

**VALUES IN THE TIME OF CRISIS:
ANALYSING POLITICAL VALUE CHANGE IN THE
EUROPEAN UNION**

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ABSTRACT

The impact of crises on values is a topic which is frequently touched upon in political science, but rarely dealt with explicitly. This thesis aims to contribute to the discussion and help to bridge that gap, by taking both a theoretical and an empirical approach to the question of how crises impact values, looking especially at the European context during the period 2008-2018. This thesis has two fundamental aims: firstly, to develop a clear conceptualization of values as a distinct unit of analysis; and, secondly, to analyse how values change during crisis periods, by using European Values Study data. Through statistical analyses, it is tested whether values have changed significantly during the crisis period between Wave 4 and Wave 5, and whether this has had a particularly strong effect on in countries which can be categorised as under a higher level of ontological security threat.

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INTRODUCTION

Just as love emerges in the time of cholera, periods of great distress can be said to instigate profound change. With this in mind, this thesis aims to explore the question of how crises impact values. The study of values and value change is well established in political science, spearheaded by scholars such as Ronald Inglehart and Shalom Schwartz; and subsequent scholars have studied how values change in response to various stimuli, such as developments in women's rights (Alexander & Welzel, 2014; Brieger & Welzel 2019) or increasing partisanship (Evans & Neundorff, 2020; Huber, 1989; Knutsen, 1997). However, the particular study of how value change over time is affected by a crisis period remains largely neglected both at a conceptual and operational level, and as such this thesis aims to contribute a theoretical and empirical analysis to this area of ambiguity by examining how values have changed within the European Union (EU) during the crisis period of 2008-2018.

It will be argued that, from a theoretical perspective, we should anticipate values (at a societal level) to become stronger during crisis periods; that is, states which report a 'high' score on a particular value just before or at the beginning of a crisis period are expected to report a higher positive score on the same indicator which captures this value after the crisis has taken place (H1). Equally, states which report a 'low' score on a particular value just before or at the beginning of a crisis period are expected to report a lower score on the same indicator which captures this value after the crisis (H2). The differentiation between 'high' and 'low' scores will be outlined in the empirical section of this paper. Thirdly, it is hypothesized that greater value change will be reported in states which are experiencing higher threats levels of ontological security, in comparison to those experiencing lower threats (H3). These hypotheses are based on the logic of ontological security theory, an international relations theory derived from the field of psychology, which holds that people or societies are ontologically secure when they can maintain a sense of continuity in terms of their identity and existence (Mitzen, 2006, pp. 343-344). Based on this definition, it is argued that the threat of ontological insecurity is a key characteristic of crises and it stands to reason that groups (such as national populations) will become embedded in their existing cognitive states.

Ultimately, the broad purpose of this thesis is to look at the impact of crises on values; more specifically, to look at how national populations' reported values can be compared before and after a crisis period. Even within this refinement, this is a large undertaking, so particular

scope conditions have been set: this thesis will look at how values have changed amongst the populations of European Union (EU) states from the beginning to the end of the crisis period 2008-2018, based on European Values Study (EVS) data. Working with a definition of crises which captures ontological security allows for a more nuanced analysis of value change during crisis periods; Inglehart, in particular, contends with existential insecurity and physical threat (Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Inglehart, 2018), but this does not capture the full threat of a crisis: namely, the threat of ontological security and the threat to the continuity of a society. In this thesis, it is maintained that the EU can be understood to have experienced a distinct crisis phase during the period 2008-2018, both socio-economic and security based (Bruno & Finzi, 2018; Reisenbuchler, 2020; Vampa & Gray, 2021), which was characterised by the threat of ontological insecurity (Kinnvall et al., 2018). Hypotheses will be formed based on this conceptualization of how crises may impact values, and these will then be tested in the empirical chapter of this thesis using European Values Study (EVS) data.

These scope conditions have been selected for two main reasons: Firstly, the period 2008-2018 can be defined as a particular crisis period in the EU. Within this timeframe, the European sovereign debt crisis, the European migrant crisis, as well as a crisis period of intensified terror attacks in Europe occurred, all of which were most intense within the timeframe of 2010-2016. 2008 and 2018 are suitable bookends for this crisis period as they mark a two-year milestone of decreasing intensity before and after the peak of the crises, and if one wishes to look at the *impact* of crises on values, then it is more analytically useful to take stock before and after the crisis rather than before and during. Furthermore, 2019 marks the year that the Covid-19 crisis began, hailing the beginning of a new, distinctive crisis period internationally. Secondly, it makes sense to view the EU as a group, given that EU membership entails many common policies, including economic, security, defence, and social. Furthermore, EU policies are, in principle, based on shared values across EU states, and while this principle may not always transpire harmoniously in practice, this renders the EU as a suitable group of countries for analysing value change—the cultural diversity which exists across EU states does not inhibit us from meaningfully analysing value change across this timeframe.

It is worth noting here, at the beginning, that these three hypotheses were ultimately rejected. However, research behind these tests is still valuable, even if not the results were not anticipated in the conceptualization of this thesis and its hypotheses. Rather, this should be taken as an invitation for further analysis of the impact of crises on values and the development of new hypotheses which may help us to understand how values impact crises. Furthermore,

while the hypotheses themselves were not proven, a different finding was revealed: crises barely change at all during crises.

CHAPTER I:

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Overview

The impact of crises on values is a topic which is frequently touched upon in political science literature, but rarely dealt with explicitly. It would be excessive to frame this as a ‘gap’ *per se*, given that the notion of the relationship between crises and value change can be interpreted as an underlying question in a range of research topics across the social sciences. However, this does not mean that this relationship is not worth studying in explicit terms; rather, it means that there are dots to be connected. In terms of theory, this section will begin by outlining the state of the art on the study of value change in social science and identify the main problems and limitations in the existing literature on value change—in particular, the lack of differentiation between values, attitudes, and beliefs — and address how this thesis will contribute to the discussion. Then, before operationalizing on the relationship between crises and value change, a clear conceptualization of the concepts themselves and their units of analysis will be outlined. Here, three concepts will be considered: values, crises, and ontological security. These will be looked at as individual concepts initially, and then their interrelationships will be explored so that they can be operationalized upon. From this conceptualization, hypotheses will be developed and scope conditions will be set in preparation for the next chapter’s empirical analysis.

1.1 The State of the Art on Values

The study of values in social science has been spearheaded by two scholars in particular: Ronald Inglehart, and Shalom Schwartz, whose work derives from scholars such as Geert Hofstede (Bond & Hofstede, 1984; Hofstede, 2011), Abraham Maslow (1943), and Milton Rokeach (1973); and has in turn been further developed by the likes of Christopher Welzel (Akaliyski & Welzel, 2020; Inglehart & Welzel, 2010; Welzel 2010), Pippa Norris (Norris & Inglehart, 2003; and Amy Alexander (Alexander & Parhizkari, 2018; Alexander & Welzel, 2011). However, it is Inglehart’s research and analysis which has arguably had the strongest influence in the field of political science, as it led to the development of the World Values Survey (WVS) and European Values Study (EVS). Based on this latter point, Inglehart’s work will be the main focus here: Inglehart’s contribution is unique in that it is primed to be operationalized upon, and his conceptualization of values has been converted into survey

variables, as part of his work with the WVS. However, it is important to acknowledge the broader range of value scholars because they have influenced each other's work which shares the same overarching aim: to develop a theory of human values which can be employed as a unit of analysis in social science.

Before analysing value change, one should clarify values themselves as units of analysis. To do so, let us consider how values have emerged as a political science concept: early developments in the study of value change within the social sciences were often not intended as value research. Maslow's hierarchy of needs, for example, which emerged as part of his *Theory of Human Motivation* (1943), ranks human needs from top to bottom in order of importance. While debatable and somewhat unscientific in itself, Maslow's notion of a conceptual system in which human needs, preferences, and desires are captured and ranked was influential. This would later have a particular impact on Inglehart, who used Maslow's design as a basis for his theory of value change. Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory resulted from Hofstede's factor analysis of IBM data (1984), through which he developed his four-dimensional cultural dimensions theory, through which cultural values can be analysed. Later, psychologist Milton Rokeach developed a theory of the organisation of attitudes, beliefs, and values (1973) from which he developed the 18- item Rokeach Value Survey. Within this framework, Rokeach posits that political ideology as a value only consist of two dimensions, freedom and equality. The point to note here is that the study of values emerged from somewhat incohesive foundations, which endures today in the remaining areas of conceptual ambiguity.

A major development in the study of values emerged with Ronald Inglehart's *The Silent Revolution* (1977), as it was based on Inglehart's empirical observations of value change. Here, Inglehart contended that 'modern societies' (i.e., Western democracies) were witnessing a period of profound change based on a shift in values from 'materialist' to 'postmaterialist' priorities. Inglehart's theory of postmaterialism is a theoretical framework within which it is proposed that people's values shift from economic and tangible security (Materialist) towards more abstract, ideational values such as autonomy and self-expression (Inglehart, 1977). The post-materialist 'story', as it were, claims that modernization entails this shift. With this in mind, Inglehart theorised that individual-level priorities reflect the socioeconomic climate, and that which is scarce will be valued more highly (Inglehart, 1977, pp. 22-23) and a theory of socialization which proposes that there is a "time lag" (p. 38), between this shift in circumstances and the manifestation of priority change in their values.

Note, however, that these hypotheses make claims about individual values, while this thesis is looking at the societal level. The fact that Inglehart's empirical analysis is undertaken

at the level of national surveys while his hypotheses are developed at the individual level subjects Inglehart, to an extent, to the individualistic fallacy. That is, Inglehart makes inferences about individuals and then tests these at the societal level. This thesis aims to avoid this common pitfall by both establishing and testing all hypotheses at the societal level.

In the five decades since *The Silent Revolution*'s publication, Postmaterialist theory has been increasingly criticized; particularly in the aftermath of the 2007-08 Financial Crisis and, more recently, the Covid-19 pandemic. The core issue with this theory, much like Fukuyama's 'End of History' thesis, is that it envisions, and ultimately assumes, that modernization and democratization are co-dependent linear processes, thereby failing to account for unprecedented crises. Today, we know that modernization and economic development can be suddenly hindered by unforeseeable circumstances, such as pandemics, and democratic processes—even in Europe— can be interrupted by the invasion of sovereign states, as we witnessed with Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

This issue with the study of value change remains largely unaddressed, and thus it is the focus of this thesis: even if the story of Materialist-to-Postmaterialist value shifts during periods of democratization and modernization was both true and guaranteed (which, of course, can never be the case with political theories), this still would not tell us anything about how values change when these periods of progress are interrupted by crisis. As such, this thesis outlines a particular crisis period and compares value scores on a number of variables before and after the crisis in order to analyse any value shifts within this period. It is important to acknowledge here, however, that since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, some scholarly focus has pivoted towards the study of values during crisis periods. However, little has been published thus far, and this remains a largely unexplored question.

Although Inglehart's contribution to the study of value change is not universally endorsed (including in this thesis), it is indisputably significant. Since first developing his theory of value change in modern societies (1977), particularly the theory of postmodern values, Inglehart has paved the way for scholars to research and analyse value change, such as Welzel, Norris, and Alexander many with whom he collaborated during his career.

Another key scholar on value change is Shalom Schwartz: in his treatise *An Overview of the Schwartz Theory of Basic Values* (2012), Schwartz conceptualises basic values as values which are beliefs which are intrinsically linked with emotions, as opposed to objective or impersonal ideas; furthermore, values are motivational, in the sense that they reflect particular goals or preferences. Values function as standards by which people make choices. Furthermore, for Schwartz, values can be differentiated from norms and attitudes in two respects: firstly,

values are abstract insofar as they do not necessarily correspond to specific actions or reactions in particular situations, whereas attitudes and norms “usually refer to specific actions, objects, or situations”. Secondly, for Schwartz, values are ordinal; they can, in principle, be ranked by order of importance, and this ordering is what defines people individually. Schwartz argues that these five characteristics apply to *all* values (Schwartz, 2012, pp. 2-3).

There are issues, however, with the state of the art on value change. In particular, there is an apparent lack of cohesion on the concept of values across the social sciences, as reflected by Inglehart’s conceptualization of values in which values are not clear concepts as distinct from beliefs or attitudes and, as such, these terms are sometimes conflated which limits their analytic usefulness. In contrast, Schwartz’s interpretation of values is too robust-- he argues that his five-part conceptualization is fundamentally applicable to *all* values, which is potentially exclusionary. Furthermore, existing research on value change over time largely studies this in relation to a regime—whether in the context of democratization processes or autocratic; especially Inglehart’s analysis, which takes value change to be a linear process, just as it takes the processes of democratization and modernization as such. This does not account for the possibility of unexpected interruption and disruption—or, as this thesis frames it: periods of crisis.

Based on these two issues, the key points here are that values should be regarded and, as such, analysed as distinct from attitudes or beliefs, and that value change should not be assumed to change and evolve in the same way during crises as they do during non-crisis periods.

1.2 (Re)conceptualizing Values

This thesis maintains that one should differentiate between attitudes, beliefs, and values as distinct phenomena or cognitive states in order to avoid conflation between these terms when analysing them, whether theoretically or empirically. Crucially, the EVS and WVS are surveys concerned with reported *values* which allows us to observe *value change*. One should try to avoid falling into a Euthyphro dilemma here (are they values because the value survey coded them as such, or did the value survey code them as such because they are values?), but it is important to recognise that the European Values Study is concerned with values, and these should be considered as a distinct category. While values may emerge from beliefs, or values may be reflected in people’s attitudes, for purposes of analysis and interpretation it is important to recognise their taxonomical differences.

Feldman (2003, pp. 477-480) distinguishes between the three phenomena: attitudes refer to evaluations of specific objects at a given time, while values are enduring beliefs regarding modes of conduct, which exist along a vacuum of relative importance; and attitudes and beliefs subsequently serve the basis for the formation of ideologies, as argued and modelled by Rokeach (1973). While this distinction is helpful for differentiating between attitudes, beliefs, and values in terms of outreach, it does not provide a sufficient conceptualization which demonstrates the precise differences between each cognitive category. As such, here, such a conceptualization will be proposed which factors in the existing research and working definitions in the study of value change in political science.

One could conceptualise values as cognitive states with real-world effects which can be stacked in relation to other cognitive states: beliefs can be considered the most fundamental cognitive state on this stack, as beliefs are involuntary but formed based on the world around us. Values consist of beliefs, but also consist of preferences—they reflect that which we find most important, as agreed upon by scholars of value change. Attitudes, as Feldman suggests, can be interpreted as our interpretation of our values at a given time, while our behaviours refer to how our attitudes, values, and beliefs are expressed as we interact with the world. In **Diagram I**, these four concepts are visualised as a stacked Venn diagram in which beliefs are taken as the most fundamental unit which provides a foundation for values, which in turn provide a foundation for attitudes, and so on. This stack can be thought of as comparable to a Sartorian ladder of abstraction in which the ‘higher’ up the conceptual ladder we ‘travel’, the more ideas the concept can capture. However, this diagram visualises beliefs as the most fundamental, and therefore most widely applicable, cognitive category which is situated at the bottom of the stack. The further up the stack we ‘travel’, the more expressive the cognitive category; that is, behaviours in comparison to beliefs are a matter of expression and interaction with the outside world, whereas beliefs are foundational to values, attitudes, and beliefs, but do not necessitate expression and interaction with the world in and of themselves.

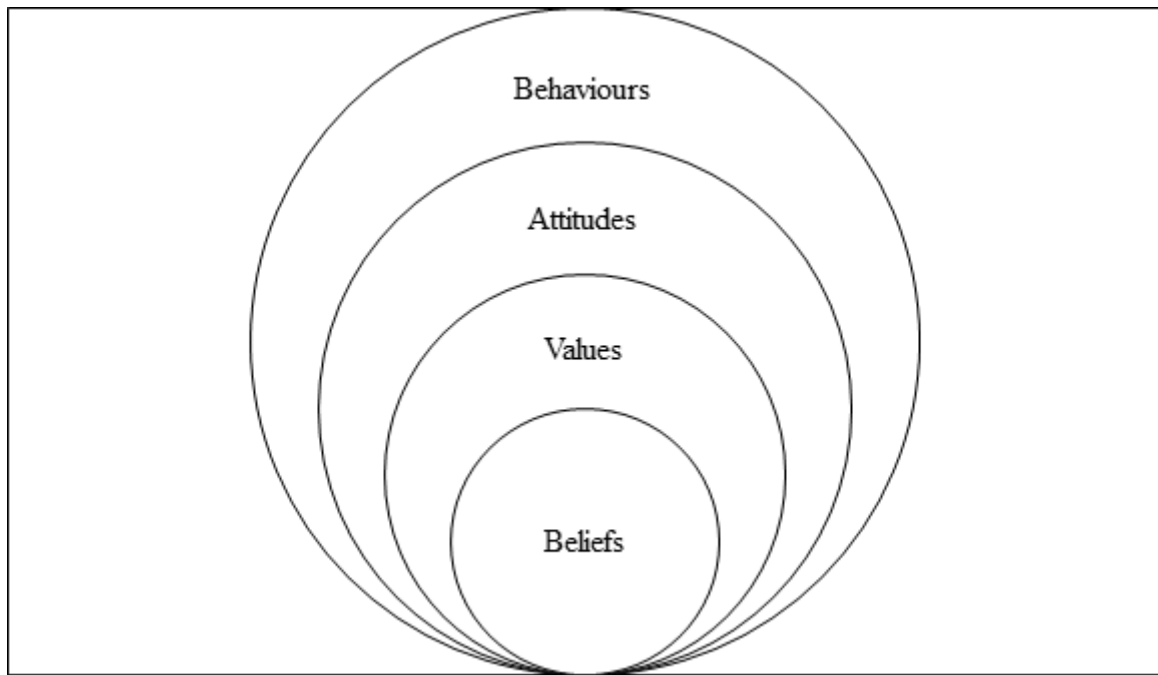


Diagram I: Stacked Venn diagram representing 4 types of cognitive states. Beliefs are most fundamental, then values, then attitudes, then behaviours. The further up along the stack we travel, the more engaged with the world the cognitive state becomes while the further down, the more internalized.

To capture the mainstream but also move beyond it, it is necessary to reconceptualise values. There are three broad areas of consensus within the existing research, which are considered as the foundational characteristics of values in this thesis. Thus, the working definition of values which will be employed in this thesis is conceptualised based on three criteria: values are normative, ordinal, and fluctuating, as visualised in **Diagram II**.

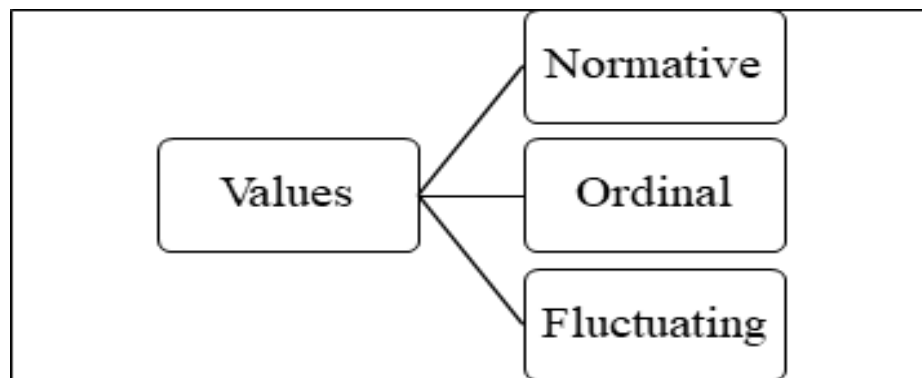


Diagram II: The three key fundamental characteristics of values.

1.3 The State of the Art On Crisis

Here it will be argued that there are two types of crises: one in which existential security is threatened, and one in which ontological security is threatened. A crisis may threaten both, but must threaten at least one. Some scholars such view the phenomenon of existential insecurity and ontological insecurity as distinct concepts (Mitzen, 2006) while others view the two as intrinsically linked (Rumelili, 2015)—more specifically, that existential insecurity is a subtype of ontological insecurity. These will be elaborated upon in the next subsection, but here it is sufficient to note that the two are treated in this thesis as distinct phenomena.

As previously stated, there is a wealth of existing literature on both crises and values, but the two are rarely linked in explicit terms. However, it must be acknowledged that some overlap between both lines of research already exists; researchers of crises have factored in value research on values has considered crises as particularly critical moments. However, a need remains to study the impact of crises on impact on values in its own right. The existing (but limited) literature on the link between crises and values tends to focus on either economic crises, whereas this thesis will focus on *political* crises.

The most relevant contribution to the study of crises in political science so far is Brecher and Wilkenfeld's *A Study of Crisis* (2000), which considers how crises threaten values. Brecher and Wilkenfeld's conceptualization of crises builds on Hermann (1963), but omits the element of surprise as a necessary condition for crises, and thus recognises the possibility of externally-sourced crises, and distinguishes between basic *values* from Hermann's conception of 'high priority goals' as the object of threat by crises. Auer (2016) makes similar criticisms, and adds that the likelihood for involvement in military hostilities should also be considered (Auer, 2016, p. 121). While Brecher and Wilkenfeld's contribution is significant, but it is limited in two main regards: firstly, the scope of their research on crises is limited to foreign policy and international conflict crises. This is, of course, pertinent to the study of political crises, but is a limited reflection of the spectrum of possible crises. Thus, this thesis considers crises which do not fall into this category, such as the Covid-19 crisis.

Secondly (and more importantly), Brecher and Wilkenfeld look specifically as the *threat* to value by crises, rather than studying the impact of crises on values from a neutral perspective, as this thesis will attempt to do. Furthermore, their conceptualization of crises includes the threat to values as a characteristic, which prompts the question of whether crises *necessarily* impact values and, as such for the purpose of their research, threatens values. As such, this thesis will not assume that crises impact values in any regard, thus providing a neutral and objective standpoint from which to carry out this study. However, based on the

conceptualization of crises as periods of great distress to those who live through them, this thesis will hypothesize that crises effect values.

To conceptualize crises, this thesis will use Rosenthal et al.'s definition as a starting point, treating a crisis as a "serious threat to the basic structures or the fundamental values and norms of a system, which under time pressure and highly uncertain circumstances necessitates making vital decisions (Rosenthal et al. 1989 p. 10). However, this is a supply-side approach to crises, and it is equally important to understand crises from the demand-side; that is, from the perspective of the recipient, whether it is an individual or a society. On this basis, it is proposed here that a threat to security is the key feature of crises on the part of those who experience them, and this notion can be subsequently split into two subtypes: a threat to existential security (i.e., existential insecurity) and a threat to ontological security (i.e., ontological insecurity).

Inglehart and Norris (2014), consider existentialist security as a factor in value change but do so almost exclusively in a religious context, observing that when existential security is threatened, people tend to become more religious, and vice versa. Castanho Silva (2019) Inglehart and Welzel (2005) argue that, in a context of existential threat, in-group solidarity and out-group hostility are a defence mechanism that might be necessary for group survival. Castanho Silva (2019) found no evidence, at a societal level, of public opinion change in terms of ideological self-placement, immigration policy preferences, or xenophobia in the immediate aftermath of the 2015 Paris attacks when compared with survey results taken shortly beforehand, based on European Social Study data.

In sum, crises are complex phenomena, which don't strictly threaten people's physical security, but crises also have a more profound effect on people's sense of continuity. Financial crises, security crises, and immigration crises all threaten the sense of continuity in a society, even if only security crisis necessarily involve a literal threat to the existential security of the population.

1.4 Ontological Security Theory

This thesis begins with the intuition that when societies feel that their continuity is threatened, i.e., when their ontological security is threatened, this has an effect on their values. Importantly, this includes political values, which will be tested on in the empirical analysis of this thesis. Here, the concept of ontological security will be elaborated upon in great detail—it would be unnecessary to do so as ontological security theory is employed as a theoretical framework for this thesis' hypotheses, as opposed to a concept which is being tested itself.

Ontological security first emerged as a concept in psychology, introduced by R.D. Laing (1991 [1960]), who was influenced by existentialist anxiety theories. It was not until 1991, however, that the concept was applied to international relations theory by Anthony Giddens, who conceptualized ontological security in I.R. as a sense of order and continuity at the individual level. Furthermore, it is argued here that crises necessarily entail a threat to ontological security.

Ontological security as a suitable theory for comparative politics was developed by Mitzen (2006), who posited the idea that states seek ontological security in a manner analogous to individuals. For Mitzen, this explains why states may engage in seemingly irrational conflict: states, like individuals, may respond to threats to their ontological security which do not necessarily involve threats to their physical or existential security. While Mitzen's focus is on state actors, here her reasoning is applied to national populations in this thesis.

In general, ontological security scholars differ on the question of whether ontological security should be regarded as a distinct concept or as intrinsically linked with existential security. Mitzen (2006), for example, distinguishes ontological security from existential security, but Bahar Rumelili (2016), however, views ontological security and existential security as intrinsically linked—more specifically, she views existential security as a subtype of ontological security, as to threaten ontological security is to necessarily threaten ontological security as well. Simply put, the threat one's existence is to also threaten one's sense of continuity.

Both arguments are accepted here, to an extent. In principle, ontological and physical security should be viewed as categorically different given that the definition of each does not require the other—to argue that ontological insecurity entails existential insecurity because being requires living is an example of concept stretching. To follow this logic would entail the inclusion of existential security and insecurity as a factor in virtually any concept. However, while the two concepts are distinct in principle, in practice, Rumelili's reasoning is fair—virtually no crisis of ontological security does not involve existential threat, however the fact remains that this could happen in principle, thus this category is tabulated accordingly, and it is maintained here that **either** the presence of existential security threat or ontological security threat, or both, at the societal level constitutes a crisis.

Based on this conceptualization of ontological security which separates ontological security from physical or existential security, societies at any given time may perceive themselves as fitting into one of four categories, based on a 2x2 dimensional understanding of security. Within this tabulated conception of security, it is argued here that three of the four

categories qualify as crises; that is, all except the combination of physical security x ontological security.

	Physical security	Physical insecurity
Ontological security	Physically secure; ontologically secure (no crisis)	Physically insecure; ontologically secure (crisis)
Ontological insecurity	Physically secure; ontologically insecure (crisis)	Physically insecure; ontologically insecure (crisis)

Table I: Security at a national level can be understood as a two-dimensional concept, where states may be experience a 2x2 combination of physical or ontological security or insecurity.

One could argue here that crises ought to be viewed as concepts to be measured by a difference in degree as opposed to a difference in kind, but this thesis takes crisis as present or absent, based on the combination of ontological security/insecurity and physical security/insecurity dimensions. While such criticism is reasonable, and this measurement does not capture the complexity of crises nor the period of wax and wane on either side of them, this is traded off with the benefit of parsimony, which allows for meaningful analysis of value change during crises within the scope conditions set in this thesis.

Finally, is worth noting that the notion that values, beliefs, or attitudes become stronger during crises is not solely compatible with ontological security theory. As Castanho Silva notes (2019), terror management theory makes the similar claim that the fear of death makes people strengthen their initial worldviews, whether they place themselves at the left or the right of the political spectrum. This hypothesis has been supported by empirical studies (Castano et al., 2011, Greenberg et al, 1986,). The logic here is that fear leads to the derogation of alternative ideas to the ones that individuals already hold; especially extreme alternatives. Similarly, in his analysis of existential anxiety and value change, Peters (2019) observes a direction correlation between existential anxiety levels and the prevalence and intensity of religious belief and practice (religiosity) (Peters, 2019, pp. 282-286). However, both are too specified. In comparison, ontological security theory provides a particularly suitable theoretical framework

for studying the impact of crises on values, given that it is taken in this thesis to be a key feature of crises themselves.

1.5 Synthesis of concepts

To synthesize these concepts, this thesis maintains that crises, at a societal level, entail a threat to ontological security as well as a threat to physical or existential security. Thus, we can identify distinct crisis periods based not only on whether a population is threatened with the prospect of physical harm, but also the threat of major disruption. As such, financial crises, immigration crises, and non-violent political crises can be included in this analysis, as they are deemed to qualify as crises. As outlined, ontological security and physical security are distinct categories in principle but, in practice, when existential security is threaten then ontological security is too. Thus, based on the conceptualization of security in crises outlined in **Table I**, a threat to ontological security is virtually always present, given that the combination of ontological security x physical insecurity never really transpires in practice.

From this conceptualization and categorization it is further posited that when ontological security is threatened at a societal level, the society becomes more embedded in its values in order to preserve a sense of societal continuity. Intuitively, we might assume that crises should have a destabilizing effect on values, given that we might associate crises with feelings of distress; but based on how crises are defined in the existing literature and subsequently reconceptualized in this thesis, we should say less stable, but remember what values *are*: it actually would make more sense for values to stabilize in order to preserve continuity, and we can probably witness this at a societal level.

1.6 Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical background and conceptualization of values, crises, and ontological security which have been outlined in this chapter, it is now possible to assert the hypotheses which will be tested during this thesis. Based on 1-4 point the scoring system of the European Values Study in Wave 4 and Wave 5, we can formulate hypotheses to be tested here.

Two hypotheses have emerged, based on this theoretical background and conceptualization:

Hypothesis 1: Countries with positive scores on a particular value variable in Wave 4 will score higher on that variable in Wave 5.

Hypothesis 2: countries with negative scores on a particular value variable in Wave 4 will score lower on that variable in Wave 5.

The reasoning here, as outlined above, is that societies as a unit of analysis, become more embedded in their existing values during crises; thus, value scores increase, either positively. Furthermore, these hypotheses are built on the idea that the whole EU region experienced a period of crisis between 2008-2018.

As these hypotheses are tested, there are six possible outcomes:

1. Countries which report a positive score in Wave 4 may report a significantly higher score in Wave 5.
2. Countries which report a positive score in Wave 4 may report no significant change to their score in Wave 5.
3. Countries which report a positive score in Wave 4 may report a significantly lower score in Wave 5.
4. Countries which report a negative score in Wave 4 may report a significantly lower score in Wave 5.
5. Countries which receive a negative score in Wave 4 may report no significant change to their score in Wave 5.
6. Countries which report a negative score in Wave 4 may report a significantly higher score in Wave 5.

Amongst these outcomes, #1 and #4 can be considered as strong hypothesis confirmations, #2 and #5 can be considered as weak hypothesis confirmations, while #3 and #6 can be said to reject the established hypotheses.

While H1 and H2 treat the whole EU a region which experienced crisis during this period, it may also be worth comparing states which can be categorised as experiencing a high ontological security threat (HOST) with those who experienced a low ontological security threat (LOST).

Thus, an additional hypothesis is put forward:

H7: Countries which can be categorised as having a higher level of ontological security should report a higher level value increase.

CHAPTER II: EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

2.1 Overview

This section of the thesis will move from conceptualization to operationalization. Firstly, for the sake of transparency, the research process which lead to the established conditions for this analysis will be outlined. Then, the geographical and temporal scope conditions of this research will be justified. Thirdly, the methodology section will outline the statistical methods which were used to test the established hypotheses, and the fourth section will consist of visualisations of the findings. The next section, Chapter III, will then discuss these findings

2.2 Research process

Initially, the aim of this thesis was to analyse individual-level value change across the European region over the course of the 21st century within a number of short intervals, in order to compare how values changed over time in relation to different crises, especially the Covid-19 crisis, based on EVS and WVS data.

A number of issues soon emerged: firstly, these scope conditions were far too broad. Thus, specific scope conditions were set and variables for comparison were carefully selected in order to preserve the academic integrity of the thesis but develop a realistic research plan. A second issue involved the scale of the surveys themselves: the EVS and WVS are undertaken over 9-year and 5-year periods respectively, and the EVS alone has involved over 220,000 participants over the last four decades. Thirdly, the EVS and WVS frequently publish their findings which tend to be followed by summary publications which report value changes likely to be of interest. Thus, it was necessary to approach the study of value change, it was necessary to conceptualize and operationalize the research in a manner that had not be done before. Fourthly, survey data from during and after (and even shortly before) the Covid-19 crisis is only becoming available now, given that lockdown conditions hindered travel and face-to-face interviews, which WVS and EVS surveys both employ as a method of data collection, as unsafe and generally forbidden. As such, data from this period is largely unavailable. Finally, there was an issue concerning the study of individuals over time: my initial aim was to analyse individual value change over time; however, the EVS and WVS are both repeated cross-sectional longitudinal surveys—neither include panel data, therefore individual-level inferences about value change over time cannot be established from any observations; to do so

would be to commit the ecological fallacy, by taking group-level observations and assuming these could be applied to the individual level.

The initial aim of this thesis was to look at the impact of crises on values with a particular focus on the Covid-19 crisis. The idea was to analyse World Values Survey data, comparing results from before the beginning of the pandemic with data gathered during and after (or, at least, when the crisis has waned significantly and restrictions were mostly abandoned) and compare country scores before/after particular crises, but given the small number of EU countries included, plus the inconsistency of inclusion amongst these, I felt that the European Values Study would be a better choice. It's worth noting here that, originally, I wanted the COVID-19 crisis to be central to my analysis so I planned to use the WVS as the most recent wave was only published in the last month, so I figured that there would be data collected during/after the pandemic. However, most of the WVS data was collected up until 2019, and the few countries which were included after this cut-off don't meet my scope conditions. Rather than change my scope conditions, I decided to change the timeframe. As such, more specified scope conditions were established.

2.3 Data Selection & Scope Conditions

The European Union was selected as the region of analysis, based on the fact that EU membership entails, in principle, shared values amongst member states. Furthermore, this allows for the use of the European Values Study, a reliable, high quality, and transparent cross-sectional longitudinal survey, which is perfect for analysing the change of values over the crisis period 2008-2018. It is worth noting here, however, that the period 2008-2018 was not established as a distinct crisis period because the data was available; rather, this survey was partially chosen on the basis that the survey collection periods marked the beginning and end of a distinct crisis period. After the European Union was established as the region of analysis, other surveys such as Eurobarometer and the European Social Survey were also considered; EVS was simply the most appropriate for the aims of this thesis.

Furthermore, the EU is a suitable region for analysis in this thesis as its member states are faced with ontological security threats far more so than threats to existential or physical security. In terms of general security, the European Union is the more secure region in the world based on almost every indicator, according to the Normandy Index (2021).

The index, which was developed in 2019, measures security across 11 indicators (climate change, cybersecurity, crime, economic crises, energy insecurity, fragile state, democratic processes, disinformation, terrorism, violent conflicts, the threat of weapons of mass destruction); when evaluated collectively, the European Union ranks highest (10 = least at risk, 0 = most at risk), with an overall score of 7.74. For comparison, South Asia scores lowest at the regional level across all indicators, with a score of 5.11, and the world as a whole scores 5.99. It is worth noting that the EU also scores highest when compared at the level of each indicator—with the exception of one: terrorism, where in the EU comes second with a score of 7.66 after North America, which scores 7.76.

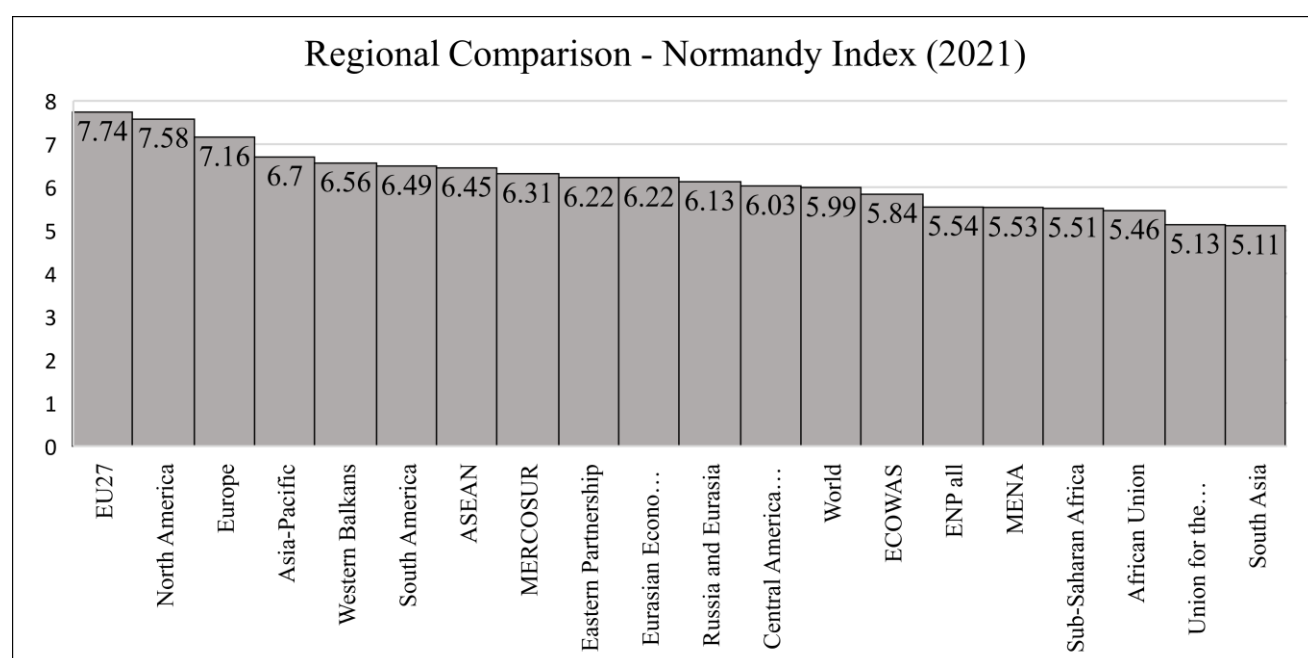


Diagram III: Regional comparison of security across all indicators, where in 0= most at risk and 10= least at risk.

As, by definition, the EU is a community in which member states share values, we can expect that there will be less variation based on the subjective values of particular states when their EU membership entails general cross-national value cohesion at the state level. Of course, this does not transpire so simply in reality, but it makes the region the most suitable worldwide for comparing value change in response to a particular stimulus (in this case, crisis).

19 countries have been selected from the (originally) 28 EU member states: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden.

9 states were considered but ultimately excluded: Belgium, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, the United Kingdom. Belgium, Cyprus, Ireland, Latvia, and Malta did not participate in Wave 5 of the EVS, so their scores could not be compared to their Wave 4 results. Greece and Portugal took part in both waves, but Wave 5 surveys in both countries were not taken until 2019-2020. Based on the conceptualization and scope conditions of this thesis, the period 2008-2018 ought to be understood as a distinct crisis period, whereas 2019, the year which the Covid-19 pandemic began, should be considered the beginning of a new, distinct crisis period. As such, the available data for Greece and Portugal causes them both to fall outside the temporal scope conditions of this thesis. Finally, the UK is excluded—not because of Brexit; Croatia was not a member state during Wave 4, but is still included—rather, the UK is excluded because it was categorised differently in Wave 4 and Wave 5. In Wave 4, the whole United Kingdom is included whereas Wave 5 only includes Great Britain. Although ‘Great Britain’ and ‘the United Kingdom’ are often used as interchangeable terms, Great Britain refers to England, Scotland, Wales, and their surrounding islands *only*, thereby excluding Northern Ireland, while the United Kingdom consists of Great Britain plus Northern Ireland. While the difference between the two is acknowledged, insofar as Northern Ireland and Great Britain are coded separately, given that the UK as a whole has EU member status, results which exclude Northern Ireland cannot be said to reflect the values of the whole state. Thus, for simplicity, Great Britain, Northern Ireland, and the UK are all excluded from this analysis.

Amongst these 19 selected countries, two categories were established for the purpose of an additional comparison: ‘High Ontological Security Threat’ (HOST) and ‘Low Ontological Security Threat’ (LOST).

These were divided as follows:

High Ontological Security Threat countries: France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Spain.

Low Ontological Security Threat countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden.

France and Germany were categorised as experiencing as HOST countries based on the high rate of terror attacks in both countries within the 2008-2018 timeframe, combined with high levels of refugee immigration to both in comparison to other EU states. Italy could also be categorised in this regard, but Italy, Hungary, and Spain were chosen primarily because these

states (within the 19 selected) were the worst hit during the financial crisis and subsequent European Sovereign Debt Crisis and subsequent economic recession.

2.4 Selection of variables

The European Values Study variable report (EVS, 2021) thematically categorises the survey variables. There are seven thematic categories in total: (1) Perceptions of Life, (2) Work, (3) Religion, (4) Family and Marriage, (5) Politics and Society, (6) Moral Attitudes, and (7) National Identity.

As stated, political values are the main values of interest in this thesis. This category, in turn, captures values such as political interest; political participation; preference for individual freedom or social equality; self-assessment on a left-right continuum (10-point-scale); and self-responsibility or governmental provision, amongst others. While all of these values are worth studying, this thesis is only concerned with one subtype of Politics and Society values, which is political system values. This places this thesis well in the existing conversation on the relationship between value change and regime type, while also factoring in crises. The four variables which fall into this subcategory are: strong leadership, expert decisions, army should rule the country, and democracy.

These four variables are also appropriate as they were included in all 19 countries in both EVS Wave 4 and EVS Wave 5. Political systems values questions followed the same format; participants were asked the following question (EVS, 2021, 516-521):

I'm going to describe various types of political systems and ask what you think about each as a way of governing this country. For each one, would you say it is a very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad way of governing this country?

This question was asked in relation to each of the four political systems variables: strong leaders, expert decision-making, army rule, and democracy. Participants could answer based on a 9-point scale, but only 5 actually represent value scores

-5 other missing

-4 question not asked

-3 not applicable

- 2 no answer
- 1 don't know
- 1 very good
- 2 fairly good
- 3 fairly bad
- 4 very bad

It is important to note here, however, that *only* positive scores were included. As this thesis is concerned with value change, it is necessary to only include scores which actually reported values—thus, for the purpose of this analysis, values -5 to -1 are excluded. Such scores rarely occurred. Including these values would skew the data by potentially lowering the average scores for each country due to the influence of negative scores which do not actually represent any values.

Based on this, the hypotheses have to be reformulated as it does not make sense to gauge value correspondence with ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ scores in the case of political values (but would make sense for other variables in which a negative score represents disagreement). For the sake of simplicity and accuracy, it is best to reduce the 9-point scale to a 4-point, wherein participants can respond on a scale of 1-4, where a lower score represents stronger agreement and a higher score represents stronger disagreement. From here, we can reapply the logic of the original 3 hypotheses to reflect this change, except that now 2 represents the constant rather than 0. That is, 1-2 can be regarded as ‘high’ or positive scores, while 3-4 can be regarded as low or ‘negative’ scores. For the sake of mathematical accuracy, it is best to opt for the terms ‘high’ and ‘low’ to describe the scores now, rather than ‘positive’ or ‘negative’. Thus, the hypotheses can be reformulated as follows:

H1: Groups which report a high score in Wave 4 on a particular political value variable will report a *higher* score in Wave 5.

H2: Groups which report a low score in Wave 4 on a particular political value variable will report a *lower* score in Wave 5.

H3: HOST countries will experience greater value change than LOST countries on a given political variable between Wave 4 and Wave 5.

2.5 Methodology

As the main aim of this thesis is to empirically analyse the impact of crises on values, statistical methods will be used to measure the difference in scores over the course of the crisis period. Three statistical methods were employed in the research for this thesis, and others were considered:

To begin, correlation and covariance tests were carried out on each variable across the EU states, and the results are listed in **Table III**. Pearsdon correlation tests will tell us how strongly related EVS4 scores and EVS scores are on a particular variable, which will allow us to identify whether there has been significant change over the crisis period. The result can be anywhere between 1 and -1, where 1 reflects a strong positive relationship while a negative number would represent a negative relationship. Covariance tests will tell us how similar the variance is for both eaves; this will reveal whether scores tend to cluster across the EU, or whether there was a higher level of variance either before or after the crisis. Similarly to a Pearson correlation test, a high score here would represent a strong relationship between the variables while a low score would represent a weak relationship. Based on our hypotheses, we expect a high level of covariance here.

Finally, the difference in average score per country for each variable was calculated, which allows us to compare value change across the EU and develop a bivariate regression model. Factor analysis was considered as an additional statistical method to be used for comparison here, but this was ultimately deemed beyond the scope of this thesis.

Finally, to test **H3**, four independent sample t-tests were carried out in which a selection of countries which were categorised as 'High Level' in terms of ontological security threats were tested in comparison with the rest of the region. These countries were France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, and Spain. This tests the relationship between crises (IV) and value change (DV) in cases where a crisis was comparably present in comparison with the other 14 EU states included in the analysis. A null hypothesis that ($p < .05$) was also established so that the statistical significance of the output may be evaluated; if the p value (represented as Sig.) is greater than 0.5, then we must reject **H3** and accept the null hypotheses.

2.6 Limitations

Before proceeding any further, it is worth stating the limitations to this research: most importantly, it cannot be guaranteed that the value change observed before/ after the established crisis period results solely (or even partly) from the crisis itself. One could object that this renders the research pointless, but that is not the case: this thesis makes no causal claims about the impact of crises on values, and does not prove, statistically or otherwise, that the value changes observed can be traced directly to the impact of crises on values. Rather, this paper presents data from two points in time and compares it in the context of a theory (namely, ontological security theory) which could explain why values can be expected grow stronger at a national level after a crisis occurs. It does not prove nor disprove this theory, but provides a theoretical argument in an effort to contextualise what can be quantitatively observed.

Secondly, and almost as importantly, it is worth emphasizing that the scope conditions established for this paper and the use of nationally representative survey data for multiple countries entails observing value change at the national level *only*. As such, this paper cannot and does not make any inferences about value change at the individual level—to do so would commit the ecological fallacy, by applying to the individual level what is only observed at the level of the collective. Furthermore, this paper does not assume that any patterns which can be observed at the national level are maintained at the level of subpopulations or subgroups, due to the risk of the statistical phenomenon known as Simpson's Paradox, wherein patterns or results which are observed at a group level disappear or reverse when the population of the group is broken down into subgroups. In principle, with EVS data, one could carry out the same analysis this paper does while controlling for a number of subgroups, such as regional or socio-economic, by weighting the data accordingly. To do so is beyond the scope of this thesis, but leaves room for further research.

A final caveat worth acknowledging is the potential for cross-border diffusion in the case of value change over time. The potential for cross-border diffusion or 'contagion' to exist as a factor when undertaking cross-national analysis is known as Galton's problem. More precisely, Galton's problem refers to the problem of unknowable possible causation in cross-national analysis, as cross-border diffusion is a lurking variable which is rarely accounted for. It is not always taken seriously given the element of unknowable causality renders Galton's problem almost impossible to control for and resolve (Braun & Gilardi, 2006. Jahn 2006). However, statistical developments which control for autocorrelation (the statistical phenomenon which Galton's problem captures) allow for cross-case diffusion to be better recognised and, as such, controlled for.

2.7 Findings

Results: Correlation and Covariance Testing

Variable	Strong Leader	Experts making decisions	Army Rule	Democracy
Pearson Correlation	.82	.67	.72	.45
Covariance	.19	.15	.16	.01

Table III: Pearson correlation and covariance tests comparing 4 political system variable scores between EVS Wave 4 and EVS Wave 5 scores for EU states.

Results: Independent Sample T-Tests

Independent sample t-tests on 4 political system values, where HOST and LOST states are compared based on their reported value change between EVS Wave 4 and EVS Wave 5

Independent Samples Test: Strong Leadership										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
DV_strng_ldr	Equal variances assumed	2.388	0.141	-0.197	17	0.846	-0.02671	0.13586	-0.31335	0.25992
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.286	16.535	0.779	-0.02671	0.09345	-0.22431	0.17088

Independent Samples Test: Democracy										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
DV_demo	Equal variances assumed	0.553	0.467	-2.614	17	0.018	-0.19486	0.07454	-0.35212	-0.03760
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.962	9.173	0.016	-0.19486	0.06578	-0.34325	-0.04647

Independent Samples Test: Army Rule										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
DV_armrul	Equal variances assumed	1.346	0.262	-0.437	17	0.667	-0.06257	0.14310	-0.36448	0.23934
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.545	11.653	0.596	-0.06257	0.11479	-0.31350	0.18835

Independent Samples Test: Expert Decision-making										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
DV_exdec	Equal variances assumed	0.299	0.592	1.101	17	0.286	0.17143	0.15571	-0.15709	0.49995
	Equal variances not assumed			1.083	6.883	0.315	0.17143	0.15833	-0.20426	0.54711

Results: Mean difference by country.

Value change comparison between Wave 4 and Wave 5 on the four political value variables on a country level.

country	5ps: strong leader (Q43A)	4ps: strong leader (Q43A)	difference
at	3.28	2.88	0.4
bg	1.75	2.24	-0.49
cz	2.73	2.4	0.33
de	3	3.03	-0.03
dk	3.28	3.28	0
ee	2.71	2.7	0.01
es	2.78	2.59	0.19
fi	2.62	2.93	-0.31
fr	2.94	2.99	-0.05
hr	2.69	2.56	0.13
hu	2.98	2.85	0.13
it	2.81	2.63	0.18
lt	2.16	1.74	0.42

nl	2.62	2.6	0.02
pl	3.01	2.63	0.38
ro	1.68	1.65	0.03
se	3.28	2.71	0.57
si	2.85	2.86	-0.01
sk	2.64	2.57	0.07

Table IV: Change in value scores between EVS wave 4 and EVS wave 5 (W5-W4) on the variable 'strong leadership'

country	5ps: experts making decisions (Q43B)	4ps: experts making decisions (Q43B)	difference
at	2.15	2.04	0.11
bg	1.5	1.67	-0.17
cz	1.95	1.71	0.24
de	2.43	1.92	0.51
dk	2.8	2.82	-0.02
ee	1.56	1.99	-0.43
es	1.89	1.89	0
fi	1.96	2.13	-0.17
fr	2.32	2.44	-0.12
hr	1.62	1.64	-0.02
hu	1.79	1.76	0.03
it	2.44	1.91	0.53
lt	2.14	1.54	0.6
nl	2.25	2.29	-0.04
pl	1.83	1.94	-0.11
ro	1.62	1.65	-0.03
se	2.8	2.18	0.62
si	1.73	1.78	-0.05
sk	1.62	1.89	-0.27

Table V: Change in value scores between EVS wave 4 and EVS wave 5 (W5-W4) on the variable 'experts making decisions'.

Country	5ps: the army ruling (Q43C)	4ps: the army ruling (Q43C)	difference
At	3.56	3.36	0.2

Bg	2.67	2.99	-0.32
Cz	3.37	3.04	0.33
De	3.68	3.66	0.02
Dk	3.73	3.86	-0.13
Ee	3.16	3.43	-0.27
Es	3.26	3.24	0.02
Fi	3.22	3.35	-0.13
Fr	3.29	3.66	-0.37
Hr	2.95	2.95	0
Hu	3.33	3.5	-0.17
It	3.31	3.25	0.08
Lt	3.04	2.64	0.4
Nl	3.4	3.58	-0.18
Pl	2.83	3.28	-0.45
Ro	2.42	2.39	0.03
Se	3.55	3.02	0.53
Si	3.53	3.5	0.03
Sk	2.87	3.21	-0.34

Table VI: Change in value scores between EVS wave 4 and EVS wave 5 (W5-W4) on the variable 'army rule'

country	5ps: democratic (Q43D)	4ps: democratic (Q43D)	difference
at	1.3	1.34	-0.04
bg	1.25	1.36	-0.11
cz	1.41	1.47	-0.06
de	1.19	1.44	-0.25
dk	1.22	1.11	0.11
ee	1.29	1.62	-0.33
es	1.33	1.48	-0.15
fi	1.42	1.35	0.07
fr	1.4	1.54	-0.14
hr	1.43	1.58	-0.15
hu	1.35	1.78	-0.43
it	1.22	1.46	-0.24
lt	1.43	1.28	0.15
nl	1.3	1.61	-0.31
pl	1.43	1.49	-0.06
ro	1.41	1.46	-0.05
se	1.15	1.03	0.12
si	1.55	1.65	-0.1

sk	1.58	1.48	0.1
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Table VII: Change in value scores between EVS wave 4 and EVS wave 5 (W5-W4) on the variable 'democracy'

CHAPTER III: DISCUSSION

3.1 Discussion of results

The Pearson correlation tests find strong correlations between the score results for EVS 4 and EVS 5 on the variables which capture expert decision-making and army rule as values. In comparison, the relationship between the Wave 4 and Wave 5 scores is stronger in terms of strong leaders as a value, while the relationship between Wave 4 and Wave 5 scores on democracy is weakest, but still significantly positive. These scores on their own do not reveal a huge amount of information, given that the value scores are lumped together for countries. However, by looking at the change in scores by country in **Tables IV-VI** we can see how those correlations can be broken down.

The covariance test reveals how cohesive or incohesive these scores were across the EU—and in every case these were quite low, with democracy having the lowest level of variance (therefore highest level of cohesion) with a score of .01 on that value, while strong army leader has the highest level of variance (1.9), indicating a slightly higher level of disparity in terms of that value across the EU. Scores for expert decision-making and army rule fell in between the other two in terms of variance.

To test **hypotheses 1 and 2**, we must analyse the correlation score in the context of the observed value change by country. For example, for the strong leader score, we can observe a correlation of .82 across the waves. We can also see in **Table IV** that in Wave 4, that all but 2 states reported a ‘high’ score for strong leadership, reflecting a negative opinion of political leaders who prioritize their appearance as a strong leader over good governance. However, in Wave 5, there is little change, some slightly positive increases, and many slightly negative. Based on this, the analysis of this variable rejects both the established **hypotheses 1 and 2**, as we witness very little shift in terms of value scores. Across the other three variables, we can witness very similar results. However, given the shortness of the scale, the small shifts which we can observe should not be dismissed entirely. Nonetheless, it cannot be said that this analysis was sufficient to prove with **hypothesis 1 or 2**.

The third part of the empirical analysis involves t-tests, which should reveal if there are significant changes in the average scores for EU states in Wave 4 and Wave 5; if so, we can analyse this further to see if these changes are positive or negative. In this part we are comparing two groups: HOST countries with LOST country scores. The dependant variable here is the change in values between the two waves, while the independent variable is crisis itself (HOST=1; LOST=0). As stated in **hypothesis 3**, we expect the null hypothesis ($p < .05$), which predicts no significant change, will be rejected and some significant changes will be observed which can be investigated further. However, as the four t-test results reveal, the p-value for all four variables exceeded .05, therefore we must reject **H3** and accept the null hypothesis. While this disproves the hypothesis, that does not mean the question of varying value change across the EU should not be studied further and compared, it simply means that the conditions established here did not reveal any insights about this comparison. As stated previously, factor analysis is a statistical method which would be worth using in future research to analyse how values change at the latent level, which cannot be observed here.

3.2 Implications

While the analysis carried out here did not prove the hypotheses initially laid out, and reveals no new surprises about value change over time—this research is still valuable in terms of its conceptualization, given that the questions being asked, the answers being proposed, and the analyses being attempted, have not been done before in this context. As such, while the empirical analysis which this research entail did not change our understanding of how values change, it has through its rejection of the hypotheses revealed that values change very little during crises, and this in itself is a topic worth exploring and analysing further.

Furthermore, the finding that values barely change at all during crises (within these scope conditions, at least) has interesting implications of its own for the study of value change. In the context of the theoretical framework employed in this thesis, this could be used as a ‘softer’ argument which aligns with ontological security theory, as this finding points to the idea that values *stabilize* during crises—they just don’t seem to become much stronger or weaker. It stands to reason that this stability, was identified as a possible outcome earlier in this thesis, could reflect an effort to preserve continuity and ontological security in the face of crises.

3.3 Further research

While this conceptualization of this thesis prompts further questions about how individuals' values respond to crisis, this is not the subject of this thesis. Here, national populations are the unit of analysis, which can be studied through longitudinal survey data. Given that the survey used, the European Values Study, does not consist of panel data, it is not possible to look at individual value change, but this is an area of research worthy of study in the future, should data become available to do so. Further analysis on other EVS variables, too, may provide interesting results.

Going forward, it will be most valuable to revisit this research in retrospect, when more survey is available—in particular after the Covid-19 crisis is further in the past, and its economic, social, and psychological effects can be better understood. The pandemic is an almost quintessential example of how crises can threaten ontological security, given that the reasoning behind lockdown measures were not only based on existential or physical threats, but also the continuity of society. For individuals, too, the continuity of everyday life was threatened in a profound and novel way. As stated in the introduction, periods of great distress instigate profound change, and the COVID-19 crisis has, since late 2019, prevailed as one of the most distressing issues of the current era. The social changes which this crisis has induced are apparent; however, while the material impact of COVID-19 is a ubiquitous subject, the political impact remains unsure. While there is research emerging on this, there is limited data available for meaningful analysis, especially at the societal level. As such, this is the area in which further research on this topic would be most fruitful.

CONCLUSION

This point of this thesis has been to identify a particular phenomenon, if it exists: the impact of crises on values. While this thesis does not make any causal claims regarding the impact of crises on values, it points to a number of observable shifts in Europeans' values, and positions these shifts in the context of the theory of ontological security. The empirical analysis laid out in this paper has revealed that we cannot observe dramatic value change during crises; and as such, the hypotheses set out in this paper have not been supported. Regardless, this research points us in a direction, which is that values remain stable during crisis.

On the other hand, this thesis has offered another contribution: a clear conceptualization of crises as a distinct cognitive category, which should be viewed as different from attitudes or beliefs when analysed in political science. The purpose was to provide this conceptualization in order to better analyse value change during crises, but this conceptualization has wider applicability and wider relevance for the study of value change in political science.

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