

Fear is the Parent of Cruelty: Racism, the Military, Terrorism and War

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*"Religion is based ... mainly upon fear ... fear of the mysterious, fear of defeat, fear of death. **Fear is the parent of cruelty**, and therefore it is no wonder if cruelty and religion have gone hand in hand My own view on religion is that of Lucretius. I regard it as a disease born of fear and as a source of untold misery to the human race."*

"Patriotism is the willingness to kill and be killed for trivial reasons."

"The trouble with the world is that the stupid are cocksure and the intelligent are full of doubt."

Bertrand Russell

Abstract

In my 2005 presentation, entitled ***Australian Nationalism, Conflicted Identities, Militarism and Exclusion***, at the previous conference in this series, I argued that Australian nationalism is very much alive but is also conflicted, complex and problematic; and argued that this *could* be an indicator of the future direction of nationalism elsewhere. I have in mind other societies focussed on the military aspects of their history that Samuel Huntington would describe as 'Praetorian', that is, strongly influenced by a deep embeddedness of the military in the civil institutions of the nation state (Huntington 1970).

In this paper I postulate that a relationship may exist between societal attitudes to 'other' ethnicities and the military experience. I examine the military culture and indoctrination, war crimes and punishment, dehumanisation of opponents, killing distance and callous attitudes, racial attitudes, fear of numerical superiority and the propaganda that reaches the wider community. I have focussed on Australia, the United States and, as a case study, Israel.

The military has a special role in the forging of national identity and creation of the narrative of national mythology by political elites. In Australia, the celebration of ANZAC Day, the resurgence of militaristic depictions of Australia's history and national identity and the former Prime Minister, John Howard's concerns for the teaching of history in schools.

I will develop this theme of military identity as it applies to the dissemination of the 'national mythology', racial attitudes, drawing out the synergistic relationships of racism, military training and indoctrination and the experience of combat against peoples of outgroup 'other' ethnicities.

There appear to be synergistic relationships between racism, military training and indoctrination as well as the experience of combat against peoples described by Social Psychologist, Matthew Hornsey, as being of outgroup 'other' ethnicities (Hornsey 2004) (Hornsey M September/October 2004). It is noteworthy that many of the wars and warlike actions that have involved Australian military personnel have been against ethnic 'others'. These engagements appear to significantly amplify and ingrain authoritarian, patriarchal behaviours and attitudes and the practise of simplistic racial stereotyping in Australian society.

Introduction

The purpose of this essay is to describe the phenomenon and suggest that more work needs to be done.

In my 2005 presentation, entitled ***Australian Nationalism, Conflicted Identities, Militarism and Exclusion***, at the previous conference in this series, I argued that Australian nationalism is very much alive but is also conflicted, complex and problematic; and argued that this *could* be an indicator of the future direction of nationalism elsewhere (Bach 2005). I have in mind other societies focussed on the military aspects of their history that Samuel Huntington would describe as '*Praetorian*', that is, strongly influenced by a deep embeddedness of the military in the civil institutions of the nation state (Huntington 1970).

Since the Cronulla riots, which coincided with the 2005 conference, the term 'face paint patriotism' has been coined. This phenomenon, described by Gideon Haigh, depicts the emergence of a disturbingly xenophobic and aggressive strand of nationalism, capable of vicious and divisive violence in Australian society. It included 'enforced flag kissing' followed by assaults that occasioned significant physical injuries. These 'patriots' targeted Australians with the appearance of being other than 'Anglo (Haigh Sep 19, 2007)'.

This tendency has been noted again in response to, or coincident to, statements by former federal Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Kevin Andrews. Resettlement organisations and Sudanese people, who described the Minister's statements as hurtful and detrimental to the successful resettlement of African and Sudanese refugees, have documented these statements and outcomes that resulted from the 'dog whistle' response. The former Minister expressed no regret, nor did he give his condolence to the Melbourne Sudanese family whose son had been violently killed.

I drew attention in 2005 to the role the military has in the forging of national identity and creation of the narrative of national mythology by Australian political elites. I mention here the celebration of ANZAC Day as “the one day of the year”, the resurgence of militaristic depictions of Australia’s history and national identity and former Prime Minister, John Howard’s micro management of the teaching of history in schools to his personal prescription. I will further develop this theme of military identity in this paper.

I intend to draw out the synergistic relationships of racism, military training and indoctrination and the experience of combat against peoples described by Social Psychologist, Matthew Hornsey, as being of outgroup ‘other’ ethnicities (Hornsey 2004) (Hornsey M September/October 2004). It is worthy of mention here that many of the wars and warlike actions that have involved Australian military personnel have been against Africans, Arabs, Koreans, Indonesians, Vietnamese, Afghans or Iraqis. These engagements, I argue, significantly amplify and ingrain authoritarian, patriarchal behaviours and attitudes and the practise of simplistic racial stereotyping in Australian society.

The military culture

The military is a part of society with a special role as servants of the government in power. That role is what Rod Lyon refers to as “the management of violence”. The military is an instrument of violence that needs to be very carefully managed by civil authorities in a democratic society (Lyon July 2004). Its personnel are the sons and daughters of this society. It is a mirror of society, yet it is a mirror that exaggerates the need for obedience, hierarchy, patriarchy, and the simplification of problems to the point where all problems are seen as threats, whose solution is ‘the default position’: the application of violence. “The man with a hammer sees everything as a nail”. (Rex Brown, Texas##)

In my experience as a young soldier in the British Army, I was frequently told that I was not paid to think. If I made a mistake I would acknowledge this and was told, “not to be a hero”. The military is a ‘brotherhood’ (and a ‘sisterhood’) that protects its own. The organisation does not like to admit mistakes; or it minimises their significance. The military does not mention ‘courage’ when obliged to admit that it makes mistakes. It can require members to tell lies under oath, as in the cases of Col Oliver North and Admiral John Poindexter in the 1987 inquiry into the Iran-Contra scandal.

This can also be seen in the various ADF responses to (a) accusations of sexual harassment, mainly but not only from female personnel, (b) accusations of ‘bastardisation’ and (c) occasional suicides by military personnel whom bullying and intimidation may have unduly stressed. The ADF continues to fail in correcting its wrongs. Covering up and protecting its own take priority over any willingness to reform or administer just outcomes for individuals. Admitting mistakes requires courage.

The family of Pvt Jake Kovco have their own experience of this, as they continue to seek the truth about Jake's shooting in his Baghdad barrack room and compensation for the loss of his life. Was Jake inept in the routine task of cleaning his weapon in a safe manner, or was he playing Russian roulette? Why are we not allowed to know about the state of a sniper's mind? Neither of these explanations would sit well with the national mythology of 'the digger'. It is 'unthinkable' that such a soldier would take his own life. The military were simply unwilling and unable to tell the truth (Baird 7 May 2006).

Indoctrination of the military

The word indoctrination is employed here to embrace all aspects of military culture, including the siting of most military concentrations away from civilian populations, if through necessity, and the emphasis on separateness from and difference to the civilian society. Military personnel are generally subjected to the same education, societal conditioning influences and media exposure as most other citizens. But, additionally, they are acculturated into the military interpretation of history and a 'national identity' that focuses on conflicts, 'victories' and the claimed qualities of 'bravery' and 'heroism'. The Australian mythology about 'the diggers' is a useful construct in this scenario.

In this 'parallel universe' there is no room for nuanced explanations why the military were deployed into particular theatres of operation. To tell soldiers simplistically "the bad guys were there" fails to analyse or engage with critical thinking. Qualities of that nature are singularly threatening and unwelcome to military obedience and cohesion. The civilian population are silenced, as in current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, by admonishments to "support our brave boys (and girls)". All analysis and critique is suspended for the sake of national and military morale.

Brian Martin examines this differentiating aspect of military culture and indoctrination in his 1984 book, *Uprooting War* (Martin 1984). Brian Martin develops his arguments regarding the military in Chapter 9, where he says:

"Even in societies where military forces are overtly subordinate to civilian elites, military perspectives and interests can penetrate deeply into a society's fabric. This process of militarisation has been especially noticeable in industrialised countries since World War Two. Since then, 'peacetime' military spending has provided a rationale for continuing state intervention into economies and for the turning of industrial and professional efforts toward military priorities".

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Brian Martin is referring here to the viral effect of military attitudes that are adopted by their families and children. These attitudes find a life of their own as

they spread through schools, workplaces, social institutions, government and the media.

Furthermore, as Brian Martin details the specialised functionality of the military community:

“Internally, military forces are bureaucratic in form, with a strict hierarchy and division of labour, rigid rules and duties. The function of military forces is to be able to use organised violence against opponents, usually seen as similarly organised. Because killing of other humans is not readily undertaken by many people in modern societies, military recruits undergo extensive training, indoctrination and isolation in a military environment. The key to military performance is unquestioning obedience to orders, which again has much in common with non-military bureaucracies.

Military forces use violence as the ultimate defence of state interests, and not surprisingly the ultimate sanction against internal resistance in armed forces is also violent: imprisonment or even execution. Military forces even more than other bureaucracies are similar to authoritarian states in their denial of the right or opportunity to dissent, in their demand for obedience and in their use of reprisals against recalcitrant subjects”. 151

The military act with various degrees of secrecy that are incompatible with accountability and democratic governance. This is especially relevant when the military is accused of committing serious wrongs. Many military operations are covert in nature, consisting of violent acts against undeclared enemies, sabotage of civilian utilities, and assassination of individuals, in locations that have not been declared as war zones, and often with the intention of transferring the blame for these essentially terrorist acts onto other actors. Black Ops and Psy Ops, as they are known, do not acknowledge the agency of regular military forces, are exceptionally hazardous and are likely to lead to denial of these activities. This has happened in relation to Indochina and other theatres of warlike activity and will be one of the problematic outcomes from what is termed the ‘war on terror’.

Covert warriors travel light. They move fast and take no prisoners. For anyone squeamish about this, they kill all prisoners (who may or may not be in uniform – and may or may not be combatants). The traumatic act of killing at very close quarters is generally by strangling or stabbing. Guns are too noisy. It is interesting indeed to learn from former US Secretary for Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, that the Geneva Conventions that also protect the soldiers of democracies are now considered to be “quaint” (Gutman R (Editor) November 5, 2007).

Unacknowledged civilian casualties are another result of this style of war fighting, as the deaths and injuries go unrecorded and the media opinion-makers try to focus public attention on “our brave boys”, bearers of the ‘national mythology’, who, in this case, were not there anyway. Callous public attitudes that are necessary to the prosecution of war, assume that the entire population of the opposing nation state are the ‘enemy’, their places of habitation are ‘battlefields’ or ‘battle space’, which makes them ‘free-fire zones’, and that their lives are worthless and not a significant concern to us.

War crimes and punishment

If military personnel are taught to kill, they also need to be taught only to use lethal force when ordered to do so. There are several levels of response to perceived threats that military personnel learn, as they interpret and respond to situations that they face. This is known as the graduated response. There are penalties for unlawful killing. An undisciplined force or a vengeful, permissive and unprofessional leadership can readily lead to excesses in lethal response behaviour. At the time of public discovery, there were attempts to explain away the My Lai massacre, which may have indicated a breakdown in the normal restraints of good discipline as well as a state of denial. The ‘one-off incident’ explanation assumed that this was what had happened at My Lai.

The overall prevailing strategy of the civil and military leadership elite *can* also *include* the indiscriminate killing of as many civilians as possible. Negative attitudes to the ethnic ‘other’ and the preconditioning messages received in military training are critically important enablers. So too are the precise language and ‘messages’ embedded in their orders. When Serb paramilitary troops executed Bosnian Muslim prisoners in Srebrenitza the effects of this ‘conditioning’ were exhibited. (**video**) Military orders require a directive ‘task oriented’ approach that eliminates any moral values that might hinder the act of killing.

Additionally, we need to consider the soldiers’ desensitisation to killing other human beings – or ‘sub-human beings’. In most societies that make claims of decency and civility, people do not like to think that they have sanctioned barbaric behaviour and breaches of the Geneva Conventions. This is one of the reasons why returning veterans are disillusioned and bewildered by society, families and friends, who turn away or refuse to hear about their awful experiences.

The most serious incidents of war crimes and crimes against humanity evoke a protective, secretive response from military leaderships. This is not surprising as the Nuremberg Principle places the blame on senior officers to a greater degree, and for good reason. More recent experience shows that accountability being increasingly shirked in favour of placing greater blame at the lower end of the chain of command. Exceptions to this rule would be Rwandan genocide,

Colonel Théoneste Bagosora and former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević, who have both been tried by United Nations tribunals, though the latter took his own life before the completion of the trial.

The My Lai massacre, which took place on 16 March 1968, during the Vietnam War, demonstrated that the US government and military were unable and unwilling to satisfactorily investigate the incident, and ultimately blamed it on a junior officer, the Platoon Commander, Lt James Calley, making him the token 'bad apple' in a blameless professional leadership. Claude Cookman, a former US Special Forces soldier, explains how this happened in his paper, ***An American Atrocity: The My Lai Massacre Concretized in a Victim's Face***, he also states *that other massacres took place on the same day* (Cookman June 2007).

It is important to note that the US military 'cordoned-off' My Lai from other massacres. As Claude Cookman explains, "on that same day another company massacred at least ninety women and children a mile away [from the acknowledged massacre], in My Khe—an atrocity few have heard of". In fact there were deliberate, random, both authorised and unauthorised killings taking place in many regions of Indochina, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, for the duration of the war and beyond. These actions were ordered by or condoned by the senior staff officers and the administration to the level of President, whose guilt or innocence was never tested in court. These were flagrant breaches of the Geneva Conventions and the Nuremberg Principles.

There are many examples that demonstrate a culture of impunity in the US military that has continued till the present war in Iraq. In the Mekong Delta, the US 'Brown Water Navy' was ordered by General William Westmoreland to treat all signs of habitation that personnel could see from their swift boats on the rivers and canals as 'free fire zones'. This resulted in the razing of villages with bombing, strafing, napalm and automatic weapons fire, causing the deaths of an unknown number of Vietnamese civilians. It is significant to mention that the oldest, youngest and least mobile would have been disproportionately represented among the civilian casualties.

More recently, in 2003, the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq produced just a handful of low ranking defendants, MPs Spc. Charles Graner, Ivan Frederick, Pfc. Lynndie England, and Spc. Sabrina Harman, all of the 372nd MP Company. It was clear from the memos from then Secretary for Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, that he had *authorised* the use of 'aggressive interrogation techniques' – code for torture by another name (FOX News Catherine Herridge April 26, 2007).

General Janis Karpinsky accused Donald Rumsfeld of authorising torture, as she claimed to be sidelined by a parallel chain of command, the CIA and by 'private contractors' over whom she had no authority. So, Pvt Lynndie England and her superior, First Sgt Graner were "just following orders", albeit with some creative

interpretations. **Richard Matthews (Matthews 5 July 2007) and Alfred McCoy** both produce incontrovertible evidence that torture needs to be 'routinised', subject to regulation and rules of engagement and provisioned with funding, wages and equipment (McCoy December 26, 2006) (Matthews 5 July 2007). They show that the practise of torture has been widespread throughout the past fifty or so years.

This paper does not propose to accuse the Australian Defence Forces (ADF) with direct participation in such war crimes. Nevertheless, a large body of evidence emphatically proves that United States forces, allies of Australia, and colleagues in many combat tasks, have carried out activities that gravely compromise the integrity of Australian forces. **Ben Saul** In his 2006 book on the War in Iraq, *'The Weapons Detective'*, Rod Barton describes how he tried in vain to inform his superiors, to the level of former Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, of his troubled conscience and eventually resigned whilst informing the media of the reasons for abandoning his career (Barton 14 February 2005).

Dehumanisation of opponents

The euphemistic language used by military and civilian elites is well documented, as are the effects of these particular words and phrases in military operations. They are known as 'weasel-words' and 'unspeak'. The latter term is taken from British journalist Steven Poole's 2006 book, ***Unspeak: How Words Become Weapons, How Weapons Become a Message, and How The Message Becomes Reality***. These words were described by George Orwell, in his 1946 essay, ***Politics and the English Language***, and in his book ***Nineteen Eighty-Four***, published in 1949. There are probably too many jokes about 'collateral damage', however, this term summarises a range of callous and indiscriminate acts that needlessly cause civilian casualties. These casualties can result from the use of 'overwhelming force' otherwise referred to in Humanitarian Law as 'disproportionate force' (Gutman R (Editor) November 5, 2007).

The term 'collateral damage' has the effect of erasing the significance and value of the human lives that are extinguished by lethal conflicts. Terms like 'ethnic cleansing' now have a sinister ring as the Serbian leadership used this, but genocide would have been just as appropriate. Terms like 'cordon and search' and 'eliminate' and 'take out' have much the same outcome of trivialising the killing of human beings. More banal, perhaps, would be the use of the term 'battlefield' to describe a suburb of Baghdad, but the effect of 'clearing the battlefield' is to create a 'free fire zone' with the same terrifying consequences for civilians. Similarly, the term 'civilian targets' depicts people as objects to shoot at. This act should always be referred to as the 'targeting of civilians', which is indisputably a major war crime (Gutman R (Editor) November 5, 2007).

English is not the only language that facilitates what are otherwise unconscionable acts. When questioned about the killing of East Timorese women

and children in 1975, an Indonesian officer informed John Pilger, "When you clean the fields don't you kill all the snakes large and small?" Richard Woolcott, Australia's Ambassador to Jakarta explained to John Pilger, "Although we know it's not true, the formal position of the Indonesian government is that there is no Indonesian military intervention in East Timor. We should act in a way *designed to minimise the impact in Australia* and show private understanding to the Indonesians" (italics added). The Rwandan genocidaires used euphemisms like "cutting down the tall trees" and referred to Tutsis as "cockroaches".

Whether the military are deployed to carry out legitimate tasks on behalf of their domicile state or to commit war crimes, there are some aspects of their training and conditioning that remain constant. In all cases dehumanisation of opponents, 'the enemy', must be employed to *enable* soldiers to kill, at close range if necessary. The opponent is always labelled as something less than human, given a nickname like 'Charlie', 'gook', 'slope', or 'rag-head' that conveniently excuses random acts of killing, disrespect for the corpse, maltreatment and even murder of prisoners and massacres of civilians.

US Lt Col David Grossman (rtd), in his book, ***On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society***, explains how young men (as they were, prior to more recent conflicts) were conditioned to accept that their job was to kill, that killing is a normal, routinised activity, and that they must learn to cope with feelings of remorse or revulsion and blot out any empathy they may have for fellow human beings (Grossman November 1, 1996) (Grossman August 10, 1998). In some military forces, there is heavy alcohol consumption and sometimes other drugs are used. Some rebel militias in Africa administer drugs, by scratching the temples of their child soldiers and rubbing in amphetamines or heroin. This practise was well documented with child soldiers in Sierra Leone, but it is widespread. This is said to numb their emotions and erase fear. Drug use can transform into physical dependence or addiction. Inga Clendinnen mentions this in relation to new, inexperienced German reservists who were posted to Poland and ordered to massacre civilians during World War II. ***Reading the Holocaust*** (Clendinnen May 6, 2002).

As David Grossman develops his argument, the act of killing, the participation in combat, the soldier's experience of being adrenalised, hyper-vigilant and frightened for extended periods can inevitably lead to a high incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), psychotic episodes and psychiatric disease. The percentage of combat-hardened veterans that David Grossman claims to suffer from these disorders can be as high as 97%. These veterans are suffering mental illness as a result of their military service. There is an extremely high rate of suicides among these veterans, which can sometimes be identified in a specific act, or which may manifest in persistent risk-taking behaviours. This may be born out by returned American veterans of the Iraq war.

Killing distance and callous attitudes

For some combatants, especially from technologically advanced nations, there is also the opportunity, as Susan Sontag explains, to “kill beyond the range of retaliation” (Sontag and Jump 06/03/07). This phenomenon gives rise to callous explanations by air force pilots and naval personnel that “I was just doing my job”. The job can be a matter of identifying dots on a video screen and pressing a button.

There was little public questioning during World War II of the Allied incendiary bombing of the German cities, Hamburg and Dresden, except for some later disquiet in Britain. There was mainly a triumphant satisfaction in Allied nations following the fire bombing of civilian homes in sixty seven (**check**) Japanese cities, including Tokyo, and the symbolically demonstrative atomic bombing experiments in Hiroshima and Nagasaki :

“The first indiscriminate bombing onto residential area was examined in March 10, 1945. The Great Tokyo Air Raid killed 80,000 people in just one night. After that, other major cities like Nagoya, Osaka, Kobe, and so on were also attacked.

Since June of 1945, relatively small cities like NAGAOKA had also become targets of indiscriminate incendiary bombings”.

<http://www.echigonagaoka.com/bomb/n06.html> **58**

US Air Force General Curtis Emerson LeMay and British RAF Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris, known also as ‘Bomber Harris’ and sometimes as ‘Butcher Harris’, were architects of these several significant events including the incendiary bombing of Hamburg and Dresden and LeMay in the Japanese incendiary bombing raids, followed by the atomic bombings.

I mention this as I reflect on what I saw in the German city of Essen in 1952, but also because justice needs to be understood and accepted by all stakeholders. Japanese denial of war crimes, revision of history and Prime Ministerial visits to the Yasukuni Shrine of Class A Japanese war criminals are symptoms of Japanese discontent and sense of grievance. There is also long-standing anger in Korea, China and Mongolia regarding the Japanese occupations of those countries and a strong sense of injustice, as there is a perception of ‘unfinished business’ relating to these World War II crimes.

Western, particularly American attitudes to the frequency and conduct of warfare, have been influenced by the absence of any trials of Allied officers at the end of World War II. The Puritanical beliefs that the USA is an embodiment of the ‘light on the hill’, and America’s role in the world, characterised by what is termed ‘American Exceptionalism’, confers virtual immunity from prosecution for US military and intelligence personnel. I contend that hegemony alone has created this unhealthy

paradigm, which confers extraordinary powers and impunity on the USA and on no other member of the community of nations.

This point is significant to the arguments in this article, as US General Curtis Emerson LeMay threatened in May 1964, “You want to know my solution to Vietnam? Tell the Vietnamese they’ve got to draw in their horns or *we’re going to bomb them back into the Stone Age?*” The statistical evidence documents the heaviest bombing in history by the US against the three nations of Indochina. This statement indicated an intention to inflict unprecedented civilian casualties, coincident to General LeMay’s threat, and in clear breach of Geneva Conventions and Just War Theory stipulations against the use of disproportionate force. References to the Stone Age have echoed on through every twentieth and twenty first century conflict since 1964. As President Johnson told American officers in Vietnam, October 1966, “Boys, I want you to come home with that coonskin on the wall!”

Racial attitudes driven by fear of numerical superiority

The “coonskin” reference suggests very strongly that the President considered the Viet Cong and their allies as less than human. This translated on the ground to a spree of indiscriminate killings. When we try to examine the reasons for the use of this overwhelming force, indiscriminate air power and egregious weapons in Indochina we find in the documentary evidence that these military strategies stemmed from a deep-seated Western fear of being ‘swamped’ by endless waves of millions of Asians. The Pentagon Papers and documents in the British National Archives are irrefutable on this point.

Further examples of how attitudes of racial superiority and contempt informed the military campaign can be seen in the words of US General William Westmoreland, as he explained his readiness to kill 3.5 million Indochinese people in these terms:

“The Oriental doesn’t put the same high price on life as does the Westerner. Life is plentiful, life is cheap in the Orient. As the philosophy of the Orient expresses it: life is ... is not important”.

US General William Westmoreland

Film documentary, Hearts and Minds, 2002

http://www.turnerlearning.com/cnn/coldwar/images/viet_s2b.gif 48

Noam Chomsky’s close reading of the Pentagon Papers yields these revealing passages:

“America’s early strategy, as [Townsend] Hoopes describes it, was to kill as many VC as possible with artillery and air strikes:

*As late as the fall of 1966... a certain aura of optimism surrounded this strategy. Some were ready to believe that, in its unprecedented mobility and massive firepower, **American forces had discovered the***

military answer to endless Asian manpower and Oriental indifference to death. For a few weeks there hung in the expectant Washington air the exhilarating possibility that the most modern, mobile, professional American field force in the nation's history was going to lay to rest the time-honoured superstition, the gnawing unease of military planners, that a major land war against Asian hordes is by definition a disastrous plunge into quicksand for any Western army.

But this glorious hope was dashed. The endless manpower of Vietnam, the Asian hordes with their Oriental indifference to death, confounded our strategy. And our bombing of North Vietnam also availed us little, given the nature of the enemy. As Hoopes explains, quoting a senior US Army officer: 'Caucasians cannot really imagine what ant labour can do.' In short, our strategy was rational, but it presupposed civilized Western values:" 196

The casualness with which these people spoke their minds when discussing the killing of millions of people, most of whom were civilians, demonstrates that they believed their worldview to be normal and widely held. Lt George Coker, USN explained to a group of American children: "If it wasn't for the people it [Vietnam] was very pretty. The people are very backward and very primitive and they just make a mess out of everything."

Film documentary, ***Hearts and Minds***, 2002

<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/thumb/7/75/GeorgeCokerMay1966.jpg/200px-GeorgeCokerMay1966.jpg>

Lt Coker might not have been aware of the ancient cultures of the places that he was engaged in destroying nor the 5,000-year history of the Vietnamese. His sense of superiority was reinforced by his war experience.

During bayonet practice soldiers are ordered to make "blood-curdling yells" as part of psyching them into jabbing a bayonet into a sack of straw. I too had to do this. It helps to yell, as adrenalin is a necessary ingredient. The exercise seems more real that way. David Grossman describes group absolution, vicarious role models and intimate brutality as explanations of the aims and outcomes of military training. He further explains why these learned responses could not be turned off when combat veterans return to their home environment.

Grossman describes the military turning people into killers. This was seen in the films, ***Tigerland*** and ***Full Metal Jacket***, in which the drill instructor repeatedly tells the young US Marines that they are "killers" (and this was something to be proud of). In the film ***Gardens of Stone*** the main character, another US Marine 'true believer', is heard to say, "death is our business – business is good" when describing the relentless slaughter in Indochina.

So, inevitably, we hear lines like, “Waste the Gook”, from the characters in films like **Casualties of War** and **Full Metal Jacket** – it was an expression commonly used. A helicopter gunship door gunner, in the film **Full Metal Jacket** explains to colleagues

“If they run they are VC, if they stand still they are disciplined VC.”

Whilst US forces were destroying a substantial part of Vietnam’s forests, agriculture and economic infrastructure, many of the troops believed they were there to help the Vietnamese and saw their hosts as “ungrateful”, which puzzled them and made them feel resentful. Some shared General Westmoreland’s contempt for the lives of Asians and readily obeyed their orders.

Australia has been carried along in this direction through this country’s involvement in the wars of great and powerful allies. Political leaders like former Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies were happy to fan the flames of hate and fear. Consequently, Australian troops, for example, sometimes had no time or cover to bury dead Vietnamese, so they set off an explosive charge next to the body.

This was called “a C4 burial” – much easier than digging a grave and giving that person a dignified burial. Memories of these events led very often to PTSD.

Daniel Ellsberg, in 1971, relates this snippet of discussion:

“Exhausted men concentrated on immediate means rather than eventual ends. A poignant example of this thinking was recalled by TIME Correspondent Jess Cook. In the spring of 1967, after a long and fruitless retrospective interview, he asked McNamara: “Isn't there anything you regret at all about how the war was conducted?”

There was a long pause.

“Yes,” replied the weary Secretary. “There is one thing. We should have been able to come up with a better technique for population control.””

Further examples can be seen in Robert McNamara’s explanations of war crimes in the film, **The Fog of War**, which relates to the ordinariness of the routinised tasks of managing wars. Hannah Arendt’s 1963 book, **Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil**, bears a chilling similarity to the career of Robert McNamara, who speaks about war crimes in the film, even using that terminology in referring to LeMay.

Psychological theories – Case Study: the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF)

One of the most revealing racist statements that has emerged from the conflict in Israel and the Palestinian Territories is recorded in Hansard, the British Parliamentary record. Sir Robin John Maxwell-Hyslop (Conservative) recorded (Commons, 18 October 1973), a visit to the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset:

*“After lunch, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee spoke with great intemperance about the Arabs. When he drew a breath, I was constrained to say, ‘Dr Hacoheh, I am profoundly shocked that you should preach of other human beings in terms similar to those in which (Nazi) Julius Streicher spoke of the Jews. Have you learned nothing?’ I shall remember his reply to my dying day. He smote the table with both hands and said, ‘**But they are not human beings, they are not people, they are Arabs.**’*

When combat veterans return to society and their families they bring these values, including the racist stereotyping of the 'other', with them, thereby reinforcing the legitimacy of these values in society.”

In her essay, ***Jewish Trauma and the Palestinian/Israeli Conflict***, Avigail Abarbanal describes how every family in Israel has at least one young adult son or daughter serving in the IDF and the parents' generation also participated in the exclusion of Palestinians and the occupation of their lands (Abarbanal 10 June 2003). She describes how the whole society is imbued with the same authoritarian militarist racist values. As she describes this in her question, **“What does it mean to base a whole identity on the experience of trauma?”** –

“Throughout my upbringing in Israel I experienced the culture as aggressive and impatient and as society with a chip on its shoulders. Israel felt to me like a pressure cooker. I left in late 1991 not because I was threatened or persecuted in any obvious way. I left because I felt suffocated.

Indoctrination is also an important function of the military, and since every Israeli is required to do military service the control is comprehensive.

The phrase “a good Arab is a dead Arab” was commonplace and as children we used to sing songs that called for the destruction of all the Arab countries and their leaders.

It means to view the world as mostly a negative and dangerous place. It means to have an “us and them” mentality. The world is divided between our group and all the others and the others are not to be trusted. It means to not be particularly respectful of others. It means to be aggressive, defensive and emotionally reactive. It also means to personalise everything and think that everything that happens is about us.

When people suffer from trauma it is extremely difficult for them to see someone else's point of view or to empathise with others. Being traumatised does not exclude success, intelligence or creativity. In fact there are many traumatised people who occupy important positions and who do extremely well in some areas of their life. But trauma causes people to be chronically anxious, see enemies everywhere and always anticipate negative outcomes. They live in a permanent state of urgency and emergency and it is hard for them to be patient. Traumatized people live in a private hell. The philosophy of life of the traumatized can be quite fanatic and narrow minded. The world they live in is so scary that they desperately try to hold on to their way of seeing things, to the point where they can be quite rigid and uncompromising. Views different to their own present a real threat to their world."
Avigail Abarbanel **337**

Carmen Lawrence explains this phenomenon of dehumanisation in her 2006 book ***Fear and politics*** (Lawrence 2006). She writes:

"There's considerable evidence that when fear is engendered in any community, people become more punitive and less concerned with the welfare of those they've been asked to define as the others, the outsiders. High levels of threat and fear reduce our capacity for rational thought. They increase our reliance on group stereotypes, and increase the likelihood that we'll behave towards others with heightened distrust, suspicion and prejudice. And there's a mountain of evidence in social psychology and sociology to that effect". **81**

Carmen Lawrence further deconstructs the politics of fear with references to the Holocaust:

"What I want to talk to you about this morning is the role that fear of the other, fear of the stranger, xenophobia, sometimes called, plays in generating violence and in eroding human rights. And in speaking to you, I'm speaking from a concern that developed along, in me, a long time ago. My personal journey of exploration into this subject really began when I was introduced at a university like this, as a psychology student, to the work of Erich Fromm and Wilhelm Reich, and through them to a much fuller awareness of the horror of the Holocaust. And in researching their attempts to understand the genesis of fascism and authoritarianism, I embarked, like many before and since, on what was really a gruesome quest, to try to understand how human beings arrive at the point where they can torture and kill one another without apparent regret.

That so many ordinary Germans, and for that matter, people in Eastern Europe, could stand by as their Jewish neighbours were first branded and

then excluded from normal life, then herded into ghettos and cattle trucks, and say they didn't know what was happening...."

"These weren't the actions of a disordered few. Oppressive regimes and terrorist organisations can't operate at all without these willing executioners, without a bureaucracy to keep the wheels of the system turning, without finance to pay for the cattle trucks, without factories to manufacture the gas, and without the majority of people turning a blind eye, to the disappearances and the brutality taking place around them."
Carmen Lawrence 260

Winnifred Louis has studied the social psychological reasons for Australians agreeing to allow their government to subject asylum seekers to extraordinary cruelty after the Australian public had been repeatedly told that these vulnerable people represented a threat to Australian security and identity (Louis 5 July 2007).

Jessica Stern wrote ***Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill***, which was published in 2004, in which she studied fundamentalist terrorists by interviewing them. Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhists were all subjects in her study (Stern August 17, 2004) (Stern August 17, 2004). She found that their preparedness to kill large numbers of non-combatant civilians rose in direct proportion to their religious zeal.

Conclusions: propaganda to the wider community

I have postulated that war begets prejudice, concluding that this area requires further examination in future studies. Propaganda depicting racial stereotypes is only one manifestation of the dehumanisation, which relates to the training of military personnel. This indoctrination has a clear purpose, and probably detrimental post-facto societal effects. Making war brings unintended consequences. I have examined existing knowledge and drawn together threads that I regard to be logically related, but which may not have been connected in previous work.

War has many hidden costs in advanced democracies that engage in power projection through military means. One of these is the traumatising of the veterans, their wives, and families, especially the children. The whole society pays an intergenerational price for the presence in their midst of one or more physically or psychologically damaged cohort.

Society also pays for a form of often latent, sometimes expressed and sometimes acted-out, xenophobia and racism. This racism has been born out of military indoctrination and combat that veterans of a nation like Australia have experienced. This includes the manner in which they treated people of 'other' ethnicities. This is a virus with a very long memory.

In researching the roots of racism it is possible to find crosscurrents of guilt and illusions of superiority stemming from conflict, thus sowing ethno-religious disharmony into the future.

Part of the mental process of indoctrination appears to feature the essential ingredient of fear in most examples that I have examined. Bertrand Russell famously said that "fear is the parent of cruelty". It appears that fear is indeed a potent driver that enables people to kill other human beings, as long as this person has been dehumanised as 'other', not like us, and labelled as an 'enemy'.

The more ignorant we are of the 'other' human being the more likely we are to use excessive, lethal force, and the more cruel will be the killing. Community approval or at least apathy and disinterest enable military personnel to carry out the task allotted to them. This only helps them to get through the task but is no help when they return traumatised to reintegrate into the society. It is even harder when they do not feel able to articulate what they have experienced and when the society has lost interest in the issues.

Myth making begins where the national elite finds political expediency that suits the purpose of nation building. The link between religious zeal, nationalism, deep-seated fear of the 'other' and xenophobia is strong. The links to military actions and the national mythology are also there, but require further study.

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