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Abstract

We study the acceptability of war as a necessary tool to obtain justice under certain conditions across individuals from Russia and Ukraine in 2011. We discuss which socio-economic, political and individual characteristics shape the support for using destructive military force to achieve justice. Overall, the acceptance of war for justice is relatively low in both countries. Using logistic regressions, we found that there are characteristics that significantly reduce the support for war for justice in both countries, such as gender and level of happiness. Support in both countries is also significantly larger among respondents who are interested in politics and are married. Additionally, there are conditions which produce different results between the countries, such as religiosity, country aims, employment, confidence in the government, concern over possible war and political orientation.

1. Introduction

Russia's support of separatists in Crimea and parts of Donbas since 2014 escalated into a war when Russian troops crossed the Ukrainian border on 24 February 2022. In the first two weeks of the invasion, there were 549 civilian deaths and 957 civilians injured, as well as more than 2.5 million people fleeing the country. In addition, 2,000-4,000 Ukrainian soldiers and supporters and 5,000-12,000 Russian soldiers died (Thomas 2022). Even before the invasion there has been conflict within Ukraine. According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), between 2013 and 2020, at least 7,101 people died in clashes between Russian-backed separatists and the Ukrainian government and its supporters, mainly in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine (UCDP 2022).

Given these severe consequences, one might think that a war can never be justified. As immoral a war is, there will always be a government that claims to use it for a moral cause because the acceptability of war and use of military force to achieve a positive outcome (e.g. justice) among the population can be used to mobilize larger resources and increase expenditures on military and repressive forces. With the help of the public media and education system, governments can institutionalize a higher acceptance of war and military interventions for moral purposes, and public support is an important factor for successful military interventions (Howard 1982). Further evidence suggests that such public acceptance of war to obtain justice has a positive and significant predictive power for higher levels of military spending and attitudes toward military force across countries (Eichenberg and Stoll 2017; Bartels 1994; Hurwitz and Peffley 1987; Everts and Isernia 2015).

The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine has raised questions regarding attitudes toward the acceptance of war under specific conditions. In his speech on 24 February 2022 to announce a "special military operation," Vladimir Putin declared that the goal of the war against Ukraine is *"...bringing to justice those who committed numerous, bloody crimes against civilians, including citizens of the Russian Federation*." (The Spectator 2022). Our study is especially

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relevant given the Russian narrative that the military operation in Ukraine serves to protect Russian-speaking minorities, prevent a genocide and remove the fascist regime in Kyiv (Troianovski 2022). These reasons might be considered as conditions under which a war can be justified by neutral observers without other sources of information. This will help to understand the attitudes of the Russian population toward war before the start of intensive propaganda efforts and the restriction of international and independent media outlets within Russia. We shed more light on this by examining the public opinion on the acceptance of war for justice, using data from 2011, before the beginning of military confrontations between the two countries (which started with the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014). The study is structured as follows: Section 2 explains the data and estimation strategy and Section 3 discusses the results. Section 4 concludes the paper.

2. Data and estimation strategy

2.1. Dependent variable

We explain cross-individual differences based on responses to the statement below. The sample includes responses from Russian and Ukrainian individuals from 2011 and is collected by the World Value Survey (WVS) Wave 6 (Inglehart et al. 2018):

"*Under some conditions, war is necessary to obtain justice*". We define a variable as 1 if the respondent agrees with the statement and 0 if the respondent disagrees (we exclude those with no answer or "do not know" responses). Table 1 shows the percentage of respondents who agree with the statement in both countries. The level of relative acceptability of war is comparably low in both countries and much lower than in other samples, such as the United States with 77% acceptance. Eichenberg and Stoll (2017) provide an extensive discussion on this variable. Eichenberg and Stoll's study based on the opinion surveys from the German Marshall Fund's Transatlantic Trends series does not include Russia and Ukraine.

The question captures the "morality of war," which is one of the core values of individuals and has a strong explanatory role for other attitudes on national security. This question has a long history in public opinion surveys (since the 1930s) and is regularly used by psychologists to measure public attitudes regarding war (Jones-Wiley, Restori, and Lee 2007; Jagodić 2000). This question was only asked in the Wave 6 of the WVS.

Since our dependent variable is a dummy variable (1, 0), we use logistic regression analysis with robust standard errors clustered at the individual level.

Table 1. Acceptability of war as a necessary tool for justice

	Russia (2011)	Ukraine (2011)
Agree	565 (25.8%)	155 (10.3%)
Disagree	1619 (74.1%)	1345 (89.7%)

Source: Own calculations based on WVS, Wave 6.

2.2. Independent variables

There are different individual, cultural and ideological factors that influence attitudes toward the acceptability of war to obtain justice. We partly follow Eichenberg and Stoll (2017) in the selection of explanatory variables, while adding others.

- Age group (6 cohorts): this is an indicator of the age of respondents in six categories from 15-24 years old to 65 years and older. According to Kagan (2003), older respondents have more negative attitudes toward war, due to the experience of two

world wars in Europe, and thus we expect to observe a negative association between the age of respondents and acceptance of war in our sample. Farzanegan and Gholipour (2021) also refer to the experience of war during early adulthood on the formation of an individual's attitude towards security issues and willingness to fight. However, these large-scale wars were more than 75 years ago, thus the impact of age is not clear because only the last cohort of respondents directly experienced these wars. More precisely, 84% of Russian respondents and 81% of Ukrainian respondents from the samples were born after 1945.

- Education: we define a dummy variable which equals 1 for respondents with university-level education (Bachelor's or higher), and 0 otherwise. In the Russian sample, 31% of respondents have a university degree and 34% in the Ukrainian sample. According to Everts (2011), higher education may be positively associated with higher support for engagement in global challenges, including military interventions. He argues that higher educated persons are more politically active and cosmopolitan. Some studies also show that the association between higher educated people and their support for military interventions may depend on the period of analysis. A case study of the US by Wittkopf (1990) shows that this association was negative in the 1970s and became positive in the 1980s. Bartel's (2014) study in the case of the US finds a negative association between higher levels of education and acceptance of military force and war.

- Importance of religion: we use a question from the WVS which asks respondents to indicate the importance of religion in their lives. We define a dummy variable as 1 if the response is "very important" or "rather important," and 0 otherwise. In the Russian sample, religion is important in daily life for about 45% of the respondents, and in the Ukrainian sample, the share is 63%. We expect that persons with higher attachment to religion show lower support for war to obtain justice. Religions generally discourage their followers from violence against others, especially in the form of war and military confrontation. In contrast to the Western tradition, Orthodox churches did not initially have a concept of a just war and perceived war as evil (Nowosad 2016). The Russian Orthodox church's militarization and its explicit support of military actions is a more recent phenomenon and even led to the full support of the Russian invasion in Ukraine by Russian Patriarch Kirill in March 2022 (Knorre and Zygmont 2019; Pullella 2022).

- Happiness: respondents with higher levels of happiness in their lives may also prefer more peaceful means to obtain justice. Thus, we expect to observe a negative association between the feeling of happiness and acceptance of war. This has also been shown in psychological studies which investigate the link between life satisfaction and deviant and criminal behavior, including fights and violent acts (Olson, Martin, and Connell 2021). We use a WVS question which asks respondents to indicate their degree of happiness from very happy to not at all happy. We define a dummy variable as 1 for those with "very" or "quite" happiness levels, and 0 otherwise. 76% and 71% of respondents found themselves as happy individuals in the Russia and Ukraine samples, respectively.

- Marital status: we defined a dummy variable as 1 for respondents who married or who live together as married, and 0 otherwise (e.g., separated, divorced, widowed, single). In the Russia sample, 55% of respondents were married, and 57% in the Ukraine sample. The relationship between marital status and the attitude towards war has not been discussed extensively in the literature, but there is a large body of literature on its effect on violence and crime (Skardhamar et al. 2015). According to the authors, 78% of the

studies reviewed found a negative association between marriage and crime, but very few studies address the problem of time ordering, and thus do not provide evidence for a causal relationship. In addition, the association is stronger in studies that focus on the quality of the relationship, for example, its attachment or stability. Thus, we cannot say with certainty that any type of marriage will decrease violent behavior or opinions. Another variable that might capture the attitude of a just war is an individual's opinion on the death penalty. Using a global sample, Unnever's (2010) results suggest that married respondents are more likely to support capital punishment, but he does not offer a theoretical framework to explain this relationship. Overall, the association between marriage and acceptance of war for justice can be mixed. For one, married individuals have, on average, more established and stable lives with higher opportunity costs of engaging in a war, even for justice. On the other side, married people usually have children and develop a behavior to protect the family (and country) at any cost.

- Preferences for the country: there is a question where respondents indicate their opinion on a country's priorities. They can select high economic growth, strong military forces, democracy or protection of the environment. We define a dummy variable for each of these responses. We expect to see a negative association between those who selected strong economic growth, democracy or environmental protection and acceptance of war. In contrast, those who support strong defense as the first choice may also be more willing to endorse the use of military force. In the Russia sample, about 67% of respondents selected strong economic growth as the first choice, while about 10% supported strong defense, 16% supported democracy and the remainder supported environmental issues. In the Ukrainian sample, about 67% of respondents selected strong economic growth as the first choice, followed by democracy (16%), environmental protection (4%) and strong defense forces (3%).

- Interest in politics: it is expected that individuals with higher engagement and interest in political issues are more actively involved in local and global challenges and may care more about global suffering, such as injustice. Depending on their political agenda, such engagement may have a positive or negative association with the acceptance of war. In countries where the government has strong control of the media, people with higher levels of interest in politics may receive more government-processed news, which may amplify their support for military intervention by exaggerating the injustices of the other side. A question in the WVS asks the respondents to select their level of interest political issues from "very interested" to "not at all interested." We designate a dummy variable as 1 for those who are very or somewhat interested, and 0 otherwise. 33.5% and 34% of respondents are interested in politics in Russia and Ukraine, respectively.

- Political ideology: political attitudes of individuals can be measured in the WVS question: "In political matters, people talk of 'the left' and 'the right. ' How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking?," where 1 is extreme left and 10 is extreme right. We define three dummy variables: left, center and right. Left is 1 if he/she selected 1 to 4, and 0 otherwise. Center is 1 for those who selected 5 and 6, as well as "don't know" cases. Finally, right is 1 for persons who selected 7 to 10. We have two arguments for why the relationship between political ideology, measured on a left-right scale, and support of war for justice is not clear. First, the political spectrum from far-left to far-right includes two extremes which do not necessary mean to be opposites, but can rather be understood as opposing ends, as discussed in the horseshoe theory (Faye 1977). In our example, we would assume that both political extremes might accept war

to achieve justice. Therefore, we would assume that ideologies that are further away from the center might support a war to achieve justice. Second, the political spectrum from left to right usually describes the ideologies from communism to fascism, both of which in their own narratives might find arguments to go to war for just causes. Still a part of its modern ideology, the Russian Federation has not fully overcome its role as a communist country that wants to fight fascism (Laqueur 2014). In this example, "left-leaning" might indicate support for the Russian government and its narrative. Therefore, we would expect that left-leaning individuals in Russia might support a war for justice. In the Russia sample, 15% of respondents are left oriented, about 67.5% are center and about 17.5% are right oriented. In the Ukraine sample, 17.5% of respondents are left oriented, about 61.5% are center and about 21% are right oriented.

- Employment status: we expect to see a negative association between individuals without employment and acceptance of war. Retirees, students, the unemployed and homemakers may have stronger preferences for allocating limited resources to the provisioning of public goods instead of funding of wars, even for moral reasons. We define the dummy variable as 1 for the categories of full-time job, part-time job and self-employed. We aggregated the remaining categories under "without employment status" and generate a dummy variable for it as well. In the Russia sample, 39% of respondents have without employment status, 4% are self-employed, about 6% have part-time jobs and about 51% have full-time jobs. In the Ukraine sample, 49% of respondents have without employment status, 2% are self-employed, about 10% have part-time jobs and about 39% have full-time jobs.

- Gender: this is a dummy variable which is 1 for female, and 0 otherwise. There are several studies (mainly in the case of the US) which show that women are not supportive of war and the use of military force (Eichenberg and Stoll 2017; Eichenberg 2019). This anti-war attitude may have different reasons rooted in the biology, experience or socialization of women. Therefore, we expect also to see a negative association in our sample. In the Russian sample, 55% of respondents are female, and 60% in the Ukrainian sample.

- Worrying about war: this is a dummy variable that has the value 1 if the respondent worries about a war involving his or her country, and 0 otherwise. Worry, which is a negative emotion, should have a negative relationship with the acceptance of war for justice. In both countries, about 70% of respondents have articulated this worry.

- Confidence in the government: this dummy variable takes the value 1 if the respondent has confidence in the government, and 0 otherwise. Depending on the goals of the government, the association can be positive or negative. If a government is pacifist and denounces any form of violence, the respondent might support this course, which would mean a negative association with the acceptance of war for justice. A negative relationship would also suggest the respondent's belief that the government is capable of achieving its goals without the use of force. Lewis (2021) describes the Russian approach to conflict management as a mix of hard power and diplomatic know-how, which became evident in its recent involvement in direct military operations and peace negotiations in Nagorno-Karabakh, Libya, Syria, and Afghanistan. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that confidence in the Russian government can also be associated with support for diplomatic forms of conflict resolution. However, if the government has a political agenda that explicitly promotes war to achieve justice, then we would

expect a positive association. In the Russian sample, 50% of respondents have confidence in the government, and 25% in the Ukrainian sample.

3. Results

We apply a logit model for a binary response by maximum likelihood, modeling the probability of a positive outcome (acceptance of war) given a set of regressors. Table 2 shows the average marginal effect of each variable in the logit model with robust standard errors.

Our results show that higher importance of religion is associated with lower acceptance of war in both countries. However, this negative association is only statistically and substantially significant in the Russian sample. A unit change in this variable (shifting from no or low importance of religion to high importance in daily life) is associated with a 7.3 percentage point (pp) decrease in the probability of acceptance of war in the Russian sample, ceteris paribus.

Individuals with higher levels of happiness are significantly less supportive of war, even for justice. This negative association is highly statistically significant in both countries. A unit change in this variable (a shift from a low level to a high level of happiness at the individual level) is associated with a decline in the probability of acceptance of war by 5.5 and 4.9 pp in Russia and Ukraine, respectively, controlling for other factors.

We also find that those who are married (or living together as married) have a positive association with acceptance of war for justice compared to non-married groups. This positive association is also statistically significant in both samples.

Another interesting and intuitive result in both samples is the negative association between higher levels of preference for democracy and economic growth and the acceptance of war. This negative association is statistically significant only in the case of Russia. Prioritizing democracy as the first choice compared to other goals (strong defense, growth, or environment) is associated with a decline in the probability of accepting war by 9.4 pp in Russia. In Russia, the decline in the probability of the acceptance war for individuals who selected high economic growth as the first choice is 7.8 pp.

We also find that those who are interested in politics (compared to those without interest) are more likely to support a war to obtain justice. The positive association is statistically significant in both countries, although only marginally in the case of Ukraine. In Russia, those with higher interest in politics are 5.3 pp more likely to accept war while this effect is 3.1 pp higher in the case of Ukraine.

Political orientation also plays a role in the support for war in both countries. In Russia, individuals with left political attitudes are supportive of war for justice. This positive association is statistically significant at the 5% level. Additionally, those on the left are 7.4 pp more likely to support a war for justice compared with individuals on the right. Individuals associated with the right are not significantly associated with support for war in Russia. In the case of Ukraine, the positive association between individuals on the right and the probability of acceptance of war is marginal.

From the employment perspective, those without full- or part-time jobs (aggregated under the unemployed category) are less likely to accept war in the case of Russia and this negative association is statistically significant at the 5% level.

Another consistent result in both countries is the negative association between gender (female) and acceptance of war. This is statistically significant at the 1% level in Russia and at the 10% level in the case of Ukraine. On average, being female in Russia is associated with a decline in the probability of acceptance of war by 8.5 pp and about a 3 pp decline in Ukraine.

Individuals with higher degrees of worry/concern about their country engaging in a war show a lower level of acceptance of war for justice. This negative association is stronger and highly statistically significant in the case of Ukraine.

Finally, in the case of Russian, our results show that individuals with higher confidence in their government are significantly less likely to accept war as a means to obtain justice.

Figure 1 visualizes the estimated marginal effects in Table 2 for a better overview.

Figure 1. Drivers of probability of acceptance of war for justice: Russia vs. Ukraine (2011)
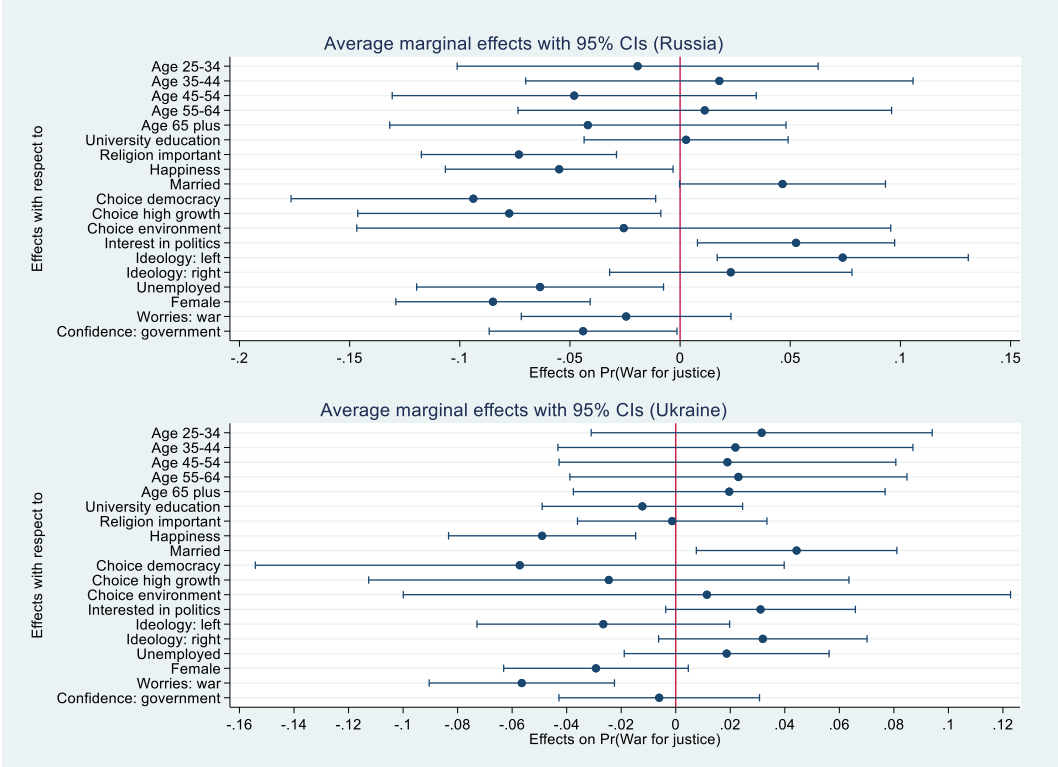
Source: Based on estimations of Table 2.

Table 2. Acceptance of war in Russia and Ukraine, Logit, Marginal Effects

	(Model 1: Russia)	(Model 2: Ukraine)
Age 25-34	-0.019	0.032
	(-0.461)	(0.988)
Age 35-44	0.018	0.022
	(0.398)	(0.659)
Age 45-54	-0.048	0.019
	(-1.140)	(0.602)
Age 55-64	0.011	0.023
	(0.259)	(0.729)
Age 65 plus	-0.042	0.020
	(-0.913)	(0.673)
University education	0.003	-0.012
	(0.115)	(-0.653)
Religion important	**-0.073*****	-0.001
	(-3.238)	(-0.073)
Happiness	**-0.055****	**-0.049*****
	(-2.082)	**(-2.800)**
Married	**0.046***	**0.044****
	(1.951)	**(2.362)**
Choice democracy	**-0.094****	-0.057
	(-2.223)	(-1.156)
Choice high growth	**-0.078****	-0.025
	(-2.209)	(-0.546)
Choice environment	-0.026	0.011
	(-0.414)	(0.201)
Interested in politics	**0.053****	**0.031***
	(2.306)	**(1.753)**
Ideology: left	**0.074****	-0.027
	(2.539)	(-1.124)
Ideology: right	0.023	0.032
	(0.820)	(1.638)
Unemployed	**-0.064****	0.019
	(-2.223)	(0.974)
Female	**-0.085*****	**-0.029***
	(-3.773)	**(-1.694)**
Worries: war	-0.024	**-0.056*****
	(-1.009)	**(-3.257)**
Confidence: government	**-0.044****	-0.006
	(-2.025)	(-0.323)
Observations	1622	1366

*: 0.10 , **: 0.05 , ***: 0.01. *t statistics* are in parentheses and based on robust standard errors.

4. Conclusion

We examined public opinion in Russia and Ukraine in 2011, before the start of violence and war. How do Russians and Ukrainians think about the acceptance of war to obtain justice? Perceptions of justice and injustice may be shaped by government-controlled media and education, among other factors. A political regime may try to get more popular support for military interventions in other countries by highlighting attractive goals such as addressing injustice. It is therefore important and interesting how an average citizen thinks about concepts of a just war and the socio-economic and political characteristics that drive acceptance of it. Our sample of more than 1600 respondents in Russia and more than 1300 respondents in Ukraine from the World Value Survey (Wave 6) provides an opportunity to examine this issue. Our logit regression analysis show that in Russia, higher levels of religion importance have significant negative association with acceptance of war. In addition, we find that individuals in Russia with higher preferences for economic growth and democracy are less likely to support a war for justice, as are the unemployed. In Russia, people with left political attitudes show higher support for war for justice.

There are findings which also apply to both the Russia and Ukraine samples. For example, we find that female respondents are less likely to support a war for justice. Those who are interested in politics are more likely to support a war for justice. Married individuals also show higher acceptance of war to obtain justice, while individuals with higher levels of happiness are clearly less supportive of war. Only in Ukraine were higher levels of worry in engaging in a possible war significantly and negatively associated with the acceptance of war.

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