communication technology infrastructure, etc. (World Bank 2007: 2). It confirms the hypothesis that the higher the education level is, the lower the support for an authoritarian government. In Japan and Germany – both with a very high KEI: 8.5 – support for ANDs is very low (Japan: 2.3; Germany: 2.4). In China, where the KEI was only 4.4, support for ANDs was more than twice as high as in Japan or Germany (5.0).

If we investigate into the support for LNDs (Fig. 4) we see the paradox that was already discovered by Welzel and Kirsch. In communist China, support for liberal democracy was astonishingly high and amounted to 8.2. However, we see another paradox, namely that support for LNDs is comparatively low in South Korea, but specifically in Japan, where the educational level is very high. This 'second paradox' deserves further investigation.

Support for liberal notions of democracy: The ‘second paradox’

As noted, the figure for LNDs is created by a factor analysis, encompassing the importance of gender equality, human rights, and free and fair elections for democracy. The WVSs researchers grouped together the survey data as support for LNDs. If we look at the single factors (Table 1), we see that China scores very high concerning the importance of gender equality and human rights. Concerning the value of gender equality, this is unsurprising since the communists, specifically under the leadership of Mao, turned away from Confucian principles such as patriarchy. Concerning human rights, it can be assumed that the Chinese have a very different understanding of rights. With the amendment of China’s Constitution in March 2004, article 33/3 now declares that “The state respects and preserves human rights”. It further guarantees a set of individual rights to the people, such as equal rights, special protection of ethnic minorities, and people’s right to subsistence and development. However, in the West, human rights are often associated with freedom of opinion, expression, peaceful assembly, and association.

If we look at South Korea, and especially at Japan, Confucianism seems to influence attitudes toward democracy on a larger scale. Gender equality scores only 7.9 (South Korea) and 7.6 (Japan). We get the same picture concerning human rights. Further, looking at the figures in parentheses, which summarize the answers of younger people, we see that in Japan they are even lower than those of the overall population. Since value change always occurs first among the younger segments of society and only gains

Table 1 LNDs by Single Factors, in Comparison

	China	Japan	South Korea	Germany
Gender Equality	8.7 (8.8)	7.9 (7.7)	7.6 (8.1)	9.1 (9.1)
Civil Rights	8.4 (8.5)	7.5 (7.4)	7.0 (7.6)	8.1 (8.0)
Free Elections	7.5 (7.5)	7.9 (7.7)	8.1 (8.0)	9.1 (9.1)

Source: WVS.; age under 29 in brackets

1 = not at all important; 10 = very important

importance via intergenerational change over time (Inglehart 1971), we can assume that there will be no trend change in the near future.

In sum, we can confirm the hypotheses concerning authoritarian notions of democracy, since we found a fair correlation between support for ANDs and education level, in contrast to the hypotheses concerning the liberal notions of democracy. In the case of the East Asian countries, specifically Japan, whose structural development in terms of industrialization or education resembles Germany, we found no clear-cut correlation between education and support for LNDs. We can trace this back to Confucian principles such as traditional family hierarchies and the emphasis on respect and responsibility vs. individual human rights. Our findings support the assumption that cultural-ethical background is key in defining values and change in values over time as well as attitudes to democracy. However, it is also apparent that the different paths to modernity play a decisive role. They give information about the direction of the value change. In the wake of modernity, the Christian background was rationalised by the movement of Enlightenment, which questioned tradition and social hierarchies. Likewise, the Confucian background may assume different manifestations depending on the respective path to modernity.

Conclusion: Confucianism, value change, and democracy in East Asia

Based on the WVSs and inspired by Western research on value change, we have sought to investigate the influence and strength of cultural-religious background on value change direction. Further, we were interested in whether there is a link between value change, ethic-religious background, and democracy. We distinguished between the value change in the 'first' or 'simple' modernity and that during the 'second' modernity.

According to Western value change discourse, the 'first' modernity witnessed a value change from traditional-religious to secular-rational values, but this did not necessarily lead to democracy. For the 'second' modernity, a shift from material to post-materialist values and an intensifying of the demand for self-expression values was predicted. Triggered by rising education levels, this leads to a rising demand for democracy.

Our analysis showed that East Asian countries rank high concerning rational-secular values of the 'first' modernity, owing to the strong connection between Confucianism and bureaucratic and rational principles of modernity. Concerning the value change in the 'second' modernity, in contrast, these countries show only low change levels. Since Confucianism fosters traditional family relationships and social hierarchies, its values can be seen as a hindrance to self-expression values. Thus, democracy finds relatively low support among these countries. In Western discourse, it is further assumed that the higher the education level is, the higher the preference for self-expression values, the greater the demand for liberal notions of democracy and the greater the rejection of authoritarian notions of democracy. The researches of the WVSs also found a

paradox: that people in authoritarian nations also tended to support LNDs. Our study also revealed a second paradox. Although Confucian societies prioritize education, and the education system is based on strict entrance examinations, this did not lead to a higher demand for democracy. Specifically, in Japan, where education levels are as high as in Germany, the support for liberal notions of democracy was comparatively low. Thus, the expectations of Western value change discourse, which predicts a general shift to more democracy in the 'second' modernity, are unfulfilled. Overall, our analysis revealed that ethic-religious background plays a key role in value change and seems to be as influential as structural setting.

However, despite similarities via shared ethic-religious background, we also found country-specific features that deserve attention. For China, we must consider that communism has questioned the principles of Confucianism, specifically gender inequality and the traditional family system. Thus, it remains unclear whether other values are also changing in the wake of the current structural change taking place in China. This may concern values relating to post-materialist values, such as the environment.

South Korea has seen a strengthening of civil society over the past few years. Millions of people have protested against the free trade agreement TTIP (the candlelight protests) or for the impeachment of then-President Park Geun-hye. The next wave of the WVS will show whether or not this has strengthened the support for democracy. It would be interesting to see whether we will see a change from an elite-directed form of democracy to an elite-directing form of democracy via civil society in South Korea.

For Japan, which is a consolidated democracy and a highly developed country in terms of industry and education, we see no significant correlation between education and the preference for self-expression values and support for democracy. We may blame elite education and associated educational ideals, such as the submission of individual wishes in favor of learning for the entrance examinations or copying and memorization. This form of education stands in sharp contrast to the Western ideal of reflexive scrutinizing. However, since the survey in Japan dates from 2010, it would be interesting to see whether the Fukushima atomic disaster has led to a process of awareness in the direction of more reflexive scrutinizing.

Overall, it is apparent that structures alone cannot explain value change. This emphasizes the importance of the ethic-religious background for value change as well as perceptions of democracy. On the other hand, we also found country specifics that cannot be explained by the ethic-religious background alone. There were not only different starting points of modernization in terms of timing but the respective countries also pursued different paths to modernity. We can therefore regard the religious-ethnic background as a shared background of values, which, however, can evolve differently depending on the respective path to modernity and the timing of this process. Besides the ethic-religious background, we should therefore re-analyze the data concerning national characteristics so as to get a clearer picture.

Endnotes

¹For instance, see Inglehart (1971).

²A strong link has been found between self-expression values, the emergence of civil society, the flourishing of democratic institutions, and gender equality (Inglehart/ Welzel Inglehart and Welzel 2010: 559, 563; Inglehart/ Norris Inglehart and Norris 2003).

³See WVS: www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp.

⁴Initially, it was seen as a value change from materialistic values (e.g. the possession of a house, car, or TV) to post-materialist (e.g. gender equality, leisure time, or environmental protection).

⁵Interpersonal trust is seen as another modernization-linked orientation; see Inglehart and Welzel (2010: 556).

⁶This argument was already made by Barrington Moore Jr. (Moore Jr. 1966); see Inglehart/ Welzel (Inglehart and Welzel 2010: 552).

⁷However, economic collapses can reverse modernization trends, as can be seen during the Great Depression in Germany, Italy, Japan, and Spain; see Inglehart/ Welzel (Inglehart and Welzel 2010: 552).

⁸It is to note that in contrast to the Christian cultural space, other influences such as Buddhism, Taoism (China), shamanism (South Korea), Shintôism (Japan) or Christianity were also influential in East Asia.

⁹For Japan, see e.g. Schmidt (2009).

¹⁰In order to do so, not only Buddhism but also Christianity was discarded. Upon pressure from the Western powers, the Meiji state shifted to more tolerant religious politics and eventually granted freedom of religion by the Meiji Constitution.

¹¹For the full text of the Rescript, see Tsunoda et al. (Tsunoda et al. 1964: pp. 139–140).

¹²Christianity in Korea spread from the eighteenth Century onwards through Korean intellectuals who had come into contact with Christianity during educational trips to China, where Jesuit missionaries had established contacts with China from the sixteenth Century onwards. However, the Christians were suppressed by the Confucian monarchy until freedom of religion was granted in 1882. Until the 1960s, however, the number of Christians was quite small.

¹³For elite universities in Japan, see Schmidt (2009).

¹⁴For elite-directed and elite-directing forms of democracy, see Inglehart (Inglehart 1990: 335 f.).

¹⁵In case a friend asks for help, for instance, it would be impossible in the Confucian context to decline without a very good reason.

¹⁶ANDs: Religious leaders interpret the laws, the army takes over when the government is incompetent, and people obey their rulers.

Abbreviations

ANDs: Authoritarian Notions of Democracy; KEI: Knowledge Economy Index; LDP: Liberal Democratic Party of Japan; LNDs: Liberal Notions of Democracy; WVS: World Values Survey

Availability of data and materials

The data can be found at the World Value Survey (WVS) homepage: <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>

Author's contributions

The author read and approved the final manuscript.

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