

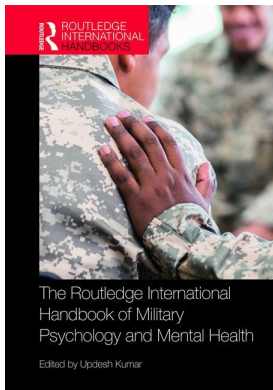
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4

POLEMOLOGY

Orphan of military psychology

Jacques J. Gouws

Historians may one day look back upon the twentieth century with equal importance as the Italian Renaissance because of the massive paradigm shift in how humankind perceives the world and its place therein. The Renaissance, a reawakening to the science, art, and culture of the time, laid the foundation for the Industrial Revolution of the 1700s and 1800s and related economic paradigms. Technology enhanced military armaments, the application of which brought about another paradigm shift. The doctrine of warfare changed rapidly as the wars of the late 1800s and early 1900s benefited from the application of these new technologies to create ever more destructive weapons of war. These new weapon systems resulted in the slaughter campaigns of World War I – the war that gave birth to modern military psychology. Finally, these new technologies also brought about the ultimate weapon of self-destruction, the nuclear bomb. Artificial intelligence is yet another new technology that will bring about another paradigm shift in warfare.

In its infancy, military psychology's first role was the selection and placement of soldiers based on cognitive tests. As the discipline matured, this role expanded with the aim to create soldiers whose skills sets surpassed those of their predecessors in dealing with the ever-increasing complex demands of the modern battlefield. The Cold War was an arms race that ravaged whole economies, yet brought lucrative contracts to arms dealers. The arms race also negatively impacted small nations involved in regional conflicts where new weapon systems were field tested by opposing forces. 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.

Zinchenko, Veraksa, and Leonov (2011, p. 53) quoted the definition of military psychology in Mangelsdorff and Gall (1991): *Military psychology can be defined as an area of the study and application of psychological principles and methods to the military environment*, and then expanded this by referencing Cronin (2003): *Cronin compares military psychology with a microcosm which embraces psychological disciplines and which affects almost all aspects of military setting*. These authors also compared the classical to the post-classical type of rationality in the development of military psychology, with the former being physiological research in the military sphere. This was most significant with regard to the latter:

Non-classical psychological science introduced new criteria of cognition: necessity to consider the method used to obtain data, the adoption of relativism in the reference of existing scientific paradigms. It stresses the dependence of the resulting knowledge

from the social context and number of other factors that regulate the organization of complex self-regulating systems. According to V.S. Stepin “if within the mechanical picture of the world the things (bodies) served as something primary, e.g. a substrate, processes would be interpreted as the effect of one thing to another by transfer of power that in a new system of representations of everything appeared as procedural system, self-reproducing as a result of its interaction with the environment and through self-regulation.” (Zinchenko et al., 2011, pp. 54–55)

This is a vital perspective in light of the radical world changes since the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, ending the Cold War and creating the vacuum subsequently filled by a Jihad War and a War on Terror. The twenty-first century Renaissance plays out in a world barely conscious of the consequences of its all-new social media structures utilising technology to communicate and interact at levels beyond government control and even general comprehension. What was thought impossible a mere decade ago is now fingertip-accessible in real time. One example: the rise of additive manufacturing (using 3D printers) allows anyone to create any solid object in the confines of a living room or bedroom from a digital model. It is not unlikely that future wars could be fought against governments and countries by local civilians and/or revolutionaries using such technologies to arm themselves against statutory forces, aided by the bottomless fount of real-time social media intelligence.

Even if this scenario never fully materialises, conventional combat deployments with soldiers on the ground will become obsolete and be replaced by robots, either controlled by humans or acting independently through artificial intelligence. The latter option is a much more likely scenario given, for example, the documented psychological impact on personnel who work as “drone pilots” operating unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or remotely piloted aircraft (RPAs) in the United States Air Force. Current thinking still supports human control in these weapon systems designed to neutralise enemy forces and reduce casualties among land forces. However, long-distance remote warfare will not be sufficient to attack enemy targets that are primarily civilian-based, non-statutory militia.

The wave of research papers and books on strategies to counter the “asymmetrical” or “hybrid” warfare phenomenon is testimony to the failure of conventional approaches to war that had served the military well until the end of the Cold War. Remnants of this remain the action of choice despite the face of warfare changing so dramatically that military might is no longer a guarantee of success. At the time of writing of this chapter, the United States and its allies have been in Afghanistan and Iraq for 17 and 15 years, respectively, with no end in sight because these mighty modern armies are held at bay by small numbers of militia fighters with improvised devices and even outdated weapons.

Military psychologists grapple with the impact of long, multiple deployments on soldiers, looking for ways to enhance resilience, foster hardiness, and reduce stress reactions in these theatres of operation where the “Arab Spring” brought about radical change in decades-old dictatorships, replacing them with little-known leaders and political office incumbents. Turmoil had spread throughout the Middle East and North Africa, and a self-proclaimed Islamic Caliphate¹ had quickly conquered vast territory. This latter conquest only ended (but is far from over) when the Syrian regime’s resistance and brutal counterattacks against opposition fighters (albeit with Russian and Iranian backing) turned the tables on their civil war.

These examples illustrate the necessity for military psychology to urgently direct its focus to the psychological factors at play in the world’s current conflict areas. Regardless of the back-and-forth

1 See, for example, Adam Chandler’s article: “What is an Islamic Caliphate and why did ISIS make one?” In: *The Atlantic*, June 30, 2014.

propaganda from all sides involved in these conflicts, there are psychological motives that play a major role in perpetuating these conflicts which require thorough analysis so as to prevent even greater a catastrophe arising from ongoing ill-informed international military intervention decisions. Polemology, when added to the traditional military psychology research paradigm, could be a primary tool to assist military leadership and government decision-makers in countering the psychological forces (with their potential to destroy the world) that are feeding current conflicts.

What is polemology?

In the experience of this chapter's author, there is a paucity of even rudimentary knowledge of polemology in the traditional Western military alliances (USA, NATO). This disinterest in the traditional West to develop a sound understanding of the science of war remains puzzling to this author, who had taught polemology based on its European roots as an integral part of academic military psychology training in early 1990s South Africa.

Although polemology is generally ignored in the West, it is of interest in the traditional East. For example, Dodonov, Kovalskyi, Dodonova, and Kolinko (2017) described in the abstract to their monograph that:

Polemology deals with the wars and armed conflicts of the past, present and future. Novel hybrid wars take a respective place among them. They involve using all available warfare, regular and irregular, cyber and those allowing for the use of weapons of mass destruction, and also information, psychological and propaganda war using the latest information and media technologies...

For the purpose of studying wars and armed conflicts from the polemological perspective it means the need to focus on social changes in all the areas of human life, on considering various elements of the political, economic or even technological context, which influence the war as a social phenomenon. (p. 98)

Ironically, across the centuries an integral part of the "Art of War" would today be considered "psychological operations." As a science, however, psychology only formally became useful to the military when it devised scientific tests to assist in the placement of troops in modern war settings (Johnson 1991, p. xxi). With its focus on particular subfields, military psychology remained a fragmented service simply because it neglected the big picture and so lost valuable opportunities that could have guided political decision-makers and military planners (Gouws, 2014). Tragically, lessons not learned cannot be applied to prevent future mistakes. As Napoleon Bonaparte (2018) reportedly stated:

There are but two powers in the world: the sword and the mind. In the long run the sword is always beaten by the mind.²

2 Napoleon originally said this somewhat differently in 1808. It is most quoted in the form indicated in the text in military training settings and online web pages. According to Herold (1955, p. 76), Napoleon had said to his education minister: "do you know Fontanes, what astonishes me most in this world? The inability of force to create anything. In the long run, the sword is always beaten by the spirit." Borowitz (1985, p. 63) quoted it in the more common form: There are only two powers in the world, the sword and the mind... In the long-run the sword is always defeated by the mind. The original quote in French is reportedly: Il n'y a que deux puissances dans le monde, le sabre et l'esprit. J'entends par l'esprit les institutions civiles et religieuses... A la longue, le sabre est toujours battu par l'esprit. (*Revue des deux mondes*, Vol. 4 (1838). p. 645): See: https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Talk:Napoleon_I_of_France.

Napoleon's wise words still apply, perhaps more than ever before. Gouws (1990), in his work integrating polemology and military psychology in the 1990s, reviewed various sources on the causes of war and its prevention, including Watson (1978, p. 1), who had opined that psychology in war is seen first and foremost to mean "propaganda." Gouws (1990) emphasised that although military psychology progressed to include selection and training, design of military hardware, and a myriad of other activities, these took a back seat in comparison to other scientists. Gouws (2014) still asserts today that, while the contribution of psychology to the military in its war efforts is considerable, because of its fragmented nature it lacks an overall integrated scientific structure. Even more significant is the absence of a structured and systemised study of the war phenomenon itself which should be applied towards the reduction, if not resolution, of potential conflict even before military action is embarked upon.

A foundation for the structured and systemised study of the war phenomenon was created in 1945. Most military psychologists in the Western Alliances are unaware of its existence. Polemology, a term coined by Gaston Bouthoul after the end of World War II, is the study of war and its precursors and consequences; given the ability that humankind had developed to wipe out itself and the earth with nuclear weapons. Bouthoul, a sociologist, initiated the systematised study of the phenomena of aggression and wars in the context of strategy, tactics, economics, politics, ideology, and cultural contexts. Bouthoul postulated that by a better understanding of conflicts and wars, one can find positive ways to prevent them. These lofty and worthy aspirations died with Bouthoul in 1980. Fortunately, a revival in the interest in this work came about in the 2012 landmark publication, *The Ashgate Research Companion to War*, edited by Hall Gardner and Oleg Kobtzeff (both at The American University of Paris, France). Ironically, this work has not piqued the interest of Western Alliance military psychologists, perhaps for the same reasons the work of Bouthoul was ignored:

By the time postmodernism became very influential in France as well as in the world, around the 1980s and 1990s, marking the decline of the Annales School (which had itself reached the peak of its influence in the French intelligentsia and public in the 1970s), war was still not a subject that the New Historians had been able to interpret. The original prejudice against war studies in particular and political science in general still prevailed after three generations.

This probably explains the isolation of French sociologist Gaston Bouthoul (1896–1980) who devoted his career to fusing the knowledge and methodologies of all social sciences into a new interdisciplinary field of research and reflection for which he invented a new word: polemology... The word "polemology" remains either almost unheard of or is mistakenly associated with the kind of practical academic programs delivered by military institutions. The tens of millions of casualties made it difficult to accept that war can be quietly studied as an object of science, an "ordinary" social phenomenon... Also, when Bouthoul and his team of researchers founded, in 1945, a modest research center named the French Institute of Polemology (Institut Français de Polémologie) they were met with suspicion which was typical of the late forties to mid-to-late 1960s. On one hand, the now dominating Annales school suspected too much political comment over war; on the other, an increasingly radical leftwing intelligentsia rejected any activity in the arts or social sciences that could not justify itself as politically and socially useful for the Revolution (peace studies, like hippies, risked demobilizing the working masses). The fact that Bouthoul's institute cooperated with the French military academic system made him even more suspicious. Nevertheless, Bouthoul, a socialist who loathed war, strongly argued that his scientific activities

were pacifist in nature. Although he conceived polemology as a discipline based on scientific methods, academic objectivity was not meant to abolish the scientist's ability to function as a thinking and responsible citizen striving for peace. Fortunately, other scholars initiated comparable efforts in other parts of the world. At a time when nuclear holocaust appeared to be a real possibility, it became evident that conflict prevention or resolution was hampered by the dramatic lack of research structures that could offer the necessary broad array of conflict analysis tools. The urgency of the need for more research on war and peace became evident after such dramatic moments as the Cuban missile crisis, or under the growing pressure from peace movements in the 1960s. The emerging disciplines or sub-disciplines of sociology or political science became better known as "Peace Studies" with the creation of (such) groups and institutions... (Gardner & Kobtzeff, 2012, pp. 2–3)

Unfortunately it seems as if, as indicated by the above quotes, the general reluctance to scientifically study war and to use knowledge gained from such research to effect change in a conflict-ravaged world remains unchanged. It is unfortunate that military psychology had remained disinterested in this important endeavour for so long.

Bouthoul on polemology

The work of Bouthoul is monumental in its scope and application, and it is impossible to summarise it in brief. However, even a cursory review of his work provides impetus for different thinking and interpretation of the phenomenon of war and the role military psychology can play in bringing about a reduction in war conflict through analysis of the underlying drives and motives that fuel the bellicose spirit of nations around the world.

Probably the most significant application of the work of Bouthoul was offered by Franco Fornari (1921–1985), an Italian psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. He became interested in polemology in the 1960s. He subsequently founded the first "anti-H group" and established the Italian Institute of Polemology (ISTIP). Fornari also published an excellent book in 1966 titled *Psicoanalisi della Guerra*, followed by an English translation in 1974: *The Psychoanalysis of War*.

Although psychoanalytic in nature, this early work in polemology provides important insights that may be applied to the processes by which decision-makers make determinations on whether to go to war. Fornari, relying on the work of Bouthoul and also Durkheim, explains the origins of much of the military action and subsequent rituals still taking place today. One can even illustrate the applicability of Fornari's thesis to the United States' military response to the attack on the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001:

The splitting of the world into friend and enemy represents an extreme simplification whereby the good and the bad are no longer integrated in the same instinctual situation and in the same object relationship, but the same situation assumes different characters according as it is consummated upon the self, or upon the other, in the paranoid aphorism of 'morstua vita mea.'³ The enormous weight of human ambivalence is suddenly lifted when love and hate find two separate objects of attention. (Fornari, 1974, p. 23)

Hence, war is a method to bring about a radical transformation of values, to make people think, feel, and act differently from before, to make them distinguish between "good" and "bad."

3 Latin, literally translated: "your death is my life" or more commonly expressed in English: "your loss is my gain."

However, to bring about this transformation, the initiator's powerbase must first be coaxed into action and then become unified in its aggression against the opposition. This is achieved through mass behaviour taking place in a specific context, analogous to a feast:

In Bouthoul's opinion, war has all the characteristics of a feast, whose principal function, according to Durkheim, is to unify the group. The most typical psychological aspects of a feast, in the sociological sense of the word, are the following: (1) It brings about a meeting of the members of a group; (2) it is a rite of expenditure and dissipation; (3) it is accompanied by a modification of certain moral laws; (4) it is a rite of collective exaltation; (5) it brings about a state of physical insensibility; (6) it is accompanied by sacrificial rites. As every one of these characteristics is found in war, war might be regarded as the **supreme feast**. (Fornari, 1974, p. 23)

There is thus a commonality between the characteristics of a feast, as described above, and many public ritualistic activities that still take place in war. Fornari made the connection between primitive peoples' war preparations, including dances, that appear preserved in military parades in advanced societies (Fornari, 1974, pp. 23–24). Furthermore, the manner in which the rules of war transcend civilian law parallels the modification of morals at a feast in that the tunnel vision and lack of feeling and sensation often found in battle is likewise a state of physical insensibility. Finally, in the aftermath of war, it is the ritual ceremonies that recall the sacrifice to memory:

Among primitive peoples, in fact, war is intimately joined to the idea of a human sacrifice that is pleasing to the gods, i.e., to the cult of death... Bouthoul notes that in western civilization, concurrently with the decline of religions, the cult of the fallen in war has been revived in the form of monuments and parks. He interprets this situation as the return of the archaic customs in our civilization. The cult of the fallen in war therefore tends to replace the cult of the saints. (Fornari, 1974, p. 24)

Towards an integration of military psychology and polemology

War and its destructive aims are in stark contrast to humankind's achievements of conquering land, sea and air, and, after landing on the moon, targeting the stars and planets. These are in addition to the many efforts aimed at conquering disease, poverty, slavery, subjugation, and even class and social differences. Underlying these achievements is a belief that conquering these inequities will create healthy, affluent societies, where people would be free to express their previsions and premises absolved from prejudice and intimidation. The notion for some is that once this state of affairs is achieved, there would be lasting peace and security for all.

Yet, almost two decades into the twenty-first century, the world again finds itself as close to another world war as a century ago and with as clear a threat of nuclear war as during the Cold War.⁴ It seems as if humankind, nations, politicians, and military leaders are completely unable to break free from the violence and destruction imposed by the powerful on the weak, the rich on the poor, the aggressive on the passive, and the devious on the ignorant. They seem intent

4 The Doomsday Clock (the imaginary worldwide nuclear war apocalypse) was set at two minutes to midnight on January 25, 2018, this for only the second time since it was created in 1947. The first time was in 1953 based on the then-U.S. and USSR thermonuclear arsenals, the use of which in that tense period could completely destroy the planet. There was no change in this setting on January 24, 2019.

on bringing down their war temple upon themselves, and just like Samson⁵ of old, they would surely die, as would the whole of humankind with them.

In the past, psychology's attempts to explain war and its role in human endeavour focussed on reasons for the continuous eruption of wars whether on grand scale or small, often to little avail. This is why it is imperative that military psychology must include polemology as a core research topic and application in the psychological study of war and its causes in order to promote conflict resolution and prevention of unnecessary war operations. However, this is not the same as pacifism. Pacifist literature places the blame for war squarely on the shoulders of the soldiers themselves with arguments that the commanders of forces, i.e. the generals, are the warmongers, the ones who really give an essence, a right to existence, for armies, and thus war. They blame "old men who sent the sons of others to their untimely ends" and calls for the dissolving of all armed forces. The pacifist argument is that if the military dissolves, then war and violence would disappear, because it is soldiers who foster and enhance the spirit of conflict. Likewise, if societies were to disarm, violence would disappear. If only it was this easy to end to violence and war!

Polemology realised that the reasons for war lie within deeper human drives and needs, which can explain the war phenomenon. There is a simple reality about the complexity of war, pointed out by Boatner (1956, p. 3): "soldiering is not only the third oldest profession, but since the dawn of mankind the soldier himself is the only element that has varied least through the ages." He demonstrated this from a quote of Ardent du Picq:

Centuries have not changed human nature. Passions, instincts – particularly the most powerful instinct of self-preservation – these things are expressed differently in accordance with the times, the circumstances, the character and temperament of races.... But, beneath it all, the same man is to be found. (Boatner, 1956, p. 3)

This must be an important focus in both psychology and polemology: as the above quotation indicates, humans have something within them, call it the "psyche" for convenience's sake, which will always drive them towards some form or another of conflict or war in their ceaseless quest for peace. This contradiction between a desire for both war and peace is important to both understand and resolve to prevent humans from destroying the world with their modern weapons of mass destruction. While war is the "legalised" method by which conflict may be resolved, there are better choices. What prevents these better choices from being implemented is that humans, despite striving towards the achievement of lasting peace, are prohibited by their nature of perceiving others as threats to their continued existence of implementing this ideal. Even as they attempt to secure peace through mutually agreed-upon treaties, individual human groups continue to prepare for war to deter the perceived enemy. To deter also means to pre-empt and to engage in war, as the defensive measures taken by one will always be interpreted by the other as a build-up of the threat to the other. Thus, a subjective threat

5 This refers to the ancient story of Samson, a renowned Israelite warrior, who lost his immense strength when Delilah, a Philistine woman with whom he had a relationship, cut his hair (the source of his strength) while he was asleep. He was taken prisoner and enslaved. The Philistines, celebrating their victory over Samson, brought him to the Temple of Dagon, placing him between the temple's supporting pillars so that he could amuse them. While in captivity his hair had grown back and thus, in a final act of revenge, he used his immense strength to pull down these pillars, causing the temple's collapse and killing all inside, including Samson. For the full story of Samson, see: Judges 13–16, New King James Version Bible (NKJV).

perception eventually culminates in the rationale for war with all the violence and destruction associated with it.

Over the years, psychologists have studied various phenomena in depth that resulted in violent outcomes. Some such controversial research studies tested the limits beyond which ordinary individuals would not follow instructions, with the prime example of the Milgram experiments⁶ on obedience to authority in the early 1960s (Milgram, 1974). Zimbardo's 1971 Stanford prison experiment⁷ less than a decade later actually materialised in the real world in the Abu Ghraib jail scandal⁸ three decades later. While politicians and the public expressed their shock and dismay, there should have been no lack of understanding of the role of psychological factors in bringing about these very "uncharacteristic" behaviours by otherwise "normal" soldiers. Yet it seems that examples like these serve to deter the psychological study of the all-too-human failures to live up to modern civilised codes, this especially in the military. There is clearly a contrast between that which is the ideal that humans strive for and their actual behaviours when they go to war, regardless of how they may act in civilian settings. Yet, the role of the psyche is paramount in determining the course of conflict resolution:

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. (Walsh, 1971, p. 6)

Walsh's statement in the above quotation has important implications for understanding the reasons for war as being based on both the individual and the collective psyches of humans when making war decisions. An understanding of the human drives, fears, and anxieties that influence especially leaders' perceptions of given situations will also explain much about their decisions on war engagement and disengagement.

6 Described by Stanley Milgram in his book in 1974.

7 Described by Zimbardo et al. in the September 1973, *Naval Research Reviews*.

8 See: <http://www.udel.edu/PR/UDaily/2006/dec/zimbardo120705.html>.

If anything, it is the engagement in war, rather than war itself, that feeds the fanatic zeal of the proponents of war. As long as war can be engaged in, a reason will be found to wage such war. However, when eventually these fanatic war urges have been released and to some extent expended, it becomes possible to engage in peace or truce negotiations. That also requires, once war engagement comes to an end, that a new state of mind be created to make the incomprehensible war actions comprehensible and to justify the sacrifices made during the war. The “victorious fallen” are remembered for their “heroic struggle,” while the “vanquished” are brought to “justice and repentance for their wrongs.” This process takes place as a very real and visible phenomenon:

Describing the psychological transformation in the aftermath of war, Bouthoul states that the most important fact observable during the period immediately following the establishment of peace is a rapid decline of the bellicose spirit. Having insisted that their rivalry or disagreements were intolerable, nations suddenly find that they can come to terms with each other. The aggressiveness subsides, as if war were a sort of orgasm followed by relaxation. Mental states and actions, clearly understood by everyone only a short time before, suddenly become incomprehensible. Bouthoul compares the euphoria of peace to the silent, secret joy that prevails, when someone dies, among his prospective heirs, and to the relaxation of tension experienced by students after examinations. The vanquished people often find a sort of satisfaction in the thought that war has freed them from their errors and show a distinct tendency to attend the school of the victor. The vanquished people’s institutions are despised and their defeat rationalized as punishment for their crimes. In this manner defeat is a source of repudiations. The vanquished people deserved to be defeated on account of their errors: the vanquished are guilty. While sacrifice participates in war as a propitiatory procedure for future misdeeds, the expiatory attitudes following war are reparation for past misdeeds. The sacrificing of scapegoats seems to be a part of the rites of atonement. (Fornari, 1974, pp. 28–29)

It is indeed a strange trait of humankind that people find it impossible on both the individual and collective levels to accept responsibility for their deeds and actions. Following individual aggression, the perpetrator blames someone else or circumstances, but refuses to accept responsibility for his or her own flaws. Although such individual transgressions may have consequences brought to bear by an offended society, the same does not apply at the collective level. This is because society, through its leaders, will rationalise the evil perpetuated or the threat posed by the opposition, placing the blame for the resultant conflict on the inherent unjustness of a system which had to be opposed, ignoring the fact that:

War 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 rationalisation that the aggression of the foe elicited the intervention by own forces softens the sacrifice of lives and material, wastefulness which otherwise cannot be admitted to. The ritual of entering into war and then remembering the fallen afterwards justifies the “counter-aggression” which “saved the nation from destruction by the evil forces of the foe.” It is in

this context that a distinction should be made between individual and collective outbursts of aggression, as these two activities are markedly different:

One of the essential differences between individual aggressiveness and the warlike impulse, according to Bouthoul, is that while individual aggressiveness is momentary, transient, felt specifically as such and usually limited to one individual, the warlike impulse is a generalised, profound emotional state of acceptance and approval of future violence rather than a manifestation of violence itself. The warlike state corresponds, that is, to a sense of the need for a period of violence and destruction rather than to genuine aggressive excitation. Before it is an action, it is a conviction; sometimes it is merely a resignation to a calamity considered inevitable. The apparent absence of aggressive excitation in war as a festival destructive of humanity is certainly a peculiar problem... (Fornari, 1974, p. 30)

When war is seen as being more of an emotional state of acceptance and approval of future violence, rather than a manifestation of violence itself, it also brings acceptance that "some might die so that others can live." This makes the ritual of deciding on going to war vitally important on two levels. The first level arises from the emotional reaction and how that is rationalised to motivate others to engage in war. The level provides the justification for entering into war that entails the sacrifice of one's own who died or were the wounded and maimed victims of war, but who also were all loved ones, the love objects that had formed part of one's own clan. It is an incomprehensible paradox that, in order to save and preserve something, that same something, or at least a part thereof, must be sacrificed and destroyed:

But an even more surprising fact is that war as sacrificial duty, though performing essentially destructive functions, has for men the significance of a destruction put into the service of the preservation of what they love. Fanatic behavior, the idealization of the leader, the need to sacrifice oneself in the name of an ideal, the giving and receiving of martyrdom, and the soldier's being both the sacrificer and the victim in the sacrificial rite... – all these psychological aspects pose a series of very complex problems. (Fornari, 1974, p. 32)

The psychological aspects of war, namely the crises of the instinct of self-preservation and the idealisation of the need for sacrifice, as well as the idealisation of the leader, all seem to be phenomena that occur on the basis of the fact that individuals form a group on the basis of identification with a common love object. Since the group ideal (as an object of love and identification) is fantasised as that which gives life to the individuals within the group, the preservation of the common love object is felt as a primary function as compared with the preservation of the individual. A situation of this sort is specifically human and justifies in a manner the need for sacrifice. Nevertheless, I believe that I have succeeded in showing that the group ideal, translating into an illusory dimension the concrete and vital function of the primary love object – in a way usurping it – causes the evolution of the original need for sacrifice (expressed by the primitive need for guilt) into an illusory and unauthentic dimension.

In war, in fact, sacrifice is not aimed at mastering the bad parts of the self, as a function of preservation of the original love object threatened by the self, as happens in the ethics of the individual. In war, sacrifice becomes sadistic through the projection onto the enemy of the destructive tendencies originally directed against one's love object. (Fornari, 1974, p. 36)

War, then, is not waged about right and wrong, good or evil, nor is it about just and unjust; it is about the externalising of the inner aggression of self felt towards one's love objects onto those with whom one ironically should have no quarrel. War, in essence, is therefore the displacement of the expression of vengeance and hate, found deep inside the self, projected onto others who do not form part of the own love objects, making third parties the scapegoats and therefore "legitimate targets" of the unacknowledged, inner aggression towards the love objects. In other words: war becomes the ritual by which humans atone for the real guilt they bear for hating their own and even themselves. A better description is difficult to find than stated by Albert Camus (1963):

We used to wonder where war lived, what it was that made it so vile. And now we realize that we know where it lives, that it is inside ourselves. (September 7, 1939)

Thus war and the psychological impact thereof must be seen for what it is: a fierce, unrelenting paranoid struggle of humans within themselves. There are many remnants of primitive, unconscious beliefs and accompanying rituals that even today play a vital part in forming people's attitudes towards war and the ceremonies that accompany these actions. Present-day weapons of war scare the hell out humankind, bringing into play even more powerful, illusory fears. These have become a vicious cycle that encroaches more and more upon humans to the point where reality and illusion are fused into one indiscernible entity of Absolute Terror. Humans created it; humans must destroy it or be destroyed by their own creation. There is no question that military psychology must be cognisant of the role it plays in the perpetuation of conflict and war through its involvement in creating and maintaining the bellicose spirit.

It is true that there are very real threats posed by nations to each other. To allow these threats, whether real or imagined, to escalate into war when other solutions could be found is unacceptable in modern times. The answer to the prevention of this destruction is found in knowledge: knowing about humankind's deepest, unconscious fears and drives. Humankind cannot afford to allow the superweapons of today to destroy all humankind and the world because of the uncontrollable urges of leaders, both military and political, who, for some undefined fanatical cause, will lead their people and the world into an all-destructive war. The soldier is the only one that knows the real horror of war; the soldier is also the only one that can remedy this horror. The remedy is found in knowledge and understanding of the real, often unconscious issues that direct the actions of many countries and their leaders. The world is ready to address the issue of international and national conflicts by the political diplomacy taking place. However, as military psychology maintains its focus on the psychological factors related to war and operations it, as easily as everyone else, succumbs to its own individual and collective fears and biases. However, by military psychology adding a focus on the real causes of war, it could provide the data and the critical thinking required for the decision-making leadership to objectively analyse the military threats and propose measures to counter that threat appropriately, without necessarily engaging in war. Given its unique ability to comprehend humans' deeper motives and fears, military psychology has a major role to play in the eventual taming of the bellicose spirit by applying some of the principles developed in polemology:

The polemological approach argues that there is rarely a mono-causal factor for conflict and war, but interrelated causes, of which some may be more significant or relevant than others depending upon the confluence of forces in specific situations and historical periods. (Gardner & Kobtzeff, 2012, p. 3)

Conclusion

In a rapidly changing world, it is imperative to recognise that the changes of the past three decades brought a major shift in how people see the world. The most important tools in a government's hands are its military. However, the military and its members are as much subject to human frailties as any other societal structure.

In the new world with its new demands, military psychology in the twenty-first century should integrate polemology into its active study and application of lessons learned from the historical behaviours and actions of humans, governments, organisations, institutions, and corporations that ultimately resulted in armed conflict in all its forms, ranging from low-level skirmishes to full-scale war, and the active applications of these insights in order to prevent, limit, and end hostilities between opposing parties, in favour of bringing about negotiated resolution and tolerant co-existence of prevailing political, economic, religious, ideological, and psycho-social differences.

Furthermore, the role of military psychology should expand to support the principle of deterrence as a strategy to prevent armed conflict and facilitate resolution of differences. This should include not only psychological factors, training of soldiers, and support of operations but the education of politicians and military leaders on other options that should first be pursued to prevent unnecessary and irrational engagement in war.

War as the last choice of action can be achieved by military psychology researching solutions for the management of challenging political and military situations. All governments posture within the new Global Village on the old "us-them" paradigm. However, it is the failure of governments to adequately distinguish reality from their own propaganda that often results in the tragic and unnecessary waste of human life and destruction of property. Sometimes elements in the military may even be complicit in the war mongering that takes place. From a soldier's perspective, it cannot be said any better than this:

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 neighbours, 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. (Moore & Galloway, 2008, pp. xix, xx)

Military psychology must work within the massive paradigm shifts that had followed the end of the Cold War. The world's nations again face military threats that could make Einstein's prophetic statement a reality:

I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones. (Calaprice, 2005, p. 173)

The conflict motives illustrated in this chapter require serious and urgent military psychological research to manage the challenging political and military situations in which the world finds itself. Starting with the psychological component of polemology as a research focus, military psychology has much to offer that may bring about strategies to not only manage and resolve conflict, but to limit war risks by providing the necessary perspective on which decision-makers have to base their decisions. If not, the world will destroy itself while military psychology continues to contribute to the conflicts, but not their resolution.

Chapter end note

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⁹ Edge inscription on the 1997–2015 British £2.00 coin, attributed to Sir Isaac Newton, although some sources trace this back to the twelfth century to Bernard of Chartres.

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