

Vorträge/Krieg & Frieden/War as social catalyst

# **War as a societal catalyst?**

## **How wars can lead to self-purification and optimism, depression and indifference (with special consideration of the Ukraine)**

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# Motives for this paper, the problem

- Widespread pessimism in Europe, due to
  - economic crisis and stagnation (comp. to USA, China)
  - Covid-19 consequences
  - rise of right-wing political parties
  - wars in Ukraine and Israel/ Palestine
- Book on basic societal values
- Book on Ukraine war from the perspective of Kants theory of peace



**DIE** MAX HALLER  
**LETZTE**  
**INVASION**

DER UKRAINEKRIEG  
IM LICHTE VON  
KANTS FRIEDENSTHEORIE

[transcript] X T E X T E

# Kant's theory of war and peace

(Vom ewigen Frieden 1795)

- Not only normative-idealistic principles, but a social theory
- Class theory of war: only elites are interested in wars, people are only victims
- Democracies do not wage wars against each other
  - Democracy: freedom and equality of all, rule of law
  - deficits of representative democracy: Switzerland vs USA)
  - Authoritarian leaders also in democracies
- Publicity is central in political action (indication of morally just action)
- Peacemaking is an autonomous process, possible and relevant at all times important

Surprising finding: Ukrainians support war support war unconditionally

# Thesis: war as a social catalyst

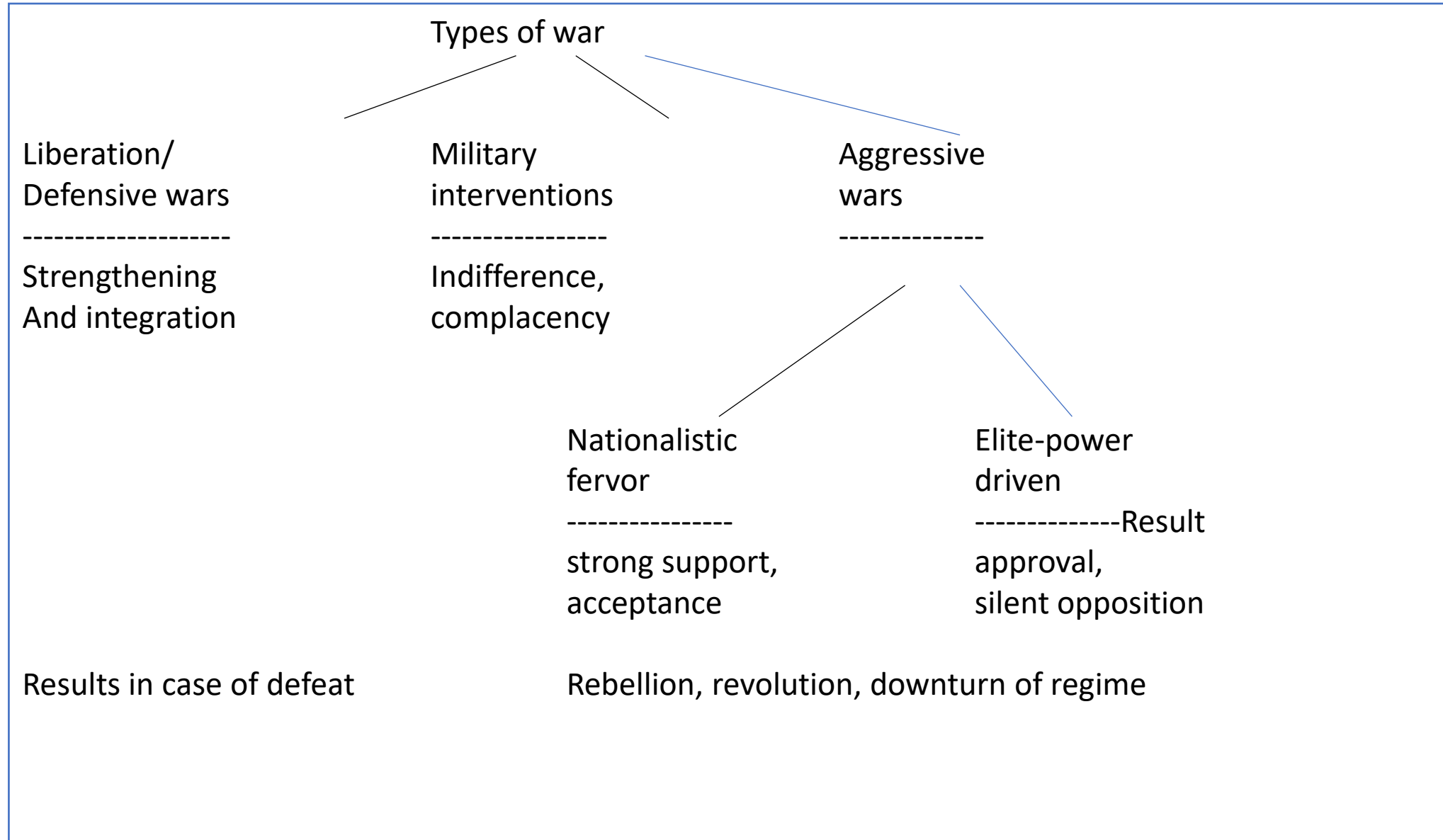
Á catalyst (chem.): a substance which accelerates processes without consuming itself (e.g. enzymes)

Heraklit (550 a.C. – 460a.C.). He stated: “War is the father of all things and the king of all. The one he transforms into Gods, the other into men, the one into slaves, the other into free people.”

Many social theorists argue that wars have significant positive consequences (e.g. K.O.Hondrich 2022, Wieder Krieg)

But wars are the main cause of the greatest present problems, e.g. irregular migration

Attitudes of people toward ongoing wars are very important, but they depend on the character of wars



# War as a societal catalyst: the case of Ukraine

- Most modern nation states emerged through wars
- Attack on a country will lead to internal unification, support of war, support for leaders
- Findings about changes in public attitudes
  - surveys of Razumkov Center Kiyv ca 2010-2024
  - personal interviews with in Lwiw and Kiyv April 2024
  - extensive reading of media reports

# (Surprising) findings from Razumkov surveys

Ukraine will win: Aug. 2022: 92% (15% definitively), Oct. 2023: 83%

Proud of Ukraine: 2010 51%, 2023(similar for flag, Ukr. Language)

	2010	2023
Democracy best system	50%	73%
Ukraine is a democratic country	66%	85 %

Future economic perspectives for Ukraine are bad:  
2022 72%      2024 57%

Wish to emigrate: 2000 31%, 2023 11%



# Effects of military interventions, aggressive wars

- Variations by degree of legitimacy (UN-sanctioned humanitarian interventions – purely aggressive invasions, wars)
- Most outcomes of invasions contrary to the aims stated
- Examples (out of a dozen mostly failed invasions since 1900):
  - Russian occupation of Porth Arthur 1898
  - Invasion of Serbia by Austria-Hungary 1914
  - US interventions (Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan...)

Attitudes of the people in the aggressing countries: indifference, positive-accepting (due to incomplete and distorted information)

# Narratives and reactions to the war in the Ukraine in the west

- Russia by nature evil empire, Russians authoritarian
- Reactivation of the domino theory

These positions widely believed, pacifistic authors delegitimized (CH-pres. Berset, Wagenknecht/Schwarzer, Habermas, Pope Franziscus)  
with massive political consequences (rising of military spending, enlargement of NATO)

# Narratives and reactions to the war in Russia

## Putins arguments:

- In Ukraine nazist government, degenerate values and styles of life
- Ukraine integral part of Ruski Mir (Great Russia)
- Encircling of Russia by USA/ NATO
- De facto highly relevant: Suppression of democracy (like Budapest 1956, Prague 1968)

## People's reactions:

- Russians consent, became silent because of massive suppression
- little knowledge about the Ukraine war

# European attitudes to other wars

Thesis: attitudes to wars in the “world society” in all countries important because they impact the attitudes and actions of governments toward the countries in war

The two most important / consequential present other wars:

- Israel – Palestine: Also here main problems confirm Kant:
  - authoritarian, corrupt leader
  - one-sided information in amount and orientation
- Civil war in Sudan: far more deaths and more refugees than in Ukraine and Palästina. Main problems here:
  - Little interest among the western population
  - Misrecognization and lack of definite actions by politics

# Conclusions concerning the war in the Ukraine (1): when and how will it end?

- Neorealist theory:
  - global security must be guaranteed by great powers (one or more)
  - wars end after attrition (exhaustion of one party)
- Problems of Ukraine war now
  - People and country strongly affected
  - Military stalemate
  - No vision of the aim of the war

# Conclusions from the Kantian perspective (2)

- Negotiations must be made also with the worst enemy
- A “honorable peace” is possible (a “just peace” may be impossible)
- Therefore, negotiation should start immediately (with inclusion particularly of the EU)
  
- The pessimism in Europe and the rise of right-wing parties are related to the one-sided view in west Europe and its lack of a vision of political elites for the end of the war and Ukraine’s future



*Thank you for your  
attention!*