

# The Psychocultural Fracture of the Western Civilization

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## Abstract

Is the West a community of shared values? In particular, we must ask whether the populations of the nine ex-Communist Catholic countries in its eastern border, from Estonia to Croatia, presently share the West's values and individualism. An analogous question follows from the fact that Mediterranean Western countries (Italy, Spain, Portugal) are outside the West's ecological niche. This study, using data from multiple nations' samples, shows that former communist countries of the West plus the Mediterranean Western countries and Ireland are fractured from the core West in terms of freedom, responsibility, emancipative values, and/or individualism. The core West is formed by Protestant populations plus those of Austria, Canada, France, and Luxembourg, all maximizers of Western values and individualism which differ in this regard from geographically and psycho-culturally peripheral Western countries. The study results demonstrate that the fracture is attributable in part to religion and in part to political system or ecology. Germanic ethnicity remains a possible source of the core West despite its disconfirmation in regression analysis; there is a need for studying its relationships with the religion, political past, and ecology of Western countries and their provinces, to better understand the Western fracture in values and individualism.

**Keywords:** Western civilization, Peripheral West, Freedom, Responsibility, Emancipatory values, Individualism, Religion, Political system, Ethnicity, Ecology

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## 1 Introduction

A common history, religion, language, culture, tradition, and/or technology is at the base of virtually every civilization (Huntington, 1993; Targowski, 2019; Toynbee, 1947). These attributes differentiate the West from the Orthodox civilization, its immediate neighbor in Eastern Europe, and the Islamic civilization, a southern and eastern neighbor. In his delineation of an inside eastern contour of the West, Huntington (1993, Fig. 1) applied Toynbee's (1947) religious and historical criteria and classified ten nations, two of them recently dismembered from an Orthodox country (Yugoslavia), as parts of the West's eastern border: Finland (Protestant) and, from north to south, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, and Croatia (Catholic). From 1944 to 1991, the latter nine countries were exposed to a Marxist ideology and communist regime characterized by privileging social over individual goals. Yet, even though Huntington (1993) considered individualism to be the first attribute of the West, he treated the fact that the nine eastern-border Catholic countries had been forced to subordinate individual to social interests as unimportant. Because it has been demonstrated that communist experiences had important social impacts on European societies (Millar & Wolchik, 1994), it is necessary to ask whether the former communist countries in the West's eastern border presently share the values and individualism of Western Civilization. Studies of leadership and organizational behavior have shown the existence of psycho-cultural differences between the eastern-border Western countries and countries more at the center of the West. The psycho-cultural term refers to psychological variables analyzed at the national level and, thus, representative of the culture. For example, in the GLOBE cross-cultural study, future orientation and collectivism scores for

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Poland, Czechia, Hungary, and Slovenia were lower and resembled those for nearby non-Western countries (Albania, Georgia, Greece, Russia) more than those for standard bearers of the West (France, Germany, UK, USA) (House et al., 2004).

## 2 Development of hypotheses

Several value systems are capable of differentiating the West from the remainder of the world: survival versus self-expression and traditional versus secular-rational dimensions (Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005), individualism-collectivism and power distance (Hofstede, 1980, 2001), and embeddedness and other components of the theory of human values (Schwartz, 2004, 2008). The rise of postmodern or post-materialist values are of more recent origin and are continuously in flux. Recently, factor analyses of data from 107 countries using items from the Inglehart, Hofstede, and Schwartz systems yielded country scores representing freedom versus material concern and, on an orthogonal axis, personal responsibility versus faith (Kaasa & Minkov, 2022).

Distinctive positive items of freedom are freedom of speech, homosexuality justified, leisure time, tolerance and respect to others, less importance on work, and imagination; close to the negative pole are priority over immigrants, over giving people more say; hard work, maintaining order, and government responsibility. Distinctive positive items of responsibility are abortion justified, people can be trusted, feeling of responsibility, independence, determination, perseverance and thrift, saving money and things; close to the negative pole are religion, proud of nationality, obedience, greater respect for authority, work, and family. In the ensuing freedom x responsibility cultural map, Kaasa and Minkov (2022, Fig. 3) presented the former communist Western nations as parts of non-Western geo-cultural groups: Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania emerged as members of an East Asia and Baltics group; Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Slovakia, and Slovenia, of Former Communist Countries and South Asia; and Poland, of Southern and Latin America. In contrast, Finland fell close to Netherlands and Switzerland, as part of Northern Europe. The other groups were English Speaking Countries, Southern and Western Europe, and Africa and Arab Nations. By causing the assignment of the former communist Western countries to non-Western geo-cultural groups, the values of these countries question their membership in the West.

Western civilization as such was not addressed in the Kaasa and Minkov (2022) research. The present study was designed to determine whether, individually, the former communist countries of the West fall in (a) a Western space of freedom and responsibility values encompassing only Western countries, (b) a Western value space shared with countries of other civilizations, or (c) a value space beyond that of the West.

**Hypothesis 1.** *The differentiation of a psycho-culturally unitary West vis-à-vis the remainder of the world in terms of freedom and responsibility values requires exclusion of former communist countries. This “psycho-culturally unitary West” seems to be what others have called the WEIRD countries.*

The exclusion from the unitary West alluded to in Hypothesis 1 is only in terms of values and with respect to a unitary West and does not imply exclusion of the country from Western civilization; regardless of their current values, former communist Western countries belong in the West by virtue of their history, language, and other attributes. On the other hand, values are not static. Stemming from the Inglehart and Welzel (2005) line of research, the Emancipative Values Index (EVI) targets values which emphasize freedom of choice and equality of opportunity sought by Western Europeans with increased force since the Enlightenment (Welzel, 2013) and continue to increase in our days (Akaliyski et al., 2022). These values, pertaining to people’s choice, people’s voice, gender equality, and child autonomy, are viewed as drivers against social forces which coerce individuals.

Empirically addressing emancipative values was substantial in the present study considering the ability of EVI archives to contribute a longitudinal perspective permitting the test-retest study of the data. Whereas the data for the value dimensions delineated by Kaasa and Minkov (Kaasa & Minkov, 2022) were collected in the early 2000s and earlier, old and more recent EVI data are available. Analyzing EVI items,

Akaliyski et al. (2022) found that all countries in their sample increased their European Union Value scores across decades, although at different pace. This suggests the possibility that the emancipative values of the nine former communist Western countries could have fully recovered from the impacts of communism with added passage of time.

**Hypothesis 2.** *The differentiation of a psycho-culturally unitary West vis-à-vis the rest of the world in terms of emancipative values may have left formerly communist Western countries outside the West in the past, but this is not the case more recently.*

The study also addresses individualism, because this is considered the first, most distinctive Western attribute (Huntington, 1993). Individualists are independent of the in-group, serve fundamentally their own and nuclear family's interests, seek personal achievements, and do not necessarily discriminate outgroups; the main values of individualists are autonomy, self-reliance, and self-fulfillment (Andersson, 2023). Whether individualism is defined as a cultural expectation (Hofstede, 1980), a personality trait (Triandis et al., 1990), or a self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), it acquires a large part of its meaning as the opposite of collectivism. The main attribute of collectivism is social conformity, associated with the dependence of the individual on the in-group (Hofstede, 1980). Here, individualism and collectivism are considered polar opposites.

**Hypothesis 3.** *The differentiation of a psycho-culturally unitary West vis-à-vis the remainder of the world in terms of individualism requires the exclusion of former communist countries.*

The question that follows is whether the nine former communist nations in the eastern border of the West exhibit weaker Western values and individualism than countries more at the center of Western civilization due to their communist practices in 1944-1991 or because they are Catholic. Welzel (2014) made evident that Protestant countries excel in emancipative values, whereas Catholic countries lag behind.

**Hypothesis 4.** *Allegiance to Catholicism explains the differences in freedom, responsibility, emancipative values, and/or individualism between former communist countries in the eastern border of the West and other Western countries.*

However, communist experience could be an active antecedent regardless of religion.

**Hypothesis 5.** *Transcending Catholicism, past communist experience explains the lower Western values and individualism of the nine former communist countries in the eastern border of the West.*

On the other hand, the source of the differences could be ethnic. Three of the nine former communist countries of the West are Baltic, five are Slavic, and one is Magyar; that is, they are not Germanic. A persistent individualism appears to characterize Germanic populations. Some even speak of the "hyper-individualism" of the Scandinavian countries. Virtually all examples of decentralization of power used by Welzel (2025) pertain to Germanic societies. Moreover, it has been argued that during the late Roman Empire and early Middle Ages, Germanics intensified a social trend that caused a differentiation with respect to the collectivist family practices in the remainder of Europe and the Near East; it consisted in the free choice of individuals to initiate a family and set up their household independently of parents and extended families (MacDonald, 2018). Before marriage, as adolescents, Germanic medieval girls and boys learned how to manage a household by working as contracted servants for non-kin families. The medieval ban on marriage between cousins has been regarded as the root of European individualism (Schulz et al., 2019), but it is clear that the Germanic nuclear family, with unrelated husband and wife of similar age and greater independence and gender equalitarianism than the collectivist family, emerged during paganism (Hartman, 2004). Later, the Germanic impulse toward individual empowerment, a likely cause of the Reformation, would have been reinforced by it as part of a circular process (Pradhan & Bagchi, 2011).

**Hypothesis 6.** *Germanic countries of the West present higher levels of individualism and Western values than non-Germanic Western countries, and this also explains the deviation of former communist countries in the West's eastern border from the remainder of the West.*

A literature that addresses atmospheric forces as influences on psycho-cultural traits suggests an additional fracture of the West in values and individualism. It has been demonstrated that the ecological niche of the West encompasses Western European and transoceanic Western countries - the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand -, but excludes Portugal, Spain, and Italy due to the low steady rainfall of these countries (León, 2025); steady rain is conceived as neither excessive nor insufficient rainfall (van de Vliert, 2018). The Western ecological niche is characterized by low ultraviolet radiation and high steady rain; the former is associated with lower gender inequality and efficient impulse control (León, 2023) and the latter is a fundamental source of agriculture (Rockström et al., 2010) and pastoralism (Tessema, 2014), bases of national wealth. Northwest European and transoceanic Western countries are blessed with the highest levels of steady rain in the world (van de Vliert & van Lange, 2019, Table S1), while per capita national income (United Nations Development Programme, 2022, Table 1) is a consistent correlate of individualism (Bianchi, 2016; Gorodnichenko & Roland, 2017; Ogihara, 2018) and emancipative values (Jackson & Medvedev, 2024). Mediterranean countries, lacking steady rain, can be expected to be psycho-culturally different from the core West.

**Hypothesis 7.** *The differentiation of a psycho-culturally unitary West vis-à-vis the remainder of the world in terms of Western values and individualism requires the exclusion of countries outside the Western ecological niche.*

The emergence of emancipative values in Europe has been attributed to the joint effects of cold demands and steady rain; cold demands would stimulate a long-time perspective and focused effort while steady rain would promote the decentralization of power (Welzel, 2025). Mediterranean countries are exposed to higher temperatures than most countries of the West in addition to lower steady rain. However, León (2025) demonstrated that temperature does not explain Western civilization; only ultraviolet radiation and steady rain define its ecological niche.

### 3 Method

#### 3.1 Samples

The 107 countries with measurements in freedom and responsibility in Kaasa and Minkov (2022) were targeted in the present study (Sample 1). The number of nations for analyses of combined EVI and individualism scores was 59 (Sample 2). The hypotheses on Catholicism, Germanic ethnicity, communism, and the ecology were evaluated in 27 Western countries (Sample 3). The lists of countries can be seen on Table A1 in the Appendix.

#### 3.2 Measures

##### Western civilization

This variable was addressed through a Yes = 1 and No = 0 dichotomy referred to membership in the West according to Huntington (1993).

##### Freedom/material concern

The country data on a metric scale were obtained from Kaasa and Minkov (2022, Table A1).

##### Responsibility/faith

This factor score per country also was obtained from Kaasa and Minkov (2022, Table A1).

## **Emancipative values**

These data emerged in a number of World Values Survey's (WVS) waves of data collection. Here, data were selected to compare a country's first EVI score (the earliest measurement for a country) with last EVI score (the latest measurement for the same country). First EVI scores were collected from 1981 to 2013, and last EVI scores, from 2009 to 2022. Access to EVI scores was provided by Christian Welzel.

## **Individualism**

Fredriksson and Mohanty (2021) utilized seven scales to measure individualism across countries. Whereas four scales had responses from 100 to 124 countries, the other three only had data from 49 to 57 nations and were discarded in the present study. I obtained an average from the standard scores of the four scales selected. One of them was the Hofstede (1980) Individualism Scale, updated by Hofstede (2001) and the Hofstede Center, which utilized 14 work/life goals. The second measure selected referred to pronoun drop (e.g., not using the "I" in "I am happy") allowed by the dominant language, associated with collectivism (Kashima & Kashima, 1998). Abdurazokzoda and Davis (2016) updated Kashima and Kashima's (1998) country data set utilizing the *World Atlas of Language Structures*, introducing technical improvements, and incorporating a greater number of countries; their summary pronoun drop indicator (last column of their Table A1) was utilized here with reverse coding. The other two measures came from van de Vliert (2011); one was a measure of favoritism (advantageous treatment of members of a social group to which one belongs compared with outsiders) and the other measured nepotism (favoritism shown to relatives by giving them organizational positions because of their relationship rather than on their merits). The items were reverse coded with the higher value indicating individualism. The data were provided to the author by Per Fredriksson. Alternative measures of individualism/collectivism are highly correlated.

## **Political system**

The Western countries with a communist past have already been listed.

## **Religion**

Catholic countries of the West included the nine former communist countries plus Italy, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, France, Luxembourg, Austria, Andorra, Malta, and Canada.

## **Ethnicity**

Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, UK, Belgium, Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland, USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand were classified as Germanic owing to the Germanic language spoken by their majorities (Roberge, 2020; van der Auwera & König, 2017) and historic facts (e.g., migration of Angles and Saxons into England). The Irish speak English but they are mainly Celtic rather than Germanic and were excluded from this category. Other ethnicities were not specified.

## **Ecology**

Western ecology is one with low ultraviolet radiation and high steady rain. It excludes Portugal, Spain, and Italy from the West.

### **3.3 Analytic strategy**

Discriminant analysis (Norušis, 1990) evaluates the predictability of a classification of objects (e.g., Western vs non-Western countries) from a number of predictors (e.g., values and individualism). It offers the option to ask for the prediction made for each case. In the present study, these were country's predicted membership in the West when it is actually part of the West, country's predicted non-membership in the West when it is actually not part of the West, country's predicted membership in the West when it is actually not part

of the West, and country's predicted non-membership in the West when it is actually part of the West. Specification of the number of observations was required to obtain one of the four types of outcomes. To be able to represent the findings in two-dimensional space, I addressed (a) freedom x responsibility, (b) first EVI x individualism, and (c) last EVI x individualism. Wilk's lambda indicates the adjustment of the multivariate model and canonical correlation, the extent to which assignment of country membership in the West was justified considering values and individualism.

Simple t-test, chi-square, and OLS regression were also utilized; in these cases, bootstrapping with 1000 samples was used. Missing data for any variable led to the exclusion of the country from the analysis, except in the case of correlations; in this case, missing data were estimated from the mean.

The study data are available in three parts.

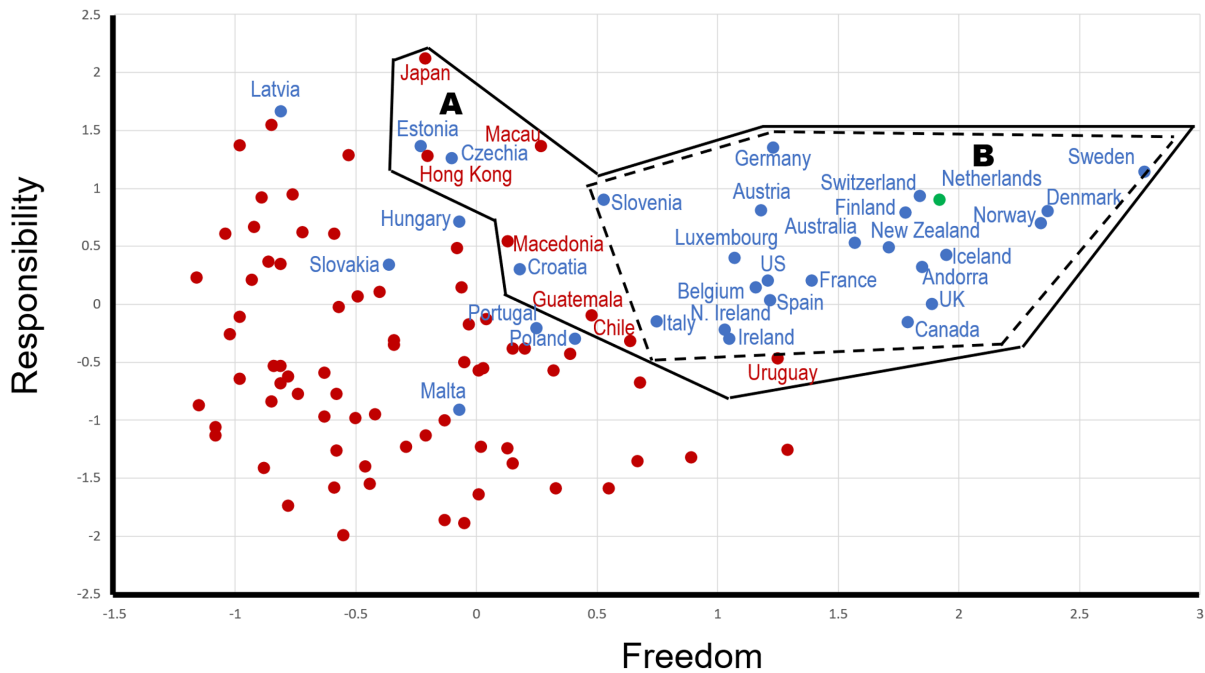
- Sample 1: <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.31435468>
- Sample 2: <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.28828589>
- Sample 3: <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.28828592>

## 4 Results

### 4.1 *Worldwide analyses*

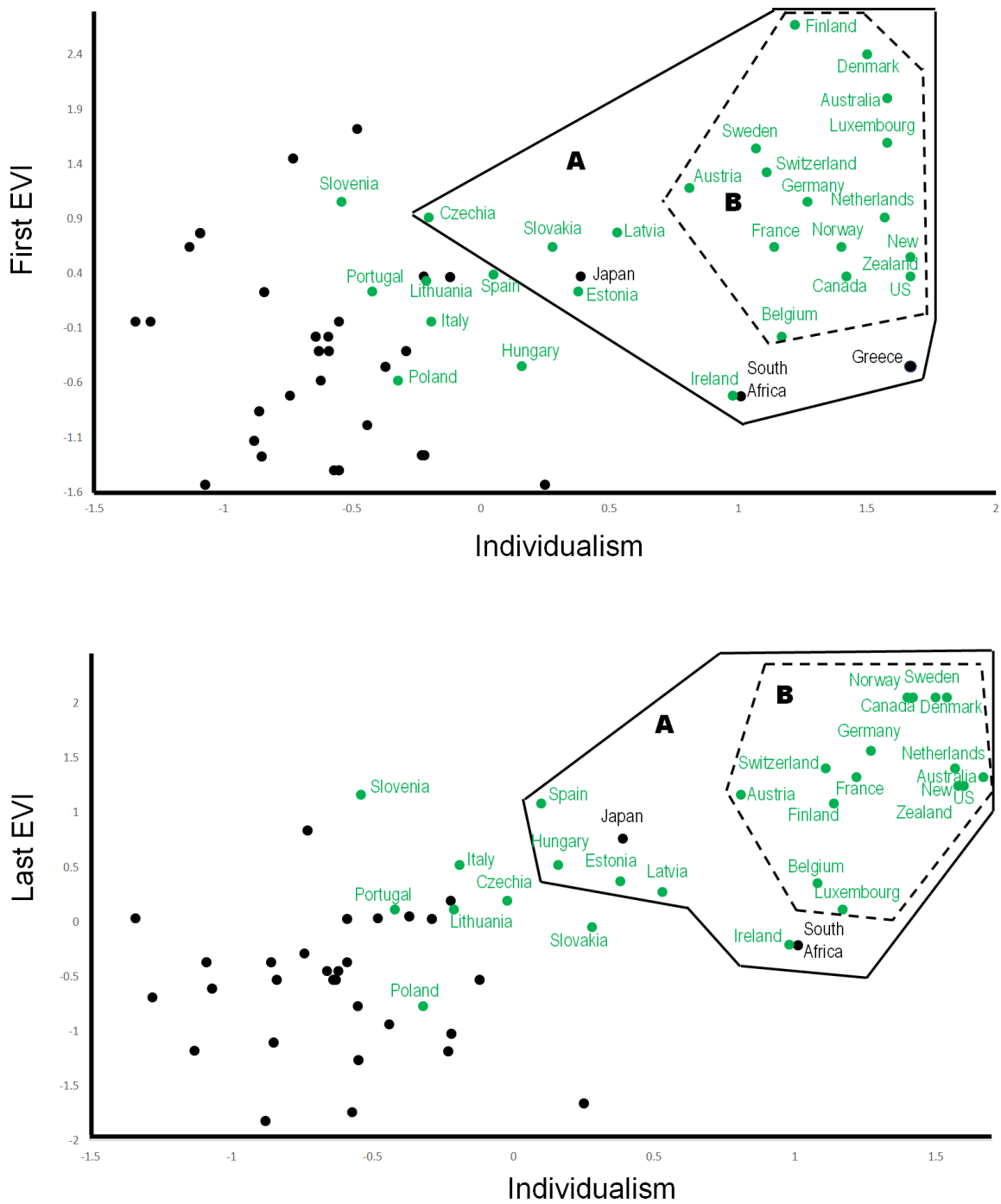
Table A2 in the Appendix presents the correlations between the study variables in Sample 2. Only the correlation between freedom and responsibility was not statistically significant; similar was the case in an analysis that encompassed the 107 cases with freedom and responsibility scores (Sample 1).

Regarding discriminant analysis using freedom and responsibility as predictors, the statistical outcomes were significant (Wilks' Lambda = 0.51,  $\chi^2 = 69.47$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and strong (canonical correlation = .70). It can be seen in Figure 1 that, together with 23 other Western countries, Estonia, Czechia, and Croatia were predicted to belong in the West, although they shared the value space with non-Western countries. On the other hand, Latvia, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Portugal, and Malta were excluded from the West, whereas Japan, Hong Kong, Macau, Macedonia, Guatemala, Chile, and Uruguay were included. Slovenia emerged within the Western value space not contaminated by non-Western nations. This implies that Hypothesis 1 about the exclusion of former communist countries from the West was partly upheld by the evidence and Hypothesis 7 about the exclusion of Mediterranean countries was partly upheld.



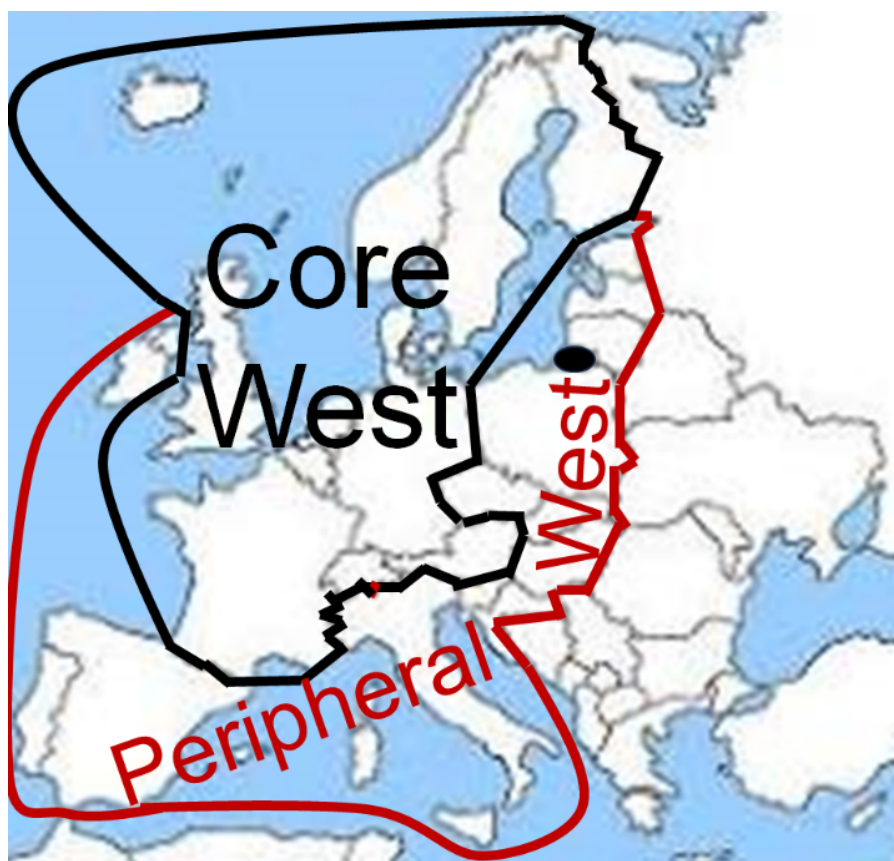
**Figure 1:** Scatterplot of 107 countries according to their freedom and responsibility scores. (A) Western and non-Western countries predicted by discriminant analysis to belong in the West considering their freedom and responsibility value scores. (B) Western countries predicted by discriminant analysis to belong in the West which fell on a value space not contaminated by non-Western countries. Color legend: Blue for countries actually belonging in the West, burgundy for countries not belonging in the West.

In the application of discriminant analysis using individualism and EVI scores, the individualism score for a country was paired with the first EVI score obtained from the country and with the last EVI score from the same country. The statistics were significant (Wilks' Lambda = 0.42,  $\chi^2 = 49.10$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and strong (canonical correlation = .76) for the first EVI application, as well as for the last EVI application (Wilks' Lambda = 0.39,  $\chi^2 = 52.97$ ,  $p < .001$ ; canonical correlation = .78). Figure 2 is a composite figure that facilitates the comparison of EVI scores collected in the first (upper panel) and last survey (lower panel). Whereas the analysis involving First EVI predicted Greece, Japan, and South Africa to be part of the West, it excluded Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and Slovenia. When using the last EVI, only Japan and South Africa were included and Czechia, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, and Slovenia were excluded. Since the number of excluded former communist countries of the West's eastern frontier was the same in the first and last application of the EVI, Hypothesis 2 was contradicted by the evidence. Apart from former communist Western countries in the eastern frontier of the West, Ireland emerged on a space contaminated by non-Western countries in both panels of Fig. 2. This suggests that Ireland is part of the West, but not of the core West.



**Figure 2:** Scatterplot of 59 countries according to their emancipative values (EVI) and individualism. Upper panel, First EVI scores; lower panel, Last EVI scores. (A) Western and non-Western countries predicted by discriminant analysis to belong in the West considering their EVI and individualism value scores. (B) Western countries predicted by discriminant analysis to belong in the West which fell on a value space not contaminated by non-Western countries. Color legend: Green for countries actually belonging in the West, black for countries not belonging in the West.

Figures 1 and 2 indicate the existence of a core West occupying value spaces or value x individualism spaces not contaminated by the presence of non-Western countries (CORE) and a peripheral West constituted by Western countries which occupy value and/or individualism spaces shared with non-Western countries (SHARED). Discriminant analysis also predicted which countries were out of the West considering their values and/or individualism (OUT). Four countries (Slovenia, Spain, Italy, Ireland) emerged once in CORE; 11 countries were OUT once (Latvia, Czechia, Spain, Malta), twice (Lithuania, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, and Italy), or three times (Poland, Portugal); and eight countries were in SHARED space once (Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Spain, and Ireland), twice (Latvia, Czechia), or three times (Estonia). Figure 3 depicts the core and peripheral West delimited in the present study.



**Figure 3:** Map of Europe depicting the core and peripheral West. Transoceanic Western countries, belonging in the core West, are not shown. The black dot represents Kaliningrad (Russia).

## 4.2 Analyses within the West

Bivariate analyses of the data confirmed higher freedom, Last EVI, and individualism, though not responsibility, among Protestant than Catholic countries (Table A3), and the same for Germanic vis-à-vis non-Germanic (Table A4) and non-Communist versus Communist countries (Table A5). Countries within the Western ecological niche exhibited greater responsibility and individualism, though not freedom and Last EVI, than countries outside it (Table A6).

The multivariate evaluation of hypotheses 4-7 required the joint testing of effects of religion, ethnicity, political system (communism), and the ecology on the dependent variables. It can be seen in Table A7 that responsibility and Last EVI were unpredictable in this context; in contrast, political system explained freedom, whereas religion, political system, and the ecology explained individualism (Table 1). The variance inflation factor and tolerance were within the accepted collinearity limits (Daoud, 2017). That is, Hypothesis 7 about ethnicity was not upheld by the evidence.

**Table 1:** Results of OLS regressions: Joint effects of four predictors on freedom and individualism among Western countries.

Predictors	Freedom			Individualism		
	$\beta$	95% CI	$p$	$\beta$	95% CI	$p$
Protestant	.21	-.02; .43	.064	.18	.02; .35	.038
Germanic	.06	-.15; .31	.589	.09	-.10; .23	.288
Communist history	-.70	-.92; -.50	.001	-.66	-.80; -.49	.001
Ecology	-.21	-.54; .18	.205	-.53	-.78; -.46	.001
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.66 ( $p < .001$ )			.86 ( $p < .001$ )		

*Note.* Bootstrapping with 1000 samples was utilized. N = 26 for freedom and 24 for Last EVI. Per capita income, introduced into the equation at the request of a reviewer, was nonsignificant; the data for this variable came from van de Vliert & van Lange, 2019, Table 1.

**Table 2:** Distribution of Western countries according to pronoun drop. Summary Index for main language spoken. Source: Abdurazokzoda & Davis (2016, Table A1).

Ethnics	Pronoun drop	
	Forbidden	Accepted
Germanic	Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, USA	
Non-Germanic	Finland, France, Ireland, Latvia	Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain

*Note.* Andorra, Luxembourg, Malta, and Slovakia had missing values.

*Communism may have been more important than Catholicism for Eastern European countries of the West and the ecology more important than Catholicism among Southern European countries.* The Germanic/non-Germanic classification was analyzed in reference to a component of the measure of individualism: pronoun drop. Analysis of the dominant language in a country yielded  $\chi^2 = 15.56, p < .001$ , which confirmed that the individualism of the core West is basically Germanic (Table 2).

## 5 Discussion

The present between-country study addressed the cultural homogeneity of Western Civilization with a focus on freedom, responsibility, emancipative values, and individualism. In the worldwide analyses, especially Poland and Slovakia, but also Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, and Croatia emerged fractured from the remainder of the West in terms of most of these Western psycho-cultural attributes. The deviation of the nine Catholic former communist countries is consistent with prior findings reported by Kaasa and Minkov (2022) and was expected considering the communist system they embraced in 1944-1991. Since religion and political system predicted their low scores of freedom and individualism in the regression analyses of the study, both variables explain the deviation of these countries from the remainder of the West. While this indicates a cultural transition from the core to a peripheral West, Akaliyski et al. (2022)'s Fig. 8 indicates that a similar transition occurs from the peripheral eastern West to the Orthodox civilization, which encompasses Russia, Belarus, Serbia, Bulgaria, and other countries to the east of the West.

Italy, Spain, Portugal and Malta, Catholic countries without a communist past, also differed from

the remainder of the West by being predicted by discriminant analysis not to belong to the West and/or belonging to it but in a space shared with countries from other civilizations. This finding is explained by the fact that Catholic populations are associated with reduced Western values and individualism scores and that Mediterranean countries are excluded from the ecological niche of the West. In regression analyses, religion explained the low freedom and individualism scores of these countries, whereas ecology explained their low individualism scores. The Mediterranean Western countries may represent a transition from the West to the Islamic civilization settled in eastern Europe (Bosnia, Kosovo, Turkey), the Near East, and North Africa.

The core West that emerged in this study was formed by Protestant populations plus Austria, Canada, France, and Luxembourg - which maximize Western values and individualism and differ in this regard from peripheral Western countries. The Protestant Western countries, except Finland, are of a Germanic ethnicity defined by the Germanic language family (Roberge, 2020) and by phylogenetics (Hartmann, 2023). It should be remembered that the Reformation occurred originally in Germany. Nonetheless, ethnicity failed to explain Western values and individualism in regression analyses, which can be attributed to a failure of the ethnicity dichotomy utilized in the research to grasp more nuanced ethnic meanings than Germanic = 1, non-Germanic = 0. I am referring specifically to the cases of France, Luxembourg and Finland, classified as non-Germanic in this study despite the important genetic and cultural Germanic influences on them. French and Luxembourgian are Catholic populations which have important Germanic roots. In France, the settlement of Frankish peoples since the fall of the Roman Empire created a minority that increased with the centuries and had a disproportional national influence. For example, whereas the Gaul language is now extinct and contributed little to the development of modern French, the development of this Romance language was influenced by the Frankish culture. Modern French emerged around the Seine River, more specifically, in Paris, when Frankish lords governed the medieval city (Rickard, 2003). Note that France was also settled by other Germanic tribes by the time of the fall of the Roman Empire; in addition to Burgundians, Alemanni, Visigoths and Suebi, a Norse (Viking) population settled in Normandy at the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE. A recent genomic study of French samples suggests a north-south genetic divide marked by the Loire River, which coincides with the von Wartburg linguistic line. This line divides France into a "Langue d'Oil" part (influenced by Germanic speaking) and a "Langue d'Oc" part (closer to Roman speaking) (Saint Pierre et al., 2020). That is, France is partially Germanic, linguistically and genetically, although in this study was classified as non-Germanic. Similar is the case of Luxembourg. In the von Wartburg linguistic line perspective, Luxembourg can be considered more Germanic than France. However, Luxembourg was not included in the study.

There is a Swedish-speaking minority in Finland which descends primarily from Swedes who immigrated during the years 1100–1300 CE (Virtaranta-Knowles et al., 1991). Despite the small population having Swedish as mother tongue in Finland now, the Swedish influence has been extraordinarily large in this country, to the extent that Finland is an officially bilingual country. "During five centuries until 1809, Finland formed the eastern part of the Swedish Empire, and during this lengthy period Swedish language and culture were deeply rooted" (Björklund & Märd-Miettinen, 2011, p. 13). Genetic studies have identified Swedish ancestry especially in the capital region and major cities of this country (Hannelius et al., 2008).

Therefore, it should not be surprising that both French and Finnish, like the entire family of Germanic languages of the core West, forbid the dropping of the personal pronoun; the dropping of the personal pronoun is a linguistic attribute associated with collectivism. The use of the personal pronoun singularizes the Me or Ego as an independent part of the situation. The independent or individualist self-construal has been defined as "construing oneself as an individual whose behavior is organized and made meaningful primarily by reference to one's own internal repertoire of thoughts, feelings, and actions, rather than by reference to the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others" (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 226). Contrariwise, the interdependent or collectivist self-construal is equivalent to "seeing oneself as part of an encompassing social relationship and recognizing that one's behavior is determined, contingent on, and, to a large extent organized by what the actor perceives to be the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others in the relationship" (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 227). This feature is reflected in the absence of a frequently referenced Me or Ego in languages which allow the personal pronoun to be dropped.

It should be remarked, however, that pronoun drop by itself does not suffice to account for the individualism of the West. The languages spoken by the majority in countries such as Ghana, Indonesia, Singapore, Sierra Leone, and South Africa also forbid pronoun drop and, yet, these nations are far from the level of individualism observed in the West. The linguistic attribute of the core West formed by Protestant countries plus Austria, Canada, and France emerged in the present study in the company of high scores in freedom, responsibility, emancipative values, and individualism. Luxembourg lacked data on pronoun drop, but French is its national language. Contrariwise, Irish people and Latvians also speak languages that forbid the dropping of the personal pronoun, but their Western values and individualism scores were too low to merit membership in the core West. Pronoun drop accompanied by Western values and other indicators of individualism in the context of a specific European evolution permits to understand the strongly Protestant, possibly Germanic core of the West. Paraphrasing Akaliyski et al. (2022), Western civilization can be conceived as two layers of nations rotating around a gravitational centre defined by Western values and individualism.

The regression results contradicted the potential of Germanic ethnicity to explain individualism in Europe, but not to the extent of forcing a denial of such a possibility. It appears that Western individualism had two historical drivers. The individualist families and gender equality of the Germanic tribes were already noted by the Romans. According to Santos Silva and Cruz (2020), Tacitus, around 98 AD, described the Germanic household as occupied by couples of similar age and strength and their children, a fact that has recently been confirmed by archaeological evidence on relative enamel hypoplasia in the Middle Ages in Scandinavia (Buckwalter & Baten, 2019). This demonstrates the early Germanic deviation from the typical collectivistic family with a strong and older father and a weak and younger mother. The nuclear family and individualism are intimately intertwined (Ogihara, 2023). The evidence, therefore, strongly suggests that the basic difference between European populations presently expressed in the core versus peripheral West did not originate recently. The second historical moment is better known. The Reformation implied a grand emancipative leap in Germany and, later, in other Germanic countries: Latin was replaced by German, and then, by other Germanic languages — and the clergy became less needed as interpreter as the individual became able to accede directly to the Bible. This also implied that the dialogue with God became more individual and reflective (Buss, 2000; Butner, 2016; Butterfield, 1961; Pradhan & Bagchi, 2011). Both moments appear to continue to influence Western civilization and be the ultimate source of its core-periphery fracture. However, Germanic ethnicity remains an ambiguous antecedent considering its failure to predict values and individualism in regression analyses. There is a need for obtaining a more nuanced measure of Germanic ethnicity than the dichotomy utilized here as well as for a more focused study of the relationship between Germanic ethnicity and the religion, political past, and ecology of Western countries and their provinces, to better understand the Western fracture in values and individualism.

The case of Ireland is unique. As English speakers, Irish people are deeply influenced by the Germanic structure of this language. On the other hand, they are Catholic and their location in the EVI x individualism space, while being within the predicted West, was situated in a zone contaminated by non-Western countries (South Africa, Greece) in discriminant analysis. Whereas former communist Western countries' deviation from the core West is explained by Catholicism and communism — and the deviation of Mediterranean countries is explained by Catholicism and the ecology —, only Catholicism would explain Ireland's deviation. Specific studies of this Celtic country are needed to better understand its cultural peripherality.

The core-peripheral West distinction will be put to the test of History once the current Ukraine-Russia war is resolved and European countries' belongingness in the European Union and NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) starts eroding. The prediction suggested by the results of the present study is that the Core Western countries will remain integrated, while peripheral Western countries start to disengage.

## 5.1 *Study limitations*

The main shortcoming of the study — the Germanic/non-Germanic dichotomy utilized — has already been addressed. On the other hand, O'Hagan (2002) postulated that civilizations are to be thought of

as processes or tendencies rather than essences. The emphasis of the present article has been put on essences, although one of the hypotheses and the study findings had processual implications. In the comparison of First with Last EVI, the level of exclusion of Western countries from the West by discriminant analysis did not vary; the second hypothesis of this study had wrongfully predicted a greater number of Western countries classified as non-Western in the First than Last EVI. Longitudinal studies of wider scope should be conducted to evaluate the hypotheses of the present study dynamically. The lack of polygenic scores for individualism and collectivism was another shortcoming. Ancient DNA would have permitted a comparison of living populations to determine during which millennia and centuries individualism and collectivism were rising or declining. Such studies are being done with polygenic scores for education, intelligence and related constructs.

An important limitation of the study was the use of highly correlated variables, such as freedom and Last EVI ( $r = .83, p < .001$ ), which made some analyses somewhat redundant. Future studies should attempt to utilize less correlated variables. On the other hand, three country samples were utilized in the research, with  $N_s = 107, 59,$  and  $27$ . Sample sizes were affected by the need for paired data. For example, Lithuania was absent in the first sample and present in the other two. Missing values also ran counter to the comparability of the findings across samples. Underrepresentation of Sub-Saharan African countries and small Oceanic and Caribbean countries was also a study weakness.

Another limitation of the study was the use of countries as units of analysis, with the exception of Turkish Cyprus and Northern Ireland regarding freedom and responsibility. Considering the virtually identical responses corresponding to Ireland and Northern Ireland (Fig. 1), it was possible to exclude the whole Irish island from the core West (Fig. 3). But Italy and Spain did not offer this type of opportunity; the data only referred to the country level. However, northern Italy is a region exposed to steady rain (León, 2025) and has been importantly Germanic since the invasion of the Lombards in 568 CE and, later, the rule of the Austrian Habsburgs; furthermore, Visigoths, Huns, Ostrogoths, and Franks probably left genetic traces there. Consequently, marked social and psychological differences have been registered between northern and southern Italians (e.g., Asso, 2023). Important differences between northern and southern Spaniards have also been noted (e.g., Lynn, 2012). This was probably associated with the ecology of northern Spain vis-à-vis their southern provinces, too. Belgium (Billiet et al., 2013), Canada (Caron & Liu, 2010), and Czechia (Siwek, 2012) probably present psychocultural differences between regions. Specific studies are needed to trace a more precise line dividing the core and peripheral West across individual European countries considering cultural and ecological variables.

The article adds a new cultural variable, namely pronoun drop. It is theorized that pronoun drop is a measure of collectivism. A different hypothesis could have been addressed: Authoritarian cultures tend to preserve old complicated grammar rules including conjugation of verbs. The personal pronoun is superfluous if the verb is conjugated by person. Thus, the pronoun drop could be the result of an authoritarian history. Authoritarianism is known to be correlated with collectivism. This conceptual development can be treated in a different article.

There are tropical countries exposed to considerable steady rain which do not fully adhere to Western values or are not particularly individualistic — e.g., Brunei, Colombia, Fiji, Singapore, Saint Vincent (van de Vliert & van Lange, 2019, Table A1). According to Welzel (2025), cold demands would be a necessary multiplier for steady rain to cause human empowerment. Hence, the Welzel (2025) position may require further study.

Finally, the study's circumscription to the West makes it look as an ethnocentric project. This ethnocentrism is remarked in figures 1 and 2, where most countries outside of the West have no names. A more encompassing study could have situated the West as part of a worldwide sample in which other civilizations received equal attention, but this would have required an abnormal extension of the article. Here we are really dealing with only three civilizations that are sufficiently similar that they can be compared, something that may be difficult when comparing widely different cultures at very different levels of economic and cognitive development. In the West we are dealing only with the culture of North-Western Europe (speaking mainly Germanic languages), the closely related Mediterranean culture of Southern Europe (speaking mainly Romance languages), and the somewhat more distinctive culture of Eastern Europe

(speaking mostly Slavic languages). Each of these has its own history to which we can relate their present psychology and culture.

## 5.2 Conclusions

1. The study results strongly suggest that formerly communist Western countries differ in Western values and individualism from the core West because they are Catholic and practiced collectivism in 1944-1991.
2. Mediterranean Western countries appear to differ in Western values and individualism from the core West because they are Catholic and not exposed to enough steady rain.
3. The core West is formed by Protestant countries plus Austria, Canada, France, and Luxembourg, all of which maximize Western values and individualism.
4. Germanic ethnicity and northern provinces of Italy and Spain need more detailed research.

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## **Appendix**

**Table A1:** Countries in the study, per continent

Africa	Americas	Asia	Europe	Oceania
Albania <sup>b</sup>	Argentina <sup>a,b</sup>	Armenia <sup>a,b</sup>	Andorra <sup>a</sup>	Australia <sup>a,b,c</sup>
Algeria <sup>a,b</sup>	Bolivia <sup>a</sup>	Azerbaijan <sup>a</sup>	Austria <sup>a,b,c</sup>	New Zealand <sup>a,b,c</sup>
Burkina Faso <sup>a</sup>	Brazil <sup>a,b</sup>	Bangladesh <sup>a</sup>	Belarus <sup>a</sup>	
Egypt <sup>a,b</sup>	Canada <sup>a,b,c</sup>	China <sup>a,b</sup>	Belgium <sup>a,b,c</sup>	
Ethiopia <sup>a,b</sup>	Chile <sup>a,b</sup>	Cyprus <sup>a</sup>	Bosnia <sup>a,b</sup>	
Ghana <sup>a,b</sup>	Colombia <sup>a,b</sup>	Cyprus Turk. <sup>a</sup>	Bulgaria <sup>a,b</sup>	
Libya <sup>a</sup>	DominicanRep <sup>b</sup>	Georgia <sup>a,b</sup>	Croatia <sup>a,c</sup>	
Mali <sup>a</sup>	Ecuador <sup>a,b</sup>	Hong Kong <sup>a,b</sup>	Czechia <sup>a,b,c</sup>	
Morocco <sup>a,b</sup>	Guatemala <sup>a,b</sup>	India <sup>a,b</sup>	Denmark <sup>a,b,c</sup>	
Nigeria <sup>a,b</sup>	Haiti <sup>a</sup>	Indonesia <sup>a,b</sup>	Estonia <sup>a,b,c</sup>	
Rwanda <sup>a</sup>	Mexico <sup>a,b</sup>	Iran <sup>a</sup>	Finland <sup>a,b,c</sup>	
South Africa <sup>a,b</sup>	Nicaragua <sup>a</sup>	Irak <sup>a</sup>	France <sup>a,b,c</sup>	
Tunisia <sup>a</sup>	Peru <sup>a,b</sup>	Japan <sup>a,b</sup>	Germany <sup>a,b,c</sup>	
Zambia <sup>a</sup>	Puerto Rico <sup>a</sup>	Jordan <sup>a,b</sup>	Greece <sup>a,b</sup>	
Zimbabwe <sup>a,b</sup>	Trin. & Tobago <sup>a,b</sup>	Kazakhstan <sup>a</sup>	Hungary <sup>a,b,c</sup>	
Uganda <sup>a</sup>	USA <sup>a,b,c</sup>	Kuwait <sup>a</sup>	Iceland <sup>a,b,c</sup>	
	Uruguay <sup>a,b</sup>	Kyrgyzstan <sup>a,b</sup>	Ireland <sup>a,b,c</sup>	
	Venezuela <sup>b</sup>	Lebanon <sup>a</sup>	Italy <sup>a,b,c</sup>	
		Macau <sup>a</sup>	Kosovo <sup>a</sup>	
		Malaysia <sup>a</sup>	Latvia <sup>a,b,c</sup>	
		Myanmar <sup>a</sup>	Lithuania <sup>b,c</sup>	
		Pakistan <sup>a,b</sup>	Luxembourg <sup>a,b,c</sup>	
		Palestine <sup>a</sup>	Macedonia <sup>a</sup>	
		Philippines <sup>a,b</sup>	Malta <sup>a</sup>	
		Qatar <sup>a</sup>	Moldova <sup>a</sup>	
		Singapore <sup>a,b</sup>	Montenegro <sup>a</sup>	
		South Korea <sup>a,b</sup>	Netherlands <sup>a,b,c</sup>	
		Taiwan <sup>a,b</sup>	North Ireland <sup>a</sup>	
		Tajikistan <sup>a</sup>	Norway <sup>a,b,c</sup>	
		Thailand <sup>a,b</sup>	Poland <sup>a,b,c</sup>	
		Turkey <sup>a,b</sup>	Portugal <sup>a,b,c</sup>	
		UArabEm <sup>b</sup>	Romania <sup>a,b</sup>	
		Uzbekistan <sup>a</sup>	Russia <sup>a,b</sup>	
		Vietnam <sup>a,b</sup>	Serbia <sup>a</sup>	
		Yemen <sup>a</sup>	Slovakia <sup>a,b,c</sup>	
			Slovenia <sup>a,b,c</sup>	
			Spain <sup>a,b,c</sup>	
			Sweden <sup>a,b,c</sup>	
			Switzerland <sup>a,b,c</sup>	
			Ukraine <sup>a,b</sup>	
			UK <sup>a,c</sup>	

<sup>a</sup> In Sample 1, <sup>b</sup> In Sample 2, <sup>c</sup> In Sample 3.

**Table A2:** Correlations between study variables in Sample 2, N = 59.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1 Freedom	–				
2 Responsibility	.18	–			
3 First EVI	.65***	.44***	–		
4 Last EVI	.82***	.56***	.73***	–	
5 Individualism	.73**	.34**	.54***	.71***	–

Note. Missing cases were estimated.  
 \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Table A3:** Results of t-tests for independent samples: Western values and individualism according to religion.

Dependent variables	Catholic			Protestant			<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	Mean	SD	95% CI	Mean	SD	95% CI			
Freedom	0.59	0.78	0.22; 0.97	1.65	0.74	1.26; 2.02	-3.69	.001	1.39
Responsibility	0.33	0.68	-0.00; 0.69	0.72	0.35	0.53; 0.91	-1.84	.076	0.72
Last EVI	0.54	0.09	0.50; 0.58	0.64	0.07	0.61; 0.68	-3.43	.002	1.24
Individualism	0.34	0.63	-0.01; 0.66	1.32	0.41	1.06; 1.49	-4.85	<.001	1.84

Note. EVI = Emancipative Values Index. Bootstrapping with 1000 samples was utilized.  
 Note. *N* = 26 for freedom and responsibility and 24 for Last EVI and individualism.

**Table A4:** Results of t-tests for independent samples: Western values and individualism according to ethnicity

Dependent variables	Ethnicity: Germanic			Ethnicity: Non-Germanic			<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	Mean	SD	95% CI	Mean	SD	95% CI			
Freedom	1.70	0.51	1.47; 2.00	0.45	0.77	0.03; 0.89	-4.77	<.001	1.88
Responsibility	0.62	0.42	0.38; 0.86	0.49	0.68	0.16; 0.82	-0.58	.571	0.23
Last EVI	0.65	0.08	0.60; 0.69	0.53	0.08	0.49; 0.57	-3.99	.001	1.50
Individualism	1.36	0.26	1.22; 1.49	0.26	0.59	-0.05; 0.62	-6.24	<.001	2.41

Note. EVI = Emancipative Values Index. Bootstrapping with 1000 samples was utilized.  
 Note. *N* = 26 for freedom and responsibility and 24 for Last EVI and individualism.

**Table A5:** Results of t-tests for independent samples: Western values and individualism according to political system.

Dependent variables	Communist			Non-communist			<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	Mean	SD	95% CI	Mean	SD	95% CI			
Freedom	-0.06	0.43	-0.35; 0.23	1.45	0.67	1.15; 1.73	5.83	<.001	2.68
Responsibility	0.78	0.65	0.33; 1.25	0.38	0.55	0.12; 0.62	-1.66	.139	0.66
Last EVI	0.50	0.07	0.45; 0.56	0.62	0.09	0.58; 0.66	3.41	.001	1.49
Individualism	0.03	0.37	-0.21; 0.28	1.08	0.61	0.80; 1.34	4.51	.001	2.08

Note. EVI = Emancipative Values Index. Bootstrapping with 1000 samples was utilized.  
 Note. *N* = 26 for freedom and responsibility and 24 for Last EVI and individualism.

**Table A6:** Results of t-tests for independent samples: Western values and individualism according to ecology.

Dependent variables	Ecology: Western			Ecology: Non-Western			<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	Mean	SD	95% CI	Mean	SD	95% CI			
Freedom	1.08	0.95	0.72; 1.44	0.80	0.76	0.14; 1.54	0.62	.543	0.33
Responsibility	0.63	0.53	0.41; 0.86	-0.18	0.46	-0.67; 0.20	3.22	.002	1.63
Last EVI	0.59	0.10	0.55; 0.62	0.55	0.06	0.49; 0.61	0.71	.482	0.49
Individualism	0.89	0.68	0.63; 1.13	-0.17	0.26	-0.42; 0.10	2.62	.001	2.06

*Note.* EVI = Emancipative Values Index. Bootstrapping with 1000 samples was utilized.

*Note.* *N* = 26 for freedom and responsibility and 24 for Last EVI and individualism.

**Table A7:** Results of OLS regressions: Joint effects of four predictors on responsibility and last EVI.

Predictors	Responsibility			Last EVI		
	$\beta$	95% CI	<i>p</i>	$\beta$	95% CI	<i>p</i>
Religion	.31	-.78; .66	.126	.25	-.22; .67	.290
Ethnicity	.16	-.29; .80	.542	.32	-.16; 1.00	.303
Political system	.44	-.17; 1.07	.119	-.26	-.70; .29	.377
Ecology	-.22	-.71; .23	.288	-.01	-.45; .47	.955
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.28 ( <i>p</i> = .017)			.41 ( <i>p</i> = .003)		

*Note.* Bootstrapping with 1000 samples was utilized. *N* = 24 for responsibility and 25 for Last EVI.