

# The Limitations of Military Psychology: Combat-stress and Violence-values among the Chechens and Albanians\*

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## Abstract

This article examines the interplays between *combat-stress* and traditional *violence-values*—two of the four variables of my *Brutalisation* theory—among the Chechens and Albanians in the latest conflicts against the Russians and Serbs. I first discuss in considerable detail some major theories and approaches on combat-stress in military psychology. I then point to some current shortfalls in this field, including a serious dearth of research on combat-stress and traumas among armed non-state actors generally and Chechen and Albanian insurgents specifically. As a partial compensation to this lack of knowledge, I describe how violence-values affect combat-stresses (and vice versa) among Chechens and Albanians. Finally, I suggest that stresses and traumas of Chechen and Albanian combatants account for many of their brutalities (also in post-war settings). Such brutalities—even if less common and systematic than Russian and Serb atrocities during and after the wars—violate international and local norms, i.e. the very violence-values of martial valour and honour that enhanced their combat-stress to begin with.

## Keywords

Chechens, Albanians, Combat-stress, Violence-values, Stressors, Stress-responses, Reluctance and Eagerness to Kill, Social and Group Pressures

## I. INTRODUCTION

This article examines the presence, impact and role of *combat-stress* among Chechen and Albanian rebels during the latest Russo-Chechen conflicts (1994-1996, 1999-present) and the Serbo-Albanian conflict in Kosovo (1997-1999). Com-

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\* This monograph is an extended version of the third article of my “How to Feud and Rebel” Series in *Iran and the Caucasus* (Brill): “3. Combat-stress and Violence-values among the Chechens and Albanians”, vol. 16.2 (2012): 225-245. Particularly section II is much enlarged here, with an elaborate analysis of fear, rage and other stress-responses, social pressures in the military (or combatants generally), and the contrary human dispositions towards killing and not-killing.

bat-stress constitutes the third variable of my *Brutalisation* theory, the other variables being *violence-values*, *conflict-inducing motivations* and *conflict-induced motivations* (grievances, 'greeds' or avarices, interests, and ideologies), i.e. motivations that cause or contribute to the conflict, and/or motivations that occur during the conflict and exacerbate it.<sup>1</sup> Brutalisation concerns an increasing resort to terrorism, brigandry, gangsterism, war crimes and other forms of violence that violate local and/or international norms.<sup>2</sup> I also assess salient *violence-values* (a composite term coined by the author)—that collectively constitute the Brutalisation theory's first variable—as stress-reducers and stress-enhancers affecting the behaviour and resilience of Chechen and Albanian fighters. I already have amply described Chechen and Albanian violence-values, and compared these to international norms, in the first article of my "How to Feud and Rebel" Series (Ten Dam 2010). Moreover, I have assessed the largely valid saliency of long-term, historical grievances among Chechens and Albanians in the second article of the same Series (Ten Dam 2011).<sup>3</sup> Once more, I depart from the post-constructivist proposition (expounded in the first article of the Series) that the "acting-out" of norms, values and beliefs, irrespective their factual or invented provenances, underlies one's identity.

Section II of this article assesses the main theories on combat-stress in *military psychology*. This discipline primarily aims to treat or ameliorate the effects of (post-combat) *post-traumatic stress disorder* (PTSD) and other psychological

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<sup>1</sup> From 2005 till 2013, I have described my brutalisation theory, with some minor modifications, as "a cycle of violence involving four main variables: "values on "good" and "bad" violence (variable 1); grievances leading to armed conflict (variable 2); combat stress leading to atrocities (variable 3); and new conflict grievances emanating from such atrocities (variable 4), spawning counter-atrocities and eventually hardening or debasing the original violence-values (the cycle returns to the first variable)": "1. Violence-values among the Chechens and Albanians", *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 14.2 (2010): 332. Yet since then, I have widened and thereby reformulated the theory's second and fourth variables, so as to more equally represent different motivations as explanations of brutal behaviour, taken from or inspired by diverse theories propounding particular kinds of motivations as the primary causes of such behaviour.

<sup>2</sup> For fuller descriptions of both the earlier version and later versions of the theory see C. ten Dam (2010, 2011), *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 14/2: 332 and vol. 15.1-2: 236. See also "Brutalisation theory", with a new Diagram of the reformulated version, at <<http://sites.google.com/site/tristanolutions>>.

<sup>3</sup> These historic grievances reinforce, and are reinforced by, violence-values of *honour*, *blood feud*, *raid*, *hospitality* and *mediation*, and the societal values of *martialism*, *resistance* and *egalitarianism* (Ten Dam 2010: 333-334).

disorders, and prevent, by timely diagnosis and 'hardening' training-and-conditioning techniques, it from (re)occurring or proliferating among 'their' soldiers. Section III criticises the skewed attention in military psychology on state rather than non-state armed actors. At present, I only can compensate the resultant gap in knowledge by exploring the interactions between combat-stress and violence-values among Chechen and (Kosovar-)Albanian insurgents. Section IV reveals how traditional violence-values, and the consequent high expectations towards honour, courage and sacrifice, have exacerbated rather than reduced combat-stress among Chechen and Albanian combatants. This led to mental breakdowns even or rather among the hardiest of them, and accounted for many brutalities, particularly 'berserk' violence and *terrorism* i.e. lethal violence against civilians or other practically defenceless individuals (even though generally these pale in comparison to Russian and Serbian atrocities in severity or scale). Section V recapitulates the fateful dynamics between combat-stress(es) and violence-values among Chechens and Albanians.

## II. COMBAT-STRESS: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

Long before the rise of military psychology as a distinct and recognised discipline, participants and observers spoke of the horrors and (consequent) stresses and traumas of war. Thus U.S. General William Sherman famously lamented in 1880 that "I am tired and sick of war. Its glory is all moonshine. It is only those who have neither fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for blood, more vengeance, more desolation. War is hell". This outburst occurred when he was telling military graduates of the horrors of the 1860-1864 American Civil War. With 60,000 men, marching "from Atlanta three hundred miles to the sea", Sherman destroyed "every town, rail yard, mansion, and crop across a swath of sixty miles"; his own role in it "haunted Sherman for the rest of his life" (Cooke 1974: 218). Sherman's *war-is-hell* thesis came to include the belief that combatants *inevitably* execute, massacre, rape and loot the defenceless and vanquished; all are sucked into a brutality inseparable from organised violence; there is no decency in combat: that happens, at best, in exceptional circumstances by exceptional individuals. Even they cannot dispel the nightmare of armed conflict with its corrosive effects on battlefield ethics; combatants are bound to brutalise, terrorise and criminalise, despite lofty ideals on how they could or should behave. Easily-confirmed notions that "atrocities are inevitable in war" (Watson 1980: 175), and that "all armies in all wars do terrible

things" (Gall/De Waal 1997: xi) have gained currency ever since. Nevertheless, 'war-is-hell' is not the most unreservedly negative view of human behaviour; it at least conveys the notion that people brutalise only under extreme stress. In contrast, Robert Cribb's "fatal discoveries", of feeling betrayed by the "other", and the realisation that one could get away with anything when violence breaks out, suggest that people are naturally inclined to inflict pain.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, my theory of *brutalisation* departs from that most pessimistic viewpoint on human nature (not that I share it; I actually hope to disprove the general validity of brutalisation, or some parts of it). A related yet distinct dimension is *radicalisation*, the process of increasing militancy in one's cultural, societal, political and ideological viewpoints that tend to exclude or demonise the "other".<sup>5</sup> Brutalisation easily leads to radicalisation—and vice versa. Still, combat-stress may turn out to be the most determinate variable in this (self-)destructive process, relatively independent from the particular grievances, avarices, interests, ideologies, societal values and even violence-values of the participants.

#### MILITARY PSYCHOLOGY

On 6 April 1917, just after the United States declared war on Germany, Robert M. Yerkes, the president of the American Psychological Association (APA) who defined military psychology as the "application of psychological methods to military problems", urgently wrote that the psychologist's duty was to work toward the "increased efficiency of our Army and Navy" (Yerkes 1918: 86-87). Military strategists, participants, observers and physicians always have exhibited psychological insights, especially in deceiving and demoralising their enemies but also in seeking to understand their own fears and weaknesses, from the Peloponnesian Wars around 400 BC to the American Revolution of the 1770s and the American Civil War of the 1860s. Still, military psychology, psychiatry and pathology, *military psychology* in short, only arose as a science during the First World War—though Russian psychiatrists were the first to diagnose battle stress-*es*, traumas and breakdowns at the front during the 1905 Russo-Japanese War.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> R. Cribb, in: Dirk Vlasblom, "Het is de vonk, niet het droge gras (It is the spark, not the dry grass)", *NRC Handelsblad* (New Rotterdam Courier-General Trades' Paper), 17 April 2008: 9; terms translated from Dutch.

<sup>5</sup> I will more amply analyse radicalisation in "Conflict-Induced Motivations among the Chechens and Albanians" (*Iran and the Caucasus*, forthcoming).

<sup>6</sup> Richard A. Gabriel emphasises the pioneering role of Russian military psychiatrists and psy-

Authorities sought to understand why so many soldiers, marines and aviators suffered mental collapse, and how they could be treated (preferably near the frontline) and redeployed. Also during World War II the military sought to “make men fit for combat” including those temporarily incapacitated; “our function is not long-term care” (Porter, apud Sladen 1943: 240, 243). Military psychology is broadly defined as the application of psychological principles to military ‘problems’, ‘needs’ or ‘environments’. Yet the discipline became specifically concerned with how to select suitable recruits and bar those with severe mental disorders (psychopathologies); choose the best for “responsible positions” (Yerkes 1919: 90); train and harden them against battlefield adversities; optimise (their use of) weapons, vehicles and other machines (*human factors engineering*); and take care of them if they buckle under the stress—though prioritising the “return to duty of service members with manageable combat stress reactions” (Williams *et al*, apud Kennedy/Zillmer 2006: 201-202). Some include efforts to “minimize the enemies’ behavioural capabilities” through *propaganda*<sup>7</sup> and other (ill-defined) forms of *psychological warfare* (Walters 1968: 2 (quote), 19-25)—including (better-defined) *psychological operations* (PSYOP) to “influence the emotions, motives, decision making, and .. behavior of adversaries” (Williams *et al*, apud Kennedy/Zillmer 2006: 195).

In World War II the American priority became to better select and train the mentally fit; on that issue Samuel A. Stouffer and associates undertook one of the largest investigative projects ever (Stouffer *et al* 1977 (1949): 3-4, 12-14, 20-21). During the Korea and Vietnam wars, the United States and other countries perfected techniques to ‘brainwash’ soldiers into efficient, *brutal* killers. Military psychologists thrived during such wars, but became less prominent during the *interbella* due to diminished government priority and funding.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, a new ‘wolf pack’ led by Lt. Col. Dave Grossman appeared in the mid-1990s, biting

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chologists, though he also argues that their Western counterparts eventually overtook them in the sophistication and validity of diagnoses (Gabriel 1988: 9-10, 17, 22 (Russo-Japanese War); 67-92 (Chapter 4)).

<sup>7</sup> Word “propaganda” (propagation) is derived from the Catholic *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* or “Association for the Propagation of the Faith” formed in the 15th century (Kennedy, apud Sladen 1943: 342).

<sup>8</sup> WWII gave a “boost” to military psychology, though the US had ‘fortified’ it in “peacetime” (Cronin 1998: 1-2,4). According to others, psychologists and military “parted ways” during 1918-1939, though less so after 1945 (Driskell/Olmstead 1989: 43-45). Still, “research funding declined in the late 1980s through the late 1990s” (Krueger, apud Cronin 1998: 24).

their teeth into the “taboo topic of killing in combat” (Grossman 1996: xxix), which Br. Gen. L. S. A. Marshall had already broached in the late 1940s: “essentially war is the business of killing” (Marshall 1978 (1947): 67). Ever since, Grossman and his colleagues teach *killology* (study of killing in combat) and the wider discipline of *combatology* i.e. study of the “psychology and physiology of combat” (Grossman/Christensen 2007: xxiii) to military and law enforcement students, officers and veterans. These teachings are intended to improve their resilience, understanding and after-the-event coping of the “toxic, corrosive, destructive realm of combat” (Grossman/Christensen 2007: xiii).<sup>9</sup>

Some analysts have criticised the “inadequacy of psychological .. language in describing” moral trauma (Marin 1981: 74). Thus ‘stress’ appears to have become a “jargon word” that substitutes, and even dehumanises, the concept of fear (Watson 1980: 37). Military-psychological jargon may indeed obscure, pathologise and delegitimise fear, trauma (post-event distress), guilt and other emotive states; yet I have come across no better overall term than *stress* to encapsulate these phenomena.

Therefore, it seems that military-psychological theories can explain atrocities emanating from *combat-stress*, the Brutalisation theory’s third variable. However, many (military) psychologists and sociologists (over)confidently posit that stress-induced cruelty, and violence *sui generis*, occur irrespective of grievances, convictions and other root causes. They argue that one should “put the [group-behavioural] interaction in the center of .. analysis, not the individual, .. social background, .. culture, or even .. motivation” (Collins 2008: 1).<sup>10</sup> Such a view effectively dismisses most motivational conflict theories I have succinctly discussed elsewhere (Ten Dam 2011: esp. 237-241). Even so, some scholars seek to explain the “vast array” of violence, ranging from domestic quarrels to foreign wars, by “a relatively compact theory” reminiscent of frustration-aggression theory (Collins 2008: 1). In my research I am modestly interested in accounting for (rebel) brutality, not violence *per sé*. Here I only deal with ‘narrow’ stress theories that posit

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<sup>9</sup> They prefer to call themselves “sheepdogs” (Grossman/Christensen 2007: 120-121). Unlike “wolves”, sheepdogs work “under authority, .. as team players, to protect innocent lives” (ibid: 122 (quote); 180-190). Yet, army and police forces do not always practice this ideal. And many ‘illegitimate’ wolves, like rebels, do act under (a) authority as a bonded group—and protect innocent lives.

<sup>10</sup> Yet Randal Collins appears to circumvent the fact that the individual remains the ultimate unit of analysis, even if humans are social animals.

a single, few, many or all of the following factors as valid explanations of combat-stress:

*Stress-responses of shock, fear, fatigue, rage, trauma* and other *distresses* i.e. “negative affective states” as reactions to *stressors* i.e. “stressful [combat] events” (Cohen/Williamson 1991: 5) like receiving or witnessing gruesome injury, or seeing a friend killed.

*Avoidance* and *overdrive* behaviours, ranging from an apathetic, non-aggressive *reluctance to kill*, injure, capture or otherwise incapacitate the enemy, to an overly aggressive, excessive and (often) brutal *eagerness to kill*, injure, capture or otherwise incapacitate the enemy.

*Social pressures* of or by military *training, indoctrination, conditioning* (imbibing behaviour-patterns through psychological techniques), and *group convictions, group bondings* and (consequent) *group expectations* in the civilian and military spheres.

### *Shock*

When tens if not hundreds of thousands of soldiers suffered physical-and-mental breakdowns in WWI, authorities became desperate to ‘patch them up’ and send them back to the front. Pathologists first noted, analysed and treated the ‘peculiar’ numbness many soldiers displayed after shells had exploded near them. The provenance of the term *shell shock* is contentious: possibly “medical officers adopted .. a soldier’s phrase”, yet British Col. Frederick Mott reputedly coined it. Though Mott wrongly diagnosed it as generally arising from minute brain hemorrhage, it became a famous term denoting the prevalent paralysis among soldiers ‘shaken’ by explosions and other shocks ‘breaking the camel’s back’. Earlier terms like *nostalgia* (apathy due to stress, fatigue or homesickness) and later terms like *combat neurosis* covered a wider range of nervous breakdowns (Butler 1943: 99 (quote); Weinberg 1946: 466 and his note 4; Gabriel 1998: 14-15).

Be as it may, American and British WWII studies confirmed that the “battle incident most likely to ‘break’ a soldier is the explosion of a shell” near him, due to the explosion’s noise and shock-wave; even stable personalities may succumb to a single event overwhelming the senses, particularly that of hearing: the “immediate impact of war is noise ... incredibly loud ..—small arms, bombs and aircraft” (Watson 1980: 151, 153). Even “under normal peacetime conditions, noise is a strain or stress, ranging from irritation to pain” (Dinter 1985: 37). Actually, the “noise intensities of modern military equipment are much higher than those found in most industrial jobs”; consequently thousands of US “ex-military personnel wear hearing aids” (Krueger, apud Cronin 1998: 98,99). Usually the soldier

is temporarily ‘concussed’ but recovers quickly, even in minutes—if there is no serious damage to internal organs or long-lasting, blast-related *traumatic brain injury* (TBI) (Ryan *et al*, apud Kennedy/Zillmer 2006: 108-111).<sup>11</sup> He or she also recovers “quite rapidly” (if superficially, as later research found) from other “mental disturbances” like “acute schizophrenia” (a once typical diagnosis accounting for rage) and “acute war neuroses” like anxiety, fatigue, depression and (consequent) low morale (Porter, apud Sladen 1943: 245(quote)-246). Still, extreme sounds, flashes, heat, cold, smoke, shock-waves (by explosions) and tremors (*ibid*) may precipitate nervous collapse, even if unaccompanied by concussions, other injuries, or other stresses like anxiety and exhaustion. The reverse may also be true: rather than concussion or paralysis, “loud noises” can provoke “fear and terror responses in adults”, as William James discovered in the late nineteenth century (Bartone, apud Cronin 1998: 115).<sup>12</sup> However, while “explosions farther away can be extremely loud”, explosions “close enough to slam your body” are *not* heard i.e. registered by your ears. The body reacts to the primary danger signal: “when a creature .. lands on your back and roars .., your dominant survival information would be the sensation of something on your back” (Grossman/Christensen 2007: 61). If one does not rebound quickly from such natural yet detrimental survival-responses like *auditory exclusion*, *auditory enhancement*, *concussion* or *tunnel vision* (see Grossman/Christensen 2007: 8-11, 14-15, 30-49, 54-73, 94-99, 112-122), one may become paralysed, apathetic or unresponsive—i.e. descend into shell-shock or a state very much like it.

### *Fear*

The battlefield is one of the most lethal places to be. Many analysts “question our ability to endure the horror of battle” given that “fear and madness [mental breakdown] have been man’s companions in war since the beginning of recorded history” (Gabriel 1988: 7). Even hardened combatants can succumb to *fear*, a primal emotion and response to danger, if not the only one (see Maslow 1941, 1943, 1987 (1954) ). The classic *frustration-aggressionists* have recognised this: the “dominant reaction among survivors” of the nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was “acute fear rather than anger” (Berkowitz 1962: 42). However, the

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<sup>11</sup> Combat-related TBI is “not well described in the literature”; most research has focused on internal-organ, torso, limb and “penetrating head injuries” (Ryan *et al*, apud Kennedy/Zillmer 2006: 109). Perhaps F. Mott’s erroneous brain-hemorrhage diagnosis of shell-shock discouraged research into TBI.

<sup>12</sup> From William James (1890), *Principles of Psychology*, New York.

so-called *relative deprivationists* tend to underrate fear among civilians: “heavy bombings .. first produced acute fear, not anger, but also generally led to increased hostility” (Gurr 1970: 35).<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, many scholars tend to overrate fear, regarding *anxiety* and *hysteria* as the “most prevalent” of “traumatic or situational war neuroses”, relegating *fatigue*, *depression* and other conditions as non-essential components of ‘combat neurosis’ (Weinberg 1946: 466-467). Be as it may, anecdotal if not structural evidence suggests that, as part of the “omnipresent fear of the unknown and the unexpected”, “fear of mutilation is certainly greater than the fear of death itself”, whereby injuries which “do not lead to mutilation do not frighten the soldier so much” (Dinter 1985: 20, 25). Elmar Dinter believes that *group expectations* produce the most fundamental anxiety of all: “the soldier’s fear of losing both his primary group and the love and recognition of the people back home, exceeds his strong fears of the unknown, the unexpected and mutilation” (Dinter 1985: 50).

In contrast, Lt. Col. Dave Grossman criticises the “simplistic” yet “widely accepted” proposition that the “cause of most trauma in war is the fear of death and injury”; rather, “fear may be one of the least important factors” accounting for a soldier’s breakdown: thus strategic WWII bombings caused surprisingly few “psychiatric casualties” among civilians, active combatants and prisoners of war. Especially well-trained commandos on reconnaissance and sabotage missions, who are not obliged to kill unless detected, exhibit little anxiety. Danger and “fear of death and injury” are “*not* the predominant cause of psychiatric casualties in battle” (Grossman 1996: 52, 54, 60-62). Even the “universal human phobia”, the “irrational, overwhelming, uncontrollable” fear of interpersonal human aggression, rarely engenders severe mental breakdown (Grossman/Christensen 2007: 2). Yet it typically engenders a bodily survival-response (including sensory distortions), panic, humiliation, anger and long-lasting trauma: “It is not a fear of death. ... We can accept the fact that we will die of old age, or that an “act of nature” might take our lives ... But we cannot accept .. someone “playing God”, and ... steal away our loved one’s lives” (ibid: 5-6). Then the response is extreme anger. In short, fear generally leads to combat-stress, often to after-the-event combat-trauma, but hardly ever to acute combat-breakdown. Thus Grossman distinguishes between fear as a natural stress-response (typical) and fear as a direct

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<sup>13</sup> Both Berkowitz and Gurr refer to I. L. Janis (1951), *Air War and Emotional Stress: Psychological Studies of Bombing and Civilian Defense*, New York: 4-66. See on *frustration-aggression*, *relative deprivation* and other conflict theories C. ten Dam, *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 15,1-2: esp. 237-241.

cause of mental collapse (atypical). Even Peter Watson acknowledges that “bombing has less of a psychological impact than might be expected” (Watson 1980: 155). Nevertheless, to this day scholars place anxiety at the centre of their theories of violence. Randall Collins defines his “micro-situational theory of violence” as a “set of pathways”—“find a weak victim to attack”, “focus .. on the audience”, limit oneself to “bluster”—around “confrontational tension and fear” (Collins 2008: 4, 8, 9, 10). Yet such tension and fear only lead to severe traumas and pathologies among *some* people under extreme conditions of, say, war.

Through training one learns to suppress and control fear, when one must move forward, fight, and kill. Researchers found that the *social* fear of “letting others down” and simply “combat experience decreases fear of death or injury” (Grossman 1996: 52).<sup>14</sup> Even so, after each battle and adrenaline rush, fear needs a mental-physical outlet: one gets the ‘shivers’. American military researchers in the 1960s did find that intelligent and able soldiers, better aware of the risks, went *absent without leave* (AWOL), inflicted wounds on themselves or pretended physical and mental diseases in order to get medical discharge, or managed prior to any war to “cluster in the safer jobs away from the frontline” (Watson 1980: 34(quote), 105, 160). These patterns specifically emerged during the Vietnam War, when the draft induced capable men most unwilling to take risks or wage war to dodge it. However, risk avoidance, as posited through *rational-utilitarian gain* theory, hardly accounts for soldiers pretending illness or openly fleeing defensive positions to medical stations and other places that actually “*offered no protection*” from artillery fire (Grossman 1996: 57).<sup>15</sup> Moreover, other intelligent, stable and strong men are eager to join the special forces, or accept other challenging jobs in the army, air-force and navy. Unsurprisingly, high-risk-personnel candidates receive high scores in aptitude tests on “stress resilience, adaptability, cooperation with others, and .. physical fitness and stamina”—leading to the tautological conclusion that “psychological hardiness and stress tolerance” are “critical to successful performance” (Picano *et al*, apud Kennedy/Zillmer 2006: 359). These attributes, and high motivation coupled with extensive training, practically ensure that these “special warriors” (Mountz, apud Kaslow 1993: 121-129) can ‘conquer’ fear while on mission.

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<sup>14</sup> From Ben Shalit (1988), *The Psychology of Conflict and Combat*, New York.

<sup>15</sup> Grossman seems to forget that panic can swamp cost-benefit rationality.

### *Fatigue*

Exhaustion continuously accompanies the soldier: in training, drilling, patrolling, deploying, camping, fighting, retreating, advancing, and endlessly cleaning and repairing one's kit, weaponry and other machinery. Especially the "parasympathetic backlash"—the body shuts down for maintenance after it has gone through one or more adrenaline rushes to face a dangerous situation—accounts for so-called "soldier fatigue": psychiatrists accompanying an experienced US combat unit in the Korean War found that after many an intense battle, "the men had fallen into an exhausted sleep, though they knew they would soon be attacked" (Grossman/Christensen 2007: 15, 16). In their classic WWII study of the Allied landing in Normandy in 1944, R. L. Swank and W. E. Marchand found that after sixty days of continuous combat, practically all soldiers succumb to physical and emotional exhaustion and become psychiatric casualties. Other studies found that practically all combatants collapsed only after 90 to 120 days of continuous combat, but generally confirmed Swank and Marchand's 'bell-curve' findings on combat efficiency over a period of time (Swank/Marchand 1946: 236-247; Dinter 1985: esp. 66-67; Grossman 1996: esp. 43-44). Still, Grossman and Christensen caution that situations in which soldiers are "trapped in continuous combat for 60 to 90 days" *without rotations or reinforcements* are rare: "On the beaches of Normandy ... there were no rear lines, and for two months there was no way to escape the horror of continuous fighting" (Grossman/Christensen 2007: 12(quotes)-13; Grossman 1996: 44-45).

One of the main challenges for the military psychologist has been to devise optimal sleep rhythms, nutrition, clothing, rest, morale and relaxation, and if necessary medicinal 'boosts' which "merely buy time" (Dinter 1985: 29), for the soldiers even when on campaign or in battle. Mental concentration and adrenaline peak either for too long—"in a slit trench a man tends to brace himself continuously when under fire and this is exhausting"—or drain too quickly away when one 'relaxes' after dangerous action: the "parachutist feels tired .. a few moments *after* .. a safe landing" (Watson 1980: 167). During the taking of Hill 440 in Korea, American officers had the greatest difficulty in "keeping their men awake—in broad daylight under intense bullet and mortar fire" (Watson 1980: 167). Generally, post-adrenaline relaxation (if not exhaustion) after battle makes combatants lax and thus vulnerable to counter-attack (Marshall 1978 (1947): 143-44, 193-197). Similarly, guard duty—especially in confined trenches—produces tiredness and lower performance the longer it lasts: "Any form of rest helps—

even being allowed to fidget improves performance” (Watson 1980: 70). Even “in the most confined spaces he should at least shout or shoot, if necessary without a target” (Dinter 1985: 39). If one must hide one’s location, then one only could fidget to diminish tension, cramp and tiredness.

Different physical deprivations have different effects across different timeframes. Corroborating Maslow’s hierarchy of basic (immediate) versus supplementary (long-term) human needs (Maslow 1941, 1943, 1987 (1954) ), only chronic or severe sleep deprivation deteriorates task performance, while lack of water, food and even “additional noise, .. heat or cold” (Dinter 1985: 30) may do so far more quickly and drastically. This shows how stress-responses and their stressors can interrelate and accumulate; thus shock or its stressors can enhance fatigue and *vice versa*. Likewise, fatigue can enhance fear and *vice versa*: thus if “fatigue sets in”, it often “creates a fear of incapacity, fear of failure and a fear of inferiority” (Reinartz, apud Sladen 1943: 276). J. F. Mackworth found almost no task degradation, even improvement, if people could rest for thirty minutes after every thirty minutes of work (Watson 1980: 70 (note 25)-71).<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, such a work-leisure distribution is impracticable in most civilian occupations, and utterly undoable in military ones (not counting the long waits filled with boredom). When a soldier or any combatant needs to be vigilant incessantly, fatigue easily trumps fear or any other stress-response. Many combatants fall victim to *post-traumatic stress disorder* (PTSD) due to sleep deprivation alone. This reportedly happened to many US soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan because they were allowed to play video games, watch TV and do other escapist activities after combat patrols—this in stark contrast to the strictly enforced sleeping regimes in both world wars. Contemporary defence and law enforcement departments need to relearn that “you can die from lack of sleep faster than you can die from lack of food” (contrasting earlier findings) and that “throughout history sleep has always been the soldier’s best medicine” (Grossman/Christensen 2007: 23-25).

### *Rage*

The average combatant will at least once experience *rage* i.e. extreme, barely controllable anger, in response to shocking, traumatic experiences: one loses a comrade in combat, comes under continuous, ‘unfair’ enemy fire (leading to other stress-responses like shock, fear and fatigue), or witnesses atrocities com-

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<sup>16</sup> On Mackworth: D. R. Davies; G. S. Tunc (1970), *Human Vigilance Performance*, Staples Press: 138 ff.

mitted by the enemy—or by one's own. All too often, such rage becomes uncontrollable: combatants go *berserk*, i.e. descend into a state of frenzy and become extremely aggressive against enemy combatants, bystanders (eg. civilians) or even their comrades. Either their last restraints break down under the stress, leading to “desperate aggression” to “destroy the [enemy] object before he succumbs” (Weinberg 1946: 472),<sup>17</sup> or these are deliberately broken down by their comrades, superiors and (other) agitators. Anxiety often brings “resentment and hostility”, not only ‘healthily’ towards the enemy but also ‘neurotically’ towards oneself (repressed hostility) or one's comrades (overt hostility), leading to “impulsive outbursts of temper and violence” (Weinstein 1947: 310, 312).

Even the most romantic accounts in war literature acknowledge and depict notable examples of rage and consequent brutality. However, military psychologists rarely grapple with this phenomenon, perhaps because it remains a taboo topic among the military they work for—and because they remain “confounded by the unpredictability with which aggressions sometimes explode, in a fury no one sees coming”.<sup>18</sup> They and the military themselves typically settle for the succinct, obvious observation that stress “can also increase the risk of soldier misconduct” (Bartone, apud Cronin 1998: 119), without mentioning rage at all. The US Army and Defence Department, at least until recently, did not even consider misconduct (let alone rage) as a possible *combat stress reaction* (CSR), despite recognising that “combat exposure can lead to misconduct” (Campise *et al*, apud Kennedy/Zillmer 2006: 215, 216). Even Watson rarely and obliquely refers to rage as an intermediating factor between stress and brutality: when “a high-risk soldier finds himself in a .. position that is highly stressful for long periods of time, .. the chances of atrocities are increased” (Watson 1980: 178).<sup>19</sup>

Some analysts refer to rage more directly, when speaking of “behavioral factors” contributing to or reflecting combat-stress: “Is the enemy treated with a measure of humanity? Are bodies of the dead treated with respect? Has the civilian community become a target of anger?” (Campise *et al*, apud Kennedy/Zillmer 2006: 227). Others imply that rage, indeed any stress-response, inevitably

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<sup>17</sup> Soldiers “losing self-control” (Weinberg 1946: 473) may perform “heroic deeds” that are not necessarily atrocious; neither are all heroic deeds born of rage or directly precede mental breakdown (ibid and his note 22).

<sup>18</sup> Erica Goode, “When Soldiers Snap”, *New York Times*, 8 November 2009.

<sup>19</sup> See also Watson's note 5 on the main source: Peter G. Bourne (1970), *Men, Stress and Vietnam*, Little, Brown and Co.: esp. 63-102, 144-150.

arise from war because war itself is a horrific pressure-cooker, and wonder “whether men can continue to plan and fight wars while remaining truly human” (Gabriel 1988: 1). However, Dinter insists that hatred—a kindred emotion to rage, but (usually) of a more simmering, controllable kind—“plays a much less important role than assumed” (Dinter 1985: 38): “Feelings of hatred and revenge are the result of fleeting frustrations. If for instance a good friend has just been killed, these emotions increase, but as time passes, they diminish rapidly again. The average soldier does not maintain constant feelings of hatred and revenge” (ibid: 45). Nevertheless, absolute and even relative deprivationists<sup>20</sup> would disagree with that observation, and particularly with the notion that a traumatic event like a ‘buddy’ being killed would constitute a ‘fleeting frustration’.

Arguably, witnessing the death of one’s comrades is the most traumatic and enraging event of all: the “ranks are never hardened by death in their midst. Losses are never a help”; indeed “death in the company is like death in the family” (Marshall 1978: 118, 121).<sup>21</sup> True, rage may simply be an overheated reaction to concussion and exhaustion. A soldier subjected to too many “physical deprivations or over-stimulations” may become manic-depressive: even “minor upsets lead to outbreaks of fury and good news is received with exaggerated elation” (Dinter 1985: 60, 66 (quotes); Swank/Marchand 1946).<sup>22</sup> Still, rage emanating from grievance, hatred and revenge appears to be quite common. Thus Chechen and Albanian rebels harbour salient grievances, and exhibit strong and *persistent* emotions of hate, rage and revenge. Indeed, “revenge killing during a burst of rage has been a recurring theme throughout history” (Grossman 1996: 179).

Joanna Bourke acknowledges that combatants are “transformed by a range of emotions—fear as well as empathy, rage as well as exhilaration” (Bourke 1999: 1).<sup>23</sup> Yet she accords most significance to the last emotion (see sub-section *Eager-*

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<sup>20</sup> I am the first to use the terms “deprivationism” and “depredationism” in the greed vs. grievance context: see *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 15.1-2: 237.

<sup>21</sup> Marshall’s observations on the ‘dead-buddy-trauma’ are widely shared by other analysts before and after him, though not many (nor Marshall) link this phenomenon to (brutal) rage as a response to such a traumatic event.

<sup>22</sup> If “the soldier cannot be relieved .. [of] this state, his excited mood will change into apathy” (Dinter 1985: 66)—i.e. (shell-)shock or combat neurosis.

<sup>23</sup> When Bourke recounts how Eugene B. ‘Sledgehammer’ Sledge (1st US Marine Division) explains the “collecting [of] bodily parts” from slain Japanese during WWII, rage remains unaccounted: “Death, fatigue and stress wore away even the ‘veneer of civilization’ ” (Bourke 1999: 38, 39

ness to kill below). Likewise, Collins emphasises the “intertwining of human emotions of fear, anger, and excitement” lies at the centre of his micro-sociological theory of violence—though accords most relevance to fear (see sub-section *Fear* above): “even in situations of apparently uncontrollable anger, people are tense and often fearful” (Collins 2008: 4). If anything, they and other analysts deem *frustration* rather than more intense *rage* as the harbinger of atrocity (suggesting a lingering influence of the Frustration-Aggression theory)—despite their assertion that most combatants are not predisposed killers prior to training and conditioning. Does this mean that ‘mere’ frustration already leads to brutalities? A disconcerting thought. It is certainly vital to discern for every instance of “severe misconduct” if it is “a function of combat stress” among “otherwise normal soldiers” or “a manifestation of previous psychopathology” (Campise *et al*, apud Kennedy/Zillmer 2006: 216, 219). If the psychopathic type turns out to be frequent or predominant in all the (reported) atrocities, and if it concerns a significant part of all military personnel, there may be something seriously wrong with the recruitment and selection processes—despite repeated efforts to improve these since the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>24</sup> Yet even the best psychological tests and selection procedures will, by themselves, do little to counter brutalisation if even mentally stable personalities easily succumb to it through mere frustration rather than uncontrollable rage. I am not convinced, however, that moral and behavioural constraints are so brittle. My research on Chechen and Albanian political violence does not support such an extreme Frustration-Brutality thesis. I give more credence to a Rage-Brutality thesis accounting for many of the atrocities—while moral and behavioural constraints still prevent or curtail atrocities, at least in the initial stages of (any) armed conflict.

### Trauma

Since 1994 the American Psychiatric Association (APA, not to be confused with the American Psychological Association) defines a *traumatic event* as involving “actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others” (Schnurr/APA 1994: 424). I define *trauma* as an anguished, self-harming or debilitating response to such an event. APA circumscribes *post-*

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and note 104). Yet US army sniper Dave Nelson, after trying to uphold a “*professional* ‘warrior ethic’” (ibid: 50) in Vietnam, killed out of “hatred, revenge and frustration” (ibid: 51, note 4).

<sup>24</sup> Though men with “clear-cut psychoses” were detected “rather easily”, the “psychopath and the neurotic” show “very little to the examiner” and often are “bright looking and mentally alert” (Porter, apud Sladen 1943: 253).

*traumatic stress disorder* (PTSD)—a term it first formally adopted in 1980—as a condition that exhibits at least some symptoms of six diagnostic criteria (Schnurr/Green 2004: 5; Schnurr/APA 1994).<sup>25</sup> It is an excellent summary of the disorder's 'cocktail' of physical and mental causes and effects, based on Cohen and Williamson's "event-reaction distinction" (Cohen/Williamson 1991: 5). Overall, "PTSD plays a crucial role in mediating the relationship between traumatic exposure and poor physical health" (Schnurr/Green 2004: 7; Cohen/Williamson 1991).

Nevertheless, I conceptualise PTSD as a stress-response, albeit a complex and cumulative one composed of other stress-responses like rage, fatigue and fear. Moreover, a response like rage could either be a cause or consequence of a traumatic event (or both in a cyclical fashion). Most theories consider just one or two responses, like fear, fatigue and rage, as the "primary" responses to traumatic events like explosions, mutilations and massacres. However, all these responses (can) account for combat-stress.

The Russian Army and its Soviet predecessor have been grappling with combat-stress, and PTSD in particular, among its veterans from the Afghan and Chechen wars in the 1980s and 1990s. It is hampered by orthodox, out-dated and prejudiced diagnoses and treatments, though some military psychologists oppose the "Stalinist concept of the individual ... which considers trauma to be a personal weakness" (Sieca-Kozłowski, Elisabeth 2009 (2007): par.13 and note 6; Merridale 2000). The Russian political and military leadership also tend to downplay or deny debilitating and aggression-inducing traumas among returning "war heroes". Thus Maj.Gen. V. S. Novikov (medical service) castigated the poor psycho-physiological selection, training, preparation and support mechanisms of or for military recruits during the First Chechen war of 1994-1996. Apparently, these shortcomings and more intense urban warfare brought higher rates of PTSD and other combat-stress disorders than during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1979-1989 (Norikov 1996; Thomas/O'Hara 2000).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> APA's "Diagnostic Criteria for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder" (shown as Table 1.1 in Schnurr/Green 2004: 5) is reproduced on my webpage "Trauma and Combat-stress" at <<http://sites.google.com/site/tristansolutions>>.

<sup>26</sup> In Novikov's survey of 1,312 troops, 72% exhibited PTSD or other disorders (Norikov 1996: 37-38; Thomas/O'Hara, 2000: 49-50). In contrast, 65 of 105 Afghan veterans interviewed in the mid-1990s exhibited little if any disorders, while 18 veterans exhibited full PTSD (Zelenova *et al* 2001 (1997): esp. 3, 7).

In contrast, the US Army has become aware that in most 20th century wars “more [US] combatants were disabled by stress than were killed by the enemy” (Grossman/Christensen 2007: 173; on PTSD and treatment: 261-348). Faced with one-fifth of its Iraq and Afghanistan veterans breaking down, becoming aggressive (murder, assault, drunken driving, etc.) or committing suicide, the US Army introduces ever more refined programmes to improve the soldier’s performance and resilience, and thereby reduce PTSD. Surprisingly, however, a mental training programme based on tested techniques in middle schools, planned to be introduced to soldiers (from October 2009) through “weekly 90-minute classes”, has only been implemented recently, while psychologists have recommended such programmes for decades. Even then it will be difficult to “transform a military culture that has generally considered talk of emotions to be .. a sign of weakness”.<sup>27</sup> Thus efforts initiated in the 1990s to “change the cultural norms and beliefs that had discouraged help-seeking behavior in the past” among the US military still lack definite success: a 2003 survey of US Army personnel in Iraq shows that “there are still significant problems in .. applying what we know about the treatment of traumatic stress”; thus “only one-third of soldiers who reported that they wanted help actually got it”—and 63% of all respondents believed that the “leadership might treat differently those seeking mental healthcare” (Ralph/Sammons, apud Kennedy/Zillmer 2006: 375, 379 incl. quotes; see also Campise *et al*, apud Kennedy/Zillmer 2006: 235-236).<sup>28</sup>

Even the best programmes cannot prevent the nerve, morale and discipline of the average and even strongest soldier ultimately to unravel in combat. At “some level of pressure” even “the most firmly integrated individual will succumb” (Reinartz, apud Sladen 1943: 271). Yet, to conclude from this given and the high psychiatric casualty figures that “human beings are very fragile psychic beings” with “no significant personality traits that immunize a soldier against psy-

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<sup>27</sup> Benedict Carey, “Mental Stress Training Is Planned for U.S. Soldiers”, *New York Times*, 18 August 2009 (quotes). Timothy Williams, “As a Brigade Returns Safe, Some Meet New Enemies”, *NYT*, 13 July 2010. Greg Jaffe, “Military reckons with the mental wounds of war”, *Washington Post*, 18 July 2010.

<sup>28</sup> During April-December 2003, 23 US soldiers killed themselves in Iraq and Kuwait (Ralph/Sammons, apud Kennedy/Zillmer 2006: 379). From C. W. Hoge *et al* (2004), “Combat duty in Iraq and Afghanistan: mental health problems, and barriers to care”, *New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 351: 13-22.

chiatric breakdown" (Gabriel 1988: 2, 5) underestimates the *resilience* in the *coping* process of combatants and humans in general.

Since the 1990s, proponents of *positive psychology*, making use of research on coping by Richard Lazarus, Susan Folkman and others, focus on "human strengths and virtues" emanating from trauma-recalling, trauma-retelling, trauma-acceptance, hope, adaptation and other positive coping strategies. They seek to counterbalance the "traditional pathogenic approach" that exclusively looks at trauma, PTSD and other pathological disorders with supposedly negative, debilitating coping strategies like denial and anger (Ai *et al* 2007: 55, 56 (quotes); Folkman 2011: 3-11).<sup>29</sup> Given human resilience and coping, it is *not* typical that even a "full range of psychiatric responses" (Gabriel 1988: 17), ranging from panic and paralysing fear to apathy and suicide, lead to a complete disintegration of a fighting force, like during the 1876 Battle of Little Big Horn (Gabriel 1988: 19-21). Most battles are not so desperate or one-sided. Most soldiers recover from combat-stress "in days with appropriate intervention" through both self-help without the "illness label" and "natural social support" (family, partner, friends)—without incurring debilitating trauma's (Campise *et al*, apud Kennedy/Zillmer 2006: 223).

#### *Eagerness to Kill*

The given that "not all young men are violent" is an obvious truth. Yet Collins wrongly criticises other theories on such presumed generalisations: most theories, including that of Frustration-Aggression, do *not* propose whole classes of pathologically determined "violent individuals" (Collins 2008: 1-2). Most atrocious acts seem "a reaction to extremely stressful events by personalities unfortunately unable to cope" (Watson 1980: 175) rather than by psychopathic personalities. Still, the military often fail to deselect the latter in screenings—or deliberately enlist them to commit atrocities. Then psychopaths, sociopaths and violent criminals could make up large proportions of combat-units. Nevertheless, many analysts believe that all human beings—not just psychopaths—are inher-

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<sup>29</sup> Margaret Stroebe refutes that "social sharing .. and .. social support are [always] important" in dealing with bereavement, and that "denial, repression, and avoidance" are invariably detrimental coping-processes (Folkman 2011: 6). I agree that anger, "denial and .. disengagement" do *not* necessarily constitute "maladaptive coping" (Ai *et al* 2007: 58). Still, others speak of "evidence for experiential avoidance being prominent in ... anxiety and mood disorders", which is "expected to disrupt .. trauma recovery" (Kashdan *et al* 2009: 186, 187).

ently eager to kill or inflict pain on ‘fellow’ human beings: “Deep down in his subconscious, man seems to enjoy killing” (Dinter 1985: 23).

As indicated earlier, Joanna Bourke perceives rage as a mere precursor or trigger of exhilaration: “Did actual combat dent the pleasures of imaginative violence [as shown in literature and films]? For most combatants, the answer must be ‘no’”. When a soldier in Vietnam “went berserk and massacred many of the enemy, he remembered feeling suffused with joy: ‘I felt like a god, this power flowing through me . . . I was untouchable.’” (Bourke 1999: 30, 31-32 (quotes), her note 66).<sup>30</sup> However, such ‘joy’ may be quite superficial if intense, more often than not a by-product of the adrenaline rush. Significantly, Bourke inadvertently provides numerous reluctance-or-guilt-in-killing counter-examples.<sup>31</sup>

Many kinds of battle ‘joy’ have nothing to do with sadism, but everything with experiencing relief of having survived a deadly encounter, followed by exhilaration of being alive. Alternatively, the ‘joy’ concerns a grim determination by “level-headed warriors” (Grossman/Christensen 2007: 139) to do the job, meet any deadly challenge and test one’s acquired skills in real combat (ibid: 138-139; 166-167 (survivor euphoria) ). Grossman and Christensen thus support an alternative eagerness-to-*fight* thesis: many “perfectly healthy, functional” veterans “liked it” in Vietnam—even after many tours of duty, and without any apparent PTSD (ibid 2007: 140).

More importantly, any ‘pleasure in killing’ typically is transient, quickly followed by feelings of guilt and long-lasting trauma. Most veterans have at least once experienced a “brief feeling of elation upon succeeding in killing the enemy” at close range, yet were almost immediately “overwhelmed by the guilt stage” (Grossman 1996: 115 (quote), 234-237, 243-245).<sup>32</sup> Many more combatants may feel immediate remorse once they are pushed to kill or commit atrocities, without experiencing exhilaration at all: “no one who speaks to many distressed vets can doubt that their involvement in the excessive violence of Vietnam is a

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<sup>30</sup> Unnamed Vietnam veteran, quoted in Jonathan Shay (1994), *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*, New York: 84.

<sup>31</sup> For instance, “if they did not enjoy killing, they should not be in the infantry” (Bourke 1999: 3; note 3); “Never have I forgotten the look on their [dead] faces” (ibid: 4; note 7); “Men were not prepared for the horror of being unable to remove their bayonets from the body of their foe” (ibid: 64), “only .. ‘most perverted’ could take pleasure in such .. ‘cold-blooded’ .. killing” (ibid: 66).

<sup>32</sup> If combatants fail to rationalise the “backlash of remorse and nausea”, it “can become one of the paths to PTSD” (Grossman/Christensen 2007: 167).

fundamental source of their inner turmoil, and that it expresses not just psychological stress but moral pain” (Marin 1981: 71).<sup>33</sup> There is little evidence that most people can “kill casually and guiltlessly in combat” (Grossman 1996: 88)—though Grossman later acknowledges that many older, mature combatants do not experience the “backlash of remorse or nausea” or are better able to deal with it (Grossman/Christensen 2007: 167(quote)-171). Generally, however, “it would be surprising if the inevitable release of aggressive impulses in active warfare failed to produce ... anxiety and guilt” (Rosenberg 1943: 32; from Clark 1946: 423 (quote; note 3)-424).

Nevertheless, I have issue with the reluctance-to-kill notions that: a) only the two percent of “aggressive psychopaths” or those with “aggressive psychopathic tendencies” among the armed forces (Swank/Marchand 1946) and their societies (Grossman 1996) “will kill without regret or remorse”; b) only psychopaths and sociopaths commit most or all atrocities; and c) war will “psychologically debilitate” *all* of the 98% mentally stable soldiers who “participate in it for any length of time” (Grossman 1996: 50, 61, 180 (quotes) ). In that regard Bourke’s research does plausibly show that, apart from psychopaths, a significant minority of mentally stable combatants do kill, injure and maim without compunction—often cruelly so. Thus her eagerness-to-kill thesis seems frequently, if not generally, valid.

#### *Reluctance to Kill*

The military recognise—yet rarely analyse in depth—the widespread phenomenon of soldiers refusing, avoiding or pretending to kill. Just “because a soldier *can* fight, it does not follow that he *will* fight” (Appel, apud Sladen 1943: 294). Remarkably, people generally seem reluctant to resort to any sort of lethal and non-lethal violence. The dynamics of “confrontational tension and fear” usually prevent, curtail or sidetrack actual outbreaks of violence; “people are still for the most part not good at violence” (Collins 2008: 10).

Soldiers are much more willing to fight, i.e. defend positions and fire in the general direction of the enemy, than directly *kill*. Grossman refers to original findings by Ardant du Picq (1821-1870), supported by Paddy Griffith, Richard Holmes, Richard Gabriel, F. A. Lord and other 20th century scholars, that 80 to 85 percent of soldiers did not fire their weapons during engagements in the Ameri-

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<sup>33</sup> Bourke unconvincingly claims that she gives the “guilt and .. pain which combatants *sometimes* felt ... due weight” (Bourke 1999: 11; italics added).

can Civil War (1860-1864) and other 19th century conflicts, overcoming “powerful conditioning (through drill) to fire”. The few who did, often had a “desperate urge to fire their weapons” out of fear, nervousness or posture “even when (or especially when) they cannot possibly do the enemy any harm”. Generally, combatants only are willing and able to kill in “kill-or-be-killed circumstances of self-defense or the defense of one’s friends” (Grossman 1996: 10, 24, 173 (quotes); 5-11, 21-22, 25).<sup>34</sup>

In his seminal study *Men Against Fire* (1947) U.S. Army Brig.Gen. (then Lt.Col.) S. L. A. Marshall estimated that “less than 25 percent of our infantry line employed hand weapons effectively when under fire” in World War II. Indeed, the average fire ratio was a mere 15 percent in most infantry companies. Those with heavy and crew-served weapons performed better (especially in the more ‘aggressive’ companies), like those with officers present ordering them to fire. Yet Lt.Col. Robert G. Cole observed in a June 1944 engagement that “the moment I passed on, they quit [firing]”. Significantly, the “active weapons participation” i.e. fire ratio of the US infantry had risen “beyond 55 percent” in the 1950-1953 Korean War partially due to Marshall’s findings and consequent training-and-conditioning improvements (Marshall 1978: 9, 72 (quotes); 50-63).

Referring to the US Medical Corps finding that “fear of killing, rather than fear of being killed, was the most common cause of battle failure”, Marshall famously propositions that the “average and normally healthy individual” has “an inner .. resistance toward killing a fellow man” (Marshall 1978: 78, 79). This reluctance is both instinctive (against killing one’s own species) and nurtured, as their societies typically prohibit “the taking of life” in peacetime (ibid: 78). Thus Marshall criticises the “mistaken doctrine which would have us believe that by repeating platitudes and by teaching men to snarl when going at a bayonet course, we can train them into something other than what they are by nature” (ibid: 154).

A reluctance to kill does *not* necessarily equal ‘cowardice’ or unwillingness to engage and take risks: some (or many) who “did not use their weapons .. did not shirk the final risk of battle. They were not malingerers” (Marshall 1978: 59). Moreover, they do not have a “demoralizing effect” on those who do fire at the enemy; rather, the “presence of the former enable the latter to keep going” (ibid: 65).

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<sup>34</sup> After the battle of Gettysburg, nearly 90% of the 27,574 recovered muskets were loaded with one, two or multiple non-fired bullets: from F. A. Lord (1976), *Civil War Collector’s Encyclopedia*, Harrisburg, Pa..

Still, Marshall recommended *realism* training-and-conditioning to increase the fire-ratio of soldiers in battle; even he believed that the innate resistance to kill could be overcome. Thus the firing rate increased to 90-95 percent in the Vietnam War according to Marshall's later research, "independently verified" by [Michael] Scott (Grossman 1996: 35, 181, 251 and his note 2; 344 (quote)).<sup>35</sup>

Not surprisingly, Bourke questions Marshall's "extremely dubious" fire-ratio findings and reluctance-to-kill presuppositions, referring to critiques of Marshall's research by Roger J. Spiller, Donald E. Graves and others. One reason why it has taken so long before anybody decided to scrutinise Marshall's claims is that "we *want* to believe that it is difficult to kill other men" (Bourke 1999: 75-76 and her note 24, 112, 399 (quotes)).<sup>36</sup> Spiller has been one of the first to point out that a) Marshall varied the number of infantry companies he purportedly interviewed in the Pacific and Europe during WWII from 400 to 603; b) Marshall's wartime aide Captain (later Professor) John Westover did not recall Marshall "ever asking" the question "who had fired his weapon and who had not"; and c) "Marshall's own personal correspondence leaves no hint that he was ever collecting statistics" (Spiller 1988: 88 (and his notes 52, 53)). Even if "in earlier wars there had never existed the opportunity for systematic collection of the data" (Marshall 1978: 53 (quote); Spiller 1988: 68 and his note 50)—doubtful given Du Picq's questionnaires distributed to fellow French officers in the 1860s (Grossman 1996: 9-10)—Marshall fails to present any such data himself. Still, even if Marshall's fire-ratio estimates are intuitive i.e. based on "his own experiences and observations" (Spiller 1988: 69), Du Picq, Griffith, Holmes, veterans Lt. George Roupell (WWI) and Col. Milton Mater (WWII), and others corroborate Marshall's reluctance-to-kill thesis "if not his exact [fire-ratio] percentages" (Grossman 1996: 3-4, 333 (note 1, quote); 12, 27, 34-35).<sup>37</sup> Even if his methodology "does not meet rigorous .. standards", Marshall's research has been "replicated and validated" among soldiers, police and other security personnel (Grossman/Christensen 2007: 78, 79 (quotes); 161-165, 200).

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<sup>35</sup> The early 1996 edition of *On Killing* fails to specify that Scott's and Marshall's fire-rate findings can be found in R. W. Glenn (1989), "Men and fire in Vietnam", *Army: Journal of the Association of the United States Army*: 18-27. This is rectified in later editions (Grossman, email 28-09-2011).

<sup>36</sup> Marshall "did not interview as many men as he said he did, and not one .. remembered being asked whether or not he fired his weapon" (Bourke 1999: 76).

<sup>37</sup> A 1986 British Defence study actually confirmed Marshall's fire-ratios in 100 re-simulated 19th and 20th century battles and test trials (Grossman 1996: 16).

Be as it may, Marshall's low fire-ratio estimates seem to concern all possible killing ranges, or perhaps primarily the medium rifle and hand-grenade killing ranges. Combatants seem most reluctant to kill, injure and maim in the intimate hand-to-hand, knife and bayonet ranges, and least reluctant to do so in the more impersonal sniper, missile, artillery and bombing ranges. Despite aggressive training, most soldiers in close combat use their rifles as clubs, rather than bayonet or knife the enemy. Even elite soldiers and commandos hardly ever use the well-practised yet gruesome kidney-strike and eye-gouge-and-brain-penetration techniques; they prefer—if they must kill—to slit the enemy's throat while not having to see their faces. Even Bourke admits that during both World Wars "less than one half of 1 per cent of [lethal and non-lethal] wounds were inflicted by the bayonet" (Bourke 1999: 6 and her note 18). Therefore, overall fighting, firing and killing rates are lowest on the minimum short-distance range, and highest on the maximum long-distance range, as "the farther away you are the easier it is to kill" (Grossman/Christensen 2007: 203). Certain classes of soldiers like commandos secure higher kill rates, especially in hand-to-hand combat. Still, one must keep in mind that for many combatants engaged in short-range combat, the survival instinct and the you-or-me rationalisation kick in: arguably the "only thing greater than the resistance to killing at close range is the resistance to being killed at close range" (ibid: 201-202, 203 (quote); Grossman 1996: 97-137).

### *Training*

Military (and law-enforcement) training involves drills, physical exercises and learning the routine handling and maintenance of weapons and other equipment. Ideally, before training even begins, recruits have passed sophisticated and reliable (pre)screening tests on general suitability for military service, and suitability for specialist functions in the army, navy, air-force, commandos or other services like bomb-disposal units (Walters 1968: 5-12). These drills and skills must enhance strength, discipline and fighting capability, but above instil a willingness to fight and kill, and a sense of duty, loyalty and identity geared toward group bonding. Recruits already should possess, beyond sufficient intelligence, alertness and dexterity, a paradoxical mix of "aggressiveness, fearlessness, [and] calmness" (Ryan *et al*, apud Kennedy/Zillmer 2006: 115; Flanagan 1942).

However, even basic training brings social pressures, being "away from family and friends" while "feeling command and peer pressures to conform" (Krueger, apud Cronin 1998: 89). It brings stress-responses like exhaustion due to "adverse working conditions", including deliberately invoked noises and extreme temper-

atures (heat, cold) to toughen up particularly elite-commando recruits (ibid: 89-90). So-called *stress-inoculation* techniques to toughen and prepare soldiers for extreme battlefield conditions may become counterproductive if these create stressors and stress-responses detrimental to physical and mental health. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Human Resources Research Office (HumRRO), the Special Operations Research Office (SORO) and other Pentagon 'think-tanks' subjected unsuspecting recruits to simulated and *real* dangers, like a fake 'engine fault' in an airplane or unannounced life-fire in ground exercises, in misguided efforts to 'inoculate' them against fear. One should not expose recruits to simulated dangers of which they are not informed about (violating a central criterion of ethical research), and certainly should not expose them to "dangers equal to those of battle itself" (Watson 1980: 21-30, 141(quote)-144). The US Army Ranger school once submitted recruits to weeks, even months, of "food and sleep deprivation", yet curtailed this practice after "long-term studies" found that such deprivations were causing "serious, long-term health effects" (Grossman/Christensen 2007: 26).

Even the best training focused on physical conditioning, with group benefits like self-esteem and confidence due to acquired fighting skills like marksmanship (accurate and quick firing), do not by itself turn soldiers into ruthless, efficient killers, let alone effective combatants: "Discipline is not the key. Perfection in drill is not the key"; many of the few soldiers who do fight, shoot and kill i.e. become "lions on the battlefield" are notorious for "laziness, unruliness, and disorderliness" during training (Marshall 1978: 60). These unruly men "could fight like hell but they couldn't soldier" (ibid: 61).

More frequent, and more worrisome to the military, were the often highly intelligent men and women unable or unwilling to accept the rigours and purposes of the training camp: "those who fall foul of military law too often have been found to make poor fighters" (Watson 1980: 105, 140 (quote)). Malingerers, deserters and draft-dodgers typically make bad soldiers *and* bad fighters, while ex-convicts and (other) unruly, insubordinate malcontents often make bad soldiers *but* good fighters. Many malingerers, dodgers and conscientious objectors had "psychiatric histories" indicating either a complete lack of aggressiveness or an unconsciously repressed aggressiveness unsuited to military life (and leading to wartime brutalities if still in active service). They did or could not answer to expectations from civilian society that masculine-martial "heroes" kill without hesitation and guilt, while honouring notions of honourable conduct. Early

studies of those who “adjusted poorly in training camps” focused on discharged ex-soldiers who had become psychiatric patients, and thus tended to assume that all ‘unsuitable’—either insufficiently or excessively aggressive—servicemen were psychotic or ‘psychoneurotic’ (Clark 1946: 424, 425(quotes)-426).

Military establishments were, and still are, reluctant to admit, deal with and resolve the paradoxical phenomenon of the frustrated, potentially aggressive and effective, yet disobedient “malcontent”, as it challenges traditional notions of hierarchy, discipline and command. Still, during WWII the British recruited such undisciplined and intelligent individuals for elite units such as the Special Air Services (SAS); to this day SAS recruiters and psychologists do “*not* want people who are emotionally stable; instead they want forthright individuals who are hard to fool and not dependent on others” (Watson 1980: 282).

#### *Conditioning and Indoctrination*

The most basic form of aggressive conditioning within training is the bayonet course. While Bourke deems bayoneting the epitome of human aggressiveness i.e. eagerness to hurt, injure, mutilate and kill, and bayonet training a mere honing of this predisposition, Marshall deems the latter a quintessential yet doomed attempt to instil an aggressiveness that is hardly there (see ‘Eagerness to Kill’ and ‘Reluctance to Kill’). One only can instil and enhance aggressiveness, with the greatest effort and expenditure, through transparent conditioning. One should inform both recruits and (training) officers that a) fear, other stresses *and* reluctance to kill are normal responses; and b) conditionings can overcome or deal with these human responses (Marshall 1978: 36-43, 71, 81-84, 124).

Based on Marshall’s findings and recommendations, the US military, through HumRRO, introduced a new conditioning technique: shooting in group formations at shifting *man-shaped* targets during life-fire, simulation, paint-bullet and other realistic exercises, replacing the old technique of shooting as isolated individuals at *bull’s-eye* targets in static lying, crouching or standing positions. Mainly this innovation is credited for the dramatic increase in the fire-rate (six-fold) and fire-accuracy (fourfold) of American soldiers in combat missions after World War II. Nowadays, many soldiers and law enforcement officers practice their firing skills on “photorealistic” targets and on each other (paint bullets). They also learn under “precise rules of engagement” *not* to shoot at a “life-size photo of a man holding his wallet” and *not* to shoot wildly too many bullets at any legitimate target in an ineffective “spray-and-pray” overkill. In contrast, those who still practice on “blank, man-shaped silhouettes” are “conditioned to

shoot anyone who jumps up in front of them”—which apparently leads to many unintended killings of civilians and surrendering combatants in combat missions (Grossman/Christensen 2007: 75, 80, 103-107, 209-212, incl. quotes).

Unfortunately, numerous psychologists have provided the knowledge and techniques to condition *uninformed* soldiers into potentially brutal killers—without providing moral and ethical counter-balances. Particularly stimulus-response behaviourists (think of Ivan P. Pavlov and B. F. Skinner) reasoned and (self-)justified their work as follows: “I earn my living by my ability to predict a man’s behavior under a given set of stimuli and to influence a man’s behavior by exposing him to various types of stimuli” (Appel, apud Sladen 1943: 293).<sup>38</sup> Thus Berkowitz and LePage allowed university students to administer electric shocks to other ‘subjects’ when the latter apparently erred in their tasks—which the former did more often and aggressively when a gun and a rifle were visible on a table nearby (Berkowitz/LePage 1967). Grossman and his colleagues insist that nowadays the “conditioning used to enable killing in soldiers and law-enforcement officers” contain sufficient moral “safeguards” (Grossman 1996: xvi). However, the history of “modern training/conditioning techniques” (ibid: xvi) suggest otherwise. Grossman does acknowledge that the conditioning enabling the 90-95% firing rate in Vietnam came with the “hidden cost” of “psychological trauma” due to the suppression of the innate resistance to killing (ibid: 250)—with much of the trauma arising from guilt about atrocities like the My Lai massacre. American soldiers were desensitised (still including bayonet training) and indoctrinated against the ‘geeks’. Thus “we may have enhanced the killing ability of the average soldier through training (that is, conditioning), but at what price?” (ibid: 291).<sup>39</sup>

During the Cold War, particularly American, British and Soviet military psychologists developed “behaviour-modification techniques to make soldiers less worried about killing”, without developing counter-balancing techniques to prevent atrocities (Watson 1980: 23 and note 7: “The strange tale of Commander Narut’, *Sunday Times*, 6 July 1975). With brutal experiments like forcing recruits (by Lt.Col. Thomas Narut, US Navy, allegedly to make them assassins operating

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<sup>38</sup> Appel admits that “this knowledge .. of bringing stimuli to bear might be available to the Nazi government” (Appel, apud Sladen 1943: 293).

<sup>39</sup> See Grossman 1996: 160-164; 190-191 (My Lai); 251-256; 262-280. I have no room here to discuss his alarming (and perhaps alarmist) views on violent movies and computer-games (ibid: xvi-xviii; 260-261; 299-332; Grossman/Christensen 2007: 81-91).

from US embassies) to watch horrific films with their eyelids clamped open, they intended to “completely desensitize the men to pain or suffering, to remove any emotion .. that might interfere with killing” (Watson 1980: 35-36, 37 (quote) ). They indoctrinated soldiers to dislike, even hate, potential and actual enemies, through propaganda movies ridiculing the local customs, beliefs and politics of, for instance, the North Vietnamese. They developed, for *psychological operations* (PSYOP) against these enemies, non-physical yet dehumanising interrogation methods amounting to torture (and occasionally used them, as the British did against IRA suspects). Thus HumRRO and other think-tanks in America conducted experiments of *sensory deprivation* (SD) and sleep deprivation on their own civilians and soldiers throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Numerous psychologists, like Thomas Myers at HumRRO with his social isolation and monotony research, studied effects of mental discomfort. The gained insights allowed the US military—and the British military in Northern Ireland—to ‘improve’ these techniques (involving severe physical discomfort) against potential and actual enemies—and harden their own men against such torture in the event they were captured: “captivity is far more disorientating than .. sensory deprivation, but together they are lethal” (Watson 1980: 207). Watson also suspected that Sigmund Freud and other psychologists studied atrocities like the My Lai Massacre so as to “learn more about killing and to train people to be better at it”, rather than “to prevent atrocities occurring in the future” (ibid: 183).<sup>40</sup>

Soviet, Chinese, North-Korean, North-Vietnamese and other Communist psychologists researched and thereby encouraged equally brutal isolation and interrogation methods against dissidents, insubordinates, and enemy prisoners. These usually lasted shorter, but included food deprivation and intense indoctrination called *brainwash* (from Chinese *hsi nao*, “wash-brain”) or “mind control”, i.e. alteration of someone’s behaviour and beliefs through deliberate, manipulative deprivations (Watson 1980: 208, 211-213, 214-228; Hinkle/Wolff 1956; Lifton 1962; Hunter 1971). During the Korea and Vietnam Wars, they applied both subtle and harsh brainwash techniques on captured American and other Western soldiers and civilians, to break their will, gain information, and alter their loyalties and political convictions (extreme indoctrination), often successfully so. Due to institutional conservatism, the American military kept teaching their recruits how to “stand up to pain, or isolation, [rather] than .. up to persuasion”

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<sup>40</sup> See further Watson 1980: 179-183, 199-208; Grossman 1996: 257-261.

(Watson 1980: 225). In contrast, the CIA became as notorious for 'peace-time' brainwashing as its Communist counterparts, and allegedly became even more sophisticated in it. Even though many CIA 'brainwash' missions were misconceived or ineffective, "the ability to do something almost invariably means that an attempt will be made to actually do it" (ibid: 210). The thousands of convicts the United States recruited in WWII were not submitted to such desensitising and dehumanising experiments—and had not been "convicted of murder, rape, kidnapping and treason" (ibid: 110); that time, the US military did not actively recruit those who had committed grave, violent crimes. Yet Lt.Col. Narut's recruits included convicts from military prisons, even "convicted murderers" (ibid: 182). The fact that Narut and his colleagues were allowed to recruit such criminals, at least on a small scale in the US Navy during the early 1970s to condition them as secret commandos into remorseless killers, points to institutional, authorised brutalisation in the US armed forces—long before the post '9-11' War on Terror.

Some military psychologists and officers do warn against overly aggressive training, conditioning and consequent brutal behaviour in military missions; they also warn against their profession's involvement in these practices "without clearly delineated ethical or legal parameters" (Williams *et al*, apud Kennedy/Zillmer 2006: 206). Aggressive conditioning may contribute to or at least coexist with moral laxity. Thus the abuse against Iraqi prisoners in the US-run Abu Ghraib prison—shocking photo's released in April-May 2004 produced a public outcry and urgent US Congress and US Army investigations—were partially due to a "laissez-faire attitude of leaders .., a lack of training of the prison guards, lack of discipline, and the psychological stress of being in constant danger over an extended period of time" (ibid: 203). The "medical professionals' participation in intelligence-gathering" (ibid: 207) at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba (and other places), is equally alarming (Bartone 2004; Bloche/Marks 2005). Therefore, without professional training focused on moderation, self-discipline and (self-)critical awareness of one's duties, soldiers easily may commit brutalities—especially if they are conditioned and indoctrinated into remorseless killers while being treated "as if they were children or serfs", as mere cogs in the military machine (Marshall 1978: 114-115).

#### *Group Convictions, Bondings and Expectations*

The group identities and bondings of the military unit (from platoon level upwards) lead to expectations of the individual soldier or any combatant towards oneself and one's fellow soldiers and combatants. These expectations typically

concern societal values of loyalty, courage and comradeship, all to do with maintaining individual and collective self-respect, even under the severest dangers and privations. Ideally, at least in the minds of political and military leaders, these expectations have been present if dormant in the original group identities and convictions of family, clan, tribe or nation that nurture notions of honour and destiny. Then these should be awakened, solidified and enhanced through ideo-political indoctrination and military training. Interestingly, Harold Gerard *et al* found in their experiments that the “greatest amount of conformity occurred in groups with *five* members” (Watson 1980: 95 and his notes 9-10; Gerard, *et al* 1968); the US army constructed eight-member squads for logistical reasons, but likewise discovered in Korea that four-member training produced the strongest bonding and morale. Consequently, military leaders and psychologists expect that the combat unit “increases the individual’s endurance and courage by challenging him to uphold his self-esteem” (Weinberg 1946: 473).

The military regard obedience to command as a vital component of unit cohesion. However, it “may be extremely disruptive to appeal to a sense of duty to the group (e.g. organization, unit) as a means of convincing the soldier/officer to disregard other loyalties and obligations (e.g., to his dead buddies, his family)” (Bartone, apud Cronin 1998: 135).

Scholars generally agree that the *Homo Sapiens* is a “social animal”. The basic human need of acquiring group contact and approval accounts for the saliency of *group convictions*, *group bondings* and (consequent) *group expectations* in the civilian and military spheres, even in cultures where individualism is both preached and practised. Indeed, *morale* and *leadership* play crucial roles in these group processes.<sup>4</sup> Especially group-bonding should be a stress reducer. The enhanced bonding through training, conditioning, indoctrination, and above all intense comradeship, should make unit cohesion the “critical factor that moderates or buffers the impact of combat stress on performance” (Bartone, apud Cronin 1998: 118 (quote); Manning/Ingraham, apud Belenky 1987). Even if “army units break up .. or flee, old comrades will try to remain together. This explains why units assembled quickly in an emergency under a strong commander could fight with considerable success” (Dinter 1985: 7).

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<sup>4</sup> I do not have room to analyse morale and leadership at length here, even though these concepts are extensively discussed in the military literature.

Loyalty to and protection of one's closest 'buddies', combat unit, and family at home supersede those to one's military command, political system or nation. Therefore, 'light' political indoctrination unaccompanied by 'heavy' brainwash-techniques hardly seems to increase a soldier's willingness to fight, invalidating "exaggerated notions of man's capacity to endure and to sacrifice on behalf of ideals alone" (Marshall 1978: 154). Remarkable instances of fanaticism like Nazism, Stalinism and religious fundamentalism aside, soldiers generally "do not fight for a cause but because they do not want to let their comrades down" (ibid: 161; from Maj.Gen. T. de la Mesa Allen, WWII Sicily). In order to cope with the stress, aftermath and possible guilt of killing, soldiers need the "praise and acceptance from peers and superiors. Warriors do not fight for medals, they do it for their partners, buddies and friends" (Grossman/Christensen 2007: 170-171). Even so, comradeship, unit cohesion and unit performance are strengthened if soldiers not only are aware of and agree with the objectives of the war and the campaign, but also are apprised of the strategic and tactical situations by their superior officers. They should be encouraged to tell their superiors of their own observations and assessments ("rearward flow of information to higher headquarters"): information is the "soul of morale in combat and the balancing force in successful tactics" (Marshall 1978: 92).

However, group convictions, bondings and expectations also, at the same time, can act as stress enhancers. These group pressures also may account for a greater tendency toward cruelty and 'berserk' violence by groups as opposed to isolated individuals, even without aggressive conditioning. West Point experiments in the 1960s found that "people in groups get more worked up than people alone. Given the opportunity, they are far more cruel and aggressive ... and calm down more slowly" than separated individuals (Watson 1980: 93-94 and his note 6 (some errors in source-reference); Baker/Shaie 1969: 80). Individuals in groups either use the group-anonymity, group-approval and group-bonding dynamics to commit cruelties (and killings per sé) they already were itching to do, or are thus pressured by leaders and others to do so. If "an individual is bonded to the group, then peer pressure interacts with group absolution in such a way as to almost force atrocity participation" (Grossman 1996: 225).

In sum, group pressures constitute two-edged swords that could both enhance and reduce combat-stress and consequent brutality. Marshall acknowledges that "social pressure, more than military training, is the base of battle discipline", though he prefers the "simple statement that personal honor is the one

thing valued more than life itself by the majority of men" (Marshall 1978: 149).<sup>42</sup> Be as it may, fear of losing contact with or approval of the group is a primary stress-response. The challenge is to nurture the soothing and energising benefits of belonging to a primary group, like the combat unit, without encouraging brutality.

#### *Concluding Observations*

Combat-stress may not lead to breakdowns and 'berserk atrocities' as commonly as commonly thought. American military researchers discovered in the 1960s that "out of every three individuals predicted by tests as likely to break down in battle, only one actually does so. Conversely, only one half of those who do break down are recognizably predisposed on the tests" (Watson 1980: 140 and his note 5; Kern/McFann 1965). Even today's most refined aptitude tests have limited predictive power. Social pressures (unit loyalty, bonding), coupled with warrior-ethos expectations, may account for the resilience of so many combatants despite their 'psychiatric histories'. Only the most recent *assessment and selection* (A&S) tests begin to recognise and incorporate these 'stress-inhibitors'; even then these A&S tests tend to regard interpersonal attributes like teamwork and team-adaptability as individual rather than group-induced traits (Picano *et al*, apud Kennedy/Zillmer 2006: 357-359). On the other hand, these inhibitors do not prevent or counteract traumas indefinitely, leading to post-traumatic stress disorders long after the events. In that sense, a high-strung warrior cult, as evident among Chechens and Albanians, enhances rather than reduces stress (see section IV). Social pressures created through training, conditioning, indoctrination and other mechanisms are intended to enhance combat performance and manage combat-stress; yet ironically, these very pressures often, sooner or later, undermine that performance and contribute to that stress. Such pressures make combatants more resilient in the short and medium terms, yet more high-strung and eventually susceptible to (sudden) breakdown in the longer term.

### III. LIMITATIONS IN MILITARY PSYCHOLOGY

Arguably, the field of military psychology contains some of the strongest pro-(Western-)state biases known in the social sciences. True, due to government prioritisation, funding and large test populations (soldiers), it innovated its sis-

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<sup>42</sup> Yet when "other men flee, the social pressure [of showing no fear] is lifted" (Marshall 1978: 150)—a major reason why panic can spread so quickly.

ter-discipline *civilian psychology* in education, industry and healthcare research (Cronin 1998: 3-4; Yerkes 1919: 87, 92). What “we have learned about soldiers in combat has opened the door for understanding violent situations in general” (Collins 2008: 6). However, the field often lacks scientific independence and objectivity: most military psychologists work for a government, are employed by them, or receive military ranks. Most of them perceive home-grown and foreign non-state actors as enemies under the *counter-insurgency* rubric, whose mentalities they dissect in order to defeat them. Few psychologists even-handedly study rebels and other armed non-state actors, let alone willingly select and train *their* fighters. Consequently, one hardly knows whether or to what extent the plethora of findings on pro-regime combatant stress directly applies to anti-regime combatant stress. Do rebels behave like or unlike soldiers? Do typical or frequent (yet not universal) circumstances of rebellion—waging lightly-armed *guerrilla* (hit-and-run fighting) in urban and rural areas, living underground, being harassed by government forces, etcetera—constitute intervening stressor-variables that make insurgents behave differently from soldiers? Can non-state groups never muster the organisation, training and discipline that all state armies supposedly possess (Henriksen/Vinci 2008: 88-89)? And if insurgents do have more conventional (territory-occupying) and heavy-armour capabilities (like General Franco’s forces in the 1936-1939 Spanish Civil War), will they exhibit the same combat-stresses as ‘normal’ soldiers? Military psychology as a discipline currently lacks the body of research to confidently answer these questions.

Like their Western counterparts, Russian psychologists mainly investigate the combat-stresses among their “own” soldiers, and hardly ever among the “alien” rebel “enemies” (eg. Norikov 1996; Zelenova *et al* 2001; Sieca-Kozłowski 2007). Thus (pro-)regime, state-employed psychologists often make prejudiced, unreliable and invalid statements about the behaviour of non-state fighters. Thus American military researchers adopt the grossly-generalised assessment of their Russian counterparts that “mutilations or torture were commonplace against Russian prisoners” by Chechen rebels (Thomas/O’Hara 2000: 46-47).

#### COMBAT-RELATED STRESS AMONG NON-COMBATANTS

Nowadays many scholars do investigate, through meticulous surveying (interviews, questionnaires) and statistical analysis, the traumas, PTSD, depression and other post-conflict stresses among Chechen, Albanian and other actual and former refugees from the Russo-Chechen wars (eg. De Jong *et al* 2007; Maercker

*et al* 2009) and Serbo-Kosovar wars (eg. Eytan *et al* 2004; Roth *et al* 2009). The latter studies seem more numerous, perhaps because Kosovar refugees (research-populations other than or including refugees: Gordon *et al* 2004; Ahern *et al* 2004; Wenzel *et al* 2009) are more accessible given the relatively short war in Kosovo, with Serb authorities having fewer opportunities to obstruct research than their Russian counterparts.

Some analysts suggest that some surveyed people may be former combatants (Favaro *et al* 1999: 306-308; Ahern *et al* 2004: 769 (no “further information on their roles in .. combat situations”); Wenzel *et al* 2009: 242 (“half of the sample had been in combat situations”)). Others exclude them from the surveys (Ai *et al* 2007: 56 (“Kosovars in this study were not soldiers”); Morina *et al* 2008, 2010, 2011; Kashdan *et al* 2009). Yet none of them did investigate rebel-veterans as a distinct group among Kosovar or Chechen refugees and other war-affected people (eg. Eytan *et al* 2006; De Jong *et al* 2007; Maercker *et al* 2009)<sup>43</sup>, let alone compare their stresses and traumas with those who (already) were civilians in the conflicts.<sup>44</sup>

Some values may hamper aggression, and thereby actually exacerbate (combat-)stress and trauma among both combatants and non-combatants. In “especially traditional societies such as Kosovo, rape is a fundamental dishonour in which the individual is shamed ... and the family/community which has failed to protect the woman is similarly shamed” (Kellezi *et al* 2009: 63). Victims usually isolate themselves by not telling their partners, families or outsiders of their ordeal—“to do so would broadcast their violation of group norms and compound their isolation” (ibid: 63). Consequently, rape victims—just like combatants who violate “group values (say in hiding or running away from the enemy)” (ibid: 63)—will become more traumatised. The “primary appraisal” of (ethnic) *group*

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<sup>43</sup> Thus Eytan *et al* neglect to identify ex-combatants among the 996 Kosovars interviewed in late 2001, if only to verify whether combat roles created different traumas, coping processes and healthcare use (Eytan *et al* 2006).

<sup>44</sup> I have been able to ask half a dozen authors (eg. A. Maercker; K. de Jong; N. Morina) whether one can distinguish (ex-)combatants from their data, and whether they or others are conducting psychological-diagnostic research on armed non-state actors. They responded that their data were either non-specific on former rebels in or from Chechnya or Kosovo, or that they had excluded the latter from their data. Few if any of them were planning to analyse stresses and traumas among ex-insurgents, or knew of anybody planning to do so. Only Dr. Thomas Wenzel and colleagues had “finished a project on ex combatants .. and work on the publication” (email, 15-01-2012). Thus one should undertake further research “to fill this .. gap in knowledge” (email to authors, 14-01-2012).

*identity* is negative (rape violates and endangers it), making the “secondary appraisal” of *social support* negative (i.e. minimal or non-existent); only “positive individual coping strategies” may prevent or curtail “negative mental health outcomes” (Kellezi *et al* 2009: 59, 63 (quotes) ). Ironically, if Kosovar(-Albanian) society really blames and stigmatises the rape victim, it prevents (male) partners and family-members to openly take (blood-)revenge against the actual or perceived perpetrators, and thereby restore their honour; such revenge can only be done in secret, if at all.

#### COMBAT-STRESS AND VIOLENCE-VALUES AMONG NON-STATE COMBATANTS

Presently, one of the few avenues available to say something tangible about *combat-stress* (the Brutalisation theory’s third variable) among Chechen and Albanians, is to look at how their *violence-values* (the Brutalisation theory’s first variable) affect their stressors and stress-responses. Unfortunately, looking at violence-values as either stress-reducers or stress-enhancers (or both) can only partially compensate for the astounding lack of research on combat-stress among armed non-state actors. The horrors of war must have put Chechen and Albanian insurgents under immense pressure, and probably led to PTSD and other psychological disorders among even (or especially) the bravest of them. Outside observers and volunteers rather than rebel veterans have been ready to talk about this. Former Dutch Marine Marco van Eekeren, who as a thirty-three-year-old ‘Major’ led the ‘Pitbulls’ elite-unit of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA; or *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës*, UÇK): “Clean wars do not exist. War is always an unorganised mess, yet Kosovo was extreme. .... I was not a hero, as all heroes are dead. I shit and peed in my pants from fear .... That had never happened to me before in the other wars. If necessary, I went out with my bare hands and came back with weapons; a normal soldier does not do that. When I realised this, I knew that ... this were to be my last war” (Ruigrok 2000: 34 (translated from Dutch)).<sup>45</sup> Yet apart from heavy fighting in summer 1998 and spring 1999, Kosovar-Albanian rebels experienced little attrition, exhaustion and other combat-

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<sup>45</sup> Van Eekeren claimed that he killed several Iraqi’s in the 1991 Gulf war, fifty-two Serbs in the Croatian war, forty-nine Serbs in the Bosnian war and fourteen Serbs in Kosovo, apparently all (para)militaries. He later neutralised mines in Prizren for the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR): “I .. cope with the war by doing good things” (Ruigrok 2000: 34). For a sceptical view on his claims, see Arnold Karskens, “Heldenstatus zonder een schrammetje (Hero status without a scratch)”, *DePers*, 14 October 2009, archive <<http://www.depers.nl>>.

induced stresses over an extended time period, in stark contrast to their Chechen counterparts. Be as it may, little seems to be known about the stressors and stress-responses (shock, fear, fatigue, trauma, etc.) among Chechen and Albanian insurgents.

#### IV. CHECHEN AND ALBANIAN COMBAT-STRESSES AND VIOLENCE-VALUES

The martial (violence-)values among the still traditional, clan-based communities of the Chechens and Albanians may function as simultaneous stress-reducers and stress-enhancers. Violence-values are perhaps the most salient indicators of group convictions, bondings and expectations. Here, I focus on the stress-enhancing properties of violence-values, if only because little is known about other stress-responses among rebels. This is not to say that combat-related values, pressures and traumas inevitably or invariably lead to brutalities, or lead to brutalisation among all Chechen and Albanian combatants all the time. For one thing, their significant bouts of terrorism, banditry and (organised) crime generally pale, in severity or scale, in comparison with the systematic atrocities committed by Russian and Serb combatants. Still, combat-related values, pressures and traumas can account for many of the rebel brutalities—and help to explain the brutalisations that parts of the Chechen and Albanian communities did succumb to.

#### GROUP PRESSURES ON CHECHEN COMBATANTS

In traditional-patriarchal societies one has little room for personal freedom. Chechen youngsters are pressured to obey their parents, kinsmen, elders and councils, to unconditionally implement the “social and moral code” (Zelkina 2000: 16). Duties to friends are “as exacting” (Jaimoukha 2005: 92). A religious elder once remarked that as the *teip* (clan) is nowadays “too large” and “dispersed”, what “matters is the family”, which decides “whether a youth goes to fight” (Lieven 1998: 345). The family is the “*raison d’être* of the individual”, while a father could show little public or private parental affection i.e. imitate “a woman” (Luzbetak 1951: 44, 151).<sup>46</sup> Such psychological deprivations may easily exacerbate combat-stress.

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<sup>46</sup> The sub-clan or “joint-family” is paramount (Luzbetak 1951: 194), reflecting a tendency to supplant “sib [clan, tribe]” solidarity (ibid: 51, note 58).

*Brutalising honour-stress*

Most suffocating are high *jigit* (brave-man) expectations, like the taboo on feeling or showing fear. Harbours fear just the ‘size of an ant’ in one’s heart makes one an outcast. Even old-fashioned Chechens privately admit that their exploits do not constitute natural courage, but a face-saving device. Beybulat Taymiev, leader of the 1825-1827 Greater Chechnya revolt, to Russian poet Alexander Pushkin: “I am afraid of shame and that is why I am always on guard. No, I am not bold” (Souleimanov 2007: 27 and his note 22). Other leaders never allowed or acknowledged fear. Imam Shamil, leader of the 1834-1859 rebellion in the North Caucasus, punished his mother for defying his call that Chechens fight the Russians ‘to the last man’—yet took thirty-nine of forty whiplashes upon himself. Chechens have a saying for this relentless pressure to self-sacrifice (*yakh*, acceptance of duty): “it is tough to be Chechen”. Self-restraint (*özdangalla*), ironically meant to ensure civility and prevent feuding, acts as a pressure-cooker, bound to explode during endemic inter-group rivalry. Chechen society lacks hierarchies i.e. classes; competition occurs among clans and other kinship groups instead, and tends to be violent given the martial tradition (Souleimanov 2007: 31-32 (his notes 20, 31, 32) ); Luzbetak 1951: 146-147). Kin quality, i.e. kin ancestry, size, prestige and honour, appears to determine one’s status, not class (though Derluguian may disagree).

Kinship groups are not culturally equal. Clans certainly were treated differently in customary law; once, a killer could compensate a victim’s family of a powerful clan with sixty-three cows, yet one of a weak clan with just twenty cows (Jaimoukha 2005: 137). All this provides the rationale for violence against weaker clans and ruthless attempts by the latter to rise in the pecking-order. This coincided with weakening ancestral bonds and territorial ties, despite nationalists trying to exclude ‘foreign’ and ‘impure’ lowland tribes and clans from the nation (*k’om*).<sup>47</sup> Still, the Soviet Union’s collapse drove Chechens, like Albanians during Yugoslavia’s disintegration, to refortify their clans so as to preserve order—even via blood-feuds.

Consequently, youngsters and adults are pressured to excel: in “their eagerness to secure fame” the “more ambitious .. pushed valour” to “their utmost limits” (Baddeley 2005 (1903): xxxvi). Youths are constantly reminded that “honour

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<sup>47</sup> Term *süli* (foreign) was “expanded to include .. Dagestanis” and “label Chechen clans or families .. not of Chechen origin” (Souleimanov 2007: 318, note 7; 319, note 28).

and toil make the man” and “idleness in summer” brings “torment in winter”; they must meet contrary principles of sacrificial bravery (“Rather than live like a chicken, it is better to die a cock”) and tactical caution (“Rashness is folly”) (Lawson/Jaimoukha, apud Jaimoukha 2005: 242, 243, 244). Such group expectations lead to potentially brutalising honour-stress among youngsters with fragile self-esteem.

Frictions between personal freedoms and kinship-*nokhchalla* (honour-codes) obligations of bravery, mutual help, assistance and work (*belkhi*), based on duty (*bekhk*) and integrity (*haenal*), spawn rather than prevent violence. Analysts like Riëks Smeets believe that inter-clan solidarity and eagerness to avoid blood-feuds keep the number of intra-ethnic fatalities, such as those of pro- and anti-Dudaev forces in 1994, relatively low (Smeets 1995). Yet many Chechens, especially those from minor or ‘impure’ clans (including those made up of former slaves)<sup>48</sup>, felt compelled to prove their valour in spectacular acts as *smertniki* (suicide fighters) against non-Chechen enemies, Russians in particular. Such violence reveals *double brutalisation*, i.e. discarding of both international and traditional norms: war-traumatised youngsters came to reject customs and adore brute strength (Souleimanov 2007: 22 (his note 7), 24-26, 31 (his note 30); Jaimoukha 2005: 90, 93, 134-135).

Another group-expectation has affected Chechen men, both young and old: the safeguarding of one’s family-members—and avenging them if the latter are killed, harmed or humiliated. The Chechen obligation to avenge cruelties, injustices or ‘mere’ insults by “foreigners” is particularly painful and hazardous: “If a man takes up arms and joins the separatists” he “leaves his wife, children and family without a protector. .... If, however, he decides to .. give up revenge and dedicate himself to his family, he ceases to be a “Chechen” ” (Souleimanov 2007: 273). That will bring utter shame; one already is ‘in’ shame so long as retribution remains unfulfilled. The “custom of the blood feud will by no means resolve their moral dilemma” (ibid: 273). Indeed, this custom brings it about; this is worsened by the likelihood that he and his family will be victims of a Russian *zachistka* (sweep operation), even after deciding to face the ridicule and stay with his family. Russian brutalities and local customs steer many a Chechen into an impossible ‘Catch-22’ situation. This pressure-cooker, highly similar to that of honour-

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<sup>48</sup> Clans who originated from former slaves, who often stayed at the localities of their onetime owners, probably had the same urge to prove their valour—and thereby upgrade their status—as other weak clans (Inozemtseva 2010: 21-24).

stress in battle, may explode into orgiastic violence, the “commission of desperate, even unfathomable acts” (ibid: 274) whenever Chechens see ‘appropriate’ targets to vent their rage.

*Criminalising honour-stress*

Brutalising war and crime, rather than ‘excessive’ individualism, undermined age-old bonds of kinship, elder authority, hospitality and honour (Zelkina 2000: 16, 44-45). The “discipline of honour and shame” (Lieven 1998: 345) among Chechen fighters could not stem these effects, in a way germinated them, eroding inter-clan solidarity. Families vouched for a mafioso’s recruits, as otherwise both would be shamed: “you rarely find Chechens killing each other” (ibid: 345) as even gangsters rarely kill those known to have families and clans ready to retaliate. Yet Ruslan Labazanov swore blood-revenge against Johar Dudaev when in June 1994 three decapitated heads were displayed in Grozny, including that of his cousin Arbi; some fighters at his mother’s house in Argun wore black bands to signify this oath (remarkably, also an Albanian custom). Indeed, “clashes between criminal groups contributed to a major return of the blood-feud” (Lieven 1998: 351) in the 1990s. Elder Haji Mahomet: “Youth hit each other more easily, use their weapons more easily” (ibid: 29). Natasha, a hospital doctor: youths are “ready to fly off the handle, and too many leaders .. encourage them” (ibid: 78); “when I see young kids ready to attack tanks almost with their bare hands, it makes me cry” (ibid: 79). Despite “reckless acts of nobility and generosity” (Gall/De Waal 1997: 198) early in the war to protect foreign journalists, kidnapping (*umykanie*)—once a feared yet circumscribed practice to capture enemies or prospective brides as opposed to ceremonial nuptial ‘abduction’ (Zelkina 2000: 45)—resurfaced as a criminal activity to earn ransom, whereby captors treated captives far worse than traditionally allowed. This brutalisation surpasses the ruthless-yet-regulated *umykanie* of earlier times: “in the eighteenth century .. Chechens would mercilessly rob strangers and .. demand a ransom. If the victim happened to be a fellow-Mohammedan, he .. could not become a slave if he failed to be ransomed, and was .. murdered. .. if the captive was a non-Muslim and .. of a poor family .. unable to ransom him, he had to remain .. a slave” (Luzbetak 1951: 61 (and his note 128)).<sup>49</sup> Indeed, throughout the Northern Caucasus the “overwhelming majority of the slaves were .. non-Muslims or Muslim

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<sup>49</sup>J. Reineggs (1796-97), *Allgemeine historisch-topografische Beschreibung des Kaukasus*, vol. I, Gotha: 40.

Shi'ites, as, according to the precepts of Islam, co-believers cannot be taken into servitude" (Inozemtseva 2006: 186-187). Be as it may, during the 1990s bridal kidnapping degenerated into "lawlessness and rape" as "young males knew nothing of the restraints" of "traditional courtship" and "possessed no notion of legality" (Derluguian 2005: 45).

*Religious honour-stress*

Youths across the Caucasus are turning to orthodox Sunni Islam to deal with war(-torn) and socio-economic deprivations, defying the folk-Islam syncretism of their parents. So-called Young Muslims oppose the "complex mystical worldview of "standard" Sufi Islam"<sup>50</sup>, *adat* (customary law) and other pre-Islamic customs, leading to confrontations with traditional elders and imams. Even though "the youth and the elder generation managed to achieve peaceful coexistence" in recent years, a sub-set of mostly young 'Wahhabi' or Salafi<sup>51</sup> extremists "declare all Muslims who do not share their point of view unfaithful" and consider a *jihad* against them justified (Yarlykapov 2007-8 (2006): 10-11, 28, 29). Still, the "label "Wahhabite" is undeservedly hung" on all New or Young Muslims (ibid: 11). Prayers of young expatriate Chechens exhibit Hanafi and Shafi elements, while older compatriots consistently fulfil Shafi rules (ibid: 15); it is unclear whether this signifies youthful ignorance or a Young-Muslim departure.

It remains to be seen whether peaceful Young Muslims are able or willing to curb religious(ly inspired) violence—and counter the lure of the 'Caucasus Emirate' encompassing all North-Caucasian republics and other parts of Russia, declared in late 2007 by Dokka Umarov, then 'President' of the non-recognised Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (*Noxçiyın Respublika Noxçiyçö*, NRN). Indeed, "what originally had been mostly a Chechen nationalist movement finally transformed itself into a multi-ethnic force where the liberation of Chechnya from Russian rule became just one aspect of the struggle" (Shlapentokh 2010: 118 (quote)-121). Consequently, NRN's secularist government-in-exile in London no longer recognised 'Emir' Umarov as its President, but is generally considered too weak to affect events on the ground. Umarov's predominantly Jihadist fighters

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<sup>50</sup> E. Souleimanov, "Islam as a uniting and dividing force in Chechen society", *Prague Watchdog*, 13 August 2005, <<http://www.watchdog.cz/>> (accessed 26-03-2006, revisited 07-04-2012; NB: site not updated since June 2010).

<sup>51</sup> Elsewhere, I discuss the similarities and differences between the purist-Orthodox Sunni *Wahhabiya* and *Salafiya* schools, and explain why Jihadists in Chechnya prefer to call themselves Salafis (Ten Dam 2011: 245-246).

seek to expand the war across the Northern Caucasus—and they may yet succeed, even after Russian forces or secret agents apparently have killed Umarov in March 2014 or earlier (details about the time and circumstances of his death remain murky).<sup>52</sup>

Even so, the price of any Emirate ‘victory’ may be high: numerous eventual PTSDs and nervous breakdowns among Umarov’s Jihadists due to the severe demands of Salafism. Sheik Said Abu Saad Buryatskii (Aleksandr Tikhomirov), the “driving force” behind the *Riyadus Salikhin* (“Gardens of the Righteous”) suicide martyrs’ battalion revived by Umarov in April 2009, argues that these RS martyrs “went on their death missions contentedly and with determination rather than confused, drugged or in fear” (Hahn 2009: 4).<sup>53</sup> Yet behind this martyrism lies extreme indoctrination, conditioning and overall group-pressure on the ‘voluntary’ *mujahideen*, as implied by Buryatskii’s unwitting admission that he “talked about this for hours with prospective suicide shakhids [martyrs]” (ibid: 3).<sup>54</sup> Such stressors would probably lead to PTSD and other disorders among (m)any prospective and actual *mujahideen* who somehow survive their suicide missions; perhaps some backed down due to fear and other stress-responses.

#### GROUP PRESSURES ON ALBANIAN COMBATANTS

In principle every Albanian is free to decide whether to take a *besa* (honour-oath) to deny an accusation (in tribal court), seal a deal, avenge someone or confront a common threat. Every man (increasingly also every woman) is also free to decide whether to keep or break it: “Wash your dirty face” or “make it blacker” i.e. “You are free to be faithful to your word; you are free to be faithless

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<sup>52</sup> Reportedly, Ali Abu-Mukhammad (Aliashhab Kebekov) from Dagestan succeeded the deceased Umarov later in March. Liz Fuller, “Latest Report Of Umarov’s Death Leaves Details Unclear”, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 18 March 2014; “North Caucasus Fighters in Syria Pledge Allegiance to Umarov’s Successor”, *RFE/RL*, 31 March 2014, archive <<http://www.rferl.org/>> (all accessed 30-05-2014)..

<sup>53</sup> Original source: Said Abu Saad Buryatskii, “Istishkhad mezhdur pravdoi i lozh’yu,” *Hunafa.com*, 9 December 2009, 1:01, <<http://hunafa.com/?p=2514>>.

<sup>54</sup> Buryatskii’s “assertion that he will do everything possible to get more mujahedin to join a suicide martyrs’ unit .., contradicts his claim that he is not pushing mujahedin to suicide martyrdom operations” (Hahn 2009: 5). Buryatskii was killed by Russian forces on 2-3 March 2010 in Ingushetia (Hahn 2010).

to it" (Gjeçov 1989 (1933): §518-519, 530, 537).<sup>55</sup> Yet in practice few dared to circumvent or violate such pledges, if only because one's kin was a central object of loyalty, as among Chechens. They felt the "mark of dishonor" more acutely than any "fine for perjury" in *Kanun* (customary "mountain" law) cases of theft and other minor crimes; only public ostracising as punishment for serious crime brought similar shame (CLD §589; CLVI 'The Ban' (also eg. §1157)). Similarly, those affronted have their honour violated—and remain themselves dishonoured unless they either pardon the perpetrator or (try to) kill him: "Forgive ..; but if you prefer, wash your dirty face" (CLD §595; 598).<sup>56</sup> However, many Albanians, even among Northern-Albanian Gegs, forgot the Mountain laws during Communist rule in Albania and Kosovo; nowadays 'reinvented' "*kanun* and the elders become an important device for the younger generation only in times of immediate need" (Schwandner-Sievers, apud Schmidt/Schröder 2001: 104). Moreover, few Albanians ever politicised their Muslim beliefs for nation-building projects after World War I, let alone seek to establish a Caliphate fully under *Shari'a* law. This is in contrast to Chechens who, often out of "ignorance or desperation" brought about by the latest wars (Ten Dam 2011: 244), came to follow purist *imams* and their dogma's from abroad. Due to their strong secularism (Ten Dam 2010: 352-353), Albanians generally do not experience a 'religious honour-stress' as observed among many or most Chechens.<sup>57</sup>

#### *Brutalising honour-stress*

Though Albanians have more leeway than Chechens to interpret *besa* (honour, honour-oath) and kinship obligations independently from their elders, these still sustain customs like blood-revenge. Unlike the average Chechen, the average Albanian does not lose his honour or prestige (*ndera*) as soon as he shows fear—as long as he masters it, and does not commit suicide.<sup>58</sup> Yet like the Chechen, the Albanian "who has been dishonored is considered dead" (CLD §600) if he does

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<sup>55</sup> References to Gjeçov's paragraphed (chapter) provisions I identify by *CLD*, the abbreviation of the book's English title, *The Code of Lekë Dukagjini*.

<sup>56</sup> Yet these forgiveness-clauses contradict those stating that "offence to honor is never forgiven" (CLD §597), and that "blood is never unavenged" (CLD §917).

<sup>57</sup> Thus there is no sub-section on "Religious honour-stress" among Albanians. There are tiny yet vocal Salafi and other Islamist groups among Albanian communities in the Balkans and beyond, but this phenomenon is quite new and (as of yet) marginal. I will further study and report on this phenomenon in due course.

<sup>58</sup> If "someone kills himself, his blood remains unavenged" (CLD §958;959).

not rehabilitate himself through extraordinary bravery, forgiveness or remorse, or avenges himself or others thus offended. While formal *kanun* revenge-obligations are limited to specific cases (like violation of hospitality), the Kanun allows revenge for any offense to a 'person's honour'. Gjeçov: "he remains dishonored"; even if "he is not required" to "avenge a murder resulting from violation of hospitality, he considers it a matter of honor to do so" (CLD, note to §652).

Given their martial content, *besa* obligations effectively compel Albanian adults and youngsters to excel as 'warriors' in times of crisis, war and survival. Youngsters swore *besa* to the Kosova Liberation Army (KLA) when they joined its ranks in the late 1990s. Even without the 'contesting-status' dynamic stimulating "aggressive male behaviour", "violent acts can be glorified, or excused, by local 'tradition'" by those already eager to do so (Schwandner-Sievers, apud Schmidt/Schröder 2001: 104, 106, 107; Judah 2000: 99). Moreover, right after the war, many Albanians, like those of the KLA-funded *Kosovapress*, argued that war-traumas among both civilians and combatants make revenge 'natural' and justifiable: "we cannot call it an organized crime when someone, whose family was killed and his house burned, kills a Serb in revenge for those things that Serbs committed during the war. All these things are natural and may happen to anyone under such conditions".<sup>59</sup> Sadly, the pressures of traditional norms, and their opportunist applications, have contributed to a frequent, if not endemic, double brutalisation of traditional and international norms during and after the war.

#### *Criminalising honour-stress*

Social obligations, combat traumas, other combat-stresses, and (consequent) brutalities not just occur on battlefields but in any violent arena—like that of organised crime. The widely noted low violence-threshold in Albanian culture explains the viciousness and success of Albanian criminal clans known as *fares*, making "the Italian Mafia look like a whist drive" (British Home Office report, apud Cilluffo/Salmoiraghi 1999: 24). The patriarchal clan structure, which demands absolute allegiance, perpetuates *inat* (spite), *ndera* (prestige) and blood-revenge. An average (sub-)clan consists of sixty to hundred-and-sixty members, an ideal basis for impenetrable *fares*. Crime bosses, especially those from Northern Albania, exploit this overriding sense of family loyalty, particularly since the

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<sup>59</sup> *Kosovapress*, "Hallucinations of Mr. Jiri Dienstbier", 19 July 1999, <[http://www.kosovapress.com/english/korrik/19\\_7\\_99.htm](http://www.kosovapress.com/english/korrik/19_7_99.htm)>.

end of Albania's Communist rule in 1990. This also led to inter-clan and intra-community tensions: "Codes of honour exist with any Albanian brigands as they do with youth gangs all over the world, but for northern Albanians who choose .. violence along .. group inclusion or exclusion, *kanun* rhetoric confers an advantage .... Among their fellow Albanians ... young men from northern Albania are held responsible for most crimes. They are known as 'hooligans' or 'Chechnians' " (Schwandner-Sievers, apud Schmidt/Schröder 2001: 104, 106).

Loyalty and a 'culture of heroics' put enormous pressure on young Albanians whose fathers or uncles are crime bosses, to excel in ruthless violence. They uphold an 'oath of silence', refusing to divulge information to the police (Swiss ethnologist Pr. Christian Giordano, apud Barth *et al* 1999: 50, 51, 53).

Northern- and Kosovar-Albanian gangsters were not unique in exploiting close-knit kin structures. Particularly since Albania's anarchy of 1997 (sparked by collapsing pyramid-funds, whereby thousands of Albanians lost their savings), Southern-Albanian gangsters increased their influence by "sometimes brutalised forms of violence", legitimised by " 'modernised' forms of *kanun*" (Schwandner-Sievers, apud Schmidt/Schröder 2001: 111-113). Indeed, the destructive, state-weakening impact of '1997' led to a 'retraditionalisation' in Albania's South (ibid). Yet Kosovar-Albanian *fares* became the most notorious. Youngsters who fled Kosovo to escape Serb repression were brutalised by that repression; they showed even fewer inhibitions than older-generation gangsters from Albania. Throughout the 1990s the typical Albanian gang in Italy consisted of a group of ill-educated, uprooted twenty-year-old members led by a better-educated Albanian in his mid-thirties. The latter spoke several languages, knew the rules and loopholes in the host country, and had close contacts with elites among the Diaspora and home communities. The youngster's sacrifice for the clan supersedes all moral and legal considerations—of which he is acutely aware. This fealty is directed to the patriarchal leadership and line of the clan. This accounts, together with criminalised brutalisation, for their cruel abuse of women—in contrast to the old-fashioned, older generations among their Italian (mafia) counterparts. Impoverished families sold their daughters for prostitution, despite protection of one's female relatives being a paramount *Kanun* norm (Barth *et al* 1999; Cilluffo/Salmoiraghi 1999). Criminal activities and manipulations of traditional loyalties corrode other traditional values geared toward the good of the entire clan or community. Worse, these criminal-brutalising trends undermine even the best customs of hospitality and reconciliation. As I will describe in future research

and publications, this corrosion of 'indigenous ethics' extends toward the political violence by many Albanian—and Chechen—separatists.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Despite colonisation, industrialisation and urbanisation, Chechens and Albanians retain many traditions. Paradoxically, their adherence to 'old' values—however much contemporary ignorance, manipulation and brutalisation disfigure these—leads to the same “conflict of the aggressive impulses .. with the moral norms” Talcott Parsons discerned in Western societies (Parsons 1947: 169). The 'warrior' and 'carer' roles of Western men and women, particularly in America and Germany before WWII and the post-WWII gender emancipation, resemble those of Chechens and Albanians. Despite differences between and within 'traditional' societies with large, integrated families-and-occupations and 'modern' societies with nuclear families segregated from the workplace, I—unlike Parsons—believe that males in both societies must live up to similar expectations. Both types of societies celebrate “physical prowess, with an endemic tendency toward violence” (ibid: 174)—even against authorities that impose these norms.<sup>60</sup> This celebration of prowess brought immense pressures on Chechen and Albanian combatants to compete and achieve 'incredible feats', contributing to combat-stresses beyond the 'normal' dangers and horrors of war.

At the same time, stress-inducing martialism has led some Chechens and Albanians to commit some of the worst violence against non-Chechens and non-Albanians. Even so, intra-community and factional violence tend to increase as soon as threats from outside 'enemy' communities diminish. Still, hostilities among these and other peoples are semi-regulated feuds rather than no-holds-barred wars.

Existing military-psychological theories tenuously underpin the Brutalisation theory's combat-stress variable at best: as applied on insurgents, it largely enters uncharted territory. That is true in lesser degrees for the theory's other variables as well. In that sense the Brutalisation theory stands on its own, and must be tested on more conflict cases to assess its (degree or lack of) validity. Most urgent is pioneering fieldwork with structured and informal interviews of active and former non-state combatants about their combat-stresses.

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<sup>60</sup> Violence can ensue between “relatively “emancipated” and .. traditional groups” (Parsons 1947: 178); no single society is purely traditional or modern.

Generally, ascertaining brutalisation *or* moral constraint from cross- and counter-flowing codes, norms and values in political extremism, gangsterism, blood-feuding and ‘warriorism’ remains challenging (Leach 1977: 25-26, 28, 33-34). These are the “fateful interactions between deprivation, honour and revenge” (Ten Dam 2009: 269) among Chechens, Albanians and any other people in turmoil.

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