Article

Learning peace and citizenship through narratives of war?

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– There are divergent roles of war narratives in educational settings.
– A typology of five perspectives addresses the potentials and challenges of such learning.
– Different representations of war may produce different types of citizenship.
– Didactic reflections on these divergent roles support educational practice of citizenship.

Purpose: The article explores the roles of war and violent conflicts in citizenship education.

Design: This is a theoretical article, drawing on literature from the interdisciplinary fields of political science, history, citizenship education as well as field studies in different learning arenas, war memorial sites- and museums.

Findings: There are divergent roles of war in citizenship education, and the typology of five didactic perspectives illustrates the challenges concerning the types of citizenship it aims at. Narratives of war contribute to different forms of citizenship or even represent the opposite of the concept.

Research implications: Further empirical research is needed to develop knowledge on how to deal with war and conflict in educational practice, both in schools and other learning arenas.

Practical implications: The article contributes to addressing and structuring the challenges and potentials of didactic approaches to war and violent conflict in citizenship education.

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1   INTRODUCTION

How and in what ways can learning about war and violent conflicts contribute to citizenship education, and what are the challenges? What is the role of war in educational settings, and what messages are learners and students imparted when learning about war? These are crucial didactic questions, given the significant scale of different arenas inviting learners to reflect on and learn about topics related to war and violent conflict. Moreover, topics related to war and violent conflicts are frequently included in social studies, history, and citizenship education, and are considered an important issue and of global concern by both teachers and students (Davies, Harber, & Yamashita, 2004; Schulz et al., 2017, p. 132; Vesterdal, 2022; Yamashita, 2006). The International Civic and Citizenship Education Study of 2016 also considered this part of citizenship education (Schulz et al., 2017). In school, higher education, museums, and memorials, specific cases of war represent a topic from which we are expected to learn given lessons.

These lessons are not necessarily explicit, but it often 'goes without saying' that there are important, if not crucial, lessons to be learned from the represented narratives of war (Lisle, 2006; Pennell, 2016). Educational arenas elucidating topics of war, however, seem to offer different messages and lessons, which are obviously dictated by specific contexts (Carbone, 2021; Davies, 2005; Mallon, 2018). Further, there is little research on how teaching and learning about war and conflict are carried out in practice, the kinds of approaches, perspectives and purposes and the educational effects observed, although there are studies in different educational fields that directly or indirectly shed light on the topic (Davies, 2005; Yamashita, 2006). In history education for instance, studies discussing the normalization (and denormalization) of political violence in history textbooks and memorial museums (Bermudez, 2021), and the role of conflict-supporting narratives in societies involved in intractable conflicts (Bar-Tal et.al., 2014) illustrate this point. In addition, research on how teaching the violent past is related to both national identity construction, reconciliation and conflict resolution, shows that history- and social science education has contributed to knowledge on these issues (Kvande & Naastad, 2020). The use of history and violent past to foster democracy (Barton & Levstik, 2004) are also discussed for instance in the works on historical consciousness in light of World War II by Bjerg et.al (2011). Nevertheless, there is still a need for structuring such lessons in terms of how they interplay with citizenship education. In what follows, I explore and discuss didactic dilemmas and approaches that illustrate the different roles of war and violent conflict in educational settings, and how these may produce divergent messages and lessons in light of its contributions to developing different types of citizenship. This theoretical discussion is interdisciplinary where the different fields are complementary rather than conflicting. War is itself an interdisciplinary topic, and the literature included in this article is not exhaustive but is chosen to explore and clarify the various perspectives that learners may experience in diverse educational settings and subjects.

2   DIVERGENT ROLES OF WAR IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

As Veugelers and De Groot (2019, p. 14) argued, citizenship education is learning 'how people live together in communities, nations, and in the global world.' The primary aims of living together, participating for a better, inclusive community, and developing the active, responsible citizen are common elements across different conceptualizations of citizenship education (ibid). Citizenship education also seems to address questions related to citizenship, as a status (membership), as a sense of belonging (identity), and as a practice (participation) (Osler & Starkey, 2005). These dimensions potentially involve not only inclusive and more exclusive elements but also more or less extended or even non-territorial forms of citizenship, as a political, social, environmental, and cultural concept (Veugelers & de Groot, 2019) and on a local, national, and global level (Davies, 2012). These dimensions normatively embrace not only the human rights-friendly and democratic citizen, but also the sustainable, global citizen (Wintersteiner et al., 2015). Representations of war and violent conflict, however, represent in many aspects the *opposite of* learning to live together along inclusive, sustainable, democratic principles, focusing on how and why nations, states, alliances, and other groups fight each other and the consequences of such mass violence.

Nevertheless, this concept can be interpreted in many ways and at different levels, and this also has consequences for how (and whether) war and violent conflict contribute to, and *what kind of* citizenship it responds to. The following sections illustrate a typology (Figure 1) that represents the divergent roles of war in educational settings and the possible challenges they produce; (1) exploring the phenomenon of war, (2) promoting peace, (3) constructing national identity, (4) promoting war and militarism, and (5) questioning war. The study is theoretical but presents different examples that illustrate the typology. Although some of these perspectives may be overlapping, it is necessary to distinguish between them in terms of its different contributions to citizenship education, which will be discussed through each perspective. This is not to argue that learning about war and conflict is the only or optimal approach to citizenship education, but as it still represents a current and frequently used topic in social studies, civics, history, and related subjects (Schulz et al., 2017), there is a need to discuss and problematize its roles and functions in education. The typology is not exhaustive but contributes to structuring the different didactic approaches to, and quite divergent *purposes* of, dealing with war in different learning contexts, its potential messages, and its challenges.[1]

Figure 1. Typology of divergent roles of war in educational settings
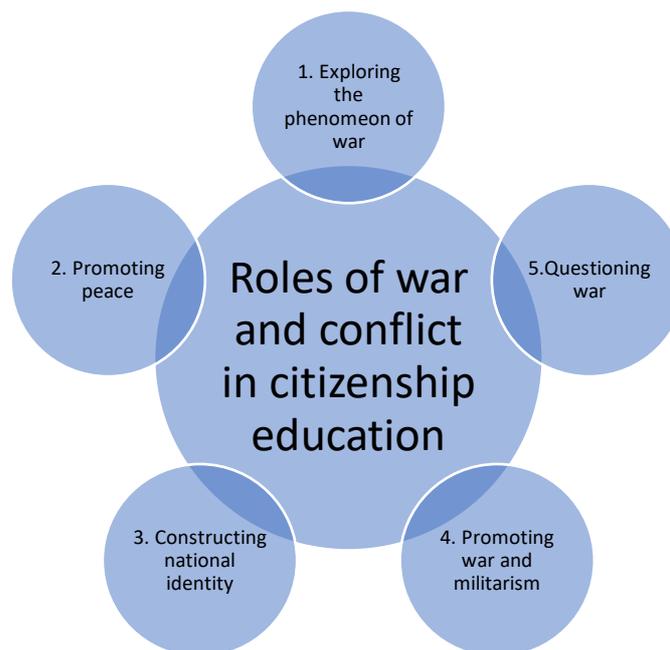
2.1   Exploring the phenomenon of war

The first perspective appears rather basic, where the knowledge of war, its causes, and consequences may represent an essential dimension of understanding international politics, civics, and a country's history, and by itself represents an aspect of developing the learner's Bildung/citizenship and perception of society (Klafki, 2011). Here the learner explores war as a historical and social phenomenon. Herododus, 'the father of history,' claimed that war is the most important ingredient of history, for better or worse, as it has significantly shaped human history. Furthermore, the Clausewitzian thesis that war is the continuation of politics by other means indicates that the nature of war is closely linked to the competition of power, hegemony, and political development. Høiback (2021) emphasized the significance of warfare as a way of understanding how the world has developed, criticizing the contemporary tendency of downplaying war and warfare in history textbooks as a catalyst for political, economic, scientific, and technological innovation, despite its destructive nature.

Hence, how can learners understand and critically analyze their society as well as other societies in the past and the present without being exposed to lessons about war and violent conflict? It seems insufficient to develop historical consciousness as well as to learn about society and citizenship without including a phenomenon that has made a significant impact on it. *Violence by omission*—not learning about violent conflict or genocide, and where learners are not given critical tools to analyze conflicts and different narratives of war—could itself be a form of repression (Salmi, 2000). This can also be a challenge concerning political and ideological uses of the past, where the *non-use* of history points

to "the deliberate and ideological adoption by some intellectual and political groups of an attitude according to which history, or some part of it, should be ignored" (Karlsson, 2011, p. 139). In this context, the absence of particular war narratives could serve certain political purposes of the governing regimes, or to avoid aspects that contradict the national master narratives incompatible with established national self-images (Tvedt, 2018). In light of citizenship education, however, reflections on how narratives of war are constructed and why some perspectives are excluded from the master narratives can contribute to developing critical and active citizenship through narrative competence and analyzing different uses of history (De Groot, 2017; Karlsson, 2011). Indeed, as Bjerg et al. (2011, p. 23) argued, "an understanding of the uses of history and a competence in participating in the debates and struggles about memories should be considered a condition for active co-citizenship."

There is also a potential tension in this model: between learning about war in general—as a historical and social phenomenon that learners explore and discuss through its conceptualization, its characteristics, conditions, and mechanisms—and learning about a specific case of war. The former invites learners to reflect on the nature of war from a *nomothetic* approach, how conflicts may or may not evolve into open war, identifying common factors that increase or decrease the probability of peace or violent conflict, and their impact on society, regimes, and human beings in different times and spaces. This also involves studying trends of war throughout history, both how warfare has developed over time, the frequency of war (is the world becoming more or less peaceful), the geopolitical impacts, and the level of destruction and number of victims (Aggestam & Höglund, 2017; Gleditsch & Buhaug, 2011; Pettersson & Wallensteen, 2015). The questions following a nomothetic approach to learning about war could be: What is the nature of war? How has war influenced societies and people in the past and present? What are the possible conditions and driving forces of war and peace, and which mechanisms and tools reduce or increase the probability of war? These are similar to the didactic scholar Wolfgang Klafki's key problems, where the macrosocial and macropolitical causes of war and peace should be emphasized to relate these conditions (structural violence) to how enemy images, prejudices, stereotypes, and collective aggression are activated and reproduced (Klafki, 2011, p. 75). Conflict researchers Mitchell and Vasquez questioned how little of the scholarly work on war and peace has found its way into learning arenas and classrooms: "Too many students, in our view, are being educated about the causes of war with simplistic theories and insufficient regard for scientific evidence" (Mitchell & Vasquez, 2014, p. xiii). It could also be argued that the nomothetic approach is less common in classrooms, where the students discuss specific current events that they are exposed to in the media, at the cost of more abstract questions concerning the nature of war, structural causes and conditions for war and peace (Vesterdal, 2022).

The *idiographic* approach focuses on a more complete, in-depth understanding of a specific, single case or a few cases to explain, for instance, the causes and consequences of the particular conflict, predominantly making use of historical narratives and

interpretive/hermeneutic methods. The idiographic approach emphasizes the uniqueness of each conflict and its particular dynamics and context, without necessarily aiming at exploring the nature of war in relation to generalizing theories (Van Ingen, 2016). Nevertheless, whereas empirical cases such as the wars in Bosnia or Syria were unique events, "it does not follow from this that the mechanisms which caused this war to occur (or endure, develop, terminate, recur, etc.) were also unique" (Van Ingen, 2016, p. 405). This approach is a common model for exploring war and violent conflict in educational settings, where learners engage in specific conflicts to analyze their causes, agents, and consequences. Key didactic questions within the idiographic approach are: What happened in the war between x and y, and what were the specific causes and contexts that led to the violent conflict here? Who was part of the conflict, and what were the consequences of the war? How did the international community respond to the conflict, and why? Existing research is quite limited, but it seems that this approach is the most widespread, indicating that war and conflict are to different degrees included in subjects such as history and social studies, where WWI, particularly WWII, and selected current and ongoing conflicts are presented to the learners (McCorkle, 2021; Vesterdal, 2022; Yamashita, 2006).

This is not to argue that exploring specific cases of conflict represents a problem. On the contrary, it is a necessary and important entrance to understanding conflicts and may create engagement and relate to the real world, where students are exposed to concrete events that they may identify with and discuss through explicit points of reference. The interplay between the nomothetical and idiographic approaches seems, in this sense, to be a fruitful combination to explore the topic in light of its contribution to citizenship education. The one perspective does not exclude the other; they are complementary and related to the analytical and scientific aspects of such education. Moreover, it may also signify an empowering didactic space of opportunity concerning war and violent conflict as a dimension for both peace education and citizenship education, as well as discussing national identity, which will be examined in the next sections.

2.2 Promoting peace

A starting point for a popular approach to learning about war and conflict is the normative postulate that *we need to know about war in order to prevent it*. As the preamble of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) constitution from 1945 illustrates: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed" (UNESCO, 2022). This axiom presupposes that wars are caused by ideas; therefore, it was believed that educational campaigns could contribute to establishing the "intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind" and thereby prevent the outbreak of another world war. The question of war and peace represents, according to Klafki (2011), one of the key contemporary problems or challenges that cannot be solved immediately and that have the potential to cause considerable damage

in the future. Learning about war and conflict is in this sense *preventive*, where the purpose is "understanding what happened so we do not repeat the same mistakes in the future," similar to the cliches "Never again," "Don't forget," and "Those who don't remember the past are condemned to repeat it." These slogans indicate that knowledge and awareness of the horrors of war may represent a vaccination or a bulwark *against* violent conflicts (Mihr, 2015).

The didactic principle here is that exploring the negative consequences of war through narratives of destruction, mass killings, and brutal human rights violations will produce anti-war attitudes and resistance to aggression—building peace through learning its antithesis. Herein also lies the vaccination against totalitarian attitudes, ideologies, and policies underpinning aggressive war and genocide, such as ignorance, prejudice, the doctrine of the inequality of men and races, and the denial of humanity (Totten, 2001). In this context, it represents resilience against dehumanization. World wars in the 20th century have played a central role in educating learners about war and conflict and are still essential points of reference for shedding light on the horrors of war. Jacques Tardi's graphic novel 'It Was the War of the Trenches' illustrates a powerful antiwar commentary on the WWI, not just to commemorate or exalt but to illuminate what he feels is the most important and "banal" lesson of this and any war—the absolute horror of it: "What retained my attention is the man—whatever his color or his nationality—who is considered disposable, whose life is worth nothing in his master's hands. A banal observation that remains valid to this day" (Tardi, 2010).

UNESCO's mandate is closely linked to the experiences of suffering, genocide, and brutal warfare of WWII, stating: "This is why education about the Holocaust in particular, and education about the history of genocide and mass atrocities, stands at the heart of UNESCO's efforts to foster peace and mutual understanding." (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2017, p. 3). Furthermore, UNESCO emphasizes the link between the prevention of mass violence and education, "based on knowledge of the social and political dynamics that can lead to mass violence, is fundamental to building stronger societies, resilient to violence and hatred" (ibid). This resilience or vaccination logic, although simplified, is quite explicit in approaches to holocaust education and remembrance education with concrete cases of war or genocide as a starting point (Ralston, 2019; Totten, 2001; Van Nieuwenhuyse & Wils, 2012). This is not necessarily a representative approach to all learning arenas promoting peace. Indeed, knowledge, awareness and critical skills exploring the *social and political dynamics that can lead to* violence are at the core of critical peace education. These forms of peace education emphasize asymmetrical power relations and root causes of violence - the structural and cultural forms of violence that 'privilege some to the marginalization of others', and thus also create unequal citizenships (Bajaj, 2019, p. 66; Bajaj, 2015).

Aakre (2021) however, argued that peace education, heavily influenced by Galtung's peace and conflict studies (Galtung, 1990), has changed over time from a focus on war and direct physical violence to include post-colonial and decolonial perspectives related to

structural and indirect violence, which some scholars refer to as critical peace education (Bajaj, 2015; Zembylas, 2018). McCorkle (2017) agreed on this shift from the original focus on international peace and war prevention to include social justice, environmental education, human rights, multiculturalism, and various other issues related to cultural, structural and indirect violence. Although these subjects are important additions to the field, McCorkle (2017) argued that we cannot ignore the actual problems of war and militarism in our efforts to understand the structural issues of conflict.[2] Therefore, problematizing war should play a more central role in peace education (ibid.), where representations and 'lessons of war' need to be discussed in light of its contribution to citizenship. These representations however, *could* include post-colonial and de-colonial perspectives integrated in critical peace education, but seem to be - however justifiable- less visible in the practice of schools, memorials and other learning arenas exploring war-related issues. A significant challenge here is if the learning of war is reduced to reliance on mere knowledge of a specific act of mass violence or prescriptive imperatives (*Never forget!*), there is a possibility of trivializing or normalizing war and crimes against humanity through ritualized acts of remembrance, with limited space for critical reflection and active citizenship in the present (Mihr, 2015). What power relations and asymmetries in material conditions contribute to this war crime/mass violence? What narratives are presented, and who controls the production of these (Bajaj, 2019, p.68)? Do all representations of war promote peace or develop citizenship, and what kinds of citizenship are developed? Such questions deriving from critical peace education are significant contributions in this context.

2.3 Constructing national identity

National identity construction and education for national citizenship have played and still play a key role in the context of learning about war and violent conflicts. Benedict Anderson (2006) argued that all nations are "imagined communities," where national identity is (re)constituted and negotiated through social practices. In the same process, actors come to increasingly identify with and commit themselves to this "figured world of nationhood," with the production of collective identity through, among other elements, common myths and historical memories being essential to this imagined community, creating a deep horizontal comradeship for which millions of people have willingly sacrificed themselves (Anderson 2006). As Haller (2003) argued, violent conflict and war have a series of significant social functions, where the production of national identity through the perception of external threats (not necessarily the objective degree of threat) confirms and strengthens the strong emotions and feelings of the "we"—the national community. Hedetoft underlined the strong relationship between war narratives of death, suffering, sacrifice, and the make-up of national identities, although in different ways. He distinguished, mainly rooted in the experiences of WWII, between a proud unifying heroism in Great Britain, the traumatic negative presence in Germany, and the symbolic

moral strength based on historical defeats in Denmark (Hedetoft, 1993). Heroism and victimhood, victory, noble defeat, suffering, and sacrifice in war are constitutive elements of such social practices. Prince Lazar's sacrifice at the battle against the Ottomans at Kosovo Polje in 1389 still plays a decisive role in national identity construction in modern Serbia (the Orthodox, victimized, 'heavenly' Serbia) (Pantelić, 2011; Ramet, 2002), as King Olav Haraldsson (Saint Olav) still does in Norway after the battle of Stiklestad in 1030, where he was defeated and sanctified (Titlestad, 2013)—both referring to the birth and manifestation of the Christian nation.

War is "a constitutive element of collective identity, reproduced in collective memory through national 'narratives' of past glories in the face of threats against national sovereignty and survival" (Jabri, 1996, p. 140). At the memorial sites and war cemeteries of the Somme in France, which was scene to one of the great battles in World War I, the graves of fallen soldiers are crowded with relatives, students, tourists, and other visiting pilgrims from various nations, primarily of the (former) British commonwealth to remember and honor the fallen on the battlefield. Many of these tombstones bear the inscription *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*—it is sweet and fitting to die for one's country. This line illustrates one of the messages that are communicated when visiting war memorials, such as the memory landscapes of the Somme. In the Somme, sacrifice and death represent the brutality of war, and the Great War was a picture of tragedy and meaninglessness; however, it was also a sacrifice for something greater than themselves— the nation and soldier virtues proclaiming that it was good and right to die for the fatherland. This is done regardless of the meaning, intent of the war, or whether this was a necessary war—they are praised for following orders, standing together, and walking into death as representatives of their nations. In this sense, this is also a sacralization of the nation for which they died, and which the descendants confirm with their visits and national monuments on foreign soil. There are clear examples of romanticization and militarism of the Somme area; regiments, battalions, and troops are hailed with the seemingly neutral military language that supports the militarized memory, ornamented with the symbolic red poppy. Pennell's study of WWI centenary practices toward British secondary pupils on battlefield tours in France illustrates the dimension of national identity construction and ambiguity concerning the lessons of war:

> "It explores possible tensions within the blending of education and remembrance, arguing that despite laudable intentions to encourage critical thinking about the First World War, for pupil participants the tour experience predominately emphasizes particular narratives of "British" remembrance shaped around sacrifice, duty and loyalty." (Pennell, 2018, p. 83)

The war poet Wilfred Owen, who fought in some of these major battles, wanted people to see the reality of warfare, and 'the Old Lie' they were told about heroism and sacrifice for your country (*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori)*. There is neither nobility in war nor honor in fighting for your country, according to the poet. Instead, there is tragedy,

futility, and waste of human life, similar to what Tardi's (2010) graphic novel on WWI suggests.

The battle of Normandie in WWII, in contrast to the meaning*less* slaughter represented in the Somme in WWI, represents 'the good war' (Terkel, 1997), the meaning*ful* war against tyranny, totalitarianism, and genocide. The British–American interpretation of WWII has until recently been described as "an epic struggle of democratic heroes stubbornly determined to slay the Nazi monster" (Schrijvers, 2014, p. 76). At the war cemetery and memorial site at Omaha Beach in Normandy, where the Battle of the Beaches began the liberation of France (D-Day) during World War II, the inscription in the multi-confessional chapel symbolizes the sacrifice of the American soldiers. This sacrifice is not just for the *nation,* as emphasized in WWI, but for the whole of *humanity*: "Their graves are the permanent and visible symbol of their heroic devotion and their sacrifice in the common cause of humanity."[3] In some sense, the lessons of the two world wars are represented in different ways. The meaningless waste of lives in the theatre of WWI is given legitimizing purpose through sacrifice for and loyalty to the nation, whereas the meaningful war against Nazism in WWII represents a noble just war for freedom and democracy—and for humanity itself.

However, these two representations of war have a number of common elements. Memorial sites and cemeteries are linked to great battles of the wars, where people travel in large numbers from different parts of the world to remember and honor the fallen, to learn more/feel/reflect on/imagine how it was experienced to participate in the battles and what this means for them personally, for the society they live in here and now, and to establish meaning in the suffering of the soldiers represented. One can also see a common focus on virtues such as sacrifice, duty, and loyalty in connection with the memory of the fallen, where the army, their soldiers, and the military operations are the decisive factors in changing the evil conditions. At one level, they produce messages of peace and the importance of freedom and non-violent solutions through the horrors of war, while at the other level, they represent militarism and the glory of the army, where violent conflict is inevitable and human suffering is part of military necessity. In both examples of the Somme and Normandy, the narratives of war include elements of national identity construction, in which both the meaningless and the meaningful war are communicated through national, military lenses for the sake of the survival of the free nation(s).

In light of these examples, it is relevant to question the role and functions of such war memorials, war landscapes, and museums as inclusive learning sites: What kind of citizenship education are at play and who are included and excluded in these settings? The (ambiguity of the) messages point to divergent forms of citizenship, in which the national and exclusive variants of citizenship seem hegemonic, although the more inclusive, cosmopolitan perspectives are also present but left with less space than the national narratives surrounding the learning of war and conflict. This is a challenge in increasingly pluralistic societies, where different marginalised groups are struggling for recognition and for being included in the great 'We' (Osler & Starkey, 2005). The shaping

of identity through such historical narratives often involves the construction of an *essentialized* national identity, as Bekerman and Zembylas (2016, p. 216–217) argued: "The inclusion or exclusion of particular narratives in the public sphere and in educational settings sets the stage for the tensions that characterize the relations between hegemonic and marginalised groups in traumatized societies."

2.4 Promoting war and militarism

Furthermore, there has been a tendency to take for granted that education itself promotes peace and development, although the empirical evidence for this is more ambiguous (Matsumoto, 2015). In this perception, learning about the costs and consequences of violent conflict should also develop awareness that leads to the prevention of war, as an aspect of citizenship education to identify similar future events. Studies since the 1990s, however, suggest that schooling is not necessarily preventive; it could represent an institution that not only constructs national identity along exclusive lines but also promotes war, directly or indirectly (Davies, 2010; Matsumoto, 2015; Salmi, 2000). Schools and other learning arenas such as memorials and museums may be effective tools of propaganda that promote exclusive ideology, ethnic divisions, dehumanization, and enemy images through the 'hate curriculum,' similar to Galtung's (1990, p. 291) concept of cultural violence, referring to the cultural justification of direct or structural violence. Examples from Rwanda, Bosnia-Hercegovina, Sri Lanka, Israel, and Palestine show how schooling has fueled conflicts and contributed to war and violence rather than prevented it (Davies, 2010; Matsumoto, 2015). Schoolchildren throughout Russia were given mandatory lessons explaining 'the necessity of war,' and the Russian Ministry of Education distributed information in March 2022 directing teachers to instruct their students on justifications for Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Teachers opposing the war could lose their jobs or be arrested if they refused to spread the propaganda: Bruce Millar, Amnesty International's Acting Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, stated: "...It is impossible to know how many teachers or students have been expelled from educational institutions simply for expressing anti-war views. We may never know the total number of children subjected to state-coordinated indoctrination" (Amnesty International, May 12, 2022). Similarly, there are few studies on how the US-led 'necessary' invasion of Iraq in 2003 was represented in different learning arenas. Studies show that the media served as a useful tool to influence public opinion based on several misperceptions about the reasons for invading the country, with the Bush administration leading the public to believe that Iraq was developing weapons of mass destruction and providing substantial support to the al-Qaeda terrorist group (Kull et al., 2003).

There are also representations in which war and the use of force are justified as necessary on humanitarian grounds or for contributing to world peace and international security. The exhibition at the Norwegian Armed Forces Museum called "Norwegian Soldiers in International Operations (INTOPS)" depicts Norway's participation in UN,

NATO, and EU operations abroad after the Second World War (Armed Forces Museum, 2012). It has several thousand visitors every year, including school classes and students at various levels. The military operations are presented and justified as humanitarian action, peacekeeping, or peace-enforcing operations, but without substantial critical distance to the controversial interventions in, for instance, Libya, Afghanistan, or Kosovo. The grand narrative is that Norway's involvement in international operations is, although presented as 'complex dilemmas', legitimate or even necessary to keep the peace in war-thorn areas and to prevent massive human rights violations—all in accordance with, or 'anchored in,' international law (ibid). The exhibition constitutes and reproduces the image of a humanitarian superpower fighting for peace, human rights and democracy, with less space for critical perspectives on, for instance, the use and misuse of military means and the non-intervention principle in international law, new forms of imperialism and the role of NATO in out-of-area operations, and its (changing) strategic concept. The exhibition does not promote war explicitly, but the lack of genuine critical perspectives of the operations may leave an impression of a just, humanitarian militarism and the necessity of *military* solutions to world challenges, and to recruitment for future operations. As Minister of Defense Barth-Eide stated when opening the exhibition in 2012: "I hope the exhibition will help create identity, pride, and tradition. Everyone benefits from hearing about the efforts many Norwegians have made in the world to create peace and democracy" (Bakkeli, 2012).

Schools have historically been strongly connected with the nation-state and as a producer of national identity (Lorentzen, 2005; Tvedt, 2018), and the military as its defender and symbol, in which elements representing the Other are the contrasting part of the dichotomy—the We and the Other. Although the statement from Lavisse (1885) directed at teachers in France in the late 19th century seems rather anachronistic, it underlines the relation between citizenship, nation, and militarism, claiming that if pupils are not imbued with the living memory of national glories or if they do not know that their ancestors fought for 'noble reasons upon one thousand battlefields,' the education is insufficient: 'If pupils do not become citizens conscious of their duties and soldiers who love their guns, teachers will have wasted their time" (Lavisse, 1885, in Hamer, 2010, p. 64).

Thus, education can promote peace and democracy, but it can also promote war and militarism. This goes beyond the premise that education itself is sufficient; the specific forms of learning, its approaches, narratives, and content in the specific context give direction to the type of citizenship it aims at and how it contributes to a peace or war culture. Teachers and other educators can be conscious of democratic methods, dialogue, and deliberation but may also be using curricula, textbooks, and topics that guide narratives of war and conflict with exclusive, nationalistic content that do not reflect skills, values, and knowledge compatible with inclusive forms of citizenship education. To put this in an extreme context, if students and teachers deliberate along these dimensions, concluding that, for instance, their nation's right to self-determination allows for ethnic

cleansing of other nations on their territory—or that its proclaimed 'right' to territory outside their state border justifies armed intervention in a sovereign state—will the principle of education/peace be sufficient to legitimize such learning? Further, war and violent conflict within or between states, people, nations and other groups is not necessarily an unavoidable practice, although history tends to represent it as an inevitable force similar to the laws of nature (Davies, 2005; Pinker, 2012). Moreover, if war is presented as a series of inevitable events, or as routine, this could produce the image of war and militarism as normality, where violence is regarded as a normal praxis and a logical response to conflict resolution (Davies, 2010). From this perspective, militarization remains the only answer to comprehensive security, leaving learners with less space to explore alternative solutions. Independent of the conceptualization of war and armed conflict, it is a human practice based on human choices; following McCorkle (2017, p. 269), it is not "as if fate or unstoppable forces cause the conflict and not the decisions of actual humans." This belief may also remove the moral responsibility of leaders or a population toward armed conflict or even be an argument for preemptive war.[4]

2.5 Questioning war: ethical-critical approach

The didactic challenges discussed in the previous sections are not exhaustive but represent key dilemmas or obstacles to the potential learning outcomes of learning about war and massive violence in light of critical citizenship education. If such learning contributes to exclusive nationalist or authoritarian perspectives on citizenship, selective remembrance, militarism, normalization, and promotion of war, or belief in war narratives as (uncritical) vaccinations against future conflicts, why and how can this topic be defended as a dimension of citizenship education at all? The last perspective represents an 'ethical-critical' approach. Tarozzi and Inguaggiato's (2016) study shows that teachers and other educators in ten EU countries report that war and conflict are one of the most central issues when teaching about global awareness in schools, *along with global justice, environmental issues, human rights, and diversity.* This is in line with Burnouf's (2004) overview of approaches to global education, in which international conflicts and peacebuilding are included in the topics related to state-of-the-planet awareness, which "requires comprehension of prevailing world conditions, developments, trends, and problems that are confronting the world community" (p. 3). The topic is both related to an extended form of citizenship education- global/cosmopolitan citizenship, to education for sustainable development and to human rights education and diversity (Schulz et al., 2017; Vesterdal, 2022). In this context, narratives of war, genocide, and brutal conflicts represent topics that learners engage with and that they identify with as part of what they are exposed to in the news and different media (Schulz et al., 2017; Vesterdal, 2016).

These topics also involve essential moral dilemmas and ethical questions highly relevant to critical citizenship education and Bildung, similar to the view of human nature, the moral choices of the belligerents, the leaders, and the civilians—the agency and

driving forces of the perpetrator, the bystander, rescuer, and the victim—involving relations between power, ethics, and law. Ethical questions necessarily involve individuals and their choices, encouraging rehumanization rather than the dehumanization of the Other. In this sense, it represents an entrance to complex philosophical issues that go far beyond the issue of war itself. Both structure- and agent-based perspectives shed light on these questions, and may contribute to recognizing mechanisms and asymmetrical power structures often present in oppressive regimes and situations of war, genocide, and other massive human rights violations (Bauman, 1989; Chalk & Jonassohn, 1990; Fein, 1993; Harff, 2003). Without learning about the motives and structural conditions of the aggressors or perpetrators, we are unable to identify the sources of violation or the means to prevent it. Adorno found this point decisive to give substance to the phrase "Never Again!" and to critical self-reflection: "One must come to know the mechanisms that render people capable of such deeds, must reveal these mechanisms to them, and strive, by awakening a general awareness of those mechanisms, to prevent people from becoming so again" (Adorno, 2003, p. 21). These aspects can be fruitful aspects of critical citizenship education, questioning the grand narratives and challenging the learners' own positions.

There is also a belief among teachers in creating global solidarity through learning about war and conflict around the world (Vesterdal, 2022). Here, the global perspective aims to develop *awareness* about the interdependent world and how it is connected to its own society. Teaching about wars and massive human rights violations is regarded as a necessary, although not sufficient, tool for engaging students in developing their global horizons, identifying asymmetrical power relations, and recognizing injustice globally (Andreotti, 2006; Burnouf, 2004; Wintersteiner et al., 2015). These perspectives resonate with the aforementioned view shared by Klafki (2011), who integrated the *contemporary key problem* of peace, war, and conflict as a necessary dimension of critical-constructive didactics to develop the threefold aim of self-determination, co-determination, and the ability to have solidarity with the Other (Bildung). This challenge has the potential to *cause considerable global damage,* especially concerning nuclear weapons. The destabilizing impact of conventional warfare on regional and international security is also of high relevance to Klafki's key epochal problems, as the wars in Syria, Yemen, and Ukraine illustrate. The development of *Bildung* and global awareness through studying peace, war, and conflict is closely related to global citizenship education (Wintersteiner et al., 2015).

War, genocide, and violent conflict also raise questions about the role of international law and as an important dimension of international politics and security in such circumstances, in which, for instance, the legitimacy of 'humanitarian' intervention stands at the crossroad between the protection of human rights and state sovereignty, between realism and idealism in international politics, and between power, state interests, legal, and moral principles— bellum justum (Beitz,1999; Nye, 2007; Walzer, 1992). These topics are obviously dependent on the level and experiences of the learners and the specific context in which the learning process takes place (Davies, 2005), and illustrate that war

and conflict are sensitive and controversial issues that need to be considered on a case-by-case basis. This dimension represents the most relevant concept to discuss within the framework of critical citizenship education. Addressing sensitive, controversial issues has been regarded by several scholars as a core principle of developing democratic citizens, in which conflict and disagreement are essential to democratic politics (Bickmore, 2012; Mouffe, 2013; Sant et al., 2021). Questioning hegemonic narratives related to, for instance, war and violent conflict may open up new, critical perspectives that could empower learners against social injustice and oppression (Bickmore, 2012; Freire, 1970). The recognition of the narratives of the 'Other' in education could create transformative learning, both for the privileged and the marginalized groups of learners, despite the risk of discomfort (Svendsen & Skotnes, 2022). This involves reflecting on *whose* war narratives are included, to develop multiperspectivity and critical citizenship. In terms of active citizenship, many cases of war illustrate disastrous outcomes that may also connote hopelessness rather than an optimistic attitude toward the possibility of improving the situation. Such dystopian narratives can thus create apathy or frustration, signaling to potential activists or promoters that there is nothing to be done about such abuses (Mihr, 2015).

The ethical-critical dimension could also represent an empowering approach in which learners are invited to develop alternative or counterfactual solutions to armed conflict and violence in specific cases: how can war be a legitimate option at all, and if so, what should be the criteria for the legitimate use of armed force? What are the premises of just war, and what are the arguments for pacifism (Sterba, 1992; Walzer 1992)? Analyzing and problematizing cases of war and its agents, causes, mechanisms, and consequences through *conflict analysis* (Höglund, 2017), identifying how violent conflict could have been avoided, and proposing alternative solutions to violent forms of conflict could contribute to active forms of citizenship. Such an approach may also develop critical thinking in terms of multiperspectivity, in which the different sides of and parties to the conflict are elucidated (Aggestam & Höglund, 2017). Here, the primary goal is not to develop awareness about a cruel, war-thorn world, but to understand and identify the conflict dynamics, question the premises of waging war, and engage in critical discourses on the inevitability of armed conflict. Similar to developing critical thinking, studying war also gives learners the opportunity to reflect on the fragility of democracy and human rights, as well as the importance of participation as citizens and the necessity of holding people in power accountable (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Snyder, 2017). From the somewhat superficial purpose of stressing the 'importance of democracy and human rights in general' through presenting the horrors of war, an empowering tool may be to scrutinize more specifically *how* violent conflict affects different groups of people and undermines democratic procedures, rule of law and particular categories of human rights. To this end, *questioning* war represents a critical and engaging contribution to citizenship education.

3   CONCLUSION

This article has explored whether and how learning about war and violent conflict can contribute to citizenship education, where the divergent representations of war may produce different messages to the learners, and thus potentially divergent forms of citizenship. This has been discussed through a typology presenting five conflicting educational perspectives on war: (1) exploring the phenomenon of war, (2) promoting peace, (3) constructing national identity (4) promoting war and militarism, and (5) questioning war. The typology points to educational challenges and options that need to be considered when developing educational programs related to war and violent conflict in different learning arenas. The specific representations, the learning context, and the purposes are interdependent aspects, and it is not given that any war narrative or all kinds of approaches to the topic will produce desirable outcomes, considering citizenship education. This discussion illustrates that studying war and violent conflict does not necessarily contribute to citizenship education. On the contrary, some approaches to the topic could be counterproductive and represent the opposite of critical, inclusive, or active citizenship. War narratives as indoctrination and propaganda to promote war and normalize militarism are challenges in authoritarian societies as well as in societies that are characterized as free, democratic societies. The potential of using representations of war and genocide as vaccinations in support of peace and democracy is also dependent on how they are explored and to the extent to which the learners participate and are engaged in the construction of knowledge. Without critical participation, such lessons can be as authoritarian as the cases to which they are exposed—a banking concept of education, in Freire's (1970) words. Furthermore, its contribution to such education depends on the forms of citizenship being discussed. Educators can hypothetically teach citizenship not only as an exclusive, status-oriented concept but also as an inclusive concept, in which citizenship is a practice, including active participation along different channels of influence and levels of society where multiple identities and multilayered senses of belonging are recognized (Davies, 2012; Osler & Starkey, 2005). This also indicates that citizenship could be conceptualized across sub-national, national, and supranational lines, and representations of war can be quite divergent from these potentially distinct positions. Figure 2 sums up and illustrates the key characteristics of the different approaches and the basic type of citizenship they contribute to. These could be overlapping approaches, with elements of different perspectives, but serve as 'ideal types' structuring the main roles of the typology:

Figure 2. Summary of didactic approaches to war, their key characteristics, and main types of citizenship they develop.

Typology: Didactic approach to war	Key characteristics of the approach	Type of citizenship
1. Exploring the phenomenon of war	*Analytical*, studying causes and consequences of war as a social and historical *phenomenon*	Scientific and competence- based citizenship, as part of *Bildung* to understand and participate in the society
2. Promoting peace	Normative and *preventive*, root causes of (mass) violence, war as the antithesis to *peace*	Inclusive, active bottom-up approach; aspects of post-colonial and cosmopolitan citizenship, peace as main goal of learning
3. Constructing national identity	*Nation-centered*, war narratives as sacrifice and heroism *glorifying* the nation	Exclusive, national citizenship, promoting loyalty and patriotism in learning
4. Promoting war and militarism	Justifying mass violence, conflict-supporting and normalizing war, producing enemy images	Exclusive, top-down; state-supportive acts of citizenship and citizens as tools (and targets) for war and mass violence.
5. Questioning war: ethical-critical approach	Explores the legitimacy and premises of war, alternatives *to* war, in light of global justice and awareness	Inclusive, critical, human-centered global citizenship, empowers people rather than the state

The analytical dimension of exploring the phenomenon of war (Approach 1) shares several aspects with questioning war as an ethical-critical approach (Approach 5) and may point toward inclusive, active and global citizenship. Constructing national identity (Approach 3) and promoting war and militarism (Approach 4) are also interrelated and point to more exclusive national forms of citizenship, while national identity construction does not necessarily lead to promoting war and militarism, and war propaganda does not necessarily involve citizenship as understood in this context, but rather *oppose* the concept as such. However, promoting peace (Approach 2) could be both transformative, preventive and involve global forms of citizenship. It could also potentially (and unintentionally) reduce learning to a reliance on prescriptive cliches and even reproduce stereotypes and enemy images (Mihr, 2015; Vesterdal, 2016), but through the concept of critical peace education integrating post/decolonizing aspects and analyzing power structures, it shares several features of approach 1 and particularly approach 5.

This typology mirrors the point of this article that there is a need to elucidate the role

and purposes of war and violent conflict in educational settings and to emphasize that narratives of and learning about war could produce and contribute to divergent forms of citizenship or even represent the opposite of the concept. This may involve inclusive elements, but it may also represent exclusive forms that reproduce stereotypes and enemy images that are counterproductive in heterogeneous societies. There is a need for more empirical research on these questions, both within and across countries. To include these reflections during the development of learning programs and identify the form of citizenship being targeted and how/whether it underpins critical and active learning, is itself a contribution to such education.

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ENDNOTES

[1] Although I recognize that the concepts of memorialization and remembrance are related to several aspects of this topic (Pennell, 2016; Ralston, 2019; Van Nieuwenhuyse & Wils, 2012), the scope of this article limit the focus of this dimension.

[2] Militarism is a contested concept (Mabee & Vucetic, 2018), but some common elements are the extension of military influence into civilian social, political, and economic

spheres, with the associated prioritizing and *promotion* of the army, as well as the normalisation of and preparation for war. Mann (1987, in Mabee & Vucetic, 2018, p.98) defines miltarism as 'a set of attitudes and social practices which regards war and the preparation for war as a normal and desirable social act'.

[3] The message however, is the same as in the WWI memorial in Flanders Field, commemorating fallen American soldiers in Flanders.

[4] The US-led invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan are examples in which such rhetoric dominated the discourse prior to the attacks (Gershkoff & Kushner, 2005). Russian president Putin's speech to the nation on February 22nd may also illustrate this point: "We have been left no other option to protect Russia and our people, but for the one that we will be forced to use today. The situation requires us to take decisive and immediate action." (Al Jazeera, February 24, 2022).

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