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**Generalized trust and military attitudes in Russia:  
The role of national and global human identification**

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## **Abstract**

Generalized trust is an optimistic view of human nature that influences people's attitudes and behaviour. Most studies focus on the positive effects of generalized trust. However, there is evidence suggesting that generalized trust may be associated with both positive and negative outcomes. In the present study, we focus on the ambivalent associations of generalized trust with the Russians' attitudes towards the Russian invasion in Ukraine. We used cross-sectional design in three online samples of Russian residents (N=799, 745, and 742) collected in March, May and July 2022. The participants were anonymous volunteers who completed measures of generalized trust, national identity, global human identity and military attitudes. The study has shown that generalized trust was a positive predictor of both national identity and global human identity. National identity, however, predicted positive attitudes towards the invasion and the use of nuclear weapons, whereas global human identity was a negative predictor of those outcomes. Mediation analysis revealed that the indirect effects of generalized trust mediated by the two types of identification had an inverse direction. We interpret the results with reference to the differences in the content of national identity and global human identity.

Keywords: military attitudes, social identity, generalized trust, global human identity, national identity

## **Introduction**

Generalized trust is a belief that most people can be trusted (Uslaner, 2017). This belief is typically measured with items such as “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?” (ESS Round 10, 2020) or “Most people are trustworthy” (Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994). The foundations of generalized trust in the world outlook include basic assumptions concerning the kindness, honesty, and justice of others. Thus, generalized trust reflects an optimistic view of human nature.

Studies conducted in various countries suggest that generalized trust makes a positive contribution to countries’ economy and politics. In particular, trust is a positive predictor of electoral participation (Hooghe & Marien, 2013; Williams, 2020) and protest activity (Benson & Rochon, 2004; Hooghe & Marien, 2013; Quaranta, 2013; Williams, 2020). Higher levels of trust are found in countries with higher levels of economic development (Bjørnskov, 2017) and lower levels of corruption (You, 2017).

However, some researchers suggest that trust towards others may also have its dark sides (Gargiulo & Ertug, 2006). For instance, some evidence indicates that although generalized trust tends to encourage protest behavior in democratic countries, it also tends to suppress it in authoritarian states, facilitating the conservation of authoritarian regimes (Roßteutscher, 2010). In the present study, we aim to examine the “light” and “dark” sides of generalized trust in the way it can shape the attitudes towards armed conflict.

One would expect that the more a person tends to believe in the kindness, honesty, and justice of people in general, the more he or she should disapprove of military action, leaning towards peaceful means of conflict resolution. However, this assumption does not take into account that the association of generalized trust with pro-war attitudes may have diverging effects in terms of one’s group identity. We aimed to investigate the way generalized trust predicts the attitudes of Russian citizens towards the military action against Ukraine, as well as the role of Russian and global human identification in explaining these associations.

### **Generalized trust and human identification**

Social identity is a part of the self-concept derived from group memberships with the value attached to those memberships. The social identity approach implies that a person can define themselves at various levels of social inclusiveness: as a unique person (personal identity), a member of a specific group (ingroup identity), or as a member of a more general group that unites member of various communities (common group identity) (Turner, Reynolds, 2012). Researchers within the social identity approach focus on the latter two levels.

In particular, within the studies of international relationships a distinction between national and global human identity is typically drawn. National identification (NI) refers to a view of oneself as a citizen of a specific country, whereas global human identification (GHI) to a view of oneself as representing the humanity as a whole (McFarland et al., 2019). In this context, NI is the second level of self-definition, where citizens of one's country and those of other countries are opposed, and GHI is the third level.

Numerous studies have shown that the extent of in-group identification may depend on the characteristics of a situation (e.g. Hogg, 2012) and on those of the group (e.g., Brewer, 2012; Castano et al., 2003). In particular, people are more likely to identify with those groups whose members they expect to treat them well. For instance, employees who believe that they are treated fairly by their colleagues and superiors are more likely to identify with their organization (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2021).

Identification with large groups including millions of people is associated with positive views of people in general or human nature. On the one hand, European and American studies have shown that individuals who expect others to treat them well are more likely to identify with the global humanity. A correlational study has shown that the tendency to believe in the fairness of others is positively related to GHI (Renger, Reese, 2017). In experimental studies, priming the benevolence of people in general increases GHI, whereas priming the malevolence decreases it (McFarland et al., 2019; Putra et al., 2020).

On the other hand, several Russian studies have shown that individuals holding positive beliefs about others are more likely to identify with their own country. In particular, the beliefs in just world (Gulevich & Sarieva, 2015; Nevryuev et al., 2018) and benevolent world (Gulevich et al., 2014) were positively associated with Russian NI. It is important to note that, despite this correlation, these variables refer to two different levels of group identification (people in general and national group). We will discuss the reasons for this association below.

Recent studies are based on the premise that generalized trust is a positive belief about other people in general. The more likely we are to see others as kind, honest, or fair and the more we expect them to help and to support us, the more likely we are to trust them. Researchers using international large-scale survey data (Daskalopoulou, 2019; Hooghe & Oser, 2017; Hooghe et al., 2009) or their own scales (Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994) tend to use indices of generalized trust with items tapping into various elements of positive beliefs about others. This is why we expect generalized trust to be positively associated with both NI and GHI.

### **National vs. global human identity and military attitudes**

Social identity influences people's attitudes and behavior. The more people identify with a social group, the more positively they evaluate their fellow group members, the more interest they take in the group's problems, the more likely they are to follow its norms, take action that benefit the group or protect its interests (Akfirat et al., 2022; Schulte et al., 2020; van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). However, because the norms and the perceived interests of different social groups tend to differ, group identification may have diverse, sometimes contradictory, effects. This is particularly evident in the case of NI and GHI.

Numerous studies have shown NI to be positively associated with support of one's country's actions, justification of its political and economic systems (Luca et al., 2021; Vargas-Salfate et al., 2018), and acceptance of official narratives concerning political events (Bilali, 2014). At the same time, GHI was positively associated with concern for global problems and readiness to take action to resolve them (Katzarska-Miller et al., 2012; McFarland, 2017; McFarland et al., 2012; McFarland & Hornsby, 2015; Renger, Reese, 2017; Reysen et al., 2013).

Moreover, NI was associated with negative attitudes toward foreign immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers in France (Adam-Troian et al., 2019), Australia (Anderson, Ferguson, 2018), Malta (Bianco et al., 2022), Switzerland (Dierckx et al., 2022), and Turkey (Yitmen, Verkuyten, 2018). At the same time, GHI was associated with support for human rights (McFarland, 2010, 2015, 2017; McFarland & Hornsby, 2015; Reysen et al., 2013) and positive attitudes toward ethnic and religious outgroup members (McFarland et al., 2019).

Finally, NI was associated with approval of military action against other countries that are perceived as threats in the US (Barnes et al., 2014) and in Russia (Gulevich et al., 2014). GHI was positively associated with approval of actions aiming to maintain the peace (for instance, using diplomatic means to tackle terrorism), a tendency to forgive other countries that used to be adversaries of one's own country in the past (McFarland et al., 2019), and negatively associated with support for the war on terror (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2017).

These opposite effects of NI and GHI are made particularly evident by a small number of studies where both constructs were measured simultaneously. For instance, a Polish study found that NI had a negative association with intergroup forgiveness, whereas GHI had a positive one (Hamer et al., 2017). In a similar vein, a study in 11 European countries found that NI was positively associated with autochthony, and therefore, with the intention to protest against refugees. In contrast, GHI was related to lower protest intentions via lower autochthony (Hasbún López et al., 2019).

### **Current study**

Previous studies have found that positive beliefs about people in general facilitate the identification with countries and with humanity as a whole with different effects on the attitudes toward outgroups. These studies, however, are mainly limited to US and Western European political contexts and rarely explore the associations of generalized trust with different levels of group identification, as well as their effects on military attitudes. In the present study, we aimed to contribute to this body of evidence by exploring the effects of generalized trust and the two forms of group identification on the attitudes of Russian population towards the military action in Ukraine.

The invasion of Russian forces into Ukrainian territory on February 24, 2022 has marked a new phase in the military conflict that began in 2014. Within Russia, it was accompanied by a new crackdown on the freedom of speech. On March 4, new laws introduced fines or jail sentences of up to 5 years for “discreditation of Russian armed forces” (i.e., public expression of disapproval for the military action) and up to 15 years for “public dissemination of false information about the use of Russian forces” (i.e., spreading news different from those originating from Russian state agencies) (Wikipedia, n/d). These laws were actively enforced, with over 2,000 individuals fined or jailed over the first three months (Obshaya Gazeta, 2022).

Public opinion polls where individuals were asked whether they approve or disapprove of the Russian government’s decision to carry out a “special military operation in Ukraine” (an official term which can be used to denote the Russian forces’ actions) have provided rather mixed findings. In a telephone survey conducted by the state-owned WCIOM agency, the number of those who tended to approve of the military action during its early phase was 68% and of those who tended to disapprove was 22% (WCIOM, 2022a). Polls conducted by independent agencies during the same period and using similar methodology have reported somewhat lower approval ratings, at 59-63% (Republic, 2022).

In the present study, we aimed to analyze the factors contributing to shaping these attitudes towards Russian military action in Ukraine. Our main premise was that people are more likely to identify with the groups that they believe share positive communal characteristics. Given that generalized trust is a positive view of people in general, which can represent “humanity” as a whole, we expected that it should be a positive predictor of GHI (Hypothesis 1a).

However, we also expected generalized trust to be a positive predictor of NI (Hypothesis 2b), as we expected that, for many Russians, the notion of people in general could imply other *Russian* people. Firstly, this could happen due to dehumanization of ethnic and national outgroups (Haslam & Loughnan, 2014). In Russia, this effect could be amplified by the official discourse presenting Russia as a last bulwark of “traditional” (i.e., true) “spiritual” values

threatened by the onslaught of globalization with its emphasis on consumerism and creature comforts (Schennikova, 2017). The second reason could be limited outgroup contact: according to WCIOM (2022c), only 29% of Russians have valid travel passports, and 77% have not travelled abroad in the last five years. According to an earlier poll, over two-thirds of Russians have never been abroad (Levada-Centre, 2018). In this situation, people of one's own country could become the basis for one's notions about people as a whole, due to an availability heuristic.

Our second main premise was that the more people identify with a group, the more they are likely to adhere to group norms and to approve actions that could, in their view, protect the group interests. Based on this premise, we expected that GHI would be negatively associated with support for military action against Ukraine among Russians (Hypothesis 2a), whereas NI would be positively associated with support for it (Hypothesis 2b). We also expected the indirect effects of generalized trust on support for military action to go in the opposite directions: generalized trust should be a negative predictor of support for military action in those who identify with the global humanity (Hypothesis 3a), but a positive predictor in those who identify with their own country (Hypothesis 3b).

The hypothesis concerning GHI was based on the previous studies showing that GHI is associated with positive attitudes toward outgroups, concern for world problems, approval of peaceful means of conflict resolution, and disapproval of military action. The hypothesis concerning NI is based on existing data showing NI is associated with political system justification, approval of the official discourse, and approval of military action against countries that could threaten one's own country.

The decision to invade Ukraine was made by Russian authorities, approved by the official discourse promoted via politicians' public speeches and state-controlled TV, and accompanied by laws limiting the freedom of speech for the critics of the military operation whose ideas could threaten the credibility of the official discourse presenting Ukraine as a source of threat. The military invasion was claimed to be a means to "liberate" the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine and to protect Russia from a possible NATO attack. According to a poll conducted by the state-owned WCIOM agency in spring (WCIOM, 2022a), an overwhelming majority of Russians believed in these ideas.

In order to test these hypotheses, we also measured the attitudes to the "special military operation" (a term adopted by the official discourse), the readiness to take part in the military action (for men) or to support their male relatives in this decision (for women), as well as attitudes toward the potential use of nuclear weapons. These themes were chosen as they were



actively discussed by the media and in social networks. To ensure the stability of the findings, we carried out three measurement waves at different time periods.

## Methods

### Participants and Procedure

The data were collected in three waves, during late March (Sample 1), late May (Sample 2), and late July 2022 (Sample 3). Participants were anonymous volunteers recruited using Toloka, a Russian crowdsourcing platform analogous to Amazon MTurk. Inclusion criteria were Russian citizenship, residency, and current location in Russia based on registered phone number. The sample was stratified to include an equal number of male and female participants from three age groups (18-29, 30-44, and 45-60 years old). A small fee (30 cents) was provided for study participation.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Those who enrolled in the study received an online link to the questionnaires hosted on an external service 1ka.si to ensure full anonymity. No personally identifying information was collected. Three to four attention check items with predefined answers (e.g., “How many answer options does this question have?” or “For this question, please select the ‘mostly agree’ answer”) were used to screen out random responders.

We had aimed for a sample size large enough to detect small effects ( $r = .10$ ) with 80% power ( $N = 782$ ). We excluded those participants who failed to respond correctly to more than one attention check item and those who responded implausibly fast (1 second or less per question), as well as incomplete responses. The resulting Sample 1 (March) included 799 participants (52.8% female and 47.2% male) aged 18 to 59 ( $M = 38.0$ ,  $SD = 11.1$ ), Sample 2 (May) included 745 participants (50.2% female and 49.8% male) aged 18 to 60 ( $M = 37.7$ ,  $SD = 11.0$ ), and Sample 3 (July) included 742 participants (49.3% female and 50.7% male) aged 18 to 60 ( $M = 37.8$ ,  $SD = 9.6$ ).

### Measures

*Generalized trust.* We used three items from a Russian version of the Generalized Trust Scale (GTS) (Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994; Lin et al., 2021): “Most people are basically good and kind”, “Most people are basically honest”, “Most people are trustworthy”. The respondents used a 5-point scale from 1 “absolutely disagree” to 5 “absolutely agree”. The total score was reliable ( $\alpha$  in the .90-.91 range across the three samples).

*National and Global Human Identification.* We used a Russian version of the 9-item Identification with All Humanity Scale (McFarland & Hornsby, 2015; Russian validation by

Nestik, 2017), sample items: “How close to yourself do you consider the people from this group?”, “How much do you identify with these people?”. The measure uses a 5-point response scale with higher score reflecting stronger identification. The participants completed each item twice, first for national identification (“Russians”) and then for global identification (“People living on our planet” in Sample 1 and “All the people (all humanity)” in Samples 2 and 3). The Cronbach’s alpha values ranged from .94 to .95 for the national identity and from .92 to .94 for the global identity scale.

More recent analyses (Reese et al., 2015; Reysen & Hackett, 2016) have revealed two subdimensions within the structure of this scale that the authors interpreted based in terms of the in-group identification model (Leach et al., 2008) as self-definition (self-categorization as a member of the group) and self-investment (emotional involvement and willingness to contribute to the well-being of group members). We also explored the differential effects related to these subdimensions.

*Military attitudes.* To evaluate the support for Russian military action in Ukraine, we used two questions: “To what extent do you support or do you not support the decision of the Russian leadership to carry out the military operation in Ukraine?” with a 5-point Likert response scale from 1 “do not support at all” to 5 “support completely”.

The second question went: “If mobilization is declared, are you ready or not ready to personally take part in the military operation in Ukraine?” (for male participants) or “If mobilization is declared, are you ready or not ready to support the decision of your male relatives or friends to personally take part in the military operation in Ukraine?” (for female participants) with a response scale from 1 “not ready at all” to 5 “completely ready”.

To evaluate the attitudes towards using nuclear weapons, we used two items (Samples 2 and 3 only): “To what extent do you support or do you not support the use of nuclear weapons by Russia in the territory of Ukraine during the military operation?” and “To what extent do you support or do you not support the use of nuclear weapons by Russia in the territory of NATO countries during the military operation?” with a 5-point response scale from 1 “do not support at all” to 5 “support completely”.

## Results

### Descriptive statistics and correlations

Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. The results have shown that there were weak differences in social trust across the samples ( $F(2,2283) = 7.96, \eta^2 = .007, p < .007$ ), with Tukey post-hoc test indicating a significant difference between March and July ( $p < .001, d = .20$ ). Moreover, for the NI, the differences across the three occasions were significant ( $F(2,2283)$

= 59.24,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .049$ ), indicating higher scores in May and in July, compared to March ( $d = .54$  and  $.38$ , respectively,  $p < .001$ ). Exactly the same pattern emerged for the GHI, however ( $F(2,2283) = 40.08$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .034$ ) with higher scores in May and July ( $d = .46$  and  $.19$ , respectively,  $p < .001$ ), compared to March. The paired-samples Student  $t$  test revealed that the tendency to identify with Russia was stronger than the tendency to identify with the global humanity in all three samples ( $d = .73$  in the March and May samples, and  $.77$  in the July sample,  $p < .001$  in all cases).

Finally, there were very small differences in military attitudes across the samples. Half of the participants supported (30.2% / 29.5% / 27.5% in Samples 1-3, respectively) or mostly supported (19.9% / 19.5% / 21.5%) the military operation. Roughly a quarter did not support it at all (17.3% / 22.0% / 19.3%) or mostly did not support it (8.0% / 6.7% / 8.6%). Another quarter (24.7% / 22.3% / 23.1%) supported the decision to carry out the military operation in some respects, but not in others. The difference in the distribution of answers across the samples was not significant.

With respect to mobilization, roughly half of the participants were definitely not ready (38.7% / 43.5% / 35.3%) or probably not ready (13.5% / 11.8% / 13.1%) to take part in the military operation. Between a quarter and a third were definitely ready (10.9% / 9.5% / 11.3%) or probably ready (18.5% / 16.8% / 19.1%). About a fifth (18.4% / 18.4% / 21.2%) were not sure. There was only a weak difference in support for mobilization ( $F(2,2283) = 4.11$ ,  $p = .017$ ,  $\eta^2 = .004$ ), indicating marginally higher scores in July, compared to May ( $d = .15$ , Tukey's post-hoc test:  $p = .012$ ).

With respect to nuclear weapons, a majority of the participants (90.2% in May and 84.0% in July) were completely or strongly against the use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine, as well as against the use of nuclear weapons in the NATO countries (77.2% and 73.0 %, respectively). However, the July sample participants, compared to May, reported more support for the use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine ( $t(1485) = 5.17$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = .27$ ) and against the NATO countries ( $t(1485) = 2.53$ ,  $p = .011$ ,  $d = .13$ ).

The correlations between the variables are given in Tables 2 and 3. Generalized trust was associated with NI and GHI, as well as with support for the military operation and mobilization in all samples. However, the associations of trust with the support for the use of nuclear weapons were weak to non-existent. NI was positively correlated with military attitudes, whereas GHI showed an inverse pattern.

### **Mediation models**

To test the hypotheses, we tested a series of mediation models in Mplus 8.8 with NI and GHI as parallel mediators of the effects of generalized trust on support for the military operation, mobilization, and the use of nuclear weapons. In line with Muthén et al. (2016), we included a direct effect of generalized trust in order to obtain unbiased estimates of indirect effects. To derive the confidence intervals for the indirect effects, we used a bootstrap procedure with 1,000 draws (below we present standardized estimates with 95% CI). Each single-item DV was modelled as an ordered categorical variable using weighted least square estimation with mean- and variance-adjusted chi-square (WLSMV) estimator.

First, we tested the partial mediation model in each sample separately (for brevity, we opted not to present these models). Next, we tested a multigroup model with all regression coefficients constrained across the samples. The constrained model with the support for the military operation and support for the mobilization as DVs fit the data quite well ( $\chi^2(16) = 15.02$ ,  $p = .52$ ; CFI > .999, RMSEA < .001, 90% CI [.000, .032], SRMR = .031), indicating that all the regression paths were comparable across the samples. The parameters of this model are given in Figure 2.

In line with Hypotheses 1a and 1b, generalized trust was a positive predictor of both NI and GHI. In line with Hypotheses 2a and 2b, NI was a stronger positive predictor of support for both military operation and mobilization, whereas GHI was a negative, although weaker predictor. The direct effects of generalized trust on support for the military operation and mobilization were weak, although significant in all samples.

In line with Hypothesis 3a, the specific indirect effects of generalized trust mediated by NI were positive and significant for both support for military operation ( $a_1b_1 = .30$  [.27, .33], .25 [.22, .28], and .28 [.25, .31] in Samples 1-3) and mobilization ( $a_1b_1 = .25$  [.22, .28], .23 [.21, .26], and .23 [.20, .26]). In line with Hypothesis 3b, the specific indirect effects of generalized trust mediated by GHI were negative for both support for military operation ( $a_2b_2 = -.10$  [-.12, -.08], -.09 [-.11, -.08], and -.09 [-.12, -.08]) and mobilization ( $a_2b_2 = -.08$  [-.11, -.07], -.08 [-.10, -.06], -.08 [-.10, -.06]).

Similarly, the effects for the two variables referring to the use of nuclear weapons were generally consistent with each other, and the model coefficients constrained across Samples 2 and 3 did not differ significantly ( $\chi^2(8) = 12.83$ ,  $p = .12$ ; CFI = .999, RMSEA = .029, 90% CI [.000, .056], SRMR = .040). The parameters of this model are given in Figure 3.

In line with Hypothesis 2a, NI positively predicted the support for the use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine and in the NATO territory (with a somewhat stronger effect in the latter case). In line with Hypothesis 2b, GHI negatively predicted support for the use of nuclear

weapons in Ukraine and in the NATO territory (again, with a somewhat stronger effect in the latter case). The direct effects of trust were not significant in all cases.

In line with Hypothesis 3a, the specific indirect effects of trust mediated by NI were positive for both support for using nuclear weapons in Ukraine ( $a_1b_1 = .09$  [.06, .12] and .09 [.05, .12] in Samples 2 and 3, respectively) and against the NATO ( $a_1b_1 = .16$  [.13, .20] in both cases). In line with Hypothesis 3b, the specific indirect effects of trust mediated by GHI were negative for both using nuclear weapons in Ukraine ( $a_2b_2 = -.06$  [-.08, -.04] in both cases) and against the NATO ( $a_2b_2 = -.08$  [-.11, -.06] in both cases).

Following Reviewer's suggestion, we used the Wald test to compare the magnitude of the indirect effects of trust mediated by Russian NI and by GHI based on the two multigroup models. The indirect effects of Russian NI were stronger on the support of the military operation ( $\chi^2(1) = 453.20$ ,  $p < .001$ ), mobilization ( $\chi^2(1) = 351.84$ ,  $p < .001$ ), as well as on the use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine ( $\chi^2(1) = 52.81$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and against the NATO countries ( $\chi^2(1) = 144.99$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Additionally, we explored the potential differences in the effects of self-definition and self-investment subdimensions of NI and GHI. First, we explored the factor structure of the IWAH scale using EFA with Geomin rotation in Mplus. The structure was quite similar to that obtained by Reese and colleagues (2015) for both identification with global humanity and with Russia. Tucker's phi congruence coefficients ranged from .98 to .99 indicating that both factor structures in the Russian sample can be considered identical to the one obtained in the original study (Lorenzo-Seva & Ten Berge, 2006). However, the correlations between the self-definition and self-investment latent factors ( $r = .75$  for GHI and  $r = .81$  for NI) were much stronger than that reported in the study by Reese and colleagues (2015, Table 1:  $r = .47$ ). The alpha reliability coefficients ranged from .84 to .91 for self-definition and from .88 to .93 for self-investment.

When the components were entered as parallel mediators into the mediation models (presented in Supporting Information), the results consistently showed a similar pattern for self-definition and self-investment. When the regression paths linking the social identification variables to trust and military attitudes were constrained to equality, Wald test failed to reach significance ( $p > .05$ ) in any of the three samples, failing to support the hypothesis about the differential effects of self-definition and self-investment.

## Discussion

In the present study, we explored the associations of generalized trust with two levels of ingroup identification and the attitudes toward the military invasion in Ukraine and the use of nuclear weapons. We used three samples of anonymous Russian volunteers who provided their

responses at three different periods of the military operation. Somewhat surprisingly, despite important changes in the progress of the special military operation over the 4 months, the results were completely consistent across the three measurement waves with only minor differences in mean scores.

The general distribution of the answers to the items reflecting the attitudes to the special military operation and mobilization was generally in line with that observed in representative Russian samples: roughly a half of participants supported the action, only slightly below the support rate seen in published polls. Most existing published polls referred to in the introduction relied on phone surveys or face-to-face household surveys where perceived anonymity is lower, compared to online samples, resulting in stronger pressure against expressing unpopular opinions. In addition, we excluded the group of older adults (60+) who tend to support the current military action most strongly, as they are not represented well in online samples. Altogether, the pattern of attitudes toward the military action observed in our online samples appears to be consistent with the available public opinion poll results.

We found that generalized trust was positively associated with both levels of ingroup identification, NI and GHI. The association of GHI with positive attitudes towards others had been discovered earlier in other countries (McFarland et al., 2019) and appears to be a more universal phenomenon. In turn, a similar association with NI had only been discovered in Russian samples and might be more peculiar to the Russian social context. We see the possible explanations of this phenomenon in the contents of the official discourse presenting Russia as the last bastion of civilization, as well as limited experience of contact with people from other countries, which is why Russians might be more likely to project the image of their compatriots on people in general than are citizens of other countries.

Ingroup identification revealed predictable associations with military attitudes. The more Russians identify with the global humanity, the more negatively they perceive the “special military operation”, the less likely they are to take part or to support others in taking part in this conflict, and the less likely they are to support the use of nuclear weapons. This is to be expected, given that GHI is associated with stronger concern for global threats, such as the economic, nuclear, and food security threats created by the present conflict. In addition, GHI was found to be associated with support for peaceful means of conflict resolution in many countries. (Katzarska-Miller et al., 2012; McFarland, 2017; McFarland et al., 2012; McFarland & Hornsby, 2015; Renger, Reese, 2017; Reysen et al., 2013; Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2017).

On the other hand, Russian NI was positively associated with military attitudes. This is also predictable, given that NI is associated with support for the actions of the government and

system justification (Bilali, 2014; Luca et al., 2021; Vargas-Salfate et al., 2018). The decision to invade Ukraine was made by Russian leadership and actively promoted in the official discourse. In addition, stronger NI is associated with more negative attitudes to outgroup members perceived as source of threat necessitating protective military action (Barnes et al., 2014; Gulevich et al., 2014). The Russian official discourse presents Ukraine as a threat for Russia and frames the ongoing military intervention as a peacekeeping operation aimed to prevent a war from happening and to ensure the security of Russia.

Finally, the reasons why Russian NI is strongly associated with support of the military invasion might be related to the content of Russian national identity which has been shaped by the social discourse promoting the ideas of national grandeur and resentment. According to these views, Russia as an empire is supposed to follow its own developmental pathway and to use its army in order to assert its dominance over the territories that became independent, in particular, those populated with Russian speakers.

Public opinion polls conducted even before the invasion showed that these ideas had popular support. A majority of Russians (Levada-Centre, 2020) agreed with the idea that Russia should follow its own way and reported a higher level of trust in the army, the president, and the security services compared to other social institutions (Levada-Centre, 2021). Polls conducted after February 24 showed that most Russians believe that the goals of the “special military operation” consist in protecting the country’s security and assisting the Russian-speaking population of Eastern Ukraine (WCIOM, 2022b).

Interestingly, the self-definition and self-investment components of GHI and NI did not reveal any significant differences in their effects on military attitudes and emerged as parallel mediators with comparable effect sizes. This is somewhat in contrast to previous findings showing self-investment to be a stronger predictor of the readiness to take part in action in the interest of all humanity (McFarland & Hornsby, 2015, Study 2; Reese et al., 2015). According to Reese and colleagues (2015), self-definition is one’s perceived similarity with fellow ingroup members, whereas self-investment reflects a psychological connection with the ingroup and readiness to invest in it. However, the strong correlation between these two facets of social identification suggests that Russian participants might perceive the self-definition items (formulated in terms of “we”, “close”, “family”) as reflecting not only a self-categorization, but also an emotional experience of belonging and proximity to ingroup members.

A statistical comparison of the indirect effects indicates that the effects of trust mediated by NI are significantly stronger than those mediated by GHI. Firstly, the positive associations of trust with NI are stronger than with GHI, suggesting that, for Russians, their own nation is more salient or more easily available as an ingroup to identify with. Secondly, NI was more strongly

associated with the attitudes to the “special military operation” and mobilization, which is hardly surprising, given the emphasis of state propaganda on protecting the country and helping fellow ethnic Russians abroad. These results, however, apply to a specific context of a nation at war, and more data from other countries are needed to see if these findings can be generalized.

The formulation of our hypotheses and the interpretation of our results was based on an expectation of a universal character of the mechanisms linking social identity to military attitudes. However, these associations and the relative contribution of NI and GHI could be moderated by specific content of social identity (whether people in general and one’s nation are seen as peace-loving or warlike), as well as by the framing of military action (for instance, as “asserting our power and dominance” or “protecting the peace”). One could imagine a situation where GHI would be positively associated with support for war framed as defense from a country which poses a threat to the global humanity or world order. This idea is a staple of the Russian official narrative (Gerber & Zavisca, 2016; Polegkyi, 2016), which could weaken the negative effects of GHI. Future studies could test these hypotheses to deepen our understanding of the effects of trust and social identity on attitudes to military action.

On the whole, our research contributes to understanding the mechanisms underlying military attitudes. First, we found that generalized trust can backfire, in that it might result in approval of military intervention in other countries. Second, the data constitute additional evidence supporting the associations between attitudes to people in general and identification with large groups, as well as the associations of the latter with attitudes to military intervention. These findings were obtained in a new cultural context, replicating and extending earlier reports from Western European countries.

Nevertheless, the study has important limitations. First, like most prior studies of these issues, it uses a cross-sectional design which does not allow to infer causality. Indeed, alternative causal models could be plausible, although the data fail to provide support the alternative hypothesis of the effects of social identification being mediated by social trust (Valcke et al., 2020; see Supporting Information). Second, online samples can hardly be fully representative. The current Russian social context entails difficulty recruiting participants using face-to-face or phone interviews, necessitating more complex strategies to recruit representative and yet fully anonymous samples.

Naturally, the findings also have some practical implications. Positive beliefs about other people that are shaped by socialization can motivate people to seek peaceful means of conflict resolution. However, when it comes to international conflict, it is not enough to focus on these individual-level constructs and processes. Existing theory and research emphasize the importance of considering the processes of group identification and intergroup relations.



However, the context of national identity is rarely explored. We believe that peaceful coexistence with other national groups can be facilitated by a national identity that would allow Russians to experience their uniqueness while also acknowledging the larger contexts of social identification and the importance of peaceful interactions based on awareness and respect of the interests of peoples of other nations.

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<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190274801.013.22>



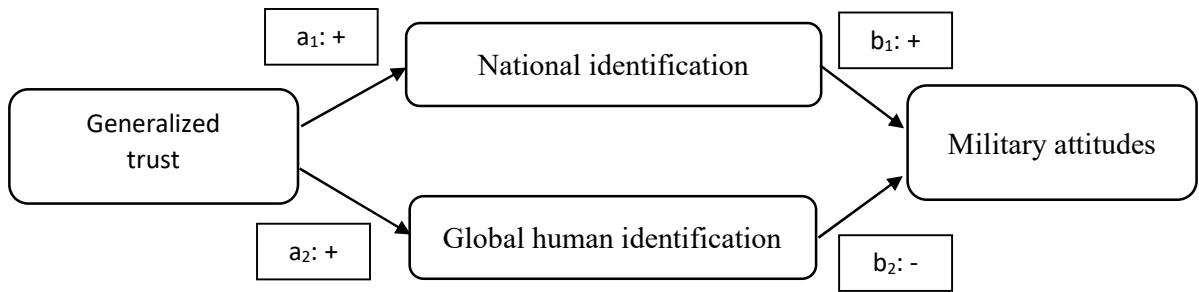


Figure 1. The study hypotheses

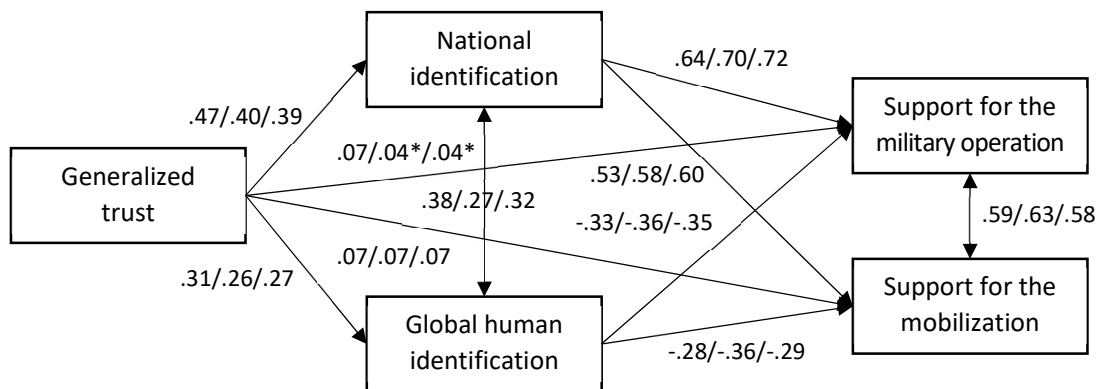


Figure 2. Standardized parameters of the multigroup mediation model 1 in Samples 1-3 (\* non-significant; all the other parameters are significant at  $p < .01$ ).

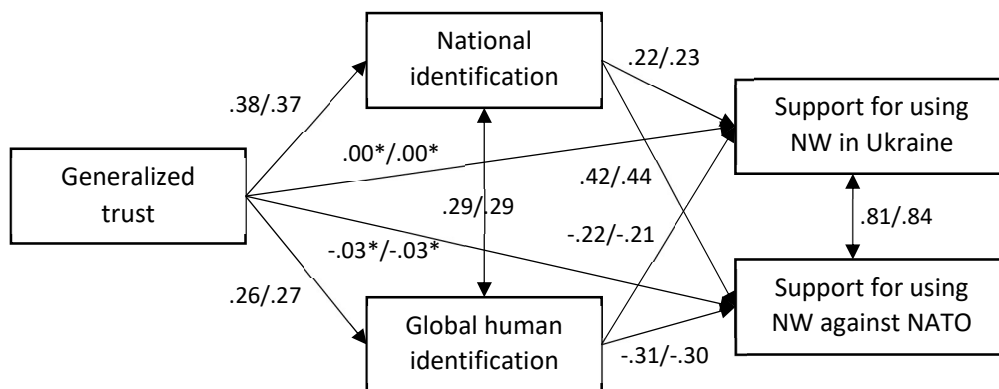


Figure 3. Standardized parameters of the multigroup mediation model 2 in Samples 2 and 3 (\* non-significant; all the other parameters are significant at  $p < .01$ ).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Scale	Sample 1 (N = 799)		Sample 2 (N = 745)		Sample 3 (N = 742)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Generalized trust	3.05	0.97	2.96	0.90	2.86	0.91
National identity	3.25	0.83	3.73	0.88	3.59	0.96
Global human identity	2.65	0.77	3.02	0.83	2.81	0.83
Support for military operation	3.38	1.43	3.28	1.50	3.29	1.45
Support for mobilization	2.49	1.43	2.37	1.42	2.58	1.42
Support for using nuclear weapons in Ukraine			1.35	0.78	1.59	1.00
Support for using nuclear weapons against NATO			1.73	1.20	1.89	1.22

Table 2. Correlation matrix (Sample 1)

	GT	NI	GHI	SMO
Generalized trust				
National identification	.49***			
Global human identification	.30***	.47***		
Support of military operation	.26***	.51***	-.02	
Support for mobilization	.23***	.39***	.02	.61***

Note. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ . GT – Generalized trust, NI – National identification, GHI – Global human identification, SMO – Support for military operation.

Table 3. Correlation matrix (Samples 2 and 3)

	GT	NI	GHI	SMO	SM	SNW_U	SNW_N
Generalized trust		.37***	.25***	.17***	.20***	-.02	.09*
National identification	.40***		.34***	.54***	.44***	.07	.27***
Global human identification	.28***	.37***		-.12***	-.09*	-.14***	-.14***
Support of military operation	.21***	.52***	-.04		.66***	.25***	.45***
Support for mobilization	.19***	.44***	-.05	.68***		.19***	.43***
Support for using nuclear weapons in Ukraine	.05	.13***	-.05	.32***	.28***		.63***
Support for using nuclear weapons against the NATO	-.01	.21***	-.12***	.44***	.42***	.70***	

Note. The coefficients for Sample 2 are given above the diagonal and for Sample 3 below the diagonal; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ . GT – Generalized trust, NI – National identification, GHI – Global human identification, SMO – Support for military operation, SM – Support for mobilization, SNW\_U – Support for the use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine, SNW\_N - Support for using nuclear weapons against the NATO.

## Supporting Information

### 1) Latent variable models

We also performed an analysis with combined pairs of items for military attitudes. The reliability of the military attitudes index derived from the two items reflecting support for the military operation and for the mobilization calculated using Spearman-Brown formula from .76 to .81 ranged across the three samples. The reliability for the support for nuclear weapons index calculated using Spearman-Brown formula was .77 and .82 in Samples 2 and 3, respectively.

When the pairs of items were joined in a single latent factor, the results were consistent with those reported in the main paper text and the model coefficients (paths and latent factor loadings) did not differ across the three samples.

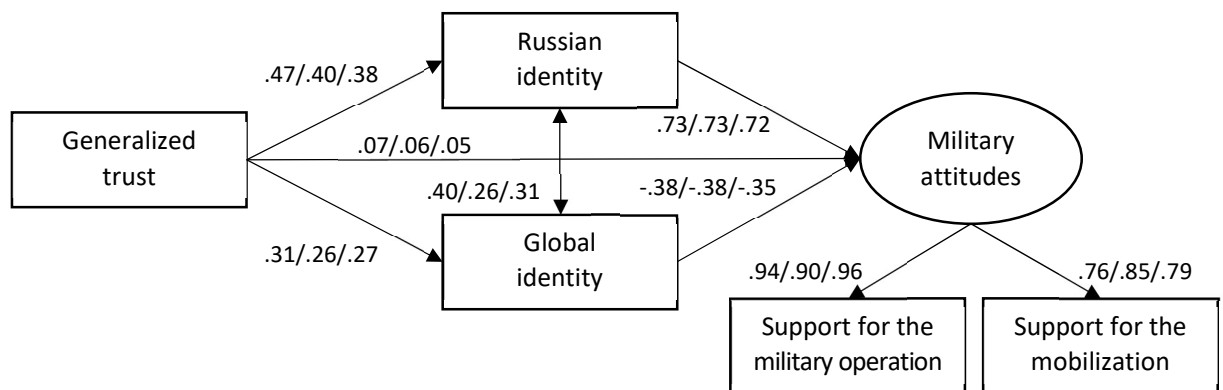


Figure SI.1. Standardized parameters of the multigroup mediation model 1 in Samples 1-3 combined ( $\chi^2(28) = 26.95, p = .52, CFI = 1.000, RMSEA = .000, 90\% CI [.000, .027], SRMR = .030$ ). The regression coefficients are constrained to equality; all the model parameters are significant ( $p < .01$ ).

The parameters of the first multigroup mediation model are presented in Figure SI.1. In line with Hypotheses 1a and 1b, trust is a positive significant predictor of both NI and GHI. In line with Hypotheses 2a and 2b, NI is a strong positive predictor of support for war, whereas GHI is a somewhat weaker, but negative predictor of support for war. The specific indirect effect of trust mediated by NI was positive and significant ( $p < .001$ ) in all three samples ( $a_1b_1 = .34 [.30, .39], .29 [.25, .33],$  and  $.28 [.24, .33]$ ), in line with Hypothesis 3a. The specific indirect effect of trust mediated by GHI was negative and significant ( $p < .001$ ) in all three samples ( $a_2b_2 = -.12 [-.14, -.09], -.10 [-.12, -.08], -.10 [-.12, -.08]$ ), in line with Hypothesis 3b.

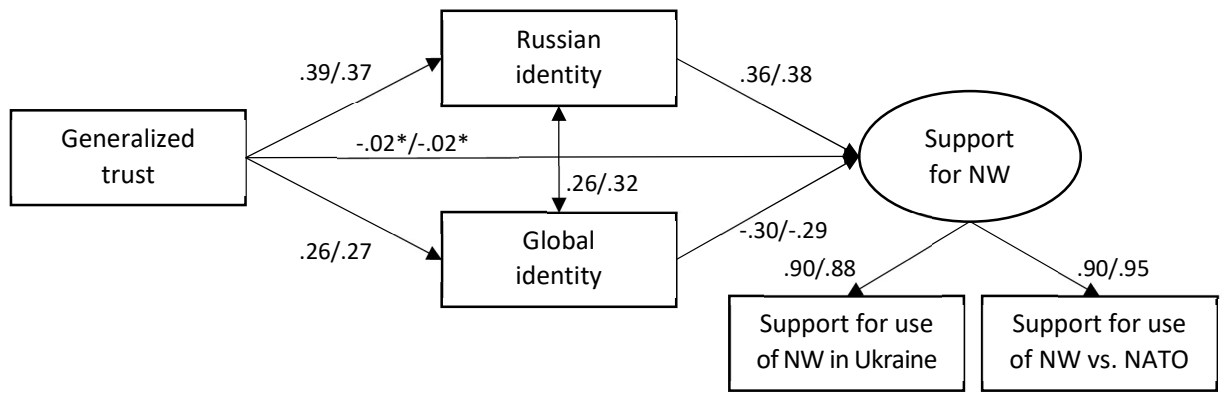


Figure SI.2. Standardized parameters of the multigroup mediation model 2 in Samples 2 and 3 combined ( $\chi^2(17) = 51.45, p < .001, CFI = .992, RMSEA = .052, 90\% CI [.036, .069], SRMR = .043$ ). The regression coefficients are constrained to equality; all the model parameters are statistically significant at  $p < .01$ , except for the direct effect (marked \*).

The second multigroup model tested using the same approach has failed to converge. In order to converge the model, we had to constrain to equality the loadings of the two items reflecting the support for use of nuclear weapons, after which the fit of the model was acceptable based on practical fit indices, but unacceptable based on the chi-square test of exact fit.

The parameters of the second multigroup model are given in Figure SI.2. Again, all three hypotheses were supported. The specific indirect effect of trust mediated by NI were positive and significant ( $p < .001$ ) in both samples 2 and 3 ( $a_1b_1 = .14 [.11, .18]$  in both cases), in line with Hypothesis 3a. The specific indirect effect of trust mediated by GHI was negative and significant ( $p < .001$ ) in both samples ( $a_2b_2 = -.08 [-.10, -.06]$  in both cases), in line with Hypothesis 3b.

## 2) Separating the effects of self-definition and self-investment

To investigate the structure of NI and GHI scales, we performed an exploratory factor analysis in Mplus (categorical indicators, WLSMV estimator, Geomin rotation). The results are given in Table SI.1.

Table SI.1. Factor structure of the IWAH scale

Item	National Identity		Global Human Identity	
	Self-Definition	Self-Investment	Self-Definition	Self-Investment
1	<b>.92</b>	-.02	<b>.83</b>	.00
2	<b>.72</b>	.13	<b>.86</b>	-.06
3	<b>.88</b>	.00	<b>.83</b>	.01
4	<b>.50</b>	.35	<b>.63</b>	.21
5	.49	.44	.59	.33
6	.16	<b>.76</b>	.13	<b>.71</b>
7	.00	<b>.82</b>	.00	<b>.77</b>
8	.28	<b>.66</b>	.16	<b>.76</b>
9	-.02	<b>.91</b>	-.04	<b>.89</b>
Tucker's phi	.98	.98	.99	.98
Factor correlation	.81		.75	
Model fit	$\chi^2(19)=355.32$ , CFI=.992, RMSEA=.107, 90% CI [.098, .117], SRMR = .018		$\chi^2(19)=545.03$ , CFI=.980, RMSEA=.134, 90% CI [.124, .144], SRMR = .027	

Note: congruence coefficients comparing the factor structures to Reese et al. (2015), Table 1.

The parameters of the models with self-definition and self-investment entered as parallel mediators of the effects of trust on military attitudes are given in Table SI.2. All the models were saturated. Wald test reflects the significance of the differences between a baseline (unconstrained) model and a nested model constraining the three pairs of paths for SD and SI components to equality for each identity ( $p_1=p_2$ ,  $p_3=p_4$ ,  $p_5=p_6$ ,  $p_7=p_8$ ,  $p_9=p_{10}$ ,  $p_{11}=p_{12}$ ). Thus, this set of parameter constrains the paths contributing to the indirect effects for self-definition and self-investment to equality.

Table SI.2. Standardized parameters of the regression models.

	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3
<b>Models 1 and 2</b>			
NI_SD ON GT (p1)	.48***	.36***	.38***
NI_SI ON GT (p2)	.44***	.34***	.38***
GHI_SD ON GT (p3)	.30***	.26***	.27***
GH_SI ON GT (p4)	.26***	.23***	.26***
<b>Model 1</b>			
SMO ON NI_SD (p5)	.43***	.41***	.33***
SMO ON NI_SI (p6)	.34***	.31***	.34***
SMO ON GHI_SD (p7)	-.15**	-.18**	-.23***
SMO ON GHI_SI (p8)	-.24***	-.21**	-.09
SMO ON GT	.02	.02	.05
SM ON NI_SD (p9)	.26***	.28***	.21***
SM ON NI_SI (p10)	.32***	.34***	.39***
SM ON GHI_SD (p11)	-.08	-.21**	-.21***
SM ON GHI_SI (p12)	-.20**	-.13	-.10
SM ON GT	.07	.08*	.06
Wald test	5.28, p = .51	6.89, p = .33	10.72, p = .10
<b>Model 2</b>			
SNW_U ON NI_SD (p5)		.08	.18
SNW_U ON NI_SI (p6)		.16	.08
SNW_U ON GHI_SD (p7)		-.05	-.06
SNW_U ON GHI_SI (p8)		-.23**	-.11
SNW_U ON GT		-.03	.00
SNW_N ON NI_SD (p9)		.15*	.17*
SNW_N ON NI_SI (p10)		.33***	.27**
SNW_N ON GHI_SD (p11)		-.17*	-.08
SNW_N ON GHI_SI (p12)		-.19*	-.22**
SNW_N ON GT		.04	-.09*
Wald test, $\chi^2(6)$		11.36, p = .08	5.39, p = .50

GT – Generalized trust, NI – National identification, GHI – Global human identification, SD – Self-definition, SI – Self-investment, SMO – Support for military operation, SM – Support for mobilization, SNW\_U – Support for the use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine, SNW\_N - Support for using nuclear weapons against the NATO.

Although the findings reveal minor apparent differences (e.g., self-investment appears to be a more important predictor of support for the use of nuclear weapons), the differences in the effects are not strong enough to attain statistical significance based on Wald test.

### 3) Separating the effects of group identification and group size

We also performed an additional analysis to find out whether the indirect effects of trust could be explained by the tendency to identify with large groups in general or by the narrow vs. broad identity. To do this, we parametrized the model differently by computing an index of general identification with large groups (a mean of NI and GHI) and a “pure” measure of global identity (calculated by subtracting the mean of NI and GHI from the GHI score). This approach is substantially similar to residualizing the GHI score, as proposed by McFarland (2010).

These two scores were then entered into the model as mediators of the effects of trust on military attitudes. As the support for the use of nuclear weapons was not measured in Sample 1, we used data from Samples 2 and 3 where all four dependent variables were present. The parameters of the model were consistent between the two samples ( $\chi^2(14) = 18.20, p = .20$ ; CFI = .999, RMSEA = .020, 90% CI [.000, .043], SRMR = .029). The parameters are given in Figure SI.3.

Generalized trust emerged to be a fairly strong positive predictor of general ingroup identification and a weak negative predictor of “pure” global identity, suggesting that Russians who trust other people are more likely to identify with their national ingroup as opposed to the global humanity.

General identification was a weak positive predictor of support for the military operation and for mobilization, whereas its effects on the nuclear weapon attitudes were not significant. In turn, “pure” global identity emerged as a stronger negative predictor of all four military attitudes. The direct effects of generalized trust were weak and mostly non-significant.

In case of support for war and mobilization, the indirect effects mediated by general group identification and by the “pure global” identity were significant and comparable in magnitude ( $\beta$  in the .07-.09 range,  $p < .001$  in all cases). However, with respect to the use of nuclear weapons against the NATO and Ukraine only the indirect effects mediated by “pure” global identity emerged as statistically significant ( $\beta = .05$  and  $.03$ , respectively,  $p < .001$  for both). The signs of all the indirect effects were positive, indicating that higher trust is associated with greater support for war.

These findings suggest that it is the tendency to identify with one’s immediate national group (as opposed to having a broader global identity) that is the most important predictor of support for war. However, this tendency has comparatively little to do with social trust, which only has a small positive effect on the global vs. national identity.



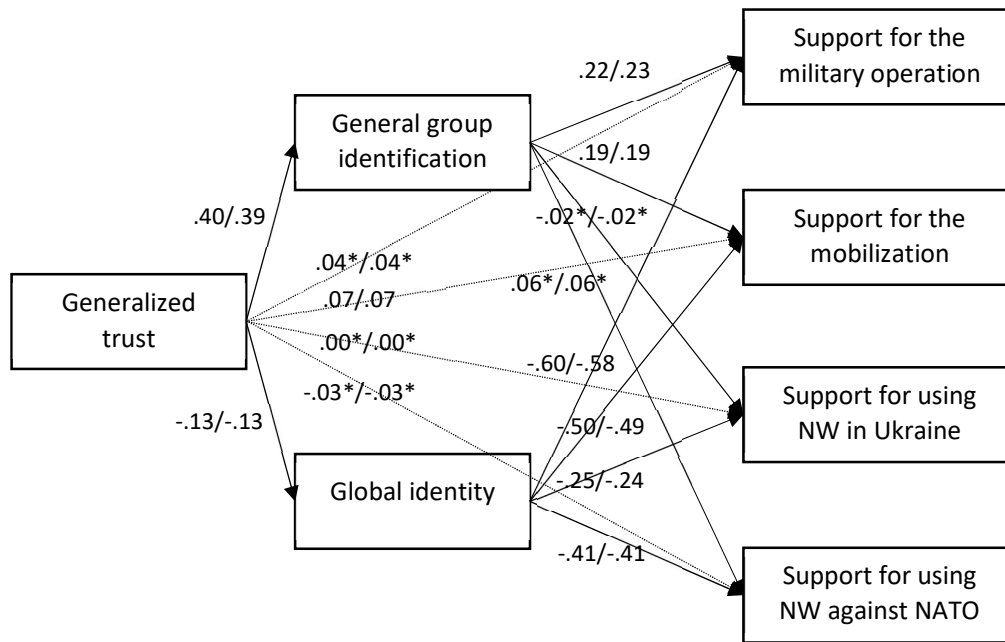


Figure SI.3. Standardized parameters of the partial mediation model 3 in Samples 2 and 3 (\* non-significant; all the other parameters are significant at  $p < .01$ ). Direct effects and DV covariances omitted.

### Alternative causal model

Following Reviewer's suggestion that social identification could also causally affect social trust, rather than vice versa (Valcke et al., 2020), we performed an analysis with alternative models, where Russian NI and GHI predicted generalized trust, which, in turn, predicted the war attitudes.

We tested two saturated partial mediation models with the Identification  $\rightarrow$  Trust  $\rightarrow$  War attitudes sequence. In the first model (with the support for the military operation and the mobilization as dependent variables), the direct effect of trust on support for the military operation was non-significant in all three samples (beta = .02-.04), and the direct effect of trust on support for mobilization was weak (beta = .07-.09) and only significant in two out of three samples. Only the indirect effect of identification with Russia on the readiness to mobilize mediated by trust was marginally significant in those two samples (beta = .03 and .04,  $p < .05$ ). In the second model (with the support for the use of nuclear weapons against Ukraine and the NATO as dependent variables), none of the direct effects of trust on the support for the use of nuclear weapons were significant in either sample, and none of the indirect effects were significant either.

Thus, the data failed to support the alternative causal model.

## References

McFarland, S. G. (2010). Personality and support for universal human rights: A review and test of a structural model. *Journal of Personality*, 78, 1735–1763. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2010.00668.x>