

Military Psychology: Time to embrace a front-line diplomatic role

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Abstract

The weapon systems created for the purpose of fighting the enemy in World War I caused terrible losses of human life on all sides of the conflict. However, World War I was also the event that gave birth to what became the field of Military Psychology. This position article, briefly tracing the development of the field, encourages the development of an expanded scope for this sub-discipline of Psychology.

In its infancy, the role of Military Psychology was the selection and placement of soldiers based on a series of cognitive tests. After World War II, the scope of Military Psychology quickly expanded exponentially into areas such as leadership development, psychological warfare, and the enhancement of morale, motivation, resilience, and human factors, as military psychology with its sub-disciplines became integrated into national military forces to enhance the capabilities of the modern fighting soldier psychologically, physically and technologically. As the discipline matured, its present role can be described as to create soldiers whose skills sets greatly surpass those of their predecessors in meeting the ever-increasing complex demands of the modern battlefield.

In recent years, Afghanistan and Iraq illustrated that conventional warfare tactics are rendered all but obsolete by small numbers of militia fighters with improvised devices and even outdated weapons in a demonstration of human ingenuity trumping advanced technology and well-equipped, superior military forces that inevitably failed dismally to subdue insurgent opposition forces. Even the destruction of the Islamic State in Libya (ISIL) and the Islamic State in Syria (ISIS) forces serves to emphasise that the world can no longer afford to continue armed conflict as a means to settle territorial and international disagreements because these eventually become the rationalisation for ongoing, unnecessary conflict.

In its contribution to the defence role, alternatives to engagement in ill-advised military options must involve the strategic deployment of Military Psychology in a front-line capacity to research, comprehend and then, through diplomatic means, counter the psychological and ideological factors at play in creating the world's current conflict areas. If not, an even greater catastrophe will arise from ongoing ill-informed, ideology-driven international military interventions around the world.

Keywords: Military Psychology, regional conflicts, military intervention, conventional warfare, diplomacy

Introduction

The weapon systems created for the purpose of fighting the enemy in World War I caused terrible losses of human life on all sides of the conflict. However, World War I was also the event that gave birth to what became the modern application of psychology in war, and with that, created the professional field of Military Psychology. This article, drawing on relevant historic mileposts in the past century noted in a brief review of the literature, proposes that the development of a military psychology diplomatic role in conflict prevention is an imperative to curtail unnecessary war operations and their aftermath.

In its infancy, the role of Military Psychology started primarily with the selection, placement and training of soldiers in various capacities within the United States (US) Army. This selection process was the first of its kind applied at grand scale in a military force through the utilisation of a team of psychologists and their trained assistants to conduct screening tests (Army Alpha and Army Beta). In some cases these screening test results necessitated the use of more advanced cognitive (such as the Stanford–Binet scale) and mechanical skill tests (such as the Stenquist Skill Test) as the major tools to differentiate individual variance and usefulness to the American Army (Yerkes, 1921).

One could say that, in this process, Military Psychology advised and provided guidelines to both the military and the government on the role of human factors in warfare. As such, it performed as much a strategic as an operational and tactical role. The purpose of this position article is therefore to draw attention to the importance of the strategic role Military Psychology has to play in a world where conflict escalation has serious implications for the survival of the present order. In doing so, military psychologists, and in particular those in the academic realm, would be encouraged not only to do research, but also to develop applications at the strategic level to ensure a safer world for all.

Perhaps the oversight to understand the important strategic role Military Psychology does play arises from the lack of historical knowledge. For most psychology students, the early history of this discipline is limited to a paragraph or two on the first attempts at psychological mass testing, its application to people utilisation initially in war operations, and later within the broader economy and industry. This, at least, is the impression one gets on cursory reading of the now multiple books that include *Handbook of Military Psychology* (Gal & Mangelsdorf, 1991). The momentous work done by Yerkes and others, and from which modern-day Military Psychology evolved, is found only in very brief descriptions, such as in the foreword to the *Handbook of Military Psychology* (Gal & Mangelsdorff, 1991). When this topic is addressed in the literature by authors such as Rumsey (2012), it is mostly in the context of the evolution of enlisted selection and classification measures from the early days of Army Alpha and Beta in 1917 to the modern explorations into non-cognitive and skills tools (Rumsey, 2012).

This is perhaps the reason why, over many years of attending conferences and workshops on military psychology, this author often felt disheartened by just how little military psychology practitioners know about the beginnings of their specialised field in psychology and the vast domains of unexplored contributions it can make to the wellbeing of

humankind. This lack of knowledge about the important role of giving direction to military decision-makers – from its inception in 1917 to the end of World War II – caused Military Psychology to become fragmented. This rendered the discipline of Psychology useless in the important strategic role of limiting war by promoting deterrence in the strengthening of the implementation of diplomatic solutions (Gouws, 2015). Instead, the emphasis remains on creating better, smarter soldiers with scant attention to the human cost and effect on the lives of soldiers and civilians alike. This is demonstrated in an excellent book by Matthews (2020) where psychology is seen as revolutionising war by contributing to twenty-first-century military success. However, in terms of the demands placed on Military Psychology in modern warfare, only 20 of 300 pages are devoted to peace and ethics in war (Matthews, 2020).

The background to and history of how Army Alpha and Army Beta testing came about after the United States entered World War I in 1917, the creation of Military Psychology as a critical science in the act of war-making, and its implications in warfare application around the world, are seldom discussed. As a result, the imperative to avoid military conflict through psychological endeavour is not fully comprehended. Ideally, every military psychologist, before venturing into this intriguing field, should at least read the more than 900 pages of the report by Yerkes (1921) documenting this history. It is imperative to pursue a thorough understanding of this significant historical development in recruiting, selecting, training and placement of soldiers. This became the foundation, which rapidly expanded to include every aspect of military life in the US Army. It also spread to become an integral part of every military force across the globe. A word of caution: the historical timeframe within which Military Psychology was established, contains many aspects that would be considered inappropriate or outright condemnable by present-day standards. This does not detract from the many important contributions the original works made that resulted in the development and growth of Military Psychology over the past century.

The scope of Military Psychology expanded exponentially into the field of ‘human engineering’, based mostly on the original work done by Yerkes and his team between 1917 and 1919. As the field of Military Psychology continued to expand in the period between the world wars, it also found application in other countries. The application of military psychology principles by various nations and their military forces has both positive and negative implications. Pre-World War II Germany capitalised on the early American work as described by Yerkes (1941, pp. 206–207) in this quote:

Our Army assumed and maintained leadership in the application of psychology to military problems during World War I. But Germany also, although in less varied ways, improved and profited by adventures in human engineering. Banking on her experience, and having access to the official reports of psychological service in the Army of the United States, she rebuilt her military organization along psychological lines following the war. And when about 1935 opportunity appeared for vast expansive development of her military might, she quickly created an unprecedented type of organization for human engineering.

During the last five years the Nazi command has built its organization about and by means of the marshaled resources of experts in problems of personnel. Known as Military Psychologists, given dignity, status, and high responsibility in the Army, they actively and aggressively further human engineering. In wisdom of organization and effectiveness of utilization of psychological services, the Nazis already have achieved something that is entirely without parallel in military history. It is not without interest that what has happened in Germany is the logical sequel to the psychological and personnel services in our own Army during 1917–1918.

The Nazi Army has today a highly trained corps of psychologists who as personnel experts are serving in military research laboratories and elsewhere as needed...

Evidently the Nazis, in the interim between world wars, prepared with incomparable foresight, wisdom, and patience for the scientific management of military man-power. If their opponents are to compete with them, it must be either by equaling this development or by devising something superior. We face the fact that no army, except that of Nazi Germany, has other than fragmentary, meager, and inadequate provisions for the utilization and further development of human engineering.

As this elaborate quote indicates, when World War II started, Military Psychology was already an integral part of battlefield success or failure. The post-World War II era saw Military Psychology expanding rapidly into areas such as leadership development, psychological warfare, and the enhancement of morale, motivation, resilience and human factors (also known as ergonomics). During the Cold War, the mind-boggling arms race ravaged whole economies, negatively affecting small nations involved in regional conflicts by the field testing of new weapon systems against opposing forces (Gouws, 2012). Throughout these conflicts, Military Psychology and its sub-disciplines worked hand in hand with national military forces to enhance the capabilities of the modern fighting soldier psychologically, physically and technologically. As the discipline matured, its present role can perhaps be best described as the creation of soldiers whose skills sets surpass those of their predecessors in dealing with the ever-increasing complex demands of the modern battlefield (Gouws, 2013). Military Psychology therefore became primarily active at the tactical and operational levels, in the process expanding into other disciplines as well. Unfortunately, simultaneous with these huge strides towards becoming an integral part of just about every aspect of military endeavour, the multi-disciplinarity of Military Psychology added to its intradisciplinary fragmentation. This, in turn resulted in a loss of its capacity to be a force multiplier, simply for lack of coordination and cooperation between its fields of application in the broader rather than the specific military environment (Gouws, 2014).

While it is therefore imperative to understand how Military Psychology became such a force within the militaries of the world, it is also critical to evaluate the premise on which Military Psychology is based, namely that it is a force multiplier that empowers

the military organisation it serves to be successful in the conduct of war operations and warfare. This added a new area of focus in the global war on terror, described as “human performance optimisation” (HPO) (Matthews & Schnyer, 2019, book cover). However, this new area of focus does not include strategies to preserve peaceful coexistence around the world as an alternative to the rather ill-advised engagements in wars that cannot be won, and which are creating the foundation for even more devastating wars of the future (Gouws, 2019). In short, Military Psychology has a critical role to play in preventing belligerent personalities leading their countries into wars that, at best, serve no purpose except political expediency through ever-increasing unnecessary destruction of lives, property and societies.

It is therefore imperative for military psychologists to consider the degree to which the environment in which they are working may exhibit ample characteristics of potentially illegal and criminal settings. As controversial as this statement may appear, it is not new, and thus it behoves Military Psychology to take heed of the perspective of American sociologist, political scientist and historian, Charles Tilly (1985, p. 186):

To a larger degree, states that have come into being recently through decolonization or through reallocations of territory by dominant states have acquired their military organization from outside, without the same internal forging of mutual constraints between rulers and ruled. To the extent that outside states continue to supply military goods and expertise in return for commodities, military alliance or both, the new states harbor powerful, unconstrained organisations [sic] that easily overshadow all other organizations within their territories. To the extent that outside states guarantee their boundaries, the managers of those military organisations [sic] exercise extraordinary power within them. The advantages of military power become enormous, the incentives to seize power over the state as a whole by means of that advantage very strong. Despite the great place that war making occupied in the making of European states, the old national states of Europe almost never experienced the great disproportion between military organization and all other forms of organization that seems the fate of client states throughout the contemporary world. A century ago, Europeans might have congratulated themselves on the spread of civil government throughout the world. In our own time, the analogy between war making and state making, on the one hand, and organized crime, on the other, is becoming tragically apt.

Tilly’s commentary that states and their militaries have more in common with organised crime than with democracy and related values reflects the failures of modern governments and their militaries to heed the dour warning issued by US President Dwight D Eisenhower in his farewell speech delivered to the American people on 17 January 1961. The warnings from this speech apply to every other nation on earth. However, through selective quoting of a single passage, the world is mostly only aware of Eisenhower’s warning about the increasing power of the military–industrial complex. As a result, critically important aspects of this speech are ignored and therefore its lessons are lost to the collective psyche. Military Psychology, however, as an advisor to its military, must heed Eisenhower’s

words in their context and application to preserve world peace. It is incumbent upon every Military Psychologist to study the entire contents of this speech carefully. Eisenhower (1960, pp. 1035–1040) implores the American people and their leaders to “use our power in the interests of world peace and human betterment” even as he warns about opposing ideologies that are threatening the wellbeing of the world. Eisenhower’s remedy is the exercise of good judgement, militarily, economically, agriculturally and industrially, all balanced with the national welfare of the future for the nation as much as for the individuals comprising it. Aside from warning about the dangers of the military–industrial complex, Eisenhower also warns about the impact of the technological revolution on research and above all, “a government contract [that] becomes virtually a substitute for intellectual curiosity” (IV) by which “public policy could itself become the captive of a scientific-technological elite” (IV). Finally, Eisenhower implores the listener to his speech to heed a dire warning:

Another factor in maintaining balance involves the element of time. As we peer into society’s future, we – you and I, and our government – must avoid the impulse to live only for today, plundering, for our own ease and convenience, the precious resources of tomorrow. We cannot mortgage the material assets of our grandchildren without risking the loss also of their political and spiritual heritage. We want democracy to survive for all generations to come, not to become the insolvent phantom of tomorrow (Eisenhower, 1961, n.p.).

Eisenhower’s prophetic words originate from his insights gained from a lifetime spent serving his country as a soldier and politician. He addresses not only the military–industrial complex, but also science, education and business endeavours. These insights should be an encouragement to all peoples, not just the Americans, and especially to military psychologists to carry the ethical torch in a world where drastic changes in all spheres require a strong national defence, which includes the ability to exercise the tact and diplomacy needed to deal with external adversaries as much as with the enemy within society. The latter is aptly identified in Eisenhower’s (1960, n.p.) speech as those who engage in the abuse of power for their own advantage. Against this background, Military Psychology has an obligation, in defence of the country it serves, to fulfil its professional duty enshrined in the age-old adage: *primum non nocere*.⁴

Towards a definition of military psychology

A review of the history of warfare and the role of Military Psychology during the past century demonstrates how the definition for this discipline, as understood by practitioners in this field, evolved. The practitioner-based definition does not necessarily reflect a definition of the profession, largely because a practitioner-based definition tends to reflect the work environment and its demands without necessarily considering important aspects such as the ethics and professional code of conduct of the profession. This point is illustrated in what was the generally accepted definition of Military Psychology by the end of the Cold War as we approached the end of the twentieth century:

Military psychology is defined in part by the context in which it is applied. It is the application of psychological principles and methods to the military operations. Military psychology is a broad and complex field; all specialities within psychology can be applied in military settings (Gal & Mangelsdorff, 1991, p. xxvi).

This definition went through a number of rapid mutations as various authors attempted to define Military Psychology in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, contributing to the broad field of application. What is more, the field evolved so rapidly that one author and editor, Christopher Cronin, changed the definition after a mere five years. In the first edition (Cronin, 1998, cited by Van Dyk, 2011, p. 114), the definition was merely, "Military Psychology is the application of psychological principles to the military environment regardless of who is involved or where the work is conducted". In the second edition (Cronin, 2003, cited by Gouws, 2020a, p. 51), the definition changes to: "a microcosm which embraces psychological disciplines and which affects almost all aspects of the military setting". A decade later, and consistent with the practitioner-defined model, Laurence and Matthews (2012, p. 6) formulated this definition:

Military psychology contributes to recruiting, training, socializing, assigning, employing, deploying, motivating, rewarding, maintaining, managing, integrating, retaining, transitioning, supporting, counseling, and healing military members.

However, it may be that there is a return to basics as, more recently, in reviewing the history of Military Psychology, Hacker Hughes et al. (2019, p. 1) merely stated, "Military psychology is a specialist discipline within applied psychology. It entails the application of psychological science to military operations, systems and personnel." This reflects a simpler approach, perhaps because, according to Kumar (2020, p. iii), "Military Psychology has become one of the world's fastest-growing disciplines with ever-emerging new applications of research and development."

Kumar noted that the breadth of this sub-discipline transcends the standard sub-disciplines of psychology, because it draws its practitioners not only from every one of the psychology specialties but also from other disciplines, such as engineering and human factors engineering, amongst others (Kumar, 2020). One could therefore say that this broad-based foundation on which Military Psychology rests, makes it a truly interdisciplinary applied science. What is more, according to Mukherjee and Kumar (2020, p. 3):

Military psychology has over the years established itself as a unique sub-discipline that determines its boundaries not through methodological concerns or subject content, but rather through its ability to optimally fulfil the requirements of the Armed Forces in specific contexts and under unique circumstances, making use of advancements in the broader discipline of psychology.

One could probably add to this statement, 'as well as the various other disciplines from which psychology draws', which would support the earlier statement that the practitioner-based definition does not necessarily reflect a definition of the profession.

Across the past 30 years, the changes in the practitioner-based definition of Military Psychology reflected not only the changes in understanding what military psychology is within the military setting, but also the context of the radical world changes that came about in warfare since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. These changes should be seen as the natural evolution expected of any discipline, including those operating within the military realm. What stands out from the analysis of the focus change of these definitions is the degree to which, within a century, military psychology became an integral component of all military development, planning and operations. Kumar (2020, p. 3) quotes Matthews (2014) on how, as a whole, “the discipline of psychology had morphed into an inalienable entity within all areas of the military apparatus: Psychology is more relevant and viable today for the military, than at any point in history.”

The implication from the change in practitioner-driven definitions and the broadening of the scope from which this discipline draws is that, as an offshoot of its mother science, Psychology, Military Psychology continues its evolution into a weaponised science. Keeping in mind the focus on human behaviour and performance in an ever-increasing technological world, Military Psychology may well become its own progenitor of a completely new science that powers the utilisation of artificial intelligence (AI) in applications such as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) and machines making ‘rational’ decisions with no human intervention on the deployment of weapon systems that may even include nuclear, biological, and chemical warfare. This is an area of great concern given that some of this is already in place and utilised by the US military and selected allies in their military operations. Consequently, it is now, more than ever before, imperative for the profession of military psychology to remain ethical and moral in the conduct of its defence duties to the country in whose forces it serves. While ethical and moral behaviour go hand in hand in every profession, it should be more so in the military because of the serious ramifications that stem from all military actions (Gouws, 2021).

Against this background, the definitions adopted in the practitioner-defined roles and purposes of military psychology in a particular military setting, must be superseded by the universally accepted role and purpose of military psychology. This is already well described by national and international professional psychological associations. These professional associations generally define the focus of the psychology profession in all of its specialist applications with the paramount consideration to ensure the ethical and moral execution of psychological duties in all areas of application. As far as the military application is concerned, it is important to remember that Military Psychology historically came into its present existence in 1917 under the auspices of the American Psychological Association (APA). Robert Yerkes, who is credited as the ‘father’ of modern military psychology, was at the time also the president of the APA, and he acted fully within the prescriptive ethical and professional guidelines of the time, and with the approval of the APA Board (Yerkes, 1921).

Presently, the APA remains the world’s largest and most influential psychological organisation in directing all of the professional endeavours of the discipline. It sets the standards not only for research, training and general practice of psychology, but also

for the moral and ethical aspirations, to which all psychologists are required to adhere. In order to understand the field of military psychology as a specialty area of general psychology fully, the APA definition of Psychology (APA, 2015, n.p) as published on their website, provides some core concepts:

Psychology is the study of the mind and behavior. The discipline embraces all aspects of the human experience – from the functions of the brain to the actions of nations, from child development to care for the aged. In every conceivable setting from scientific research centers to mental healthcare services, “the understanding of behavior” is the enterprise of psychologists.

Referencing this definition, the APA (2022, n.p.) articulates the role and purpose of psychology in its Mission Statement very clearly as “the betterment of society improving people’s lives: Our mission is to promote the advancement, communication, and application of psychological science and knowledge to benefit society and improve lives”.

The APA comprises 56 divisions. One of the founding divisions in 1944 was Division 19, the Society for Military Psychology. ‘Div 19’, as it is often referred to, articulates the role and purpose of Military Psychology (APA, 2020, n.p.) as:

Division 19: Society for Military Psychology encourages research and the application of psychological research to military problems. Members are military psychologists who serve diverse functions in settings including research activities, management, providing mental health services, teaching, consulting, work with Congressional committees, and advising senior military commands.

An important area of service to the country is summarised in the following statement, and it reflects the close ties Military Psychology has to both government and senior military command: “work with Congressional committees, and advising senior military commands” (APA, 2020, n.p).

There is no question that Military Psychology therefore is not just limited to the tactical and operational levels of warfare, but indeed should be involved in the strategic and political levels of warfare as well. Although not spelled out as such, this is reflected in its Vision on the Division 19 website (APA, 2022, n.p.): “To serve as the premier organisation for the advancement of the psychological study of military, national defense, and national security organizations”.

This is further crystallised in the Strategic Plan (Society for Military Psychology, 2019, Introduction), defining the Mission and Values of Military Psychology, Division 19. While the Mission is to advance the practice of psychology in several ways within the military establishment, in the opinion of this author, the most important value is expressed as: “Wellbeing – We are dedicated to the promotion of the wellbeing of individuals and organizations.”(APA, 2020, n.p.).

As these definitions and mission statements indicate, as an applied field of psychology, Military Psychology serves the military forces of its respective countries in order to promote the wellbeing of the country's people and organisations, in addition to the military. Within the military, the more obvious utilisation of Military Psychology is to serve the wellbeing of one's own forces, obviously not the opposing (enemy) forces. After all, military operations are not intended to serve the wellbeing of the intended targets. However, the pitfall in this thinking is illustrated, for example, by the marked shift during World War II from conventional military operations to aerial bombing campaigns targeting not only the enemy forces and installations, but also the civilian population in areas where enemy forces operated. Ironically, the bombing of particularly London – by Germany and later of German cities by the Allied Forces – had been counterproductive because neither party recognised the degree to which these actions reinforced resistance in the populations being bombed. Rather than capitulation, it forged endurance simply because of the unforeseen resilience of well-organised societies to withstand bombing without suffering either moral or economic collapse. Even though people suffered, the majority became used to it (Overy, 2013). There is therefore a fallacy in thinking that own forces are more capable of resisting sustained operations than one's enemy. It is this fallacy that inevitably caused much suffering with no change in eventual outcome, as illustrated in the disastrous endings of the Vietnam and Afghanistan wars.

In the aftermath of World War II, examples such as Vietnam and Afghanistan, but also Angola, South Africa, Namibia and other countries where people fought for freedom, illustrate the degree to which both Military Psychology and its application failed to grasp the most basic instinct of human behaviour designed to ensure survival: the ability to withstand incredible suffering and pain, both physical and emotional, when there is a potentially viable end-goal. The reason for this oversight is rather simple: as soon as military psychology becomes weaponised against a common enemy, it loses its ability to understand and thus predict human behaviour on both sides of the conflict. What is more, it loses its advisory role and fails as a science and a profession to live up to the ideals espoused in its professional mission and values.

The only antidote to the weaponisation of Military Psychology to the exclusion of its proper use (i.e. acting to the benefit of all parties involved in a given conflict), is to maintain a scientific focus on primarily human behaviour interpretation and the underlying motivational factors of the players involved in a developing conflict. This can only be achieved if Military Psychology, true to its own definitions of its role and purpose, advises senior military commanders and their governments on the various conflict exit and resolution strategies before any engagement in military operations. This advisory role requires that the practitioners of military psychology assess both sides of the potential armed conflict, and then contribute strategies to reduce, rather than escalate, military conflict in a world where the perpetuation of armed conflict can no longer be condoned if humanity wants to survive as a species.

Human factor failures: Analysing the enemy within and without

Military Psychology, despite the important role it plays in the military organisation, fails as a science and as a profession when it does not engage in all four levels of warfare, serving at the tactical, the operational, the strategic and the political levels. This also requires a level of integration that serves to maintain a view of the whole picture in order to advise and recommend options to de-escalate and prevent unnecessary military conflict. It is this author's opinion, that the absence of the latter is why the same mistake of underestimating the human factor is continuously made, sadly resulting in an ever-escalating war effort with no real positive outcome for anybody. The events at the end of the Afghanistan war and the troop withdrawals in August 2021 more than serve to illustrate the point.

From another perspective, it is worth noting this author's observations of the prevailing South African situation in 1989–1990. Regardless of the reasons proffered for the government of the day's political decision to unban the 'terrorist organisations' – as they were then labelled – and to proceed to a fully democratic system based on one person, one vote in 1994, either inadvertently or by design, the country avoided the very chaos and bloodshed that erupted in Afghanistan after 20 years of war. Indeed, the Afghan experience should be a primary focus of study for Military Psychology on how not to get it so wrong when the war served no other purpose but to return the same entity to power. Conversely, despite the challenges faced in the current South African situation, it would be useful for Military Psychology to study the successes and failures of the South African solution after decades of conflict.

In the three decades since the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 (considered by many political commentators as the pivotal event that signalled the end of the Cold War), the twentieth-century conventional warfare paradigm of business as usual was rapidly replaced by a new paradigm: twenty-first-century unconventional warfare. While many commentators appear to approach this paradigm shift from primarily a threat to Western civilisation of autocratic communist rule in multiple countries, it is important to note that the 1990s brought not only the dissolution of the Soviet Union, but also riots and suppression of autocratic communist rule in multiple countries, amongst others, the Central Asian Republics. Some countries entered into self-determined splits, such as Czechoslovakia, while others split up in a brutal civil war, such as the Balkans. These events indeed set the stage for other groups with political aspirations to commence their own quests for independence and the power independence brings.

In the early 1990s, having developed an academic course in Military Psychology at the Faculty of Military Science, this author had postulated in frequent class discussions on the radical international changes at the end of the Cold War that, just as nature abhors a vacuum and will fill it, so the political landscape will change as mainstream ideologies and political posturing upend the existing order. This author further postulated that the implications of this paradigm shift will only be understood over time in the West when it may be too late. This was a logical development following the regional wars in which East and West were battling it out for supremacy in places such as Angola in Southern Africa and Afghanistan on the Soviet Border. While the end of the Cold War had paved the way for

democracy in South Africa, many complications expected from the country's own violent history could have been managed if only people would reasonably have accommodated each other's expectations, but sadly, the goodwill that existed in South Africa in the first decade of the new dispensation was squandered to the disadvantage of all the country's people (Gouws, 2020b, pp. 193).

Against the background of rapid political change in countries outside of the immediate sphere of what was considered 'the West', as it was seen then, the impact of the end of the Cold War leaving a political and ideological vacuum in 'the East' was felt intensely in Europe. The attack on the United States on 11 September 2001 (since referenced as 9/11) was a result of this vacuum being filled by other forces. This was also the first time in its history that the United States experienced an attack of this magnitude by a rising and increasingly powerful insurgency-based Jihadist force conducting its 'war operations' on America's own territory. The inability of particularly the American government at the time to understand that this was no longer a state-driven action, but jihadist operations involving non-statutory forces, drawn from various population and ethnic groups, acting either as 'lone wolves' or organised militia groups, resulted in the ill-conceived occupation of Afghanistan with its disastrous consequences spanning 20 years. Meanwhile, the same jihadist zeal is still powered by, for the Jihadists, their reasonable rationalisation that it is their duty to destroy an aberrant modern civilisation in Europe, but particularly also in the United States, the latter being perceived as their main enemy.

Had Military Psychology – both as an academic discipline and in practice – not failed in its ability to advise against fighting a largely invisible enemy with traditional statutory military forces with their advanced technology, superior weapon systems, and huge troop numbers at the time, this catastrophe could have been avoided. Instead, the lessons learned in Vietnam only three decades earlier were forgotten and had to be relearned the hard way. Even new technologies designed for long-distance remote warfare were not sufficient to counter forces consisting of primarily civilian-based, non-statutory militia operating like phantoms in an undeveloped and inhospitable, harsh country. The failure of Military Psychology to exert its influence as it did in 1917 to serve in defence of the country at all levels of warfare originated in the fragmentation of Military Psychology, and then became entrenched with the dangerous practice of using a now-weaponised Military Psychology as a one-sided tool within the military apparatus.

Ironically, instead of recognising that a dramatic paradigm shift towards waging unconventional war took place, especially the US Military, supported by Military Psychology, rationalised this as a 'change in war tactics' to what was labelled as 'asymmetrical' or 'hybrid' warfare. While one can argue about the value, if any, of these labels, history is replete with examples of small, unconventional forces taking on big, conventional forces and even their multiple allies – and winning the battles. As Afghanistan and Iraq have illustrated, small numbers of militia fighters with improvised devices and even outdated weapon systems, rendered conventional war operations by mighty modern armies, including the United States, all but obsolete. In the quest for survival, human ingenuity will always trump superior technology and even superior numbers, as often illustrated in the history of warfare. Vietnam clearly brought this

home to the American people but, due to political arrogance, leaders chose to ignore this basic truth. This resulted in a very expensive lesson from which the United States has still not recovered. Afghanistan is now added to this list with the impact thereof lasting for decades to come.

The British Empire learned these lessons in various places around the globe. An example is the British–South African War of 1899–1902, when a relatively small militia consisting of mostly local farmers successfully resisted the mighty British Army, first by conventional and then by guerrilla warfare. The stalemate between these forces was only broken when the British decided to target civilians so as to deny the fighting forces their local support. In a ‘scorched earth’ policy, the British burned down the country-side and forced women, children, elderly and non-combatants into a series of concentration camps, where many thousands perished. Although the British won the war, the emotional impact of this destruction on the country and all of its peoples still reverberates in some political hallways to this day. As such, the enemy from within, making war decisions, is as strong as the enemy from without, because they feed on each other’s whims.

In 2021, refugee camps in parts of Africa especially still overflow with civilians fleeing local conflicts. While this situation is no different today from those left destitute by earlier wars across the centuries, the main difference is that many refugees today find refuge in the very countries that were involved in the conflict in the refugees’ countries. For example, Canada is accepting 40 000 refugees from Afghanistan (The Kabul Times, 2021); yet, through its involvement in that war was partly responsible for the refugee crisis. Government communiques convey an obligation to accommodate at least those people who collaborated with Canada during the war (Global News, 2021).

However, what no one talks about, is that for these resettled refugees, the challenges of adjusting to a new culture, a new language and, above all, failed attempts or limited opportunities at procuring work to create an income to afford a place to live and bring up children, add to their already overwhelming frustrations. This in turn causes the euphemistically referred to ‘radicalisation’ of their young people who are merely wanting a better life than what they are being offered. The process by which this takes place and how the very people intent on helping refugees are creating the future conflict from amongst those they are trying to help, is well documented. It is also very well described from a first-hand experience depicting the disastrous occupation of Iraq in a book every military psychologist should read (see Kilcullen, 2009).

In order to understand both the enemy from without as well as the enemy from within, it is imperative – in Military Psychology terms – to comprehend the complexity of situations where the imbedding of non-statutory forces or insurgents amongst civilians has resulted in many civilians in these conflict zones losing their lives or being seriously injured, as well as losing their homes and/or family members. In the end, it does not matter who does the damage; the occupying force will primarily be held accountable. Not surprisingly, when civilians are caught in the crossfire, they exhibit particular negative reactions towards the occupying or even peacekeeping forces they hold responsible for the ‘collateral damage’. Such events not only strengthen the resolve to resist and fight

back, but also expand the ranks of the insurgents and their resistance movements, as was clearly demonstrated in the South African situation during the 1980s especially. What is more, the same process plays out in countries where displaced persons feel they have no other option but to protest the inequalities they experience in the resettled settings.

Closer to home, South Africans learned little if anything from how the country experienced this phenomenon in a very personal way in especially the 1970s and 1980s. The impact of political policies based on ideological hardliner folly deprived many people of a decent life. The consequences from these events still reverberate through the country and its peoples. Much of this could have been avoided if only those involved in Military Psychology had taken the initiative to research the multitude of psychological motives that played a major role on all sides in the development and continuation of the South African conflict. The data could have been used to advise the military and political leadership on the obvious alternatives that were ripe for the picking. However, as in the rest of the world, this requirement for a thorough analysis of the motives on all sides involved in a particular conflict was not identified nor acted upon, even though it was the most important contribution any profession could make to the defence of a country with so much human potential. Sadly, it seems as if history is about to repeat itself as the country struggles with considerable challenges and ongoing divisions between population groups.

For South Africa – as for the rest of our world – it is imperative that the discipline and practice of Military Psychology should analyse the current conflict potential inside the country as much as outside of it. This analysis should serve to identify the ways to defuse conflict as early as possible and to prevent a catastrophe arising from ill-informed intervention decisions directed at largely illusory and/or invisible opponents. The failure of Military Psychology in the past 30 years to participate in the opportunities to unite nations and peoples after the end of the Cold War is unacceptable, albeit mostly attributable to the hesitancy and unwillingness to risk censure for legitimate and scientifically based assessment of senior military and political leaders whose actions serve as the enemy within.

The role of Military Psychology in advising military leadership and government decision-makers on conflict resolution and prevention of catastrophic, drawn-out wars, retaliatory strikes and upheaval of the civilian population, including scores of refugees swamping refugee camps as well as neighbouring and other countries, can be of incalculable value for a safe, clean and peaceful world. Imagine a world where 20 years ago military psychologists, using the persuasive techniques of 1917, could have convinced the American government and its allies not to invade either Afghanistan or Iraq, but instead to pursue a different option to bring those responsible for the 9/11 attacks to justice. Not only would it have reduced the considerable human catastrophes in both those countries and the loss of soldiers' lives and health, but it would also have reduced the climate change footprint and soil and water contamination caused by the explosion of many thousands of tons of military ordnance. The trillions of dollars wasted on a fruitless, ill-conceived war could have created and sustained infrastructure across the globe that would have improved the lives of all.

However, attempting to determine the actual cost of even just the war in Afghanistan is an incredibly difficult task because of security classifications on the costs and ordnance expended on many of the military operations. The accurate cost in loss of life, the wounded, the damage to or loss of property and the disruption of fragile economic stability will probably never be known. As far as Afghanistan is concerned, if recent figures (updated in August 2021) compiled by Al Jazeera journalist Mohammed Haddad (2021) are only 50% accurate, these costs are terrifying in their long-term implications, not even taking into account the ecological impact of the countless tons of ordnance dispersed across the country.

Diplomatic failures: The war that will end war – a century later

As argued in *The war that will end war* (Wells, 1914), World War I was supposed to be the war that will end all wars. What started as an expression of idealism became bitter disappointment only two decades later, when the mass slaughter of World War I was followed by the even greater casualties of World War II. Even so, aside from Wells' writings on the topic, it should be of particular interest to military psychologists to read a review article of 13 studies dealing with the effects of war on psychology during the period 1914–1916, and comparing that with the prevailing status of war today. Then, as now, there has been a continuous analysis of how to possibly avoid wars, including studying the conditions and the mental processes that give rise to war. It is therefore somewhat disheartening how, for a century, there has been little if any change in the bellicose spirit that enchants whole nations to engage in war even when other more peaceful conflict resolution options are available. The following quote illustrates how the same concerns about war engagement remained unchanged for more than a century (Wright, 1916, p. 462–466):

The question whether wars can be avoided in the future has prompted thoughtful analysis of the mental processes that give rise to war and of possible means for their suppression or control.

Crowds of pacifists exercise little influence in war time, and democratically governed nations are as much addicted to war as others. Wars are not caused by ideals, though a war becomes largely a conflict between ideals, and the latter may help determine the outcome. The only kind of force that could bring lasting peace to Europe would be the rise of an international “overcrowd” led by an overmastering ideal more potent with populations than any which single nations can exert ... Hostile impulses are nourished in a nation during peace through economic competition, the *Borse*, duelling, rivalry between officials, teachers, scholars, artists, theologians, *et al.*

When war is threatened the influence of those educated in science, philosophy, and art may be on the side of peace, but it is weak in opposition to rulers, politicians, diplomats, officers, journalists, and others who find war to their personal advantage. If a proposed war appears to be defensive, patriotic and other motives of a social and moral character are also potent. Hobhouse (4)

believes that if peace at the end of the present war in Europe could be settled on the basis of the right of each population to choose its own allegiance or independence, carrying out Green's view that "will and not force is the true basis of the state," permanent peace might ensue ... The danger is that settlement will not come on a rational basis, but "in the rough and tumble of forces, or through a give and take imposed at the last by common exhaustion," with desires for *revanche* and a continued armed truce as consequences.

The above quote demonstrates that, regardless of resistance to war engagement, political messaging plays an overriding role in countries deciding to go to war. These decisions are not made rationally, except for the advantage they hold for the decision-maker(s). A cursory review of 21st Century politics, especially after 9/11, shows that the same ideological rhetoric that resulted in the Cold War applies. The only difference is the use of new terminology, e.g., hybrid or asymmetric war as rationalisation for 'the War on Terror'. War is driven by personalities and belief systems inherent to the political and religious heritage of nations. At their core, conflicts in various parts of the world therefore consist of similar yet opposing belief systems. These can destroy the world as we know it – not because of their inherent power base, but because of the immense firepower and advanced weapons systems that are continuously being developed by superpowers and sold to surrogate powers.

The threat posed globally and nationally by the continuing arms races between countries expanded exponentially and now include non-statutory, insurgent forces. According to UN Resident Correspondent and CBS News foreign affairs analyst, Pamela Falk, there are so many radical groups operating in the world today that the deployment of a so-called 'dirty bomb' at some point in the very near future is a given; the only unknown is the "when" and "where" (Falk, 2017, n.p.).

Statutory military and intelligence organisations do not have the means to prevent this from happening. Yet, national leaders from especially powerful 'Western' countries continue to make derogatory, threatening statements to leaders of countries they oppose on ideological grounds, rather than engage in conciliatory diplomacy to find solutions despite differing ideologies. This is doable, as for example, illustrated by the Reagan–Gorbachev meetings in the late 1980s, which facilitated the end of the Cold War. It is chilling, however, to what degree old rhetoric is resurfacing and rekindling the Cold War bellicose spirit. At the time of writing, the world is on edge about retaliatory threats for potential Russian intervention in Ukraine bouncing back and forth between the United States, the EU and NATO on the one hand, and the Russian Federation on the other, with diplomatic efforts to prevent the conflict from escalating holding little promise. At the time of review of this article, a mere few months later, the war materialised. As this war continues, there is a paucity of reliable reporting on all sides as accusations are levelled at each other by the opposing sides.

In this context, military psychologists also have an obligation, in protecting the country they serve, to comprehend the motives behind the rhetoric of their own leaders and advise them on the preferable diplomatic rather than military confrontational options for conflict

resolution. Put another way, the military constitutionally obeys the government of the day by protecting the integrity of the borders and interests of the country. However, the military also has an obligation to disobey illegal orders from political masters (established in what became known as the Nurnberg Defence (see *Oxford Reference*, n.d.a), where culpability for illegal actions cannot be delegated upwards) if such orders are not based on international and national legal principles. Military leaders who fail to do so, may find themselves facing sanctions they did not foresee. One example is the United Kingdom's Iraq Inquiry set up in 2009 (United Kingdom Government, 2016) to look at decision-making in relation to the invasion of Iraq. Chaired by Sir John Chilcot, it found that the invasion of Iraq was based on the execution of illegal political orders. The most likely implication this holds for the future is that senior military leaders may well be held accountable for following such orders, as had happened at Nurnberg.

The survival of humankind – and for that matter, any country – depends not on the indiscriminate use of force in pursuit of political objectives, but on knowledge of the conflict-generating belief systems that may lead to unnecessary and ill-advised wars. It is the task of Military Psychology to obtain this knowledge by its focused research and analysis of the prevailing rhetoric and belief systems, and then to create the tools whereby this can be countered by equally well-placed counter-arguments. In short, more than ever before, the militaries of the world will have to engage in psychologically based conflict de-escalation operations not only to support the necessary military operations against the ever-increasing invisible opposition forces operating in regional conflicts, but also to prevent becoming involved in them in the first place.

In the current world climate of division and fringe movements becoming more powerful, there is no longer any excuse for powerful and influential armed forces not to be instrumental in identifying the universal and acceptable belief systems that unite people in peaceful resolution. When all else fails, Military Psychology should support military engagement designed to de-escalate violent regional conflict.

This means that not only should Military Psychology be advising against the excesses of the military-industrial complex Eisenhower warned about (see Yale Law School, 1961), but it should also warn about the dangers of seeing war as the only viable solution to conflict (by militarists, politicians, economists, bureaucrats and others – even academics). This is articulated very eloquently by the American political scientist and historian, Michael Parenti (2014, n.p.):

Through much of history the abnormal has been the norm. This is a paradox to which we should attend. Aberrations, so plentiful as to form a terrible normality of their own, descend upon us with frightful consistency.

The brutish vagaries of plutocracy are not the product of particular personalities but of systemic interests.

Our various leaders are well informed, not deluded. They come from different regions and different families, and have different personalities, yet they pursue pretty much the same policies on behalf of the same plutocracy.

So it is not enough to denounce atrocities and wars, we also must understand who propagates them and who benefits. We have to ask why violence and deception are constant ingredients.

Unintended consequences and other oddities do arise in worldly affairs but we also must take account of interest-driven rational intentions. More often than not, the aberrations – be they wars, market crashes, famines, individual assassinations or mass killings – take shape because those at the top are pursuing gainful expropriation. Many may suffer and perish but somebody somewhere is benefiting boundlessly.

Knowing your enemies and what they are capable of doing is the first step toward effective opposition. The world becomes less of a horrific puzzlement. We can only resist these global (and local) perpetrators when we see who they are and what they are doing to us and our sacred environment.

What is of particular concern is that even a cursory review of daily news statements indicates that, in addition to fringe groups, established and legitimate political and military entities alike appear to engage in a variety of actions that are designed to perpetuate regional war operations simply because it is politically convenient to do so. This is aptly illustrated in the following quote from an opinion article on Canada's involvement in the war in Afghanistan, written by retired senior Canadian diplomat, Gar Pardy (2015, n.p.):

Unfortunately there is one aspect of the war that is being ignored, and as with most modern wars it is the most important. No one, especially the militaries involved, has offered any assessment of success in understandable terms of what this war will achieve. Most will only say that a conclusion is years away, which in today's world is no answer whatsoever.

We have dressed for a ball that we do not understand, and invited ourselves, knowing we have no capability of influencing the outcome. Instead, leaders who should know better see the war as a means of scratching a small itch in the national body politic-fear of an imprecise national security threat. In response, they send our soldiers into harm's way, and this even before they have satisfactorily dealt with the wounded from the last war.

We do not have to go back to Vietnam for a detailed understanding of the futility of fighting forces on their own land. Eleven years of fighting the Afghans with overwhelming force and money, the creation of comprehensive new security and military forces, the fostering of civilian political measures of electoral politics and the holding of elections and the creation of a hothouse corrupt economy based on foreign money have done absolutely nothing to change anything of any significance in that ancient land.

Part of the reason for the entrenchment of war as a solution to supposedly irreconcilable differences between countries and factions, may be found in the work done by prominent historians. For example, even a brief look at historical data discussed by Israeli historian

Yuval Harari (2014, p. 60) suggests that humankind throughout its existence, at least as *Homo sapiens*, engaged in bloody war and genocide for probably the past 30 000 years. However, these conflicts became particularly bloody in the last 12 000 years or so. Harari further postulates that war and genocide were as violent then as it was in the twentieth century (p. 60).

An American historian, Ian Morris (2014), on the other hand postulates that, in the past millennia, war had played a positive rather than negative role in advancing society:

War is mass murder, and yet, in perhaps the greatest paradox in history, war has nevertheless been the undertaker's worst enemy. Contrary to what the song says, war *has* been good for something: over the long run, it has made humanity safer and richer. War is hell, but – again over the long run – the alternatives would have been worse (p. 7) (emphasis in the original).

What has made the world so much safer is war itself (p. 8).

However, in spite of the fact that Morris sees war as positive development in the history of humankind, he also predicted that the next half century or so could be the most dangerous of all times (p. 8). As much as Morris may explain the positive benefits of war, the rationalisations that arise from his comparative statistics therefore do not negate in any way the significant numbers of lives destroyed and futures crushed in the ongoing conflicts around the globe. Even Morris acknowledges that the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki killed more people than what was probably the entire world's human population 50 000 years ago (p. 8). These numbers are both frightening and earthshattering when one starts to contemplate the magnitude of the human suffering that takes place as a result of failed diplomacy seriously.

Therefore, there can be no question that this is a critical time in which both the discipline and the application of Military Psychology must become a radical change agent in the area of military conflict management and resolution. It is imperative to find an alternative solution to violent conflict for, if the trends as identified across history are any indication of what awaits us, it may well be that humankind will destroy itself even before the current century reaches its end. In preventing this catastrophe, Military Psychology has a very important role to play and indeed, as the principal science that studies human needs, actions, emotions and behaviour in military and conflict contexts, has an obligation to heed the existence of the gap in knowledge that Harari (2014, p. 296) warned about:

Most history books focus on the ideas of great thinkers, the bravery of warriors, the chastity of saints and the creativity of artists. There is much to tell about the weaving and unravelling of social structures, about the rise and fall of empires, about the discovery and spread of technologies. Yet they say nothing about how all this influence the happiness and suffering of individuals. This is the biggest lacuna in our understanding of history. We had better start filling it.

Leadership failures: The pathology conundrum

In order to understand the impact of all human actions in the world we inhabit adequately, Military Psychology must derive its knowledge from investigating and analysing both the visible, tangible things around us, and from that anticipate the results and outcomes of alternative actions. This requires gaining an understanding of the whole spectrum of living as human beings at both the conscious and not-so-conscious (e.g. hidden agenda and manipulation) levels. Only then would Military Psychology be able to contribute to the knowledge base required to manage conflict and armed forces operations in the coming decades.

However, to be doing this, Military Psychology will have to pursue a very necessary pathway, which is fraught with pitfalls when analysing the political motives underlying conflict engagement. After all, the military serves the government of the day and is expected to obey lawful orders. The test of whether an order is lawful or not is based on knowledge of the big picture, and not only on certain segments of it. Full knowledge can only be derived from looking at the political rationalisations put forward by political leaders as well as by studying and understanding the role of the individual and collective psyches of political and military entities in leadership positions who are driving conflict initiation and perpetuation on all sides of the proverbial red line. This is an urgent necessity, given the blunt and rather shocking perspective on political leadership offered by a World War II psychiatrist and later assessor of Nazi-accused, Maurice N Walsh (1971, p. 6):

It is now quite universally recognised that the superficial and naive statement that war maintains the balance of nature in humans in the same way that predators do in the animal world is a myth, since the present studies show that the expression of naked aggression, manifested through the destruction of other human beings, is largely led and initiated by psychologically abnormal individuals.

One can say with certainty that the time-honoured human habit, unfortunately not rare, of placing nations under the control of psychologically abnormal, aggressively perverted persons, together with the modern factor of the ever-increasing new invention of massive weapons of destruction, is certain to be suicidal for the human race unless interrupted. This tendency of societies to select psychiatrically and pathologically charismatic abnormal individuals, of the nature of aggressive perverts, to control nations and to lead them into war indicates that intra-specific aggression in the human race has gotten out of hand and has become a serious threat to the survival of the species. This can only mean that natural selection in the human is being interfered with, and that unconscious forces, basically responsible for the existence of aggressive perversions as well as for the uncanny ability of such pathologically charismatic individuals to seduce normal human beings into selecting them as leaders and following them to death, can effectively upset the balance of human nature and can brutalize and destroy human beings en masse with enormous damage to the painfully attained process of civilisation.

If ever there was a case to be made for military psychologists to study the political pronouncements, beliefs and actions of political leaders that promote war over diplomacy, this quote provides it. The role of the military is to defend the country it serves against outside attacks. Operating in other countries when no war was declared and approved by the international community through bodies such as the United Nations is pure aggression and illegal. Hence, military leadership, armed with the knowledge generated from these Military Psychology studies, in defence of their countries, should instruct government leaders about the threat posed by their actions, as described in the above statement by Walsh. It is important to note, now more than ever before, how this tendency of voters – regardless of the political system – to place aggressive and pathological leaders in charge of their nations, continues to perpetuate those factors within the individual and the collective psyches of particular groups of humans that opt to engage in war decisions and actions.

While some political leaders are more prone than others to engage in war, in the game of politics it is not uncommon for most politicians to act with less restraint than expected, because, as illustrated in a quote attributed to the English publisher, Ernst Benn, “[p]olitics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it wrongly and applying unsuitable remedies” (Radcliffe, 2012, p. 324).

In defence of the country, the military should therefore also demonstrate their commitment to finding peaceful solutions first through its expressed unwillingness to engage in aggressive war operations. This can only be achieved by developing an informed understanding of the human drives, fears and anxieties that influence political and military leaders’ perceptions and their reactions to given situations. This in turn would identify the psychological drives behind decisions reached on crucial issues, including regional war engagement and disengagement. It is therefore imperative that military psychologists not only assess opposition and rival leadership but also do a similar analysis of own and allied leadership thinking. Such analysis would provide the data necessary to assess the viability of the decision-making process about potential military operations. In addition, it would identify if envisaged military operations are carried out without a clear mandate, with an ill-defined military objective, and/or lacking a viable exit strategy. Most important, military psychologists should analyse the available options to support and bring about alternative solutions through diplomatic engagement, as non-negotiable imperatives before any military action would even be considered by top military leaders. This is doable in much the same way as Yerkes and his team did a century ago.

Opting for alternatives to military engagement must be the first course of action. Even in the twenty-first century, most of these violent and bloody military actions are still based on mythical and imaginary creations of the individual and the collective minds of political leaders who choose to engage rather than disengage the military to pursue war rather than peace. This was very bluntly articulated almost six decades ago by the late Senator J William Fulbright (1966):

The more I puzzle over the great wars of history, the more I am inclined to the view that the causes attributed to them – territory, markets, resources, the

defense or perpetuation of great principles – were not the root causes at all but rather explanations or excuses for certain unfathomable drives of human nature. For lack of a clear and precise understanding of exactly what these motives are, I refer to them as the “arrogance of power” – as a psychological need that nations seem to have in order to prove that they are bigger, better, or stronger than other nations. Implicit in this drive is the assumption, even on the part of normally peaceful nations, that force is the ultimate proof of superiority – that when a nation shows that it has the stronger army, it is also proving that it has better people, better institutions, better principles, and, in general, a better civilization (p. 5).

Fulbright’s indictment of political leadership highlights the stark contrast in Harari’s (2014) excellent example of a political leader who had opted *not* to use the force and power of the state and engage in bloody internal conflict:

Had the last Soviet ruler, Mikhail Gorbachev, given the order, the Red Army would have opened fired on the subjugated masses.

Yet, the Soviet elite, and the Communist regimes through most of eastern Europe (Romania and Serbia were the exceptions), chose not to use even a tiny fraction of its military power. When its members realised that Communism was bankrupt, they renounced force, admitted their failure, packed their suitcases and went home. Gorbachev and his colleagues gave up without a struggle not only the Soviet conquests of World War Two, but also the much older tsarist conquests in the Baltic, the Ukraine, the Caucasus and Central Asia. It is chilling to contemplate what may have happened if Gorbachev had behaved like the Serbian leadership – or like the French in Algeria (pp. 269–270).

While one would wish that this would be the rule and not the exception, even a cursory reading of the rather excellent historic assessment by Canadian historian, Margaret MacMillan (2013) of the factors that resulted in World War I, indicates the almost unbelievable psychopathological actions by political, military and bureaucratic decision-makers that brought about a perception of threats posed by leaders of other countries that made war inevitable. Careful reading of MacMillan’s personality descriptions compiled from historic documents on most of these decision-makers suggests that significant psychological factors, combined with particular personality traits, were involved in the decision-making processes of those leaders that fuelled the pursuit of these conflict strategies, rather than finding alternative solutions. It is imperative that military psychologists understand and also address these very serious threats posed to the security of their own and other countries.

The cost of human suffering incurred during World Wars I and II remains incalculable. This human suffering, sadly, continues to be multiplied today in regional conflicts on particularly the African continent, but also in other parts of the world, most notably the Middle East, with the economies of small countries collapsing through the deliberate and mostly illegal interference of outside powers. Where three decades ago the impact

of these actions went mostly unnoticed because of media limitations, in today's world, connected by technology such as unlimited access to the internet available to anyone with a mobile phone and the ability to make a video, such actions are broadcast to the world. This means that the previously well-used rationalisation that minimised these sufferings with euphemisms like 'collateral damage' is no longer effective. Through the actions of outside actors, often occupying forces, the economic and social disintegration of a country is vividly displayed for all to see, even when described as 'collateral damage'.

This extensive coverage of human suffering provides the impetus that could serve to call political and other decision-makers on military operations to account in the future. What is more, the influx of refugees that descended on countries in especially Europe over the past two decades will serve to keep these stories alive as testimony of the misery heaped upon them, with dire consequences in the future. This is because modern military operations always bring misery to especially civilian populations, who suffer fates, such as loss of life and limb, family and property. Fleeing their war-ravaged regions and countries further reduces their quality of life to virtually nothing. In turn, this creates the dissatisfaction and hopelessness, stemming from nothing more to lose, that lays the foundation for future conflicts based on centuries-old hatred for wrongs done to them. A poignant example from recent history is the 1999 war between Serbia and Kosovo, which was in retaliation for the Serbian loss of the Battle of Kosovo on 28 June 1389, when Ottoman Turks defeated the Serbian army of Prince Lazar. According to Longworth (1999), it was at the 600th commemoration of this battle that Slobodan Milosevic ignited the nationalistic fires that eventually destroyed Yugoslavia.

Ironically, in the Middle East, and in particular in Iraq and surrounding countries, very similar circumstances gave rise to the formation of the Islamic State (ISIS) and the subsequent horrors perpetrated by it. Ironically, the seed for the creation of ISIS was sown on 5 February 2003, when then US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, in his address to the United Nations to make the case for the war in Iraq, mistakenly identified the unknown violent criminal and thug, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, as the crucial link between al-Qaeda and the regime of Saddam Hussein. In truth, al-Zarqawi was deemed an unacceptable person even by Usama bin Laden, the founder of al-Qaeda, because of his extreme views and violence (Gouws, 2016). Such is the impact of political lies and machinations for political gain. Yet, even as ISIS was conquering territory, the general political message espoused around the world remained that these nations were not engaging in all-out war; instead, they were only serving peace through engagement in 'regional conflicts'. However, according to the Defence Review (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project [ACLEDE], 2022), the African continent experienced more than 94 000 armed conflict events between 1997 and 2014. While this number is staggering, it becomes incomprehensible when one considers the information offered on the website of the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLEDE, 2022). Even with the restrictions of a worldwide pandemic, the number of political violence events, fatalities, riots, battles, explosions and violence against civilians are considerable.

In order to gain an understanding of the human cost of these events, military psychologists should regularly review the data offered by this and similar projects. There is an ever-

present danger that these regional conflicts could escalate and become the source of major conventional conflict, primarily instigated and waged by smaller groups. What should be of great concern is that the apparent ‘destroyed Islamic State’ again appears to become a significant threat, evidenced by its actions in Palma, Northern Mozambique, in 2021 (Rédaction Africanews, 2021). Furthermore, while governments in primarily Western countries attempt to counter ‘radicalisation’ domestically and abroad, they conveniently continue to overlook the fact that the disgruntled and unhappy populations serving as militant recruitment sources came about precisely because these governments created the circumstances from which this became possible.

Indeed, all of these ‘small wars’ form an integral part of a new type of world war, as explained by Kilcullen (2009). As one of the architects of the 2007 ‘surge’ counterinsurgency strategy in Iraq, Kilcullen came to understand intimately how legitimate grievances raised by people instead of being addressed, resulted in them being misidentified as ‘insurgents’. Their only option in the end was to become embroiled in counteractions. These cumulatively served as the core from which actual radicals generated a unified worldwide terror network. From even a basic understanding of human behaviour, one can deduct from reading Kilcullen’s (2009) monumental work, *The accidental guerrilla*, that the millions of displaced persons who found refuge in Europe from two decades of ill-conceived and brutally executed ‘allied military operations’ in their countries of origin, would include those with legitimate reasons to actively seek revenge for the losses they had suffered. The vicious cycle of ‘an-eye-for-an-eye’ and ‘a-tooth-for-a-tooth’ therefore continues even though it could have been prevented.

Clearly, against this background, military psychologists have a very important role to play in advising military leadership during the strategic, operational and tactical planning cycles, and most importantly, also in the execution of military actions at the various command levels and the to-be-expected psychological impact of these operations regardless of command level. This is particularly important in those theatres where specific cultural factors must be considered carefully, especially with regard to winning the hearts and minds of the people who will be affected by these essentially foreign military operations on their soil.

Multiple authors depict the allied military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan as a massive failure across two decades of military operations in these countries (see for example Dyer, 2019; Haddad, 2021). However, reading between the lines, Kilcullen (2009) attributes this to the absence of psychological common sense, which brought about the overall failure of the Americans and their allies to bring about stability and prosperity, not only in these two countries, but also in every other country where they have been militarily engaged in what should have been avoidable wars. Indeed, after two decades in Afghanistan, nothing changed politically or ideologically. Dyer wrote in January 2019 (n.p.), almost two years before the disastrous US withdrawal in August 2021:

“The Taliban have committed, to our satisfaction, to do what is necessary that would prevent Afghanistan from ever becoming a platform for international terrorist groups or individuals,” said Zalmay Khalilzad, the US official in

charge of Afghanistan peace talks, on Tuesday. So why didn't the United States have this discussion with the Taliban seventeen years ago, in October 2001?

The American representative has just spent six days negotiating with the Taliban in Qatar, and he has their promise that they will never let terrorist groups like al-Qaeda or Islamic State use Afghanistan as a base. The Taliban are Islamists and nationalists (despite the incompatibility of these two principles), but they were never international terrorists.

There is no question that the allied militaries share complicity with their political leadership for failing to comprehend the underlying, pathological drives in the psyches of their own nation, their own leaders, and the people they represent. The only remedy for this pathological war-mongering is for military psychologists to include at least a component of analysis of the psychological factors playing a role in the decision-making process of their own forces and government to engage militarily in a particular conflict arena. Based on these findings, military psychologists should play a decisive role in advising military and political leaders of the underlying psychological factors that are driving unnecessary and even illegal political decisions to engage the military in both aggressive and defensive wars.

Military failure: The psychological impact of (illegal) war operations on own forces

Throughout the history of warfare, conflict is dependent on the readiness of one group of people (say group A, mostly a nation or subgroup of a nationality) to engage in physical conflict with another group (say group B). This requires the dissemination of a consensus message from group A leadership (mostly political or ideological in nature) that the group B state poses a dangerous threat to the continued existence of group A's present order and its members. Group B can therefore not be allowed to continue to function in its present existence. The argument is that to ensure the future safety of all, group B must be neutralised by force and replaced with an acceptable alternative (note the absence of concern for the lives of the people so affected). The most effective way to convince one's own people (group A) is by stereotyping oneself in an acceptable and the other (group B) in an unacceptable manner. This makes the loss of life an acceptable consequence (and justified by the people comprising group B's choice to live in their pariah state). The same process is applied when creating allies to act jointly against another state or groups of states. In psychology, this process of creating beliefs that are associated with categories of people or social groups based on prejudice, is called stereotyping (see Allport, 1954). These stereotypes are "primarily images within a category invoked by an individual to justify either love-prejudice or hate-prejudice" (Allport, 1954, p.189).

Stereotypes can thus be both beneficial and dangerous, but politically – when used in either capacity – they are particularly useful as tools to direct and channel human behaviour (see Eysenck, 1953). In understanding the benefits and dangers of stereotypes when used in ideological and political messaging, the 1953 work of one of the past century's oft-quoted psychologists, Hans Eysenck, not only on understanding intelligence and personality,

but also on other critical issues in psychology, is noteworthy. Judged by modern-day standards, some of his work has recently been considered “incompatible with modern clinical science” by some reviewers of his work (Marks 2019, pp. 409–420). Eysenck was nevertheless a towering figure in the field at the time. His description of the role of stereotypes remains valid today (see Eysenck, 1953). Applied to Military Psychology – and in particular how stereotyping serves to further war and conflict – the following quote, although elaborate, explains the role of stereotyping as still manifested in the world today:

Stereotyped ways of looking at things have their obvious dangers. They tend to be maladaptive and may lead to disaster if taken seriously ... Stereotypes also have obvious advantages. They give us an ordered, more or less consistent picture of the world to which our habits, tastes, capacities, comforts, and hopes have adjusted themselves. They may not be a complete picture of the world but they are a picture of a possible world to which we are adapted. In that world people and things have their well-known place and do certain expected things. We feel at home there; we fit; we are members; we know the way around. There we find the charm of the familiar, the normal, the dependable; its grooves and shapes are where we are accustomed to find them.

Perhaps the most obvious field in which stereotyped attitudes are found is that of national differences. It is not, however, the only one. We all have mental images of certain groups of people which make us endow these groups with certain uniform characteristics ...

But it is in the field of national differences that stereotypes appear with particular virulence, possibly because in the case of most other groups reality and acquaintance impose a certain check on us, whereas in so far as other nations are concerned we can rationalize our preferences in the complete absence of factual knowledge. Nor is it only the uneducated who hold views of this kind; many a learned professor have written tomes on the national characteristics of various groups, based almost entirely on passing fancies and stereotyped prejudices (Eysenck, 1953, pp. 244–245).

Gouws (2017, pp. 17–36) notes that the visible psychological impact of war operations on soldiers, regardless of nationality, contrasts sharply with the stereotypes in political and ideological rhetoric used to bring about escalation rather than de-escalation of the bellicose spirit. This plays into the context of military recruitment and generates public support for military war operations. Stereotypes serve a common purpose in that they provide the labelling of a group of people (be it a nation, tribe, or ethnicity) as ‘the enemy’; thus, allowing the government of the day and its military to act with impunity against the ‘aggressor’ in ‘defence’ of the society it serves. Engaging in war operations against a ‘vile enemy’ brings about an ‘acceptable morality’ of killing and destruction that becomes inherent to all subsequent military operations. In this regard, the military, as an instrument of the state in its enforcement role, is made to ‘resemble normality’, which then becomes just another way of conducting business – when things go right, all is fine, but when they go wrong, some reorganisation takes place. War operations, at least politically, are

managed in much the same way as commercial and manufacturing business operations, except the workforce is soldiers, used as the tools to execute the political and ideological policy of the day through orders designed to bring about 'positive restructuring' whereby military operations should make sense to the voting public. One way to describe the driving force behind this process is found in an explanation by Peter (1986):

When our study of human organizations is successful, it leads us to concepts that make our lives and our world more intelligible to us. When things are intelligible we have more of a sense of participation, and when they are unintelligible we have a sense of estrangement. So, when the world appears to be a chaotic mass of unrelated elements, we are in need of a new formulation to give meaning to those events (Peter, 1986, pp. 14–15).

This statement applies to many of the current events in world affairs. Perhaps one of the best examples of such a new formulation is found in media reports that were based on government briefings on the threat posed by 'weapons of mass destruction' held in the arsenals of the Iraqi government, finally resulting in the invasion of that country in 2003. Regardless of voices in the international and national arenas calling on the US and British governments and advising non-intervention, this is an event that illustrates how easily two societies and their governments became swept up in its support of yet another war effort in the aftermath of 9/11. This followed shortly after the invasion of Afghanistan, from where 'the enemy' was supposedly operating. Even though reporters at the Knight Ridder newspapers (see Follmer, 2008) were actively questioning the Iraqi links with 9/11, and later were vindicated in their commentary on the false intelligence reports, this was not enough to stop the war. In Iraq – even after no weapons of mass destruction had been found – the deployed military forces remained a willing and able tool in the hands of their governments who, following orders, continued war operations as instructed until that country was destroyed and left destitute, according to the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) (2020).

Meanwhile, the war in Afghanistan ended in the same way it had started by ironically returning the ousted Taliban to power after 20 years of what can only be considered to have been a senseless war. One could argue that the post-9/11 political messages served the purpose of bringing about a 'new formulation' to make sense of a very chaotic world and to create the infrastructure that would foster a renewed sense of security in an otherwise unpredictable world situation. Peter (1986) quotes Arnold Toynbee in his book *The Peter pyramid* in a chapter titled "Proliferating pathology", who aptly describes the current world state: "The human race's prospects of survival were considerably better when we were defenseless against tigers than they are today when we have become defenseless against ourselves" (p. 99).

The military is an institution that requires its soldiers to follow orders, even though it implies that their actions not only destroy the lives of others, but also their own. Soldiers do this because, in soldiering – consistent with the ethos of the warrior – all military forces purport, above all else, to serve in the defence of their country and their people. This means however that, in this 'defenceless against ourselves' reality, for soldiers to perform

ethically and morally in a technologically advanced world, there is an imperative for senior military leaders to question the political motives that form the basis for any decision to go to war outside the borders of one's own country. This imperative is necessary because soldiers trust their leadership to have determined the validity, morality and justification for their engagement in war operations. When lies perpetrated to bring about these operations are exposed, a massive cognitive dissonance sets in for soldiers from which serious mental health reactions eventually develop. This is also the reason behind the psychological decompensation of some soldiers after deployment: they cannot reconcile the contrast between that which is the ideal that humans strive for in their everyday lives, and their actual behaviours when they have engaged in war operations based on lies.

What makes this such a powerful negative experience is that not only have soldiers been conditioned through military training to follow orders; they have also obeyed these orders without question because of their belief that what they were doing was the right and moral thing to do. Soldiers' obedience to authority is also facilitated by the fact that obedience is part of what humans most do, as illustrated by the Milgram (1974) experiments in the early 1960s. These findings were not enigmatic; they were replicated several times over the decades with the same disturbing findings. Of even greater concern is the real-life materialisation in 2004 at the Abu Ghraib jail of behaviours first observed in the 1971 Zimbardo simulated prison experiment (Wargo, 2006).

Ironically, while the shock and dismay at such events are palpable, no one talks about the many other horrors that take place in theatres of war and how these very 'uncharacteristic' behaviours by otherwise 'normal' soldiers affect them in private. One example is the impact of the Vietnam War on the mental health of the soldiers that served there, which laid the foundation for a new psychiatric diagnosis, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As the psychological study of these trauma reactions continued, it became clear that a core component of PTSD reflects the all too human failure to live up to modern civilised codes involving *morality*, especially during military deployment. In the past two decades or so, the concept of *moral injury* therefore became a major focus in clinical psychology in attempts to explain the mental health reactions of soldiers who return to civilian life following deployment as described by authors such as Meagher and Pryer (2018).

Understanding moral injury requires an understanding of moral disengagement (Bandura, 2016). Rated as the fourth most frequently cited psychologist of all time in 2002, Bandura explains how people adopt standards of right and wrong as part of developing their moral selves. While violations of moral standards may bring about societal sanction, it is *self-sanction* that keeps conduct in accordance with internal standards. However, these self-regulatory mechanisms, once activated, can be by-passed by what Bandura (2016) calls psychosocial manoeuvres designed to disengage from self-sanctions (p. 2). In simple English, it is fine to engage in state-sanctioned killing of the enemy, but not to kill the neighbour, except in self-defence. The problem for soldiers, however, is the later realisation that the enemy they attacked and killed may not have been the threat as they were made to believe; thus, rendering the killing of the enemy as nothing less than state-sanctioned murder. In the end, numerous soldiers commit suicide because of their struggles with PTSD and the horrors of which they were a part.

While the dilemma this ‘state-sanctioned murder’ poses is described by anti-war⁵ activists and scholars, it is the first-hand accounts in numerous books by soldiers⁶ that provide a far more chilling picture and support the imperative for military leaders to question in depth the political motivations and agendas put forward by politicians before committing a country’s forces to war. The impact of this is illustrated in the following quotes from the Vietnam War era by Moore and Galloway (2008):

What all of us know is that we are soldiers still. Some of us revisit the battlefield in nightmares. Some of us wear scars, visible and invisible, that mark us as changed men who walk unseen among our neighbors, who have never known what it is like to hold a dying boy in their arms and watch the life fade from his questioning eyes. The world may now know something of the events that changed us, but thankfully most are spared the experiences that are ours and the burden that is the province of men who have killed other men at the bidding of political leaders more concerned with personal pride and national honor than with peace.

Yes, we were soldiers once, when we were young. Now that we are old we are soldiers still. We are soldiers who mourn for young men and women dying on other battlefields in other parts of our world four decades and more after our war ended so badly. A generation of political leaders who studiously avoided service in our generation’s war seemingly learned nothing from that history and thus consign a new generation of soldiers to “preemptive” wars of choice, condemning them to carry their own memories of death and dying through their lives.

May God bless and keep all soldiers, young and old, and may that same God open the eyes of all political leaders to the truth that most wars are a confession of failure – the failure of diplomacy and negotiation and common sense and, in most cases, leadership.

We who still dream of war in our troubled nights hope against hope for peace and its blessings for all (pp. xix–xx).

Conclusion: The diplomatic role of military psychologists to curtail war

When attempting to understand war in the twenty-first century there is much to learn from the twentieth-century wars, including the Cold War. One lesson that stands out is that, in the scientific study of war, the data point to a very clear problem in society: the rationale for war is generated at both the individual and the collective psyches of humans in positions of leadership who allow their human drives, biases, fears, anxieties, insecurities and vengeful motives to influence their perceptions on any given situation by favouring going-to-war decisions. As formulated by Stoessinger (1992, p. ix), the psychological component is overlooked:

I read that wars were caused by nationalism, militarism, alliance systems, economic factors, and by some other bloodless abstraction that I could not understand ... Often I

was told that war was an ineradicable part of human nature. ... I wondered if this could be true ... The conventional wisdom ... somehow always missed the human essence of the problem. After all, wars were begun by people. Yet this personality dimension was seldom given its due weight in traditional books on war. Instead, forces over which men had no control often were enthroned as “fundamental causes”.

This happens, as Walsh (1971, p. 6) says, because of the “tendency of societies to select psychiatrically and pathologically charismatic abnormal individuals, of the nature of aggressive perverts, to control nations and to lead them into war”. The great American general, Omar Bradley (1967) summed it up even more poignantly:

Man is stumbling blindly through a spiritual darkness while toying with the precarious secrets of life and death. The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing, than we know about living.

This is our twentieth century’s claim to distinction and progress (pp. 588–589)

The price for this continued insanity is paid not only by the targets of these aggressive military interventions, but also by the very soldiers who are misled into believing that they are acting in the best interest of their country, the world, and humanity, because they serve in the defence of their country and their people. However, to do so ethically and morally in a technologically advanced world requires senior military leaders to question the political motives that form the basis for any decision to go to war outside the borders of one’s own country. This would require a willingness by military psychologists to collect the data that will support senior military leaders when they question political orders that are contrary to the defence of the country. The need for this is articulated by the late Senator Fulbright in the preface of a book on the psychological aspects of war and peace (Frank, 1967, p. vii):

Most of what we learn, certainly in the field of politics, we learn by trial and error, which is to say, by going about our affairs in a customary way until, by experience of error, we learn that the customary way is no longer workable and, accordingly, we revise it. It is a perfectly good way of learning as long as the error itself is not fatal or irreparably destructive. In matters of war and peace in the nuclear age, however, we cannot learn by experience, because even a single error could be fatal to the human race. We have got learn to prevent war without again experiencing it; and to change the traditional ways of statecraft without benefit of trial and error; and, in addition, we have got to be right not just in most, but in **all** of our judgements pertaining to all-out nuclear war (emphasis in the original).

Society, through its political leaders and other entities, will always rationalise all their actions as brought about by *the evil perpetuated* or the *threat posed by the enemy*; thus, placing the blame for the resultant conflict on the *unjust system*, which had to be opposed, while ignoring the fact that “[w]ar is something that people do, not something

that happens: activity with a military dimension is activity, not mere blind process and event” (Paskins & Dockrill, 1979, p. 210)

The above statement emphasises that war is an aberrant human behaviour perpetrated by few and forced upon many. Societal and national leaders incite others to follow their own deep-seated vengeance and hate as a projection onto others who are not a part of their ‘love objects’. These ‘hate objects’ then become the ‘legitimate targets’ of the unacknowledged, inner aggression they hold towards their own ‘love objects’, a process well described by psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, Franco Fornari (1974). However, there is also a significant degree of power hunger and arrogance present in many of the war-like policies emanating from certain leaders of some countries more so than others – at a time when the world can no longer afford to engage in armed conflict solutions to settle political or ideological disagreements. The solution to war prevention – not only in terms of regional conflicts but also the revival of the Cold War paranoia – will continue to elude military and political leaders unless military psychologists take on a front-line, diplomatic role in identifying and explaining the psychological factors at play in the world’s current conflict areas. This role would be within the mandate defined by both practitioners and the leading psychological association in the world.

Regardless of the back-and-forth propaganda blaming each other, all sides involved in these conflicts require examination of their psychological motives for perpetuating these conflicts. Only through a thorough analysis of these motives would it be possible to start the process by which these conflicts may be resolved. If not, an even greater catastrophe arising from these ongoing and ill-informed international military interventions awaits the world as non-statutory forces continue to grow. They will expand their operations to the very countries they deem had threatened and attacked them first, a fact already proved by the terrorist attacks in Europe in this century.

Every military psychologist – regardless of the area within the broad Military Psychology spectrum in which he or she practices – has a key role to play in assisting military leadership and government decision-makers to engage in conflict resolution actions that preclude engagement in military conflicts that cannot be won and where options offered by diplomacy had not been exhausted. It is time to defend countries and their serving soldiers through the curtailment of wily politicians and big business in their creation of fertile breeding grounds for perpetual conflict. The time has come to put a stop to the practice of engaging ‘created enemies’ in other countries that will as a consequence become ‘real enemies’.

Put another way, military psychologists must provide generals with the necessary data to question the motives of their political masters, enabling them to challenge orders that are not in the interest of the defence of the country, but which place the country at risk of unnecessary war. After all, regardless of the reasons for engaging in war, the validity of the actions taken, and the legality of the execution of military orders, in the end, soldiers on all sides pay the price for the actions of politicians who failed, by means other than military action, to address the common differences that exist between peoples, countries, nations, and ideological blocs. This can be achieved through knowledge of self, as much

as knowledge of the beliefs held by both sides to a conflict. This makes it possible to challenge the less than factual rhetoric, while also respecting the right of each side to have opposing viewpoints, beliefs and cultural imperatives. This front-line diplomatic role fits Military Psychology like a glove but only if, as a discipline, military psychologists become the voice of reason and heed the call by the late Senator Fulbright of the United States, quoted by Peter Watson (1978):

[I]n this field of the psychological aspects of war and peace, psychology's role is to provide a 'new dimension of self-understanding':

We have got to understand, as we have never understood before, why it is, psychologically and biologically, that men and nations fight; and why it is, regardless of time or place or circumstances, that they always find something to fight about; why it is that we are capable of love and loyalty to our own nation or ideology and of venomous hatred toward someone else's. We have got to understand whether and how such emotions satisfy certain needs of human nature and whether and how these needs could be satisfied in a world without war. Only on the basis of an understanding of our behaviour can we hope to control it in such a way as to ensure the survival of the human race (p. 439).

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Endnotes

- ⁴ This Latin phrase is generally attributed to the Hippocratic Oath, namely ‘first, do no harm’ and is a fundamental healthcare principle throughout the world, also known as the principle of non-maleficence (see *Oxford Reference*, n.d.b).
- ⁵ Antiwar activist, David Swanson, author and executive director of World BEYOND War, researched and wrote three books on war that should be on the shelf of every military psychologist: *War is a lie* (2010 first edition; 2016 second edition); *When the world outlawed war* (2011) and *War no more: The case for abolition* (2013).
- ⁶ These two books should be on the shelf of every military psychologist:
Karl Marlantes (2011). *What it is like to go to war*: This book gives a chilling first-hand perspective on the Vietnam War.
Guy Sajer (1967). *The forgotten soldier*. This book is a most powerful indictment of the impact of war on the individual soldier, and is a classic memoir by a World War II German soldier, born of French–German heritage.
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