1. Different cultures have different views on confrontations and how they deal with it. Erin Meyers talks about cultures being on a continuum between confrontational and non-confrontation when it comes to disagreeing. For example, Meyer mentions the interaction between herself and some friends at a dinner party one night. She said that Juliette and Hélène “got into a big argument over whether the town’s annual golf event, which occurs every spring practically in Hélène’s backyard, was a good thing or a bad one” (Meyer). They got into, what Meyers described, as a heated debate. She thought it would result in someone leaving the room upset or slamming the door but to her surprise, it did not. Meyers did not want to give her own opinion because she was afraid of running her friendship or causing tension, but this is because of Meyer's American culture. The French can have a heated argument without it interfering with their friendships with one another. To Americans, this kind of debate is not a good thing, but in other cultures, it is different. She gave a similar example using Li Shen who was upset that members were questioning and challenging her decisions. She said she felt upset and wanted to cry because she thought that she did not know what she was talking about. After she was finished, they came and congratulated her on how well her presentation was and it took her by surprise. She then explains that she felt this was because of a concept in Chinese called mianzi or “face”. It is when “you present yourself to others, [and] offer a persona that reflects what you publicly claim to be” (Meyer). So, when speaking to someone from a culture like this, they can feel hurt if you “…publicly suggest that [they] don’t know what [they are] talking about” and basically saying that their “…expertise is scanty and [their] leadership skills are weak” (Meyer). They essentially lose face and experience “a sort of public shame” (Meyer). “In Confucian societies like China, Korea, and Japan, preserving group harmony by saving face for all members of the team is of utmost importance” (Meyer). In these Asian cultures, group harmony keeps balance and if someone in the group does not living up to the expectations they presented, then they lose face and mess up the balance. Li Shen says that “In China, protecting another person’s face is more important than stating what you believe is correct” (Meyer). This differs greatly from other cultures where this is not as important. So, a culture will differ on a continuum between confrontational and non-confrontational depending on how important saving face is.

2. Meyers lists three different outcomes for a good meeting. The first is when a decision is made. A lot of Americans agree with this because we like to have answers and a definite direction. The second is, “In a good meeting, various viewpoints are discussed and debate” (Meyer). Meyers says that the French are more likely to agree with this. The third one is “In a good meeting, a formal stamp is put on a decision that has been made before the meeting” (Meyer). Asian cultures are more likely to go with the third option. For those cultures, Meyers says is it better to express any disagreement before a meeting rather than in front of everyone. Depending on where a culture lies on the confrontational scale, will determine which option works best for that culture. For example, the French culture welcomes debate openly because they do not care as much about saving face as other cultures would.

Source:

Meyer, Erin. The Culture Map: Breaking through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business. PublicAffairs, 2014.