

(COMMENTARY 49, January 2018)

## CULTURAL TRAJECTORIES: LANGUAGES, RELIGIONS AND POLITICAL CULTURES

Draft of a chapter for *Values, World Society and Modelling Yearbook 2017*

Overview. The previous chapter was about the rise and fall of nations. Perhaps though what is important is not which countries have power but which cultures have power. There is of course a tendency for the ruling culture to be the culture of the ruling country – or sometimes the culture of a country which was formerly the ruling country. In this chapter we look at the cultural trajectories of calendars, religions, languages and political cultures. The chapter ends by returning to religious strife and struggling with the question: what really matters?

The notion of ‘the year 2017’ is a cultural form. It is part of Western culture and is internationally widespread but it is not universal. Its reference is to the birth of Christ two thousand years ago. It is a cultural event which has travelled far in space and time.

The dating of the October revolution of 1917 leads us to look first at the schism between the Western Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church, then at the further schism caused by Martin Luther’s starting of the Reformation in 1517 and finally at the great diversity of churches and religions which exist today. More than half the world has religious beliefs with a four-thousand-year cultural history which runs from the ancient city of Ur in southern Iraq, to the Middle East to the world.

There are 7102 languages in the world. There is a typical power law distribution: a few languages have many speakers and many languages have few speakers. Nine of the twelve most common languages are European. However Chinese is top, Hindu-Urdu 2<sup>nd</sup> and Arabic 5<sup>th</sup>. The ‘language export ratio’ is high for the European languages spoken in the Americas: English and Spanish with a ratio of 8 and Portuguese with an astonishing 19.

We then consider political cultures. Prompted by Cederman’s analysis of the liberal world order we reflect on the political culture of world society: the domestic political culture, the political culture of inter-state

relations and the political culture of global norms. We consider: the transition from monarchies/empires to republics; the contestation between liberal democracy, capitalism, socialism and fascism (quoting Putin, Xi Jinping and Trump); and dissatisfaction in democracies and in non-democracies. A consideration of “the human costs of history” focuses on the debates and actions in 2017 relating to colonialism and empire and to Western discourses. Finally a foundational aspect of political culture is the balance it places between cooperation and conflict: in international relations theory between interdependence and power politics; and in game theory between positive-sum games and zero-sum. Illustrating this we contrast Barack Obama’s farewell speech and Donald Trump’s national security strategy; different perceptions of Xi Jinping’s view on a new global political culture; and Narendra Modi and Trump at Davos 2018.

### **The culture of world society**

Perhaps what is important is not which countries have power but which cultures have power. There is an association: there is a tendency for the ruling culture to be the culture of the ruling country – or sometimes the culture of a country which was formerly the ruling country.

Two questions we can ask about any cultural form are how widespread is it around the world and what has been its historical trajectory. Of particular interest is whether forms are the same throughout the world or different between continents, and whether the history reflects interaction between continents.

### **Calendar cultures and ‘the year 2017’**

“The calendar used in the West today is just one of a multitude of systems for parcelling up time and naming its divisions.”<sup>1</sup>

The notion of ‘the year 2017’ is a cultural form. I have not checked but I assume that, at least through their official dealings with the United Nations, all countries have made use of ‘2017’ during the year. Certainly the Rio Times (Brazil), Vanguard (Nigeria), Al Jazeera (Qatar), The Times of India, China Daily, Russia Today, Izvestia and Pravda all referred to ‘2017’. Many groups of people do use other reference points. Nevertheless

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<sup>1</sup> Blackburn, Bonnie and Leofranc Holford-Strevens. *The Oxford Companion to the Year: an exploration of calendar customs and time-reckoning* (corrected printing). Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1999, 2003.

I imagine that the notion of ‘2017’ is globally widespread at least amongst the more international people within any country.

Also it is not just the label ‘2017’ that is widespread, it is the cultural underpinning: the understanding of time and the method of its measurement, the science and technology of time<sup>2</sup>; and the mathematical understanding of whole numbers and their representation using a place system and the use of these particular symbols. It seems likely that of all cultural components, mathematics, science and technology are the most shared across the world.

On second thoughts that statement must surely be false. The notion of rice for example must surely be familiar to many more people around the world. What needs to be said is that certain ideas have a *presence* in all countries but not necessarily a *prevalence*.

The cultural form ‘2017’ belongs to a calendar system which arose in Europe and which has become widespread as part of the global spread of European culture over the last five hundred years or so – as discussed in the previous chapter. However the origins go outside Europe. The first year of the calendar refers not to a European event but to an event which occurred in the Middle East celebrated by an Abrahamic religion which started in the Middle East with sacred texts some of which were originally written in the language of Hebrew. Abraham’s homeland was the ancient city of Ur in what is now southern Iraq. So (a simplified version of) the cultural history runs from Iraq to the Middle East to Europe to the world.

The cultural form ‘2017’ is also of interest in the history of mathematics. The symbols used are Arabic numerals which originated in India, in particular the concept of zero was Indian. Thus 2017 – and also the number at the top of this page - now have a global presence, thanks to Europeans, thanks to Arabs and thanks to Indians.

## **The trajectories of religion ... 1917, 1517**

It is particularly appropriate to reflect on the calendar in 2017 because 2017 is the centenary of the ‘October’ revolution. It was October 1917 in Russia but November 1917 in western Europe – which was 13 days ahead of Russia. Russia was using the Julian calendar, introduced by Julius Caesar, and western Europe was using the Gregorian calendar, introduced in Roman Catholic countries by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. The older system continued to be used in the Eastern Orthodox Church, and hence in

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<sup>2</sup> See the discussion “A total eclipse ... a 61-second minute” and “What is midsummer?” in Burt, 2017, op. cit. 298-302.

Russia. Books on the Russian revolution typically are prefaced with an explanation about the two calendars and how the book intends to handle the dates. Following the revolution Soviet Russia adopted the Gregorian calendar in February 1918. The Russian Orthodox Church continues to celebrate Christmas thirteen days later.<sup>3</sup> The schism in the Christian church between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church had occurred in 1054.

The year 2017 also saw the anniversary of another later schism within the Christian Church. In 1517 Martin Luther protested the sale of indulgences in the Roman Catholic Church and initiated the Protestant Reformation and the further splitting of the Christian Church.<sup>4</sup> After five centuries of tumult there is a rich structured diversity of faiths. This provides an illustration of the typical power law distribution: a few churches have many adherents and many churches have few adherents. See Table 6.1.

**Table 6.1** Membership of different Christian denominations (millions)

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Catholic	1285
Protestant	900
Eastern Orthodox	270
Oriental orthodox	86
Restorationism and Non-Trinitarianism	35
Independent Catholicism	18
Other	1
Baptist	75-105
Lutheranism	70-90
Methodism	60-80
Calvinism	55-85
Continental Reformed Churches	20-30
Anabaptist	4
Hussites	1
Quakers	0.4
Pentecostalism	280
Non-denominational Evangelicalism	80
African initiated	60

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<sup>3</sup> Parfitt, Tom. "Orthodox leader attacks gays in Christmas Speech." *The Times*, January 8, 2018: 36.

<sup>4</sup> Doward, Jamie. "How Europe's wars of religion condemned 40,000 'witches' to a terrible death." *The Observer*, January 7, 2018: 7.

Seventh Day Adventists 20  
 New Apostolic 10  
 Chinese-originated and Chinese Independent 10  
 Restoration 85  
 Anglican Communion 80

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Considering all the world's religions, Christians form the largest group 31%, followed by Muslims 24%, unaffiliated 16%, Hindus 15%, Buddhists 7%, folk religions 6%, other religions 0.8% and Jews 0.2%. Combining the Abrahamic religions thus gives 55.8%. Thus more than half the world has religious beliefs with a four thousand year cultural history which runs from the ancient city of Ur in southern Iraq, to the Middle East and to the world.

### **The trajectories of language**

The Old Testament of the Christian Bible originated in Hebrew with subsequent translations into Greek, Latin and English. The New Testament of the Christian Bible reports Hebrew speech but the text originated in Greek with subsequent translations into Latin and English. The original is sacred but the translation is not? Thus there was debate in 2017 when the Pope proposed a rewording of the Lord's Prayer on the grounds that there had been a mis-translation from the original Greek.<sup>5</sup>

There are 7102 languages in the world. They are distributed over the continents with Africa overrepresented and Europe underrepresented, possibly reflecting population density.<sup>6</sup>

There is a typical power law distribution: a few languages have many speakers and many languages have few speakers. Table 6.2 below provides information about the 12 languages which account for two thirds of the people in the world in terms of their native language (first or second).

The first column gives the number of people in the corresponding 'home country' of the language. Note that there are 7.2 billion people in the world.

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<sup>5</sup> Kington, Tom and Kaya Burgess. "Pope gives his blessing to change in Lord's Prayer." *The Times*, December 8, 2017: 1.

<sup>6</sup> Noack, Rick and Lazaro Gamio. "The world's languages, in 7 maps and charts." *Washington Post*, April 23, 2015. Accessed: January 4, 2018. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/04/23/the-worlds-languages-in-7-maps-and-charts/?utm\\_term=.0467d2eaa4a3](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/04/23/the-worlds-languages-in-7-maps-and-charts/?utm_term=.0467d2eaa4a3).

The second column gives the number of people having each language as their native language (first or second). All twelve languages come from Asia, Europe or the Middle East – none from Africa or the Americas. Eleven are Indo-European languages and thus have a shared cultural history, Chinese being the exception. Ten are European or Arab – and hence to some extent share a cultural history with Abrahamic religions. Finally nine are European. Numerically, Chinese is first then Hindu-Urdu then English and the rest are all European languages apart from Arabic which is fifth.

The third column indicates the number of countries which have that language. English is present in by far the most countries. Some of these countries are small, I assume.

The fourth column indicates the number of people learning that language as a foreign language. English is overwhelmingly dominant.

**Table 6.2** Language statistics

	pop.	native speakers	nations	learners	ratio native/pop.
China	1.400	1.400	33	0.030	1.0
Hindu-Urdu	1.300	0.588			0.5
English	0.065	0.527	101	1.300	8.1
Arabic	-	0.467	60		
Spanish	0.046	0.389	31		8.5
Russian	0.143	0.254	16		1.8
Bengali	0.162	0.250			1.5
Portuguese	0.010	0.193	12		19.3
German	0.081	0.132	18		1.6
Japanese	0.127	0.123			1.0
French	0.064	0.118	51		1.8
Italian	0.059	0.067			1.1

The fifth column gives a measure of what might be called the cultural export ratio of a language: the number of native speakers divided by the population of the home country of the language. We expect a language to

be spoken in its own country. If it is spoken outside its own country then that indicates some exporting of the language.

Only European countries have a language export ratio of more than one. The language export ratio is high for the European languages spoken in the Americas: English and Spanish with a ratio of 8 and Portuguese with an astonishing 19.

## **The political culture of world society**

Perhaps what is important is not which countries have power but which political cultures have power. Cederman considers the threat to the liberal world order.<sup>7</sup> Three components are noted: domestic liberal order, the liberal community of states and global liberal norms. Domestic liberal order is threatened by rising inequality and populism, refugee flows and terrorism, and globalisation. The liberal community of states is threatened by an unwilling hegemon, the weakening of NATO and EU, and the diffusion of illiberalism with populist victories in Eastern Europe. Global liberal norms are threatened by the attack on the UN, the undermining of human rights and international law and Western support for illiberal leaders.

One threat posed to the liberal world order, particularly to the liberal community of states, is by the unwillingness of the hegemon to perform that role. An example cited was Donald Trump's slogan, "America first!"

The future of war in an illiberal world is seen as follows. Nuclear crisis instability is characterised by military rather than negotiated solutions, the weakening of multilateral institutions and diversionary war. The 'democratic peace' is eroded by fewer democracy-democracy relations, weakening defence of the West and irredentism. An increase in civil war is driven by more discrimination and exclusion and more state-led repression.

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<sup>7</sup> Cederman, Lars-Erik. *The threat to the liberal world order and the future of war*. Presented at the annual conference of the Conflict Research Society Conference. Pembroke College, University of Oxford. 2017.

Cederman, Lars-Erik, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Julian Wucherpfennig. "Predicting the Decline of Ethnic Conflict: Was Gurr Right and For the Right Reasons?" *Journal of Peace Research*. 54(2) 2007: 262-274.

See also Rengger, Nicholas. "Realism Tamed or Liberalism Betrayed? Dystopic Liberalism and the International Order." In *After Liberalism?: The Future of Liberalism in International Relations*. In Friedman, Rebekka, Kevork Oskanian and Ramon Pacheco Pardo (eds.). London, Palgrave Macmillan: 2013. p. 51-66.

In order to defend the liberal world order, there must be no tolerance of intolerance. Complacency must be challenged through education. Liberalism needs to be embedded and multi-ethnic integration promoted. There is a need for militant liberalism at home to keep populists from power, to protect free press and academia and to block violent extremist organizations. There is a need for militant liberalism abroad with the EU as the last bastion, isolating right-wing populists in Eastern Europe and defending against external enemies, especially Russia.

### **From monarchy and empire ... to republic**

“51% supported becoming a republic, 38% were opposed ...”<sup>8</sup>  
[Australia, 2017]

“... the rare and fragile institutions of republican government can only endure if they are sustained by a culture that cherishes those institutions.”<sup>9</sup>  
[US National Security Strategy, December 2017]

“Our Party was deeply aware that ... it was critical to topple the three mountains of imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat-capitalism ... China’s great transition from a millennia-old feudal autocracy to a people’s democracy.”<sup>10</sup> [Xi Jinping, October 2017]

The First World War was a contest involving six monarchies/empires (three of them family-related) – Germany, Russia and Britain; Austria-Hungary, Italy and Ottoman - and one republic, France.<sup>11</sup> For these seven countries the ultimate outcome of the war was two monarchies/empires

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<sup>8</sup> Results of a survey for *The Australian* in August 2017. Cited in Lagan, Bernard. “Australian PM paves way for republic.” *The Times*, January 2, 2018: 31.

<sup>9</sup> Trump, Donald J. *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. The White House. December 2017.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>. Page 1.

<sup>10</sup> Xi Jinping. “Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.” Report at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. October 18, 2017. Page 13.

Accessed: January 13, 2018.

[http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/Xi\\_Jinping's\\_report\\_at\\_19th\\_CPC\\_National\\_Congress.pdf](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/Xi_Jinping's_report_at_19th_CPC_National_Congress.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> These were the seven countries with the highest numbers of war deaths. Burt, 2015, op. cit., 90.

(UK and Italy) and five republics. (The US, a republic, joined the war in 1917. And many other countries were involved also).

The revolution in Russia in 1917 ended the rule of Tsar Nicholas. His own rule had ended nor was it followed by the rule of any other family member (of whatever degree of familial distance), nor by the rule of some other person in the role of Tsar. Simply it brought hereditary rule in Russia to an end. Nor was there a return to a monarchy decades later on the collapse of the Communist system which had replaced the monarchy.

In this, Russia was following a pattern that has characterised the history for the past four hundred years or so. Monarchies have become republics and new countries have been constituted as republics.

In a somewhat separate process there were revolutions in the colonies against imperial monarchs, either by the pre-colonial people or by the immigrant slaves or by the colonists themselves (for example the USA). Empires lost their territories, retreating to their cores. The new states became republics.

There are exceptions. The English Civil War had only temporarily ended monarchy in Britain. The French revolution had ended the rule of monarchy but there had been a temporary return to rule by emperors. Several European countries continue to have constitutional monarchs and might be thought of as monarchy-republic hybrids where the monarchic aspect is vestigial. Several Middle East countries were set up as monarchies.

The following are some of the key points in the history:

1642-1651 The English Civil Wars and the execution of Charles I in 1649 and the restoration of Charles II in 1660, the Glorious Revolution of 1688 replacing James II with William of Orange.

1775-1783 USA: the American War of Independence started in 1775 as a conflict between Great Britain and its thirteen colonies. In 1776 the colonies declared their independence and formed a new nation, the United States of America, a republic.

1789-1792 France: the French Revolution started in 1789; the National Convention abolished the monarchy in 1792; and Louis XVI was executed in 1793. There were subsequent brief interludes of Napoleonic emperors in 1804-1814, 1815 and 1852-1870.

1804-1825 Latin America: countries contested rule by France, Spain and Portugal and declare their independence as republics.

1911-1912 China: the Xinhai Revolution brought an end to the 2000-year-long dynastic rule with the abdication of the Puyi.

World War I

1917 Russia (see above)

1918-1919 Germany: the German Revolution at the end of the First World War and the replacement of the monarchy with a republic.

1918 Austria-Hungarian Empire: following defeat at the end of the First World War, the empire disintegrated into separate states constituted as republics and ending the Hapsburg monarchy.

1918-1923 Ottoman Empire: at the end of the First World War, the empire broke up into separate states and the Turkish War of Independence, 1919-1923, abolished the Sultan and established a republic.

post World War II

1947 India and Pakistan ... gain independence from Britain and become republics

Africa and Asia: countries gain independence from European imperial powers

## **Competing types of republic**

“A hundred years ago, the salvoes of the October Revolution brought Marxism-Leninism to China. In the scientific truth of Marxism-Leninism, Chinese progressives saw a solution to China’s problems. With the advent of modern times, Chinese society became embroiled in intense upheavals; this was a time of fierce struggle as the Chinese people resisted feudal rule and foreign aggression. It was in the midst of this, in 1921, as Marxism-Leninism was integrated with the Chinese workers’ movement, that the Communist Party of China was born. From that moment on, the Chinese people have had in the Party a backbone for their pursuit of national independence and liberation, of a stronger and more prosperous country, and of their own happiness; and the mindset of the Chinese people has changed, from passivity to taking the initiative.”<sup>12</sup> [Xi Jinping, October 2017]

“America, with our allies and partners, defeated fascism, imperialism, and Soviet communism and eliminated any doubts about the power and durability of republican democracy ...”<sup>13</sup> [US National Security Strategy, December 2017]

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<sup>12</sup>Xi Jinping. October 18, 2017. op. cit. page 11.

<sup>13</sup>Trump, Donald J. December 2017. op. cit. Page 2.

The Second World War and its precursor, the Spanish Civil War, were contests between competing types of republic: liberal democracy (France, USA), socialism (Soviet Union) and fascism (Germany and Italy) - and monarchies (Britain (?) and Japan). In the subsequent Cold War Europe and much of the rest of the world was divided between liberal democracy and socialism.

It is interesting to note that both of these political cultures are European in origin. The Chinese like to add the phrase ‘with Chinese characteristics’. Might one refer to the Soviet Union as practising communism ‘with Russian characteristics’? The general phrase ‘with local national characteristics’ constitutes a useful hypothesis or question: to what extent does a current local cultural form depend on pre-existing local culture and on imported culture? Finally the earlier discussion in this chapter has stressed the geographical travels of cultural trajectories.

### **Dissatisfied democracy ...**

“In the decades since the end of the Second World War, it has been widely assumed that the Western model of liberal democracy and free trade is the way the world should be governed.”<sup>14</sup>

“The great democracies face new and serious threats ...”<sup>15</sup>

“... what will doubtless be the ballooning discipline of democracy death studies ...”<sup>16</sup>

There have been recent concerns about the future of democracy with references to ‘democratic recession’ and ‘democratic deconsolidation’.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Burleigh, Michael. *The Best of Times, the Worst of Times. A History of Now*. London, Macmillan: 2017. – on the dust jacket.

<sup>15</sup> George W. Bush, quoted in Blakely, Rhys. “America is losing its confidence.” *The Times*, October 20, 2017: 34.

<sup>16</sup> Cohen, Nick. “How demagogues trash democracy. An account of how the US succumbed to Trump is insightful and highly alarming.” *The Observer, The New Review*, January 7, 2017: 31.

Levitsky, Steven and Daniel Ziblatt. *How Democracies Die. What History Tells US About Our Future*. New York, Viking: 2018.

<sup>17</sup> Diamond, Larry. “Facing up to the democratic recession.” *Journal of Democracy*, 26, 1 (2015): 141-155.

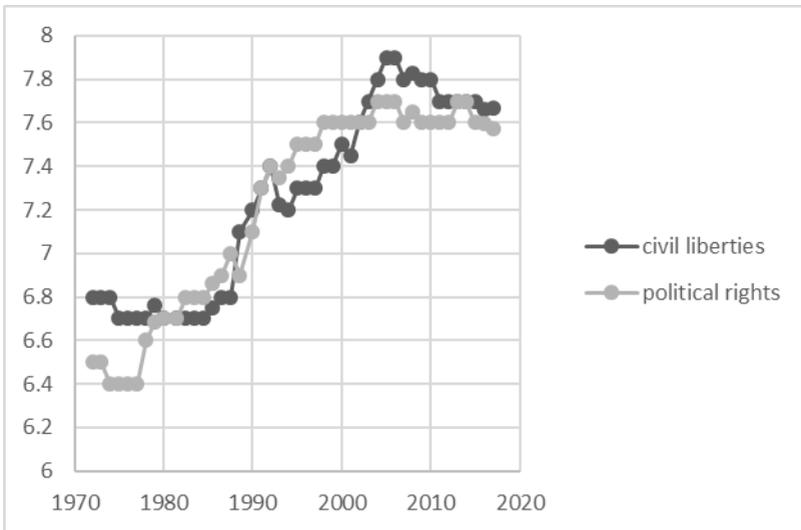
The Editors. “Online exchange on ‘democratic deconsolidation’.” *Journal of Democracy*, 26 June 2017.

Accessed: 19 October 2017.

In his talk (see above) Cederman noted that there had been an increase in the number of democracies in the world in past decades but there had been a more recent slight reversal, and he also noted the rise of populism.

The year 2017 was “the 12<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of decline in global freedom”. Figure 6.1 shows how freedom indices have broadly increased in the period 1976-2017, both for civil liberties and for political rights. However political rights have remained constant for the last twenty years while civil liberties continued to rise with a peak in 2005 but then falling steadily since then.<sup>18</sup>

**Figure 6.1** Freedom indices, 1976-2017



The 2015 Yearbook devoted a chapter to *Democracy: Satisfaction? ... Dissatisfaction? ... Value Space*<sup>19</sup>, noting in particular that people’s differing values inevitably resulted in a certain amount of dissatisfaction and this empirical observation was buttressed by a mathematical model in

<https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/online-exchange-%E2%80%9Cdemocratic-deconsolidation%E2%80%9D>.

<sup>18</sup> Abramowitz, Michael J. “Democracy in crisis.” *Freedom House Report*. Accessed: 23 January, 2018.

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2018>.

<sup>19</sup> Burt, 2017, *op. cit.*, 219-243; 287-290.

a later chapter. So it is not too surprising to learn that people are split on how well democracy is working in their country. According to a recent survey of people in 38 countries, 46% are satisfied and 52% are dissatisfied with the way democracy is working.<sup>20</sup> Asked about different ways of governing a country, the net positive percentages (good% - bad%) were encouraging for democracy. See Table 6.3.

**Table 6.3** Net percentage support for different ways of governing a country

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representative democracy	+ 61%
direct democracy	+ 36%
rule by experts	+ 3%
rule by a strong leader	- 45%
rule by the military	- 49%

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The various findings are as follows:

Using a derived measure the authors suggest that there is a shallow commitment to representative democracy. (I am uneasy about the derived measure.)

“Countries with more democratic systems show more widespread commitment to representative democracy. Correlation = 0.63.” However the graph does not exhibit a straight line relationship and maybe is even U-shaped.<sup>21</sup>

“Even in rich, well-established democracies, nondemocratic models find some support.”

“People with less education are more likely to support military government.” However for most countries the difference is not large.

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<sup>20</sup> Wike, Richard, Katie Simmons, Bruce Stokes and Janell Fetterolf. “Globally, broad support for representative and direct democracy.” *Pew Research Center Report*, October 16, 2017.

Accessed: 19 October 2017.

<http://www.pewglobal.org/2017/10/16/globally-broad-support-for-representative-and-direct-democracy/>.

Aaronovitch, David. “Referendums are great ... if you’re a dictator. Direct democracy is growing in popularity but there is no substitute for well-informed decisions made by parliaments.” *The Times*, October 19, 2017: 27.

<sup>21</sup> Burt, 2017, op. cit., 118-120.

“The ideological right is more supportive of a strong leader ruling without constraints.” However for most countries the difference is not large.

“Those upbeat on the economy are more likely to be satisfied with democracy.” In contrast to the previous results, the difference is marked.

“Those who support the party in power are more likely to be satisfied with democracy.”

Thus it is whether the economy is doing well and whether a person’s preferred party is in power that most strongly affects satisfaction with the way democracy is working. Table 6.4 shows the results for the USA. However the economy may be outwith the control of the government and the party in power is the democratic choice, and so these might not be reasonable grounds for dissatisfaction with democracy.

**Table 6.4** Percentage support for different ways of governing a country, depending on positive/negative responses to variable X. USA.

variable X	favouring V	percentage support on variable X		difference
		negative	positive	
party in power	democracy	31	68	+ 37
economy	democracy	37	54	+ 17
education	military	24	7	- 17
right	leader	14	27	- 13

### ... dissatisfied polity

Of course dissatisfaction also occurs in non-democratic polities.

“... a steep rise in the price of eggs ... They demanded the resignation of Hassan Rouhani, the reformist president, for failing to bring prosperity to most Iranians.”<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The Economist “Berating the tyrants of Tehran.” *The Economist*, January 6, 2018: 8.

Cederman's comment on how government policy might ameliorate ethnic conflict might be generalised to how government policy might ameliorate dissatisfaction.

"We assess whether an increase in governments' accommodative policies toward ethnic groups can plausibly account for a decline in ethnic civil war. Our findings lend considerable support to an account of the pacifying trend that stresses the granting of group rights, regional autonomy, and inclusion in power-sharing, as well as democratization and peacekeeping."<sup>23</sup> The size of the discriminated population has declined almost everywhere except for the Arab world where it has increased.

However:

"there are theoretical limits to the amount of satisfaction which democracy can deliver ... the same broad argument applies not just to democracy but to any system of government, and not just to systems of government but to all social arrangements."<sup>24</sup>

### **The human costs of history and of political cultures**

"I see a beautiful city and a brilliant people rising from this abyss, and, in their struggles to be truly free, in their triumphs and defeats, through long years to come, I see the evil of this time and of the previous time of which this is the natural birth, gradually making expiation for itself and wearing out."<sup>25</sup>

[Dickens, Charles. *A Tale of Two Cities*, relating to the French Revolution.]

"In 1838, the last twelve thousand Indians were rounded up in Georgia by federal troops and forced to leave, with the survivors of the long "Trail of Tears" ultimately settling in Oklahoma ...

... almost all substantial landowners were dependent on slave labour for their economic survival and growth. Slavery was perpetuated and confirmed as a national institution, with slave owner Thomas Jefferson declaring that it was a "necessary evil" for ensuring the superiority of whites and the continuation of the American way of life.

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<sup>23</sup> See also Rennger, Nicholas. op. cit.

<sup>24</sup> Burt, 2017, op. cit., 220.

<sup>25</sup> Dickens, Charles. *A Tale of Two Cities*. Bath, Parragon Books: 2000. Book 3, Chapter 15.

For the next half century, legal and military battles would be fought over the conflicting claims for land, and the ravages of slavery and its aftermath would affect the nation for another 150 years.”<sup>26</sup>

[Jimmy Carter, former president of the USA, 2003]

“Australia Day commemorates the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788 and the raising of the British flag ... Many Aboriginal Australians argue that the holiday marks the beginning of their dispossession.”<sup>27</sup>

“When we look at the lessons from a century ago, we see how ambiguous the results were, and how there were both negative and positive consequences of those events,” [Vladimir Putin, October 2017]

“Deng Xiaoping began to dismantle the policies associated with the Cultural Revolution and in 1981 the party declared that the Cultural Revolution “was responsible for the most severe setback and the heaviest losses suffered by the party, the country and the people.””<sup>28</sup>

In the above quotations, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, the victors in the 1945 triumph of humanity’s defeat of fascism, the proud possessors of superior political cultures, reflect on the human costs of their history, particularly the human costs of their political cultures. (Cf. next chapter’s discussion of John Tirman’s call for the study of the human costs of war).

The imperial power is in conflict with the colonists and the colonists are in conflict with the original inhabitants. In America and Australia the original inhabitants have been completely overwhelmed by the colonists. A somewhat similar structure of conflict occurred in the UK Mandate in Palestine. UK prime minister Theresa May did meet the prime minister of

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<sup>26</sup> It was with these words that former USA president Jimmy Carter chose to end his novel on the Revolutionary War: Carter, Jimmy. *The Hornet’s Nest. A Novel of the Revolutionary War*. London, Simon and Schuster: 2004. 465.

<sup>27</sup> Lagan, Bernard. “Statue of Cook vandalised over colonial links.” *The Times*, January 26, 2018: 21.

<sup>28</sup> Tang, Didi. “Beijing whitewashes Cultural Revolution.” *The Times*, January 15, 2018: 35. The embedded quotation is from paragraph 19 in the section *The Decade of the “Cultural Revolution”* of “Resolution on certain questions in the history of our party since the founding of the People’s Republic of China. (Adopted by the Sixth Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on June 27, 1981)” Chinese Communism Subject Archive. Accessed: January 13, 2018.

<https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/documents/cpc/history/01.htm>.

Israel but Britain's remembrance of the Balfour declaration of 1917 was muted.

The year was also the centenary of the Russian revolution but President Putin's remembrance was ambivalent – see above quotation.<sup>29</sup>

The conflictual remembrance of colonialism was a recurrent topic throughout 2017. Canada “is erasing European names from its maps. ... More than 600 indigenous names were added to the land registry in 2017 ... In some cases they are supplanting European names”. Many of these names celebrated leading colonialists. Montreal plans to remove “a stain on our city” by renaming Amherst Street. Jeffery Amherst established British supremacy in North America. The UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples acknowledges the rights of indigenous peoples to keep indigenous names for communities and places.<sup>30</sup> Similar renaming took place in the USA – see the quotation of former president Jimmy Carter regarding slavery and the persecution of the Indians.

How should we evaluate colonialism? There was a storm of protest when the *Third World Quarterly* published then withdrew a ‘viewpoint essay’ by Bruce Gilley entitled “A case for colonialism” ... and a further storm of protest when the author was defended. The publisher's website put up a page:

“The case for colonialism. Abstract. WITHDRAWAL NOTICE. This Viewpoint essay has been withdrawn at the request of the academic journal editor, and in agreement with the author of the essay. Following a number of complaints, Taylor & Francis conducted a thorough investigation into the peer review process on this article. Whilst this clearly demonstrated the essay had undergone double-blind peer review, in line with the journal's editorial policy, the journal editor has subsequently received serious and credible threats of personal violence. These threats are linked to the publication of this essay. As the publisher, we must take this seriously. Taylor & Francis has a strong and supportive duty of care to all our academic editorial teams, and this is why we are withdrawing this essay.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Walker, Shaun. “A century after the Russian revolution, the last tsar stands tall.” *The Observer*, October 22, 2017. Accessed: January 13, 2018.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/21/hundred-years-on-russian-revolution-lenin-tsar-nicholas>.

<sup>30</sup> The Economist “Shaming and naming.” *The Economist*, January 6, 2018: 29.

<sup>31</sup> Gilley, Bruce. “A case for colonialism.” *Third World Quarterly*. Accessed: 26 January 2018.

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01436597.2017.1369037?src=recsys>.  
See also:

The controversy continued throughout the Autumn and towards the end of the year page 3 of *The Times* had headlines:

“Empire-bashing archive backs down”

“Oxford academics attack professor who defended colonialism”

“Plaque in memory of slaves”<sup>32</sup>

### **Ideas: objective or partisan?**

The ideas which we shall discuss in the next chapter are intended to address the objective question of whether or not things in world society are getting better. However controversy is present in discussion of all the issues. This is not just about having different views but also about having self-serving views, possibly deliberately self-serving views. The 2014 Yearbook devotes a chapter to ‘*Our Values: Unanimous? Universal? Exceptional? Good? Safe?*’ which discusses self-serving national exceptionalisms including the debate in the UK as to whether or not Britain was a Christian country.<sup>33</sup>

A common criticism has been that the dominant ideas are the ideas of the dominant powers and that these ideas serve the interests of the dominant powers. The dominant power is seen variously as the West, the USA, the liberal order, democracy, the rich, global capital, etc.

The ‘Washington Consensus’ espoused by the IMF and World Bank has been seen as serving the interests of the US while harming client nations. Discussions leading to the Paris agreement on climate change also noted conflicts of interest between the West and others, with India initially a reluctant signatory - roles have now reversed with Donald Trump’s threat to withdraw and India’s allegiance to the agreement.<sup>34</sup> Regarding violence, Sarkees notes that some critics of the declinist argument point to the promiscuous intervention by, the permanent engagement of and the

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<https://legalinsurrection.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/The-Case-for-Colonialism-Third-World-Quarterly-Bruce-Gilley.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> Letters. “Scholars and the debate about colonial rule.” *The Times*, December 8, 2017: 32. Malvern, Jack. “Empire-bashing archive backs down.” *The Times*, December 21, 2017: 3. Bennett, Rosemary. “Oxford academics attack professor who defended colonialism.” *The Times*, December 21, 2017: 3.

<sup>33</sup> Burt, op. cit., 2016, 86-108.

<sup>34</sup> Westcott, Ben. “Reluctant signatory India takes moral high-ground on Paris climate deal.” *CNN*, June 2, 2017.

Accessed: 14 October 2017.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2017/06/02/asia/india-paris-agreement-trump/index.html>.

expansionism by the USA; and they see the declinist view as apologetics for Western-imperial violence. Tirman points to the indifference, the lack of awareness and the lack of concern of the liberal hegemon for the human costs inflicted on others by its exercise of what it sees as its hegemonic role. Within his talk Cederman expressed qualms about how the USA had exercised its role as hegemon and referred particularly to the Vietnam War.

Some studies may consider all parties but yet may frame the situation in a partial way. Steven Ratuva noted that a variety of indices yielded world maps which frame the West in a positive light and the rest of the world in a negative light.<sup>35</sup> He argues as follows:

“Mainstream ‘Western’ discourses on security often located the Western world at the centre of analysis, and the global south societies were seen as full of rogue states and potential sources of threat to liberal democracy, global capitalist interests and Western values. A critical factor was the way in which some of the underlying assumptions were used to justify division of the world into the ‘west versus the rest’ and intervention in various forms. The article does a critique of some of the dominant security discourses in the context of their significance to the global south. The political, cultural and economic transformations in the global south societies and their subaltern position within global power configuration were shaped by their colonial experiences, and these in turn reflected their security situations and these factors are often ignored in mainstream security thinking. This poses serious questions about the relevance of Western notions of security and implications on world peace.”<sup>36</sup>

### **Barack Obama’s farewell speech, January 2017**

Barack Obama’s valedictory speech touched on foreign policy, the economy and society. Regarding foreign policy, he had re-established relations with Cuba, negotiated the shutting down of Iran’s nuclear weapons programme and had achieved the assassination of Osama Bin Laden, mastermind of 9/11. Regarding the economy, his administration had reversed a recession, revived the car industry and unleashed a long period of job creation.

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<sup>35</sup> Ratuva, Steven. “Indexology, pseudo-science and human ranking: reducing peace into a quantifiable commodity.” Presented at the annual conference of the *Conflict Research Society Conference*. Pembroke College, University of Oxford. 2017.

<sup>36</sup> Ratuva, Steven. “Subalternization of the Global South: Critique of Mainstream ‘Western’ Security Discourses.” *Cultural Dynamics*, 28(2) (2016): 1-18.

Looking to the future, he agreed that trade should be fair as well as free. However economic dislocation would come not from foreign trade, but from automation making certain jobs obsolete. Society in the USA was divided. There was a lack of solidarity among its citizens; and society was fractured by naked partisanship into irreconcilable political tribes.

There was increasing economic and regional stratification. We were secure in our bubbles, accepting information which fits our opinions, regardless of evidence. Race remains a potent and divisive force. There was the corrosive influence of social media; and the splintering of media into a channel for every taste. Instead there needs to be a basic sense of human solidarity – “that we rise and fall as one” – seeing things from the perspectives of others. For blacks and other minorities, this means tying our own struggles for justice to the challenges that a lot of people in this country face. [There were messages too for white Americans and for native-born Americans.] Americans are fundamentally good ... change can be achieved.<sup>37</sup>

### **Donald Trump’s *National Security Strategy*, December 2017**

Donald Trump’s inauguration speech in January 2017 echoed the substance and style of his campaign speeches and this continued in his utterances throughout the year.<sup>38</sup> In December Donald Trump gave a speech introducing the *National Security Strategy*. The strategy relates to protecting American people, their homeland, their way of life and their prosperity. Commentators wondered about the consistency between the document and the speech and indeed other pronouncements by the president; and between past and current statements and future actions.

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<sup>37</sup> Blakely, Rhys. “Our democracy is under threat, Obama declares.” *The Times*, January 12, 2017: 11.

The Associated Press. “Text of Obama’s farewell speech as prepared for delivery.” *The Associated Press*, January 11, 2017. Accessed: 31 January 2017. <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/5f2a5b8bf38e4bd58852cfaee5864430/text-obamas-farewell-speech-prepared-delivery>.

<sup>38</sup> The New York Times. “Donald Trump’s inaugural speech, annotated.” *The New York Times*, January 20, 2017. Accessed, January 13, 2018. [https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/01/20/us/politics/donald-trump-inauguration-speech-transcript.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/01/20/us/politics/donald-trump-inauguration-speech-transcript.html?_r=0).

Such discrepancies had occurred with past presidents but might be particularly acute in the case of President Trump.<sup>39</sup>

The sixty-odd page document has a ten paragraphs preface signed by the president. But otherwise the main document has been written by another hand<sup>40</sup> and adopts a familiar realist perspective of competition between nation-states. The ten paragraphs (numbered below) in the preface contain the following ideas:

“Make America great again” 1.1

“America first” 1.2

“An extraordinarily dangerous world” 1.3

“We are charting a new and very different course.” 1.4

“We are rallying the world ... confronting ... renewing friendships ... we crushed ... allies are now contributing more ... we have continued to make clear [we] will no longer tolerate ...” 1.5

“At home we have restored confidence in American purpose ...” 1.6

“The whole world is lifted by America’s renewal ...” 1.7

“We will pursue this beautiful vision — a world of strong, sovereign, and independent nations, each with its own cultures and dreams, thriving side-by-side in prosperity, freedom, and peace — throughout the upcoming year.” 1.8

“We will promote a balance of power that favours the US, our allies and our partners.” 1.9

“America first” 1.10

## **Xi Jinping’s report at the 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress**

“Remain true to our original aspiration and keep our mission firmly in mind, hold high the banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics, secure a decisive victory in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, strive for the great success of socialism with Chinese

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<sup>39</sup> Deng, Boer. “Trump sends warning to Russia and China.” *The Times*, December 19 2017: 37.

Jones, Callum. “Wall St soars as markets cheer Trump tax reforms. Dow beats its record for 70<sup>th</sup> time this year.” *The Times*, December 19 2017: 17.

Trump, Donald J. December 2017. op. cit.

Commentary on the plan was available at many websites including:

CNN, Foreign Policy, BBC, Slate, Time, Reuters, Guardian, Atlantic, Council on Foreign Relations, Christian Science Monitor.

<sup>40</sup> Brannen, Kate. “Trump’s National Security Strategy is decidedly non-Trumpian.” *The Atlantic*. December 8, 2017. Accessed: January 23, 2018.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/12/trump-nss-diplomacy-security-foreign-policy/547937/>.

characteristics for a new era, and work tirelessly to realize the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation.”<sup>41</sup> [Xi Jinping, October 2017]

In January President Xi Jinping gave a speech at Davos prompting a headline “China’s president talks like a reformer. But the reality is very different.”<sup>42</sup> In October President Xi Jinping presented the report of the 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress. A letter from Zeng Rong, a spokesperson of the Chinese embassy in London, provides a succinct identification of some key points.<sup>43</sup> The points relate to global political culture.

A key point concerns the nature of international political culture. International relations is not a zero-sum game – rather it involves win-win cooperation. Countries are increasingly interconnected and interdependent. There is economic cooperation and cultural exchange. A new type of international relations builds a community with a shared future for mankind based on mutual respect, equity and justice.

In particular this is applied to development. Peaceful development is an irreversible trend. China has increased the options for developing countries to achieve modernisation. China will always respect other countries’ choice of development model and will never impose its will on other countries.

Finally this relates to the issue of the exercise of power. China’s development is no threat to other countries and China will never seek expansion. China opposes the old concept that strength leads to hegemony.

The letter was in response to an earlier article which was based on the National Endowment for Democracy’s suggestion that China’s policy was an expression of ‘sharp power’. This was an expression to which Gary Rawnsley took exception.<sup>44</sup> The concept of ‘soft power’ was already well established.

It might be worth pausing on the two components of the phrase. ‘Soft’ might be associated with cultural attraction, familiarity, love, etc. ‘Power’ might refer to capability or intention. Power as intention may be benign or self-seeking at the expense of others. The aim may be to influence,

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<sup>41</sup>Xi Jinping. October 2017, op. cit. page 1.

<sup>42</sup> Leader. “China’s president talks like a reformer. But the reality is very different.” *The Economist*. February 16, 2017. Accessed: 24 January 2018. <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21717041-reality-very-different-chinas-president-talks-reformer>.

<sup>43</sup> Rong, Zeng. “China’s diplomatic approach.” *The Economist*, January 6, 2018: 11.

<sup>44</sup> Rawnsley, Gary. “China’s diplomatic approach.” *The Economist*, January 6, 2018: 11.

persuade, change opinion and behaviour. The intention may not be explicit. Moreover the reaction to softness can vary. It can cause resentment and conflict and can be seen as propaganda and cultural imperialism.

The earlier article had suggested that China's relations with other countries involved "subversion, bullying and pressure". That criticism was seen by Zeng Rong as prejudice and was unacceptable, involving speculation and defamation. Instead China would welcome a positive, healthy and peaceful approach which would contribute to mutual trust and cooperation.

## Narendra Modi's speech at Davos 2018

Narendra Modi's opening speech at Davos in January 2018 links the themes of several of the chapters in this book! He noted that in 1997 the GDP of India was \$400 billion and now it is six times that (cf. Chapter 5 on *Power trajectories: Western dominance and Eastern growth*). He identified climate change and terrorism as serious threats (cf. the international survey of threats reported at the end of Chapter 7). He contrasted on the one hand globalisation, international cooperation, international organisations and arrangements, and international trade and on the other hand isolationism and protectionism – thus echoing the sentiments expressed by Xi Jinping at Davos 2017, mentioned earlier in this chapter.<sup>45</sup>

## Donald Trump's speech at Davos 2018

What would Donald Trump say in his speech on the closing day at Davos? Would he be the party wrecker and trumpet his 'America first' philosophy? Or would he make overtures towards the globalist sentiments of the Davos set? He did both and neither. His scripted 20-minute speech was 'read in a flat monotone' and was seen as 'listless', 'calming', 'sober' and 'pragmatic', 'wooing business' and 'charming the plutocrats'. His impromptu comments included his customary attack on the press.<sup>46</sup>

## The religious and secular cultures of world society

"Perhaps what is important is not which countries have power but which political cultures have power ..."

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<sup>45</sup> Griffiths, Katherine. "Modi takes aim at Trump's 'America first' boast." *The Times*, January 24, 2018: 40-41.

<sup>46</sup> The quotations are from a variety of reports. World Economic Forum. "President Donald Trump's Davos address in full." *World Economic Forum Annual Meeting*. January 26, 2018. Accessed: January 26, 2018.

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/01/president-donald-trumps-davos-address-in-full-8e14ebc1-79bb-4134-8203-95efca182e94/>.

Elliott, Larry. "Donald Trump woos business but attacks media at Davos." *The Guardian*, January 26, 2018. Accessed: January 26, 2018.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/jan/26/donald-trump-booed-in-davos-as-he-woos-businesses>.

... and perhaps what is important is not which political cultures have power but which religious or secular cultures have power.

In a way this chapter has been misleading. Although there was discussion of religion at the beginning, the chapter has mostly been about political cultures. In a similar way the cover of Michael Burleigh's book is misleading: the photographs of Xi Jinping, Putin and Trump imply that the central feature of world society today is the clash between these three nations and their political cultures. Yet inside his book three of the eight chapters cover Gulf rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia; Islamic State; and Erdogan's Turkey. In addition his chapter on Putin's Russia noted the role of the Russian Orthodox Church and his chapter on Europe noted the role of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland and Hungary. Thus an important feature of today's world is the conflict between different branches of Islam and between Islam and other religions and between religion and secularism.

In this chapter the earlier section entitled *From monarchy and empire ... to republic* noted the history of the recent centuries in terms of the political cultures in play. However alongside this there were corresponding changes taking place in religious and secular cultures. The power of the monarchy was often associated with the power of the church and so the abandonment of the monarchy was associated with the reduction of the power of the church. For some also the rise of science indicated a reduction in the power of religion. However religion provided a counterbalance to the power of the new republics. When republics fell religion was able to regain power. In situations where some saw a conflict between different forms of republic, there was surprise when the secular forms of republic fell and power was taken over by religion. The Shah of Iran was not replaced by liberal democracy or by socialism but by Ayatollah Khomeini.

### **What really matters**

Perhaps what is important is not which countries have power, nor which political cultures have power, nor which religious or secular cultures have power. No. Perhaps what really matters ... is ... what really matters.

'What really matters' is something which we struggle with. Indeed it is perhaps the central thing we struggle with. That is why the word 'values' is the first word in the title of this book. This chapter has reminded us forcefully how many different values there are. Perhaps though there are some fundamental values? In answer to that question John Burton decided that the key notion was 'basic human needs'. In the 2014 Yearbook Kevin

Avruch discusses how Burton's psychological notion has struggled with anthropologists' notion of cultural values.<sup>47</sup>

An illustration of struggling with 'what really matters' was given by an item in yesterday's newspaper:

"Happiness tells us more about Britain than GDP.  
 Today's economic growth figures will be poured over by politicians but they miss a bigger point.  
 ... a better question is why everyone from the right to the left is obsessed with income over every other measure of progress.  
 ... and yet when you examine what really matters to people, income comes surprisingly far down the list ..."<sup>48</sup>

In the next chapter we shall be looking at a variety of different values – including GDP - and how the satisfaction of these values has changed over time. Even so we shall still be left struggling with the question of 'what really matters'.

## Links

Some of the links for this chapter are similar to the links for the previous chapter – particularly in relation to nations and their histories and political cultures. Also relevant here is Chapter 11 *Democracy: Satisfaction? ... Dissatisfaction? ... Value Space* in the 2015 Yearbook. Two chapters are highly relevant to the conflict between religions and secular belief systems: the discussion of whether or not the UK is a Christian country in Chapter 6, *'Our Values': Unanimous? Universal? Exceptional? Good Safe?*, in the 2014 Yearbook; and Chapter 4, *'Our Values': The Enlightenment ... the Prophet*, in the 2015 Yearbook.

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<sup>47</sup> Avruch, Kevin. "Context and pretext in conflict resolution." In Burt, Gordon. *Values, World Society and Modelling Yearbook 2014*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars: 2016. 25-37.

<sup>48</sup> Conway, Ed. "Happiness tells us more about Britain than GDP." *The Times*, January 26, 2018: 26.