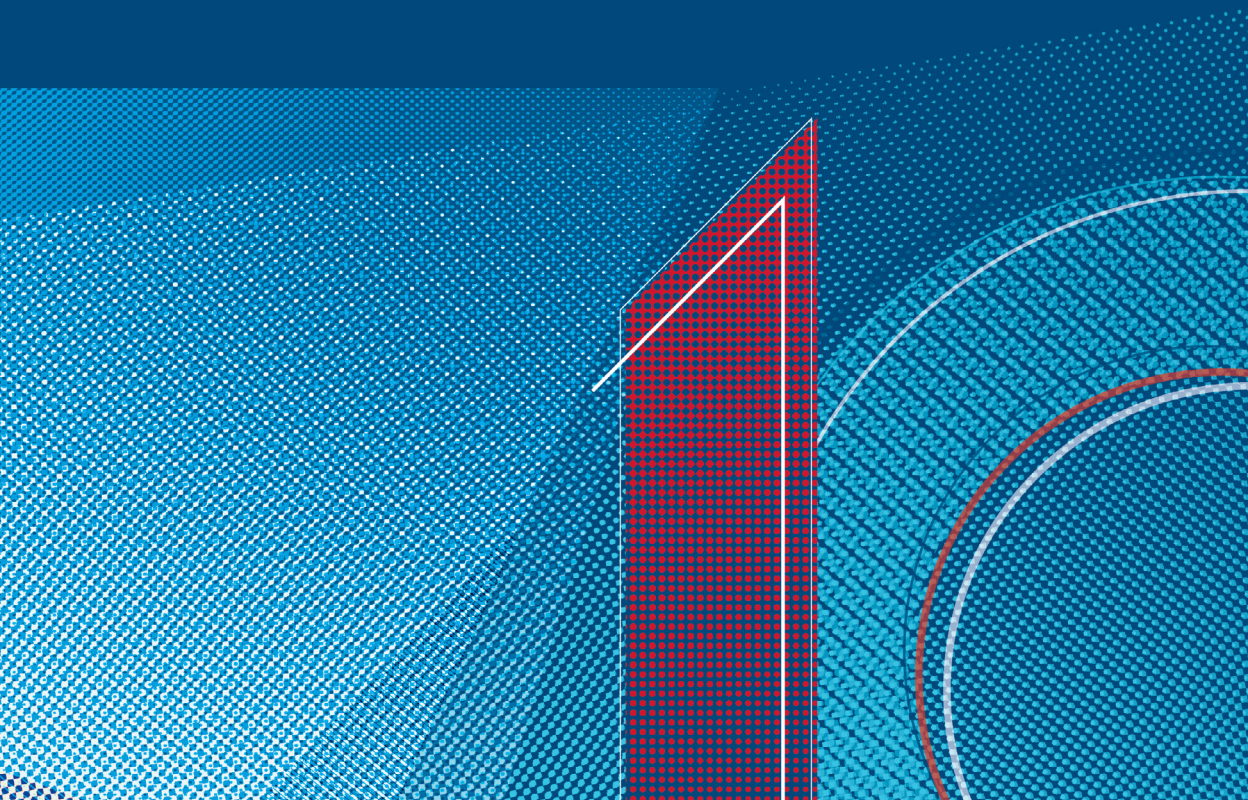


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Value-Based Leadership or What a Massive Shift in Values Does to a Society

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Introduction: Value-based leadership

Value-based leadership is a leadership style and philosophy that builds on the common values of the leader and the people that they lead. Since both share a common set of values, they experience greater alignment and benefit from higher productivity. This style builds on the foundation of emotional intelligence, which assumes that self-reflection, a balanced perspective, and true humility, among other attributes, make people stronger. Knowing that the leader has similar beliefs improves cohesion and the willingness to cooperate. Productivity follows from there.

This approach has great added value in practice. It was originally developed in a business environment, and it is set to work in the context of small teams, or to build an institutional culture. The advantage of businesses is that they can choose who they employ. Leaders of nations can choose whom they want in the closest team and in the leading positions of the country, but they cannot change the entire state administration, and they certainly cannot change or replace the population of a country.

Therefore, there are two options: to try to convince all the residents of their values, or to seek consensus with populations whose values differ from theirs. Usually only the latter is realistic with 4-year government cycles.

Consensus can only be built through discussion and authentic communication of multiple viewpoints, without simplification or caricature. Groups cannot be excluded from the discussion of values, otherwise entire segments of society exist in which frustration grows. Typical examples of contentious topics are the most burning points of the culture wars, from abortions to the limits of freedom of speech or migration policy. These topics

are explosive, because different segments have different views on them, and they cannot be decided only by stating facts – they are value-based topics where philosophical axioms form the basis of different ideological systems and are often emotionally charged.

Both sides usually have a set of legitimate arguments, and many slogans, varying from less legitimate simplifications to purely emotional tribal signalling that serves primarily as a war paint or a flag one flies that identifies allies. A typical example comes from the culture wars of the last 100 years: abortion. Proponents of abortion have a legitimate argument regarding situations such as endangering the life and well-being of the mother, while opponents of abortion have a principled concern about the arbitrariness of definitions governing one of the key human rights – the right to life. The key dispute in the matter is to answer the question of when a human becomes a person, which is ultimately philosophical, and science cannot answer it, since the definition of what makes one human a person is not so much biological as it is a topic of moral philosophy or theology. This cultural conflict cannot therefore be solved unambiguously – and depends on our ability to find common solutions and live side by side even though we do not agree on topics in which many are strongly emotionally invested.

Value-based leadership at the state level, when the leader has no choice and must work with the population as it is, does not necessarily mean the promotion of one's own values, but means possessing values that enable the functioning of a democratic establishment and a society with a high ratio of civil and political freedoms. Thus, the leaders also serve the people who did not vote for them and with whom they do not agree.

The key values of such a leader will be values that help build consensus and, in other words, strengthen social cohesion; and this will be discussed in the first chapter of this study.

A detailed description of specific values is beyond the scope of this study, as different cultures, historical epochs and specific social situations may require different values and different personalities for the same result. Let us assume, however, that the right leaders are found. The second chapter deals with the question of values of people who they will attempt to govern.

The third chapter deals with the practical social challenge of today: the impact of strong individualism and polarization on security. If the right leaders know how to unite, and know whom they govern, they are expected to convince those who feel uncomfortable in the current society that it is in their interest to cooperate with the rest anyway. They also need to convince the strongly individualistic population that they will be able to enjoy the fruits of the current cultural-social system only if they are willing to sacrifice some of these

gains for the benefit of the common efforts. The most basic form of this – when we talk about the state level – is the willingness to defend the country.

At this point, one can only argue that no matter what the leader’s personality and ideological equipment is, patience and perseverance are among the key values.

1. Cohesion and trust

Social cohesion has many aspects which it translates to, such as propensity to cooperate or sacrifice, or patterns of similarity. For the sake of simplicity, it is often defined as the mutual trust of people in a group; the feeling that others can be trusted because they have common behaviors, goals, and values in key matters.

There are two types of trust: interpersonal trust (horizontal), and trust in institutions and elites (vertical). For the state to work efficiently, both of these must be reasonably high. If only the horizontal trust works, people unite against the state and institutions and bypass the rules, and if it is only the vertical one, people rely on the state to solve everything. Local relations are impersonal and what otherwise could be solved informally is dealt with by means of institutions (Larsen 2014).

Interpersonal (horizontal) trust: Agree with the statement “Most people can be trusted”:

	WVS ¹ 1990-1994	WVS 1995-1998	WVS 2005-2009	EVS ² 2017	WVS 2022
Czechia	30.2%	27.2%	N/A ³	21.1%	36.8%
Slovakia	23%	25.8%	N/A	21.4%	21.9%
Poland	31.3%	16.9%	18.1%	24.1%	N/A
Hungary	N/A	22.5%	25.8%	27.2%	N/A

1) World Values Survey (WVS)
2) European Values Study (EVS)
3) Missing/not available

Trust in institutions (vertical):

WVS 1990–1994 / WVS 1995–1998 / EVS 2017 / WVS 2022	CZE %	SK %	PL %	HU %
Churches	39.4/31.7/16.5/32.4	50.2/57.3/49.3/50.4	82.4/65.9/55.2/NA	NA/42.5/40.1/NA
Army	39.8/42.2/44.3/51.1	37.2/65.7/70.8/57.9	62.3/75.1/68.9/NA	NA/56.5/54.2/NA
Press	45.9/42.6/18.6/42.9	36.7/41.4/39/34.1	43.6/43.1/25.6/NA	NA/30.5/19.3/NA
Police	34.1/43.4/54.4/69.3	27.3/39/53.7/52.4	27.9/51.3/59.9/NA	NA/55/66.3/NA
Judicial system	45.6/28.4/37.2/59.8	37.6/40.9/33.9/38.7	44.3/48.3/35/NA	N/A/50.6/48.4/NA
Parliament	47.9/19.8/13.3/35.1	35.4/29/39/19.4	72.8/31.1/19.3/NA	NA/37.4/34.8/NA
Government	NA/29.8/17.6/33.3	NA/41.5/30.4/21.3	NA/36.2/23.1/NA	NA/42.4/27.6/NA
Universities	NA/NA/NA/75.6	NA/NA/NA/71.7	NA/NA/NA/NA	NA/NA/NA/NA
Banks	NA/NA/NA/63.6	NA/NA/NA/58.9	NA/NA/NA/NA	NA/NA/NA/NA
EU	NA/43.7/24.9/47.7	NA/49.8/52.8/48.5	NA/47.4/45.5/NA	NA/57.4/41.4/NA
NATO	41.6/NA/NA/51.5	20.4/NA/NA/37.9	NA/NA/NA/NA	NA/NA/NA/NA

Social cohesion is a key component of our ability to cooperate. If it is low, we pay the price for forced cooperation – which results in increased costs related to surveillance, control and punishment. Such a state has to have more policemen, lawyers and prisons; it usually has a lower life satisfaction rate across the population, and a lower GDP, associated with higher corruption, tax frauds, and a lower number of private businesses (people are more likely to start/run a business if they feel the other can be trusted).

Trust is a key factor for a well-functioning democracy, market economy and civil society. Low cohesion leads to the rise of anti-system sentiment and to the erosion of the current way of life in most developed countries. High cohesion, in contrast, is one of the most reliable indicators of long-term prosperity.

Trust is formed by various mechanisms; these are the two most common:

- What helps build it “subconsciously” is the apparent resemblance of appearance and mind: we automatically have higher trust in people who look and behave like us. This is an evolutionary reflex – we all evolve as individuals and, simultaneously, as members of a group; therefore, the tribal mentality is inherent in us. In the past, this feature was used to help its members identify who does and does not belong to the tribe, thus increasing the chance of their survival. We still make use of this “resemblance” these days, trying to identify with the social group we feel we belong to, e.g., through our

fashion or hairstyle, but also with our manners, the way we talk, etc. (Haidt, 2013; Larsen 2014).

- Trust stands and falls with the experience in cooperation. If, in general, we have a good experience with cooperation, our trust increases – and vice versa. Cooperation stems from the assumption that all the parties involved will be rewarded, that all adhere to norms and standards, and that those who do not follow them can be penalized (Haidt, 2013; Koukolík, 2016).

At the level of family or blood relations, trust is more or less automatic – assuming the family relations are healthy. Building cohesion at a citizen – let alone an international – level, tends, however, to be much more difficult. Trust is hard to build but easy to break – which most frequently happens due to a feeling of injustice and a lack of reciprocity in both vertical and horizontal relationships.

Trust in institutions is crucial because some of the most important cultural innovations of the modern age — such as vote-based government legitimacy or an economic system using paper and digital currency guaranteed by states — mostly rely on trust in institutions. The modern times as we know them can only survive if there is trust. Unfortunately, what people tend to forget these days, is that trust needs to be earned.

The recent pandemic has exposed this fact in full. The dividing line between those who were willing to abide by the quarantine rules and those who rejected them correlated with their perceptions of the legitimacy of state institutions (Institute for Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, 2022).

2. Values in contemporary society

Values are internalized cognitive structures that regulate human choice and behavior by evoking a sense of the basic principles of good and evil, a sense of priorities (hierarchy of values), and by filling things or activities with “meaning” (meaningful work, meaning of life) (Oyserman 2015).

The collective (often unconscious) agreement upon which values are prioritized by the society originates social norms – that is, the shared sense of what is socially acceptable, correct, valuable, and moral; in other words “normal” (ibid.).

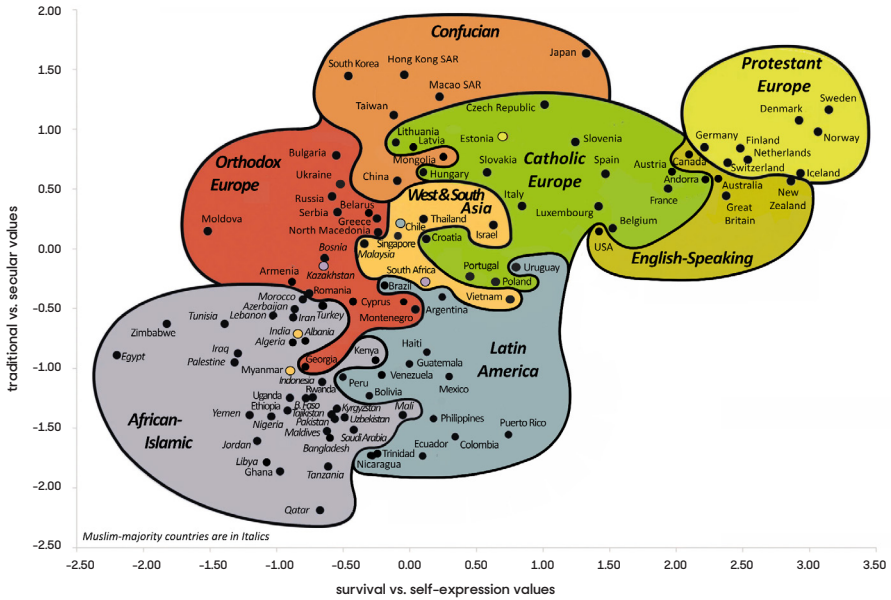
In general terms, people tend to adopt the values they grew up surrounded by. We also have a tendency to believe that these values are “right” because they represent the values of our own culture. Ethical decision-making often involves weighing values against each other and deciding which values to prioritize over others. Conflicts arise between

people with different values – which leads to a clash of preferences and priorities (University of Texas, 2022).

Society-wide values evolve in time and influence the entire spectrum of human endeavor, from the field of economics, through law, up to politics. In order to understand today's social events, it is important to pay attention to measuring the values.

The World Values Survey (WVS) is the largest scientific survey of values in the world; it has been studying people's opinions and values since 1981. Its origins were inspired by the acute threat of nuclear conflict during the final stages of the Cold War, when social scientists were trying to figure out what drives us to behave in ways that may lead to the extinction of the entire human race. Naturally, from the geopolitical or pragmatic point of view, such behavior makes no sense. It must therefore be about something else than a rational analysis of profits and losses. They were right: in addition to the power struggle, it was also about a clash of values – which to some people were so important that they were willing to risk a great deal for them. These days, when the nuclear threat has emerged again, its reasons are less cryptic. WVS has reflected a massive cultural change that various cultures have gone through over the past 40 years. Today, this longitudinal study is carried out in almost 100 countries of the world and covers 90% of the world's population. WVS provides data which allows us to trace trends in the opinions and values of people all over the world, across multiple generations. The ways of thinking and decision-making of many countries and institutions, such as the United Nations or the World Bank, rely on the WVS; the survey also laid the foundations of the Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map (see below) comparing different countries of the world based on their values.

Setting aside the questionable cultural blocs that Inglehart and Welzel describe, and focusing on empirically sound research, we see a clear long-term trend along two primary axes:



The Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map - World Values Survey 7 (2022)

Traditional values emphasize the importance of religion, parent-child bonds, respect for authority, absolute standards in social norms and traditional family values. They usually reject divorce, abortion, euthanasia and suicide. In cultures adhering to these values, there is an increased level of national pride and nationalistic views. **Secular values** emphasize the opposite, they reflect the weakening emphasis on traditional values.

Survival values put an emphasis on economic provision and physical security. Cultures with a strong focus on survival values show tendencies towards ethnocentrism, combined with lower levels of trust and tolerance towards people outside their own group. **Self-expression values** accent personal well-being, quality of life and self-determination. Cultures advocating these values often prioritize environmental protection, tolerance for immigrants or LGBT+ communities or gender equality. They also have higher demands associated with civic participation in decision-making processes related to the fields of economy and politics.

Traditional and survival values place a greater emphasis on conformity and community, in contrast with secular and self-expression values which build on protection of individual rights and freedom of expression.

The global trend in the development of values along these axes is obvious: it shows a deviation from traditional and survival values, in favor of secular values and self-expression.

There is not a consensus among social scientists as to what is behind this global trend, but those who have worked with WVS data have come up with the following conclusions (WVS 2022):

- After an increase in living standards and the transition from a developing country, through industrialization, to a post-industrial knowledge society, the country tends to move diagonally from the lower left corner (poor societies) towards the upper right corner (rich societies).
- Attitudes of the population highly correlate with the dominant philosophical, political and religious ideas of the society. Secular values and materialism used to be preferred by philosophers and left-wing politicians during the French Revolution and can be observed especially in countries with a long history of social democratic or socialist politics, and in countries with a high rate of population with university education.
- Survival values are characteristic of countries of the Global East, while self-expression values tend to be specific to countries of the Global West.
- In liberal, post-industrial economies, a growing proportion of the population takes values such as survival or freedom of thought for granted, which results in self-determination being highly valued.

The shift is therefore obvious: along the diagonal, from traditions and survival to secular values and self-expression, provoking counter-pressure from some segments of the population. We have identified three major effects that have occurred in the V4 countries:

- **Part of the population perceives the shift as a threat to their values.**

Social polarization arises when significant inequalities occur in society. These are usually pursued from a socio-economic perspective, while the psychological dimension tends to be disregarded. These days, the polarization is to a great extent an effect of the value clash of different segments of the population, illustrated on the value axes' shift above.

As seen in the WVS analysis, the value clash on the axis of traditional versus secular values primarily applies to religion; however, respect for God, the country and the family are usually closely interconnected. The importance of the family is particularly crucial – in traditional societies, one of the main goals in a person's life is to make their parents proud, and one has to love and respect their parents, regardless of how they behave. Parents are also obliged to take care of their children, even at the cost of their own quality of life. In traditional cultures, people idealize large families, and start and live in them. Respect for authority in the family then moves up one level in the hierarchy – to respect for the state, followed by another step higher – respect for God. In pre-industrial societies, being part of a family was crucial for survival. Therefore, in such cultures, family

is an extremely strong value; as such, it instinctively disapproves of divorces, abortions, suicides, but also of excessive autonomy in decision-making and other things that can be perceived as weakening the family and the community. In the past, such a weakening could have had fatal consequences for all the members of the community; and in some parts of the world, this is still the case. From this perspective, sacrificing a certain amount of personal comfort or quality of life in favor of such an important value is completely acceptable. As society grows richer, and as the integrity of a community becomes less and less relevant for survival, traditional values naturally weaken in importance (Iglehart and Welzel, 2005).

The collision on the “survival versus self-determination” axis primarily relates to existential certainty. Societies with a high degree of existential security prefer individual autonomy, the right to self-determination is sacred and goes hand in hand with trust, tolerance and interest in being part of decision-making processes. In contrast, societies shaped by a low degree of existential security place a high emphasis on physical safety and economic provision. People living in these societies tend to feel threatened by immigrants, ethnic diversities and cultural changes – which leads to a decreased level of tolerance for foreigners and various types of “otherness”, as well as to the insistence on traditional gender roles and the preference for more authoritative leadership. The mental shift from survival to self-expression usually occurs in generations that grew up in an environment where survival and the provision of basic economic needs were taken for granted. When survival is precarious, cultural diversity can be threatening because it disrupts unity. When there is a lack of resources, foreigners are seen as dangerous outsiders who can deprive us of our livelihood. People cling to traditional gender roles and sexual norms and emphasize the absolute standards of social norms in an effort to maximize predictability in an uncertain world. These are evolutionary instincts that have served humanity well in the past when it came to survival. And vice versa – the less we need to worry about survival, the more we accept things such as ethnic and cultural diversities; and, to a certain point, diversity is not only tolerated but ceases to be threatening and begins to be viewed positively because it is interesting and stimulating (Iglehart and Welzel, 2005).

The fading emphasis on traditional and survival values is therefore a global trend. With such strong, largely evolution-driven instinctive values, it makes sense that the shift from these values is gradual, and that the change is not accepted by everyone. This is often for the sole reason that the traditional values are perceived as reliable ones by part of the population, as values that successfully helped them through many hardships in the past and abandoning them is just too risky. The strongest disputes occur, however, when

one side begins accusing the other of bad intentions, attacking their values, labelling them as worthless – or even immoral. This is when the discussion comes to an end – and when the culture war begins; a war which – if it escalates and if the cohesion moves below a certain level (and, as a consequence, the mutual trust and the narratives and activities that unite society disappear) – results in violence. This is because neither of the sides is willing to abandon what they consider sacred.

There is lower pressure involving the shift in values in societies where changes occur gradually. One of the disadvantages of the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe is that the shift occurred rapidly, and some of the stages were relatively violent – e.g., oppressing religious organizations by the communist regime with the aim of secularization, or the subsequent “shock” transition from a planned economy to a market one. The latter example led to a significant drop in trust in institutions, as they stopped providing what many people had grown used to and felt comfortable with (e.g. stable prices and job security), and at the same time, lacked the ability to deliver what others had expected they would gain after the regime change (primarily a living standard comparable to the one of citizens of Western European countries or the USA).

- **Part of the population is socio-economically worse-off as a result of the shift.**

In the V4 countries, these are primarily segments of the population whose economic situation has deteriorated, or whose social status has declined after the fall of the communist regime. Miners are a typical example: they used to have a special system of support and rewards, similarly as members of the security forces who, in addition, had extraordinarily high social respect (bordering on fear). Workers and members of the security forces were also the heroes of the vast majority of contemporary songs and films. This kind of respect is extremely rare these days – but many people remember and miss it.

Another segment that has been affected by this shift, but lacks the nostalgic dimension linked to the past regime, are people who are not effectively covered by the country’s social-safety network and who are under constant existential stress (such as single mothers). This segment will gradually extend to occupations threatened by robotization and the expansion of artificial intelligence.

- **Part of the population suffers mentally as a result of the shift.**

These are individuals who do not feel comfortable in a highly individualized and consumerist society. They may prosper socioeconomically and may in principle feel comfortable with the shift of values towards self-determination and autonomy, but they do not prosper mentally. There are a number of individual reasons that may be behind this, but social scientists have begun to detect a trend in the breakdown of communities and have associated it with the trend of growing mental fragility. An example of a source of

psychological discomfort and fragility related to the development of values is the epidemic of loneliness (Mineo, 2021).

Loneliness is the social equivalent of hunger – it is an impulse that signals a lack of existential social need. Evolutionarily, it is based on the need for cooperation and remaining in a group – otherwise the individual will not survive. This is an innate instinct, which today, like many others (e.g., the importance of height in a romantic partner for women), no longer has a practical application in terms of basic survival, but is wired in our brains. Chronic loneliness means a shortening of life expectancy by eight years, as it is a strong evolutionary psychological stressor, and thus spills over into the psychosomatic dimension of an individual, where it also affects physical health through hormonal balance. Loneliness also has a negative impact on the regulation of emotions, and contributes to depression, anxiety and sleep disorders (Preece, 2021). Secularization and individualization of society contribute to the weakening of communities, which affects both social capital and the psychological health of the population. Loneliness is on the rise, and the pandemic has only made the problem worse.

Psychological fragility and discomfort as one of the side effects of the value shift can have practical social and political implications. Segments of the population have begun to resent this development, and blame it on the democratic political system, which strengthens the liberalization of social relations, or the capitalist system, which increases the economic autonomy of the individual and causes further individualization through a consumerist mentality (e.g., distinctiveness through an extensive market offer of products). The reaction can be constructive, such as finding ways to strengthen local communities, or less constructive, such as a mental shortcut and a monolithic perception of individualism or capitalism as a ruthless and selfish dimension of the current social system. Thus, modern sources of psychological discomfort are one of the reasons for anti-system attitudes in contemporary society.

The shift towards more secular values and self-expression can also be seen in the data. Greater self-determination and the smaller influence of communities lead to greater satisfaction, freedom of choice and a sense of control over life.

Freedom to make decisions and control over life

(8–10 on a 10-point scale, 10 = maximum control)

	WVS 1990–1994	WVS 1995–1998	WVS 2005–2009	EVS 2017	WVS 2022
CZE	23.7%	34.8%	N/A	50.2%	45.6%
SK	26.2%	32.7%	N/A	47%	44.7%
PL	35.3%	N/A	38.7%	47.3%	N/A
HU	N/A	36.4%	26.5%	46.9%	N/A

Overall satisfaction with life

(8–10 on a 10-point scale, 10 = maximum satisfaction)

	WVS 1990–1994	WVS 1995–1998	WVS 2005–2009	EVS 2017	WVS 2022
CZE	33.9%	33.9%	N/A	59.5%	48.9%
SK	31.1%	30.7%	N/A	51.3%	41%
PL	41%	35.7%	47.5%	60.5%	N/A
HU	N/A	27.3%	25.8%	48.9%	N/A

The overall trend of increasing satisfaction has currently come to an end, and in some countries, has even fallen significantly, e.g. in Slovakia and the Czech Republic by approx. 10%. This can be primarily attributed to the accumulation of crises, such as the pandemic, the awareness of the proximity of war or the growing cost of living crisis due to the increase in energy and food prices. This decline may continue in the future if the given crises will not come under control, or new ones will be added to them, e.g., the renewal of the refugee crisis in Europe because of high prices in Africa or Asia.

When considering the effects of the shift in values, it is important to remember that a shift in value axes is not “good” or “bad”. Science perceives it simply as a fact – a side effect of societies growing richer and safer. Traditional values and survival values are also necessary, however, for the stable functioning and survival of society and a reasonable degree of social cohesion. This value shift, which causes pushback from some people, cannot be simplified as a dispute between conservatives and liberals, or “progressives” and “retrogrades”. Conservative leaders are usually better at appealing to segments that prioritize the values of survival and tradition, and liberals, in contrast, to those who prioritize self-determination and secular values. In many cases, however, there is the opposite – many liberal-progressive policies today are strongly collectivist, and many conservatives protect the rights of individuals. In addition, individual politicians are motivated to expand their electoral base,

and therefore power base, and rarely pay attention to the ideological purity of the respective political systems. Thus, value clashes are a complicated matter that cannot be simplified in a binary way. It is useful to begin to see them as value shifts along axes, with both sides of the axis socially important, and with an understanding that the other side is neither mad, bad or sad. This is a good first step at not contributing to culture wars and polarization.

3. Willingness to defend one's country

Considering the situation in Ukraine, we also decided to address the influence of value shift with regards to security issues.

In the previous subsection, we described the mental shift that occurs in societies that take survival and material sufficiency for granted – self-determination and quality of life become highly valued. The problem is that cultures that are more collectivist and conformist, capable of sacrificing a great deal and willing to unite around a certain authority are the ones better optimized for survival. Thus, our society is not optimized for the organized violence that any society that wants to defend itself effectively has to be capable of.

Willingness to defend one's country:

	WVS 1990- 1994	WVS 1995- 1998	WVS 2005- 2009	WVS 2010- 2014	EVS 2017	WVS 2022	Other surveys (after the attack on Ukraine)
CZE	66.30%	43.90%	N/A	N/A	48.5%	34.4% (after Ukraine)	- -
SK	65.50%	52.40%	N/A	N/A	38.1%	32.2% (before Ukraine)	<u>27.5%</u>
PL	79.20%	72.20%	64.90%	71.40%	72.6%	N/A	<u>66%</u>
HU	N/A	61.80%	45.30%	N/A	54.5%	N/A	<u>50%</u>

It is important to note that many respondents that are willing to defend their country are willing to serve in non-violent positions only. Willingness to defend the country using a weapon is usually less than half of the overall willingness.

The trend in willingness to defend one's country has been decreasing for the last 30 years. This is in all probability the result of a global shift in values, since contemporary society produces people who are less willing (and some even capable) of tolerating a combat environment.

The reluctance to fight also reflects, however, the low trust in state institutions and the low identification of the V4 residents with their leadership. Many European countries

did undergo an even stronger value shift, but the willingness to defend the country is higher – Norwegians dominate this category with a willingness rate of 91.6% (WVS, 2022).

In addition to the global trends and low cohesion in the V4 countries described above, the situation is also affected by local specificities:

- Since the fall of the communist regime, the prestige of the security forces has dropped significantly, having been perceived as accomplices in the organized oppression of society. As a result, these professions were often unable to attract young people with high potential to their ranks.
- The communist regime also distorted the historical memory of society, thereby damaging the original historical and military tradition, which otherwise helps to build the natural patriotism and professional pride of the security forces. It was punishable to honor the Czechoslovak legions in Russia, the airmen that operated in the British Royal Air Forces, or the Polish resistance during World War II, as these memories also helped preserve the history of cooperation between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. Without this professional pride, it is difficult to maintain the high morale and professionalism of the security forces. This is especially important, psychologically speaking, because members of the security forces are expected to be significantly more willing to sacrifice themselves for society than any other professions. Some countries, such as Poland, are more immune to this distorting influence, while others, such as Slovakia, are still recovering from the given problem. Slovakia was especially heavily hit, since the communist era took away its Czechoslovak history, and it previously lost its common Austro-Hungarian history during its nation-building era. Today, Slovakia is a country with no history, which has a problem finding great stories of the past, which it could lean upon when building a healthy patriotism or military tradition. This is also why today it is the weakest link in the Eastern flank of Europe in terms of determination to defend itself.
- Awareness of a war in the immediate neighborhood also reduced the willingness to fight, but only by 5% on average across all V4 countries. Paradoxically, this reason is the least important for the willingness to fight, and the data shows that the long-term erosion of trust and the shift in values has a greater impact on the willingness to defend the country than the growing perception of risk of war.
- In Poland and Hungary, the decline has come to an end. We do not know the reasons, although it can be assumed that it is related to the rise of nationalism in both countries. Additional data from WVS will be available in December 2022.

- The widespread sense of security in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, especially in the first two decades after the fall of the communist regime, caused a decrease in annual defense spending, which was reflected in the number of members of the armed forces, their equipment, the available weapon systems and the state of technology.

The V4 countries underwent both physical and mental demilitarization after gaining their independence (Povaha změny, 2015).

Conclusion and recommendations

Traditional and survival values evoke Maslow's pyramid of human needs, which sought to explain the mechanism of human motivation. The theory is extremely popular because everyone intuitively understands it. The theory states that a person has five levels of needs in which there is an obvious hierarchy, and e.g., the need to satisfy hunger or move to safety (the most basic needs) are stronger than the need for dignified treatment or a meaningful life. Research has not confirmed this division. Apparently, the needs in question can stand alone and may have a similar power. Sometimes a "higher" need – dignity or self-determination – can trump hunger or physical danger (Wahba, Bridwell, 1976). A practical example, that surprised the whole world today, is the attitude of the Ukrainian population, which exchanged the hope for a better future for security and comfort.

The value shift theory, especially at the macro-level, is therefore a better analytical tool for understanding contemporary society than Maslow. If leaders want to understand their society, they should understand both these social trends and the groups that react to them – some with a sense of triumph, some with frustration. Neither group is on the "right side of history". We need both – those who guard individual rights and welcome change, and those who point out the need for the collective, the importance of authority and the risks of change.

Healthy discussion and due caution in reacting to significant social changes is what helps us survive. The demonization of the values of our opponents, in contrast, inhibits our ability to cooperate and breaks cohesion. Polarization in combination with increasing complexity, and thus fragility of society, and the accumulation of crises can have catastrophic effects, which archaeologists refer to with the euphemism "reduction of the complexity of the system". This means at best a semi-controlled collapse of development and living standards, and at worst unrest, revolutions and civil wars, where the accumulated frustrations of various groups can be vented.

It would be a mistake not to take this into account and contribute to the decline of our society at a time when we are responsible for it – and paradoxically become a victim of our own success. Many do not see it that way today, but human societies have never lived in such abundance and in such safety as we live today. The perception of reality, however, often has more weight than reality itself. A wrong perception can lead to wrong conclusions and wrong decisions.

Six recommendations that could help:

1. Know those you govern.

The first prerequisite of a good leader is the ability to process information in the least biased way possible. The responsibility that comes with power causes leaders to have a high need for accurate information to make decisions, but at the same time there are more filters between themselves and reality, and less people who are not afraid to tell them the truth. If a leader only listens to voices that agree with themselves or surrounds themselves with a small group of people, they distort their own reality.

The second prerequisite is the required high-quality state of the social sciences and state institutions, which are responsible for measuring and describing the state of society.

The third prerequisite is free and uncensored public debate (including freedom of the press and other media), which will enable authentic expression of the population's attitudes and social events. What is not expressed cannot be measured.

2. Include those you govern.

Leaders on the state level should come not only from the rich, educated urban elite. This is the primary source of problems with representation today. From the point of view of values and understanding of society, genuine diversity means diversity in thinking. This means including people in your team from a part of the value axis which the given leader does not belong to. There is otherwise the risk that they will not understand large parts of the population that they are supposed to rule. This population will also not be able to identify with them, because there is no one like them on their side.

3. Serve those you govern.

Leaders serve all citizens, not just their own voters. A democracy where too many groups are ignored and frustrated for too long will not work. Democracies are usually the best places to live in the world, not because of their leaders' angelic characters, but because in order for leaders to come to power, they have to cater to large segments of the population, not just a few key allies as in dictatorships. Good leaders go a step further and are interested in segments of the population that are not core to their power base.

4. Unite those you govern.

Cohesion increases with a citizen's good experience with the state, the ability to identify with it, but also by searching for what unites us. Collective identity is one of the

greatest weaknesses of the V4 countries, and of Europe as a whole. Poland and Hungary have embarked on the path of strengthening nationalism. The Czech Republic and Slovakia are fumbling, and it does not seem as if they will manage to find a solution anytime soon. Failure to address the issue of common identity can lead to further weakening of cohesion.

5. Remind those you govern.

Democracy requires a citizen, not just a resident. A good leader has to help people realize that the current level of well-being requires their personal commitment to maintain it and the fulfillment of the obligations of the democratic social contract. The state is the common responsibility of all. Paying taxes and fighting for the country is not a punishment, it is a privilege – it means that the state is each of us. If a citizen begins to take these duties and rights seriously, there is a greater chance that there will be less tolerance for corruption or incompetent management. A prosperous modern democracy requires not only good leaders, but also competent citizens. This is precisely why it is so difficult to transplant democracy to countries that have not undergone a certain social development and strengthening of the role of the individual in society. This is why the effort to export democracy to the Middle East failed. It is not enough to want to be free. One must be willing to voluntarily pay the price for freedom. These are, traditionally, taxes and death, but democracy also requires education and personal responsibility. High individual requirements – that is what makes democracy hard to sustain.

6. Defend those you govern.

In the public debate on defense, Article 5 of the [North Atlantic Treaty](#), which talks about the collective defense of the members of the Alliance, is often mentioned. The treaty also contains Article 3, which reads: “In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.” In other words, if someone wants others to come to their aid, one cannot be a free rider. A country has to be able to fend for itself before help arrives. To take into account trends in the development of values in the V4 countries, it is important to:

- support subsidiarity, which creates an environment for building local communities, which people can identify with and will be willing to defend;
- create a strategy to identify ways of regenerating social cohesion, i.e. strengthening citizens’ trust in their state and in each other;

- build agreement on the basic values of the state across the entire political spectrum, which will ensure continuity even in the event of a change of government. Anthropologically, the primary reason for the existence of the state is the safety of the population. In countries with a small professional army, such as the V4 countries, a strategy for the involvement of the civilian population in the defense of the country is necessary.

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WVS, World Value Survey: Slovakia

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