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Visions of Future Russia

Among Contemporary Russian War Migrants

General information



- **Research project:** *Crossing borders, building walls. Towards ethnography of Russian war mobilisation* (NAWA, Jan 2023 – Jan 2024)
- **Aim:** investigate the specificity of the migration wave from Russia, sparked by the partial military mobilisation announced in September 2022 related to the ongoing war in Ukraine.
- **160 IDIs** with the post-mobilisation migrants from Russia (2nd wave)
 - IDIs conducted between April 2023 – September 2023.
 - So-called ordinary people (neither experts nor elites).
 - Different dimensions of their migratory experience.
- **9 countries:** Finland, Estonia, Poland, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Georgia, Armenia, Turkey, Serbia.
 - 5 post-Soviet, 4 non-post-Soviet countries (incl. 1 non-post-socialist country).

Interview question analyzed today



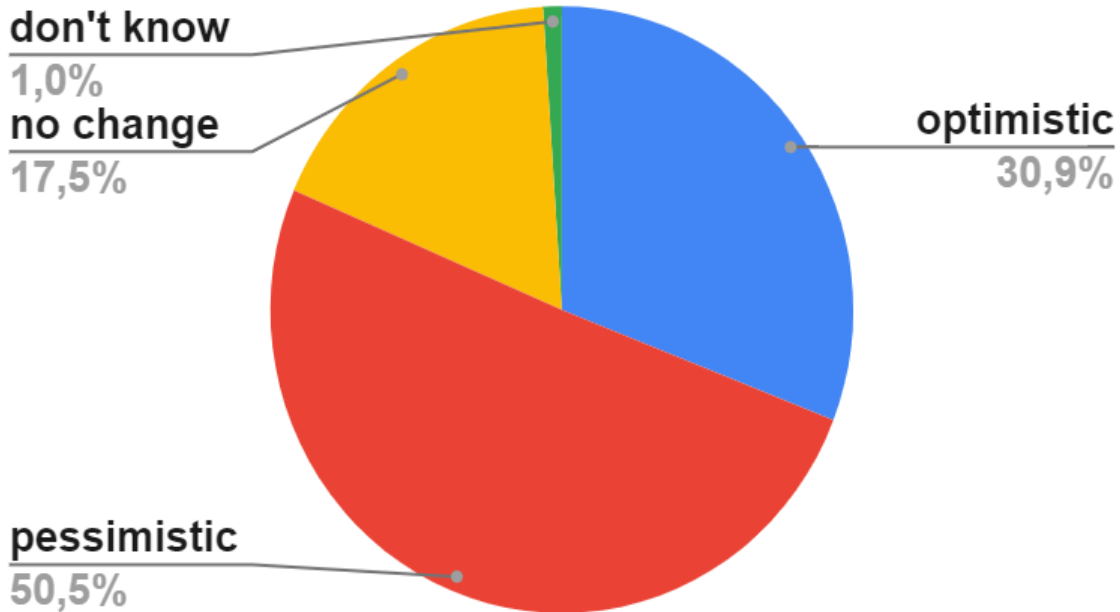
Какое будущее ждет Россию? / What future lies ahead for Russia?

- open-ended question at the closing section of the IDI
 - not suggesting any specific responses
- **99 responses**
 - more elaborative/coheren (majority) and less elaborative/coherent (minority)
 - different types of answers: realistic scenarios/predictions and fantasies.
 - „ordinary people” => wishful scenarios, not expert analyses.
 - different understandings of the 'future':
 - the result of the war / near post-war future / long-term future;

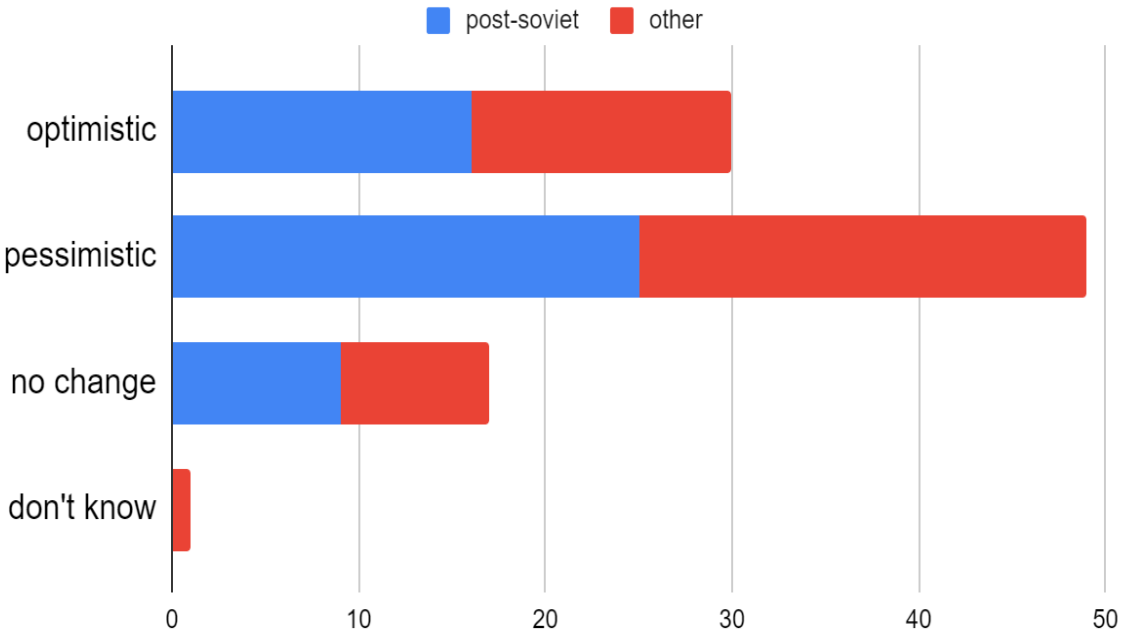
General overview



General development of events

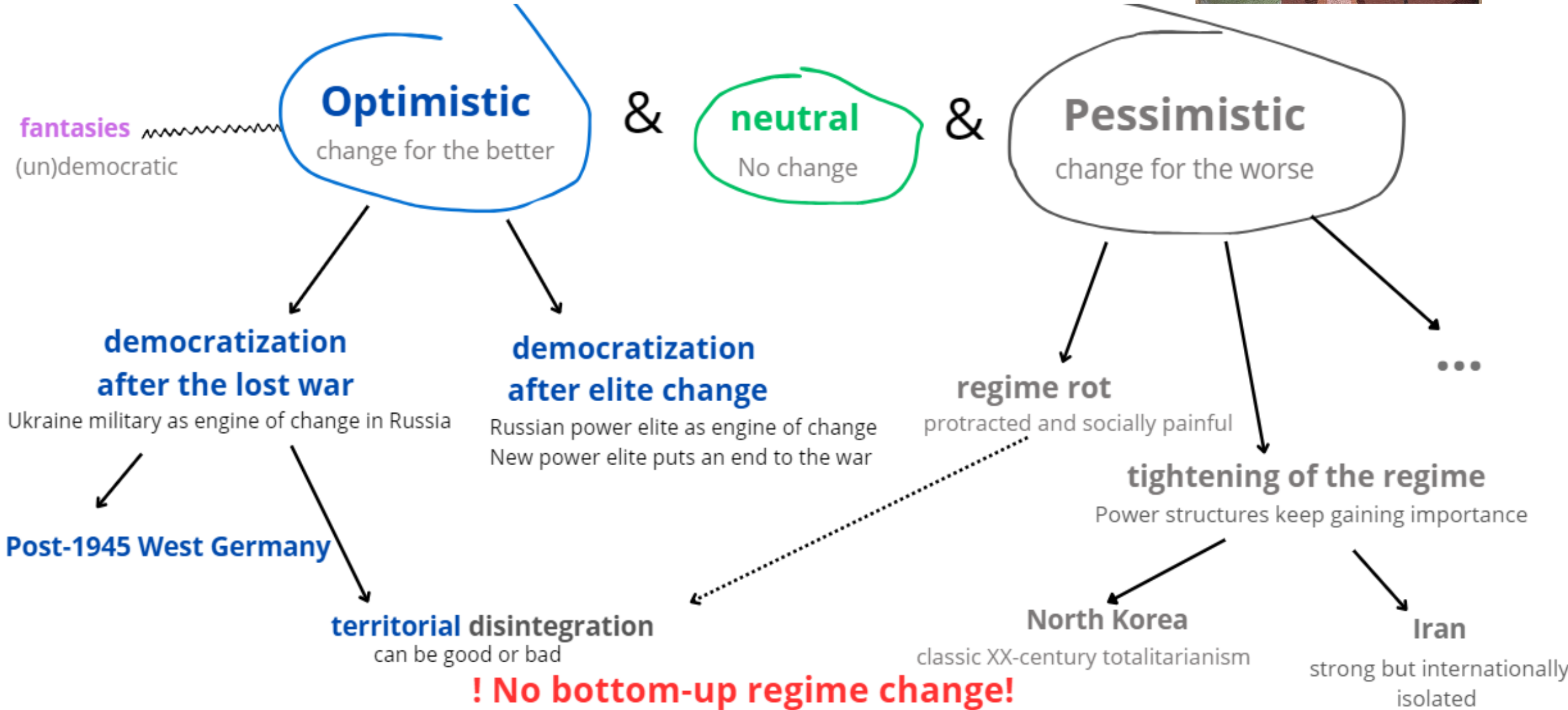


Development of events. Distribution in post-Soviet and other countries





Visions of the future [work in progress...]



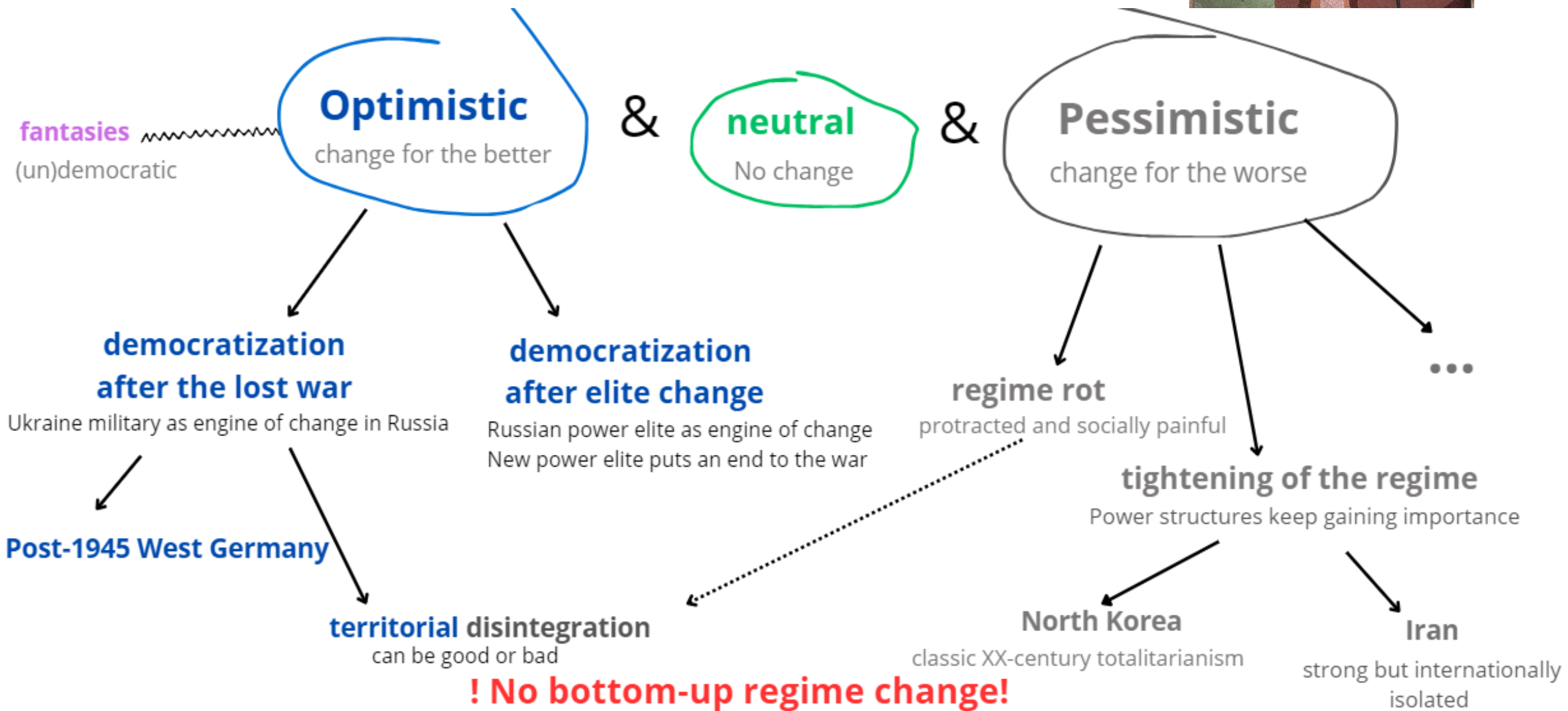
Optimistic > democratization after the lost war



- *It seems to me that they [Ukrainians] are **deliberately fighting just a little bit at a time**, so that Putin keeps the feeling that he is in control, [while in reality] he is gradually losing everything (...) such tactics may lead to the fact that the number of incidents like Prigozhin's riot in Russia will increase: one, another, third, fourth, and **at some point it will lead to Putin collapsing** [SR-05]*
- *It doesn't have to be straight that Ukrainians just will come out to the borders of Crimea and the Russian army will abandon it. **A Ukrainian drone might as well kill Putin at the Kremlin** [PL-07]*
- *Yeah, not everyone is ready to pick up a Kalashnikov and go. Well at least learn it, learn to resist, there's even a drone control program. **Yeah, I'd go there, I'd go to drone control and land a drone on the Kremlin.** [TR-08]*
- *Much will depend on **how Ukraine will be supported by the West**: I hope that both the US and the EU have enough political will to support it and [Ukraine will] build on that support [EE-05]*



Visions of the future [work in progress...]



Optimistic > democratization after the lost war > post-1945 West Germany



- *Ukraine's victory will bring the same results for Russia as it had for Germany after WWII. Russia will follow a different course [than now], a peaceful one, aimed at European integration, which is what happened in Germany. This will be **a great lesson for the next generations**. I hope that the Ukrainian people will be able **to forgive** the Russian people [GE-06].*
- *This is a war of the future and the past. For some reason, they [Russian authorities] want to impose on people some old ways [of living]: conquest of land, some imposition of a bi-polar world. Though it is not bipolar for a long time already. (...) **I hope that the future will win**. And I hope that it will launch, it will probably be very hard, **it is necessary that the power change, that the mouthpieces change, that on TV they say differently, say that the war should not have happened, that it was wrong. That Russia wasn't defending itself from anyone, that it attacked Ukraine**. I think the whole paradigm has to be overturned. [MN-17]*
- *All these **territories that were taken, they will be returned**, although I'm not sure Crimea will be returned as well [MN-18]*

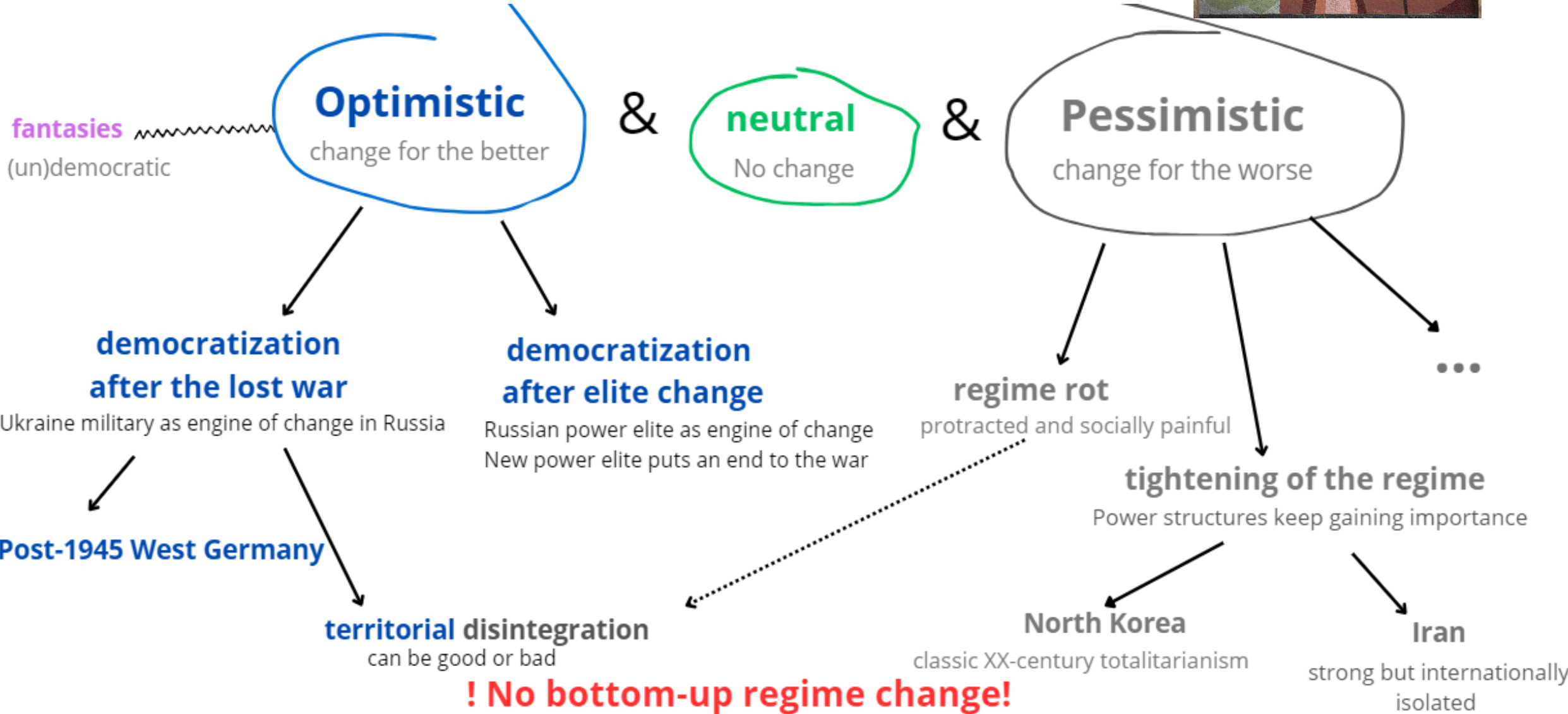
Optimistic > democratization after the lost war > territorial disintegration



- *The collapse of the empire to make things better* (KZ-12, ethnic Yakut from Siberia)
- *You have to let those people who want to live on their own, let them go (...) It's about those people who, let's say, **those parts of the country that will separate and become independent** (...) If **Chechnya, let's say, separates from Russia** (...) and his [Kadyrov's] regime is completely dismantled there, **then God with it, let them separate.*** (PL-01, ethnic Russian from Volgograd)
- *Siberia wanted to secede in 2013, to stop feeding Moscow, there were even such separatist slogans, **I fully support that Siberia should be independent. And it will be independent. And Yakutia too** - it supplies diamonds, I have a Yakut acquaintance who says, we live in poverty. Why? Why do I need such citizenship, which gives me no rights? Only slave obligations. That's how it is.* (TR-08, ethnic Russian from Siberia)
- *Such sentiments are separatist to the max. It is clear that **one wants to believe in some kind of free Buryatia** (...) Perhaps there will be some kind of unification of national republics or the Far East or Siberia, something like that* (MN-13, ethnic Buryat).



Visions of the future [work in progress...]



Optimistic > democratization after elite change



- *I hope that Putin will die quickly, and **some coup-d-etat will take place and all this will be over with minimal casualties**. So that these endless sufferings in Ukraine would be stopped, it's just, it's a cruelty what they have done there, and continue to do. It doesn't matter how, the main thing is to save more human lives. It's clear that, maybe I'm expressing myself in an unpopular way, that **Ukraine should certainly be given back its territorial integrity, including Crimea and other things [EE-07]**.*
- *If we get free elections, it will be possible to win and it will be possible to reform. Sanctions will only be lifted if Ukraine is returned to its borders, all occupied territories are returned, elections are announced in Russia and political prisoners are released [PL-07]*

Fantasies



- meritocratic utopia:

*If we could build an awesome system, let's call it **a system of filtration**, yes, well, in essence, it is about selection. We organize selection committee according to certain characteristics. (...) **We have to build a very rigid system (...) and adjust this filter [and] pull out talents**, because very often talented very cool dudes, smart and with high standards, they just don't want to get into this shit. We have to offer such great conditions if they are ready to work (...) And if we build this system, it can give great results very quickly. **And then there will be democracy, but only after everyone passed this filter**. And there, for example, one couple of people asked me: Will Navalny pass? I don't know. It doesn't matter. He will have to put up with it. Because it will be absolutely something insurmountable. Maybe there will be a multi-stage filter. Roughly speaking, you go up to some level and then you only go further if you have raised your qualifications [SR-03]*

- self-sufficient autarky:

*If we fence off Russia and stop selling oil and gas, **Russia can exist like China, in a closed cycle, for a thousand years (...) and we will still have everything**: we will have clean water, oil, gasoline, petrochemicals, the victory of civilization. If I were him [Putin], I would play this card (...) We are closing, yes, we are closing, just as the Chinese temporarily closed their state, so **we will close from the whole world. And, in fact, we will solve all our problems**, yes, we will not go there, to Europe; we will not have the latest iPhone; yes, but you will have light at home and gas and food, and they will run out of gas, because they will be cut off from our resources. [PL-02]*

Thank you.



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<https://iaepan.edu.pl/crossing-borders-building-walls-towards-ethnography-of-russian-war-mobilisation-2/>