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Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel

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## Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy

*The Human Development Sequence*

This book demonstrates that people's basic values and beliefs are changing, in ways that affect their political, sexual, economic, and religious behavior. These changes are roughly predictable: to a large extent, they can be explained by the revised version of modernization theory presented here. Drawing on a massive body of evidence from societies containing 85 percent of the world's population, the authors demonstrate that modernization is a process of human development, in which economic development gives rise to cultural changes that make individual autonomy, gender equality, and democracy increasingly likely. The authors present a model of social change that predicts how value systems are likely to evolve in coming decades. They demonstrate that mass values play a crucial role in the emergence and flourishing of democratic institutions.

Ronald Inglehart is a professor of political science and program director at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. He helped found the Eurobarometer surveys and is the president of the World Values Survey Association. His most recent books are *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies* (1997), *Rising Tide: Gender Equality in Global Perspective* (with Pippa Norris, Cambridge University Press, 2003), and *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (with Pippa Norris, Cambridge University Press, 2004). The author of almost 200 publications, Inglehart has been a visiting professor or scholar in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Brazil, and Nigeria, and he has served as a consultant to the U.S. State Department and the European Union.

Christian Welzel is associate professor of political science and program coordinator at International University Bremen and is a member of the Executive Committee of the World Values Survey Association. He was a senior research Fellow at the Social Science Research Center Berlin and visiting professor at the University of Potsdam. He is a two-time recipient of a grant from the Institute for Social Research, and he has published numerous articles in the *European Journal of Political Research*, *Comparative Politics*, *Comparative Sociology*, *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, and *Political Culture and Democracy*, among others. He has also published extensively in German.

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Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel  
Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Bremen, Germany

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## Foreword

This book makes a major contribution to our understanding of social and political change. It tests the impact of culture on political and social life, analyzing the broadest empirical base ever assembled for this purpose. It interprets the evidence in a bold new theoretical framework – a revised version of modernization theory. Analyzing a massive body of data from the perspective of human development theory, the authors produce something that has been declared dead: grand theory.

They demonstrate that fundamental changes are occurring in the belief systems of publics around the world. They show how these changes are shaped by an interaction between the forces of socioeconomic development and persisting cultural traditions. And using data from representative national surveys in eighty societies, the authors demonstrate that changing mass values are producing growing pressures for the establishment and strengthening of democracy.

Earlier versions of modernization theory did not foresee the massively strong linkage that the authors find between rising self-expression values and the emergence and flourishing of democratic institutions. Building on previous work by Welzel, the authors convincingly argue that socioeconomic modernization, rising liberty aspirations, and the quest for democratic institutions all reflect the common underlying process of human development, the theme of which is the broadening of human choice.

This book succeeds in integrating a vast amount of empirical evidence into a coherent theoretical framework, enriching our understanding of how democracy emerges and survives. Its findings have major substantive importance. The authors claim that socioeconomic development and the rise of the knowledge society have roughly predictable consequences. They then develop a model that enables them to make a number of explicit predictions about what will be observed in the future, in the realm of cultural change and democratization.

This is a bold undertaking. Successful predictions are rare in the social sciences. But these predictions build on a foundation that has led to a number of previous predictions being proved accurate. In 1971 Inglehart predicted that intergenerational change would lead to the spread of postmaterialist values. At



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the time, materialists outnumbered postmaterialists heavily – by about four to one – in the six Western societies from which he had data. Today, postmaterialists have become as numerous as materialists in all six of these societies. I am pleased to have worked with Inglehart as part of the Political Action Study group that, having analyzed patterns of political behavior and social change in the 1970s, predicted the spread of what was then called “unconventional political behavior,” including such actions as petitions, boycotts, and demonstrations (Barnes and Kaase et al., 1979). Three decades later, participation in these forms of behavior has roughly doubled in the eight countries included in the Political Action Study. At this point, it is impossible to say how accurate the predictions presented in this book will prove to be – but I would not readily discount them.

The book is a landmark in the study of political culture and democratization. It will polarize opinion, provoking both strong acclaim and fierce critique, for this work presents powerful evidence contradicting several major schools of thought in the social sciences. It will be debated and cited now and in years to come.

Hans-Dieter Klingemann

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