

# The relationship between linguistic, ethnic and state identities – Russians in Ukraine

Panel 2 "East Slavic Languages in the Context of War and Beyond"

**ARTO MUSTAJOKI**

University of Helsinki

# Identity – a definition

“Identity is a voice inside which speaks and says: ‘This is the real me’” – Erik Erikson

Identity manifests in various forms: gender, occupation, hobbies, religion, and more.

A significant, though sometimes imperfect, source of identity is the origin of a person, including birthplace, cultural background, and place of residence. These factors include ethnicity/nationality, citizenship, residency in a specific area (city, village), and mother tongue

# Identity of Russian living in Ukraine?

*David D. Laitin* (1998). Identity in formation: The Russian-speaking populations in the near abroad.

“The Russian speakers in the post-Soviet republics are facing a radical crisis of identity ---

Are they a people of diaspora, even if it was not they but their country that moved? Would they “return” to a homeland many of them had never seen?

Would they join forces to fight politically for Russian rights in these republics, or even militarily for the right to unite with the Russian Federation? Would they come loyal citizens of the new republics but maintain a Russian identity? ---

Would these Russians move along a path that leads, for their children, if not for them, to assimilation with titular nationality? “

# Mindset options for Russians living in Ukraine 1

## 1. Diaspora / Russkiy Mir /Soviet mindset

William Safran:

- To retain collective memory and myths about the homeland
- The original homeland remains an idealised home, one to which they or their descendants might someday return
- They continue to relate to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are defined by the existence of such relationship

# Mindset options for Russians living in Ukraine 2

## 2. Dual identity mindset

“We are proud of our *ruskost* and seek to preserve our language and culture but we want to be patriotic Ukrainians, as well”

## 3. Complete assimilation mindset

“We aim to assimilate to Ukrainian society and speak its language and let go off our Russian origins”

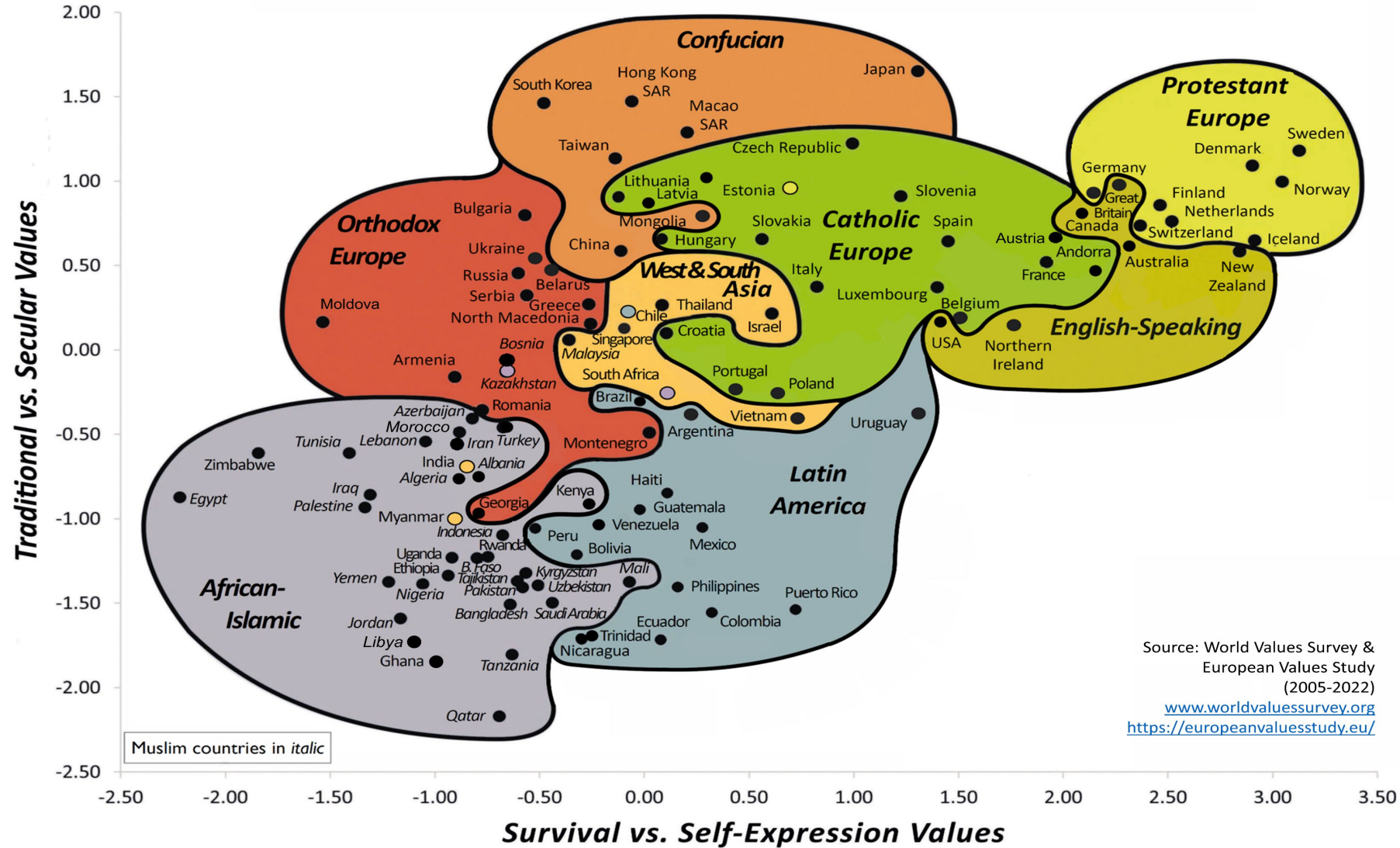
# Shared identity factors between Ukraine and Russia

- Religion
- Geography / climate
- Values / mentality
- Joint history
- Language and ethnic group (Slavic) (Cyrillic alphabet)

# SLAVIC WORLD

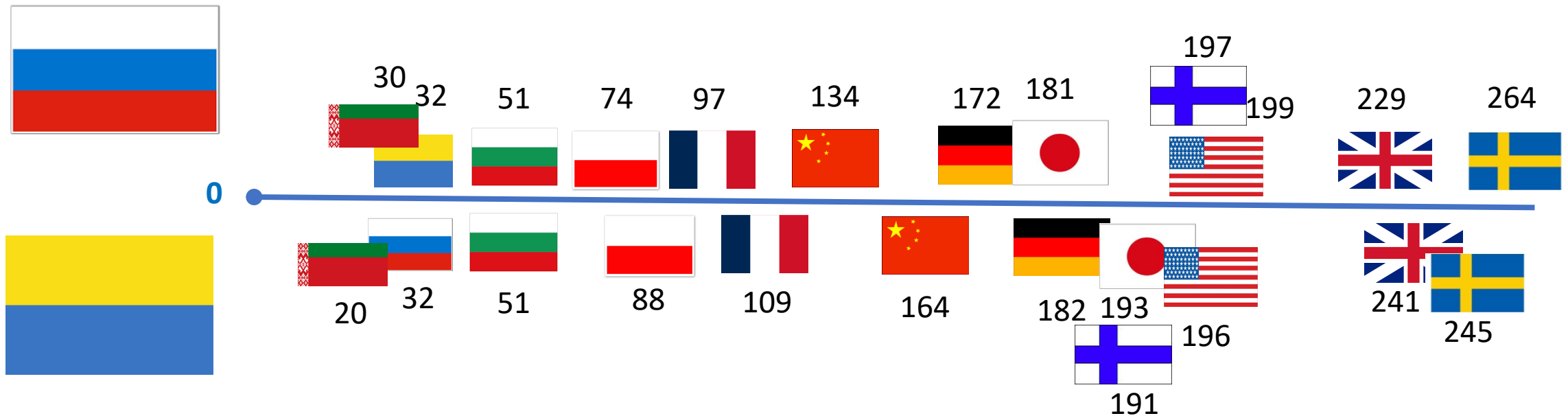


# The Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map 2023





# Cultural distance index based on Hofstede



A big identity difference – Ukraine is a postcolonial “normal” state, Russia aims to be a superpower

### Characteristics of “Superpower Syndrome”:

- We abide by different rules from other states; international law is secondary to us
- We know what is good for other nations
- When we act aggressively, it is under the guise of helping other countries
- There is an ingrained fear of both our own citizens and external enemies

# Additional dynamics in Russian-Ukraine relations

- Proximity often intensifies tensions between neighbouring countries
- Russia's 'Big Brother' stance toward Ukraine has historically 'fostered a patronizing attitude
- Newly independent states strive to establish their distinctiveness, with language as a pivotal factor

# Language as a marker of identity question: *na Ukraine* or *v Ukraine*

	Share of <b>na Ukraine</b>	Share of <b>v Ukraine</b>	N
FEDERAL PRESS			
before 24 Feb 2022	81,2 %	<b>18,8 %</b>	32 700
24 Feb 2022 to 31 Dec 2023	88,6 %	<b>11,4 %</b>	4 400
FEDERAL INTERNET SOURCES			
before 24 Feb 2022	70,7 %	<b>29,3 %</b>	2 980 000
24 Feb 2022 to 31 Dec 2023	90.2 %	<b>9,8 %</b>	1 449 000

# Proportion of native Ukrainian and Russian speakers among ethnic Ukrainians and Russians

	All respondents	Ethnic Ukrainians	Ethnic Russians
Native language			
Ukrainian	60,7	67,0	8,2
Both	24,1	23,9	28,1
Russian	12,1	7,6	63,2

# Language use in different social contexts

	Parents	Close friends	Colleagues	Officials
Ukrainian	46,9	41,3	40,7	44,7
Both	15,8	22,3	23,4	22,3
Russian	23,1	25,6	24,2	24,5

# Shifts in identity among Russian-speakers in Ukraine (2012-2014)."

This period saw notable quick shifts in identity and allegiance among Russian-speaking Ukrainians, influenced by Russian aggression

Nationality	2012	2014
Ukrainian	52,9	56,4
Both	7,9	17,2
Russian	35,5	23,2

# Terms of self-identification:

Which of the following terms best describe you) (Select up to three)

Identity	All	Russian nationality	Russian speakers
Man / Woman	44,7	52,6	48,2
Orthodox	26,2	26,5	26,9
Soviet person	2,0	7,1	3,5
Resident of my city/village	<b>28,2</b>	<b>22,3</b>	<b>27,4</b>
Resident of my region	<b>16,1</b>	<b>20,4</b>	<b>20,5</b>
Ukrainian	<b>47,1</b>	8,5	<b>22,6</b>
Russian	3,4	<b>28,4</b>	8,6
Russian-speaker	3,9	<b>15,6</b>	8,6
European	1,6	2,4	1,5



# Conclusion

Diaspora / russkiy mir mindset =>

**Dual mindset (I am a Russian-speaking Ukrainian)**

~~Full assimilation~~

However,

- 1) the process may vary across regions
- 2) the outcome of the current war will influence peoples' resolutions
- 3) the future behaviour of refugees will affect the composition of the population
- 4) Ukrainian language policies will continue to shape identities

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