

The London School of Economics and Political Science

**DOES THE WEST
STILL NEED
WARRIORS?**

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Thesis submitted to the
Department of International Relations
London School of Economics and Political Science
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
London, August 2008

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ABSTRACT

Situated within strategic aspects of International Relations, this thesis asks whether the West still needs warriors. The West has always had and needed warriors, and six warrior ideal types are analysed. Three of these are premodern and three are modern.

Warriors are defined as soldiers with a personal and existential commitment to master and experience warfare, who are willing and able to kill and sacrifice their life in combat. It is argued warriors are principally individual types, and whereas there are many soldiers, few of these are warriors.

The thesis presents a social theory of who and what the West is, analysing how this is translated into security paradigms that conceive for example whether security ought to be pursued for only the West, or whether it ought to be pursued for all of mankind.

A further context issue is the relationship between war and combat. The character of war is changing and becoming ever more instrumental. Combat, meanwhile, is existential and unchanging, consisting of the same basic features and social structure it did in Homeric times.

To ask whether the West needs warriors is thus to ask both an instrumental and an existential question. The existential features have to do with whom the West conceives themselves as; the instrumental features about what the West needs. Warriors are both a type of human being embodying qualities like manliness and courage, and instruments towards the attainment of security for Western states. To an extent, social developments have eroded the esteem in which warriors are held, because society is sceptical of the deliberate use of force. Yet at the same time, the security agendas conceived by the West are more expansive than ever, which leads to a greater need for warriors.

DECLARATION

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

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Thesis word count: 101,834

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge the generous financial assistance from the Department of International Relations; the Financial Support Office of the LSE; the Goodenough College; and the Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies (IFS). Universities UK, through granting me the Overseas Research Student (ORS) award, made my studies possible in the first place, for which I am very appreciative. I owe Sophia H. thanks as well, for helping me find consulting work. Special thanks go to the generosity and support of my parents, without which I could not have seen this thesis through.

I owe thanks to those who have closely and critically read, and made suggestions about how to improve, my work: Anthony V., who took the time to read my entire thesis promptly, and parts earlier; and Anna K. F., who has helped me immensely both with substantial comments along the way and a very thorough proofreading of the entire thesis at a critical time. I would also like to thank the members of my two panels at the Department of International Relations, whose constructive advice helped consolidate some important theoretical aspects: Professor Kimberly Hutchings, Dr Mark Duckenfield, Professor Christopher Hughes, Dr Andrew Walter and Mark Hoffman. Additionally, a number of people have kindly yet ruthlessly read parts of my thesis and given me helpful comments; they include Matthew A., Målfrid B.-H., Jørn A. H., Caroline H., Jeff M., Daniel R. M., Colin J. S., and Serena S.

I also want to thank my best friends in London who have made these years such a great time. Adriana, Jephta and Anthony made my first year fun and inspiring. Colin has entertained me for two years in the British Library and has been a generous and entertaining spirit in London as well as on the conference trail. Matt has kept me fit, shown me London by bike, and has pushed me to work hard. Carlo and Serena have been fun to be around, not least because of their dark sides. Daniel has given me provocative discussions, and has always been helpful, friendly and generous. This is also true about Caroline, a kindred spirit whom I was fortunate to meet last year. I am very grateful too to my brothers Espen and Jørn, for their resolute support, encouragement and friendship throughout this time. Special thanks goes to Anna for making these years in London unforgettable; for your presence, love, generosity and unwavering support to me in this project, and the next ones.

My interest in war and warriors goes back a long way, but it would never have escalated into full time attention were it not for Professor Christopher Coker and his particular approach to strategic studies. Incomparably inspiring and intellectually provocative, his lectures as well as his books continue to stimulate further study by being original, ruthlessly realistic yet deeply humanist. As a supervisor, Christopher has been outstanding: helpful in suggesting innumerable angles on a given problem; flexible on schedules, but quick to give feedback; always providing ways to stimulate arguments and ideas further, but happy to move beyond the work and be a friend.

ABBREVIATIONS

AK-47	Soviet and Chinese produced automatic assault rifle
BUDS	Basic underwater demolitions (training phase, United States naval special warfare)
CENTCOM	Central Command, one of US military regional commands
CI	Counterinsurgency role (here: for Special Forces)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency, United States
C-rations	Individual pre-cooked or prepared ration
CT	Counterterrorism role (here: for Special Forces)
F-4 Phantom	Two seat, two engine, supersonic fighter bomber, Vietnam era
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Pakistan
GSG9	Grenzschutzgruppe9, German federal counterterrorism police
SF	United States Army Special Forces, informally: Green Berets
ISA	Intelligence Support Activity, US covert special forces intelligence
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan, NATO led and UN administered mission
M-16	American produced automatic assault rifle introduced in Vietnam
MACV/SOG	Military Assistance Command Vietnam / Studies and Observation Group, elite inter-service special operations unit during Vietnam War
MI6/SIS	British Secret Intelligence Service
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Western collective defence alliance since 1949
NCO	Non-commissioned officer, enlisted, ranks including corporals and sergeants
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NKVD	People's commissariat for internal affairs, Soviet Union secret police

OED	Oxford English Dictionary
PMC	Private Military Company
POW	Prisoner of War
SAS	Special Air Service, British Army special operations forces
PR	Public Relations
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
RMA	Revolution in Military Affairs
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SEAL	Sea, Air, Land, United States naval special forces
SFC	Sergeant First Class
VC	Vietcong
SOF	Special Operations Forces
TRADOC	United States Army Training and Doctrine Command
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USSSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

General introduction

Thesis question

This thesis is situated within International Relations, focusing on its strategic aspects. The overall research question is ‘does the West still need warriors?’ This thesis is not only about warriors as such. Rather it is about the relationship between warriors and the character of war and society in the contemporary West, and whether there is a need and a place for warriors. Notwithstanding this general focus, the thesis explores what the concept of the warrior refers to in great detail through two historical chapters, as well as a definition of warriors in this chapter.

Warriors in this context mean something different from soldiers, and so the thesis is not about military power as such. Indeed the utility and legitimacy of military power is taken as a given.¹ A major finding of this thesis is that there is a significant existential difference between being a soldier and being a warrior, and the thesis ultimately addresses what the difference between soldiers and warriors entails for the West at war.

Warriors and soldiers

Initially we can think of warriors as the last people in the West who do war in a way that is different from the soldierly equivalents of emergency firemen. They do it as a permanent job and condition of life, touring the hot spots of the world, often covertly.

The difference between warriors and soldiers is poorly theorised in International Relations, Strategic Studies, or War studies. It is necessary to conceptually distinguish warriors from soldiers because historically the warrior and the soldier have been two different qualities that have sometimes merged. When we think of Homer’s world we are inclined to think in terms of warriors and the same goes for the Samurai. ‘Warriors’ evoke associations to *war-fighting*, certainly ruthlessness and the notion of a particular code of conduct in war. However, other contexts like the large armies of Imperial Rome, the armies of the 30-Years War, or the two World Wars inspire us to think of soldiers. A soldier remains the basic military unit in the context of state-based military establishments with a

¹ For more on the legitimacy of the use of force, see in particular Michael Howard, *Restraints on war : studies in the limitation of armed conflict* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), Michael Howard, George J. Andreopoulos and Mark R. Shulman, *The laws of war : constraints on warfare in the Western world* (New Haven Yale UP, 1994), Michael Walzer, *Just and unjust wars : a moral argument with historical illustrations*, 2nd ed. ([New York]: Basic Books, 1992). For more on the utility of force see: Robert Arts, ‘To What Ends Military Power?’ *International Security* 4, no. 4 (1980), Rupert Smith, *The utility of force* (London Allen Lane, 2005).

relatively high level of precision in training and discipline. Whereas the warrior seems to be associated with an individual, the soldier is often thought of within the context of an army, as *soldiers*.

In ancient times the imagination was shaped by epic works of literature, like Homer's *Iliad*. Homer brings to life two warriors in particular, Achilles and Hector, who have strongly shaped the Western conception of what a warrior is. For this reason Homer cannot be ignored in this thesis. Today, however, the popular imagination is much more enthralled by movies than epic literature, particularly war movies.

In one of the most credible war movies of the last decade, Ridley Scott's *Black Hawk Down*, based on Mark Bowden's book, we find the distinction between warriors and soldiers played out.² The Battle of Mogadishu was a tactically successful, yet strategically disastrous, and very costly raid in downtown Mogadishu in October 1993 where American Rangers and Special Operations Forces (SOF) apprehended two of warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid's top lieutenants. The Somali militias succeeded in downing two helicopters and the ensuing battle and rescue operation left 18 American servicemen dead and 73 wounded. Hundreds of Somali militias and civilians were killed in what was the most intensive firefight for American forces since Vietnam.

The movie opens with a captivating quote attributed to Plato; "Only the dead have seen the end of war", which also emblazons strategist Colin Gray's book *Another Bloody Century*.³ This quote, however, does not exist anywhere in Plato's work. Instead it can be found in General Douglas MacArthur's farewell address to the 1962 graduates of the US Military Academy 'West Point'. MacArthur attributed it to Plato, perhaps not as a fault of his own since the quote can also be found imprinted on the wall of the Imperial War Museum in London. The quote actually originates from the Spanish philosopher, poet, essayist and novelist George Santayana (1863-1952) who studied at Oxford during World War I.⁴ Regardless of its origin, however, the quote is interesting because its double meaning directs our attention to the relationship between war, warriors and death.

Firstly, a very likely result of war for the individual is death. Existentially speaking, if you keep doing it long enough the odds catch up on you. Unlike any other activity undertaken by man, the craft of warriors and soldiers has an endpoint that separates it from

² Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk down : a story of modern war* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999), Ridley Scott, 'Black Hawk Down', (United States: Columbia, 2001).

³ Colin S. Gray, *Another bloody century : future warfare* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005).

⁴ Suzanne Bernard, *Did Plato write "Only the dead have seen the end of war" ?* (August 31 2002 [cited June 09 2008]); available from <http://plato-dialogues.org/faq/faq008.htm>.

all other exploits; war ends in premature and violent death. Secondly, instrumentally speaking, the phenomenon of war on earth will not end with a Kantian eternal peace. War has always been here and, it is suggested, always will be here. Only the dead have seen war end.

This rather dystopian premonition of the future does not match Plato's philosophy well, because for him war was a mere tool to defend the state, and death in battle was not of much consequence, since it merely meant disbanding the body and returning to the world of pure forms.⁵ Santayana's quote, on the other hand, suggests a rather less detached and more compassionate interest in war, with tragic overtones.

The quote becomes even more interesting in the context Ridley Scott evoked it in. For both Plato and Santayana war was a more or less necessary (Plato) or increasingly disturbing (Santayana) phenomenon. However, by the time Ridley Scott inserted his quote (pre 9/11 2001), war seemed to have become an aberration in the minds of a majority of people in the West.⁶

This thesis is to a large extent about these generic tendencies of war in the West in our contemporary era. But even more so, it is about the people who embody Santayana's warning - those who still do war in the West, to an extent the soldiers, but principally the warriors. And there are warriors in Ridley Scott's movie. The seasoned veterans of Delta Force⁷ are portrayed in stark contrast to the more gung-ho, inexperienced and young Rangers.⁸ The Rangers, in turn were warriors in comparison to the other UN soldiers assigned to the mission.

The distinction between soldiers and warriors is a difficult one, and I will return to it in great detail later in this chapter. When it comes to Delta Force and similar Special Operators, they characterise the warrior type. The hypothesis is that to the extent there are warriors in the West, they are most often found in Special Forces type units. Gwynne Dyer describes this kind of individual:

⁵ Plato's discusses war at some length in *The Republic*, which will be analysed in greater detail in chapter 5.

⁶ Christopher Coker, *War and the 20th century : a study of war and modern consciousness* (London: Brassey's, 1994), Colin McInnes, *Spectator-sport war : the West and contemporary conflict* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002).

⁷ Delta Force is a unit that was formed in 1979 by Colonel Charles Beckwith to become the primary anti-terror unit of the United States military, modelled on the British SAS.

⁸ The 75th Ranger Regiment is sometimes, incorrectly, referred to as a Special Operations Unit. Whereas the Rangers, as they are popularly referred to, frequently work in support of SOF like Delta Force, they are strictly speaking not a Special Operations Unit. Instead they are elite airborne infantry with significant unconventional warfare training.

There is such a thing as a “natural soldier”: the kind who derives his greatest satisfaction from male companionship, from excitement, and from the conquering of physical obstacles. He doesn’t want to kill people as such, but he will have no objections if it occurs within a moral framework that gives him justification – like war – and if it is the price of gaining admission to the kind of environment he craves. Whether such men are born or made I do not know, but most of them end up in armies (and many move on again to become mercenaries, because regular army life in peacetime is too routine and boring).

But armies are not full of such men. They are so rare that they form only a modest fraction even of small professional armies, mostly congregating in the commando-type special forces.⁹

This is not to say that members of Special Forces units are by virtue of their unit membership all warriors. Instead, this is to suggest that the overall likelihood of finding the particular kind of individuals I will define as warriors is somewhat larger in Special Operations units. In other words, such membership is not in any way a necessary qualifier to speak of warriors. However, Special Forces units exemplify a pronounced *lifeworld* for warriors.

The concept of ‘lifeworld’; will permeate this thesis. I use the term as Jürgen Habermas has developed it. A lifeworld is a social fabric infused with meaning. Social groups create and reproduce the lifeworld to make sense of the objective world of facts, the normative world of right and wrong, and the individual psychological world in social action. A lifeworld is limited in scope; it does not have the scope of Benedict Anderson’s celebrated concept of nationalism as an ‘imagined community.’ Anderson explains how people make up communion in their minds, mostly people who will never meet.¹⁰ This social fabric has stronger coherence than an imagined community does because it is based on face-to-face interaction and lived memories.

Habermas incorporates insights by Durkheim and George Herbert Mead to add to the original concept from Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schutz. Whereas Husserl emphasized subjective meaning in individual or group life, Schutz refined this idea to comprise a social horizon that changes when the actor moves in the social world. The lifeworld is thus made up of a shared, but malleable, conception of culture and language. Habermas also incorporates Durkheim’s concept of collective consciousness, which

⁹ Gwynne Dyer, *War* (London: Bodley Head, 1985), 117.

¹⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities : reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London Verso, 1991).

describes a continuous process of legitimate regulation and stabilization of group identity. This feature of the lifeworld cements social cohesion.¹¹ Mead's contribution emphasizes the socialization of individuals; "Individuals develop their personalities, their identities and their social roles with the aid of the ever-present help of lifeworld knowledge. Those who cannot make use of this help may suffer from psychopathologies of a more or less serious kind."¹² This thesis visits many Western warrior lifeworlds, some as ad hoc examples and others in more depth in chapters five and six.

Definition of soldier

Warriors should be distinguished from civilians and soldiers by many traits. Two are necessary but not sufficient: they are willing to die and to kill, and do not shirk from either. These points are critical to understand warriors, because they distinguish them from soldiers who also wear uniform, and get paid ultimately for risking their lives, but who do not have a personal commitment to experience combat. The Oxford English Dictionary traces the word 'soldier' back to ca. 1300 ('sauder'), defined as "one who serves in an army for pay; one who takes part in military service or warfare."¹³

There are many kinds of soldiers in the world, just as there are many kinds of different military establishments. It is not possible to define soldiers positively in terms of a single variable, such as institutional attachment, and thereby distinguish them from other armed actors. Instead a typology extrapolated from an ideal type is methodologically suitable. An ideal type soldier is someone who is *a member of a state military establishment, is clearly identifiable as such, and is at least in part motivated by the ethos of a public servant, and whose use of arms can reasonably be attributed to a greater political cause.*

These variables are addressed in turn, with counter-examples for illustration, and discussion of borderline cases. The discussion demonstrates the fluid boundaries between soldiers and other types of fighters. Since soldiers are the paradigmatic expression of the state's legitimate monopoly on violence, these other fighters often challenge the state structures, usually outside the West.¹⁴ The conceptual challenges are so significant that a universal definition of soldiers, such as the ideal type, is rare in the real world. This does not detract from the fact that some soldiers are more soldiers than others: soldiers who represent most or all of the features of the definition possess a normative and legal status

¹¹ Gerard H Fairtlough, 'Habermas' concept of "Lifeworld"', *Systems Practice* 4, no. 6 (1991): 550-51.

¹² Ibid.: 551.

¹³ J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner, 'Soldier', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 954.

¹⁴ Rune Henriksen and Anthony Vinci, 'Combat Motivation in Non-State Armed Groups', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20, no. 1 (2007).

which is stronger than that of aspiring or putative soldiers who represent these to a lesser extent.

A military establishment: The ideal type soldier is a member of state based military, either as a professional officer or NCO, a conscript, or as a reservist. The reservist is technically only a soldier when on active duty. 'Soldier' in this context is a generic term, not meant specifically as army, but equally marine, airman or sailor. A counterexample is someone who is a member of a private warlord organisation, which typically exists as an end in itself and where the members of the organisation are people, government and army all in one.¹⁵ Another example is any terrorist organisation without cohesion, so fragmented as to lack a centre of gravity from where concessions of defeat can emerge, or to which propositions of negotiations can be directed.¹⁶

The challenge with this variable has to do with non-state contexts, when the institutionalisation of the army is not very strong, either because of lacking professionalism, funding, organisation or other characteristics related to the degree of institutionalisation. When addressing insurgencies, for example the Vietcong during the Vietnam War, it becomes difficult to determine with any precision whether the insurgent organisation can be attributed the status of a military establishment. In some respects the Vietcong were highly organised, into three-man cells with detailed de-briefings and links to political cadre who were in charge of organisation and motivation.¹⁷ On the other hand, the Vietcong did not wear uniforms or belong to an army formally, living among villagers and often operating at night.

The main point here is that the soldier becomes a soldier through belonging to a military organisation, which to some (and preferably large) degree controls the soldier. The soldier's actions are thus not private and personal, but public and social, which gives the community ownership and responsibility for both celebratory conduct and transgressions conducted by the soldier.

Clearly identifiable: The ideal type soldier wears a uniform; which demonstrates his allegiance and belonging to a political group; rights and duties under international law; and whether he is a combatant or not. The identifying marks are a uniform and a flag on

¹⁵ Anthony John Vinci, 'Warlords in the International Order: A Neorealist Approach' (PhD Thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2007).

¹⁶ Al Qaeda may be an example of this insofar as it has developed into a network which is barely organised. Osama Bin Laden, if he is to be counted as the organization's leader, is probably not able to effectuate any sort of command and control anymore.

¹⁷ William Darryl Henderson, *Why the Vietcong fought – A study of Motivation and Control in a Modern Army in Combat* (London: Greenwood Press, 1979).

that uniform. A counterexample is an insurgent who fights for a military establishment, like the Tamil Tigers, with a clear command structure, tangible political goals and a degree of professionalism. Despite this, however, a branch of the Tamil Tigers called the Black Tigers, specialise in suicide attacks against military targets. This is not a clear-cut case of terrorism, even though the tactic is suicide bombing, since the target is not civilians. The suicide bomber is in this case more akin to a precision guided weapon. Yet the suicide bomber is not identifiable, which undermines his status as a soldier.

Several objections can detract from the ideal type. For example, historically the uniform was invented in the late 18th century, when the physical control of vast armies in linear and regularised manoeuvres necessitated a degree of precision in identifying who belonged to what army, which would be impossible without uniform. However, the form of warfare involved civilians to a very small degree compared to today, and engagements were transparent, sometimes to the point of being agreed beforehand. Nonetheless, today the identification through uniform is a legally sanctioned indication of who is a legitimate combatant. The use of uniforms is one of several possible manifestations of a longstanding practice in warfare; to state your intentions on the battlefield. In the past, stating intentions have been done in many ways, such as posture, which was an important feature of fighting in the *Iliad*. The warriors there did not sport uniforms so much as fighting gear, but the posture and bragging before individual duels served not only to explicate who was fighting, but to put the entire genealogy of the warrior's kin at stake, thus reinforcing group belonging.

In non-state situations, like insurgencies, the government or 'forces of order' as Van Creveld calls them, are typically militarily superior.¹⁸ Asymmetric tactics thus become not a choice but a necessity for insurgents. Unfortunately, this often leads to inhuman tactics. As a Blackwater contractor complained after a September 16, 2007 controversial shooting in Baghdad, which left 17 Iraqis dead: "How long does it take for a dead terrorist to become a dead civilian? As long as it takes to remove an AK-47 from the body."¹⁹ The contractor has a point, but his own legal status as combatant is not very clear either, even though he is sub-contracted by the U.S. government.²⁰

¹⁸ Martin L. Van Creveld, *The changing face of war : lessons of combat, from the Marne to Iraq* (New York: Presidio Press, 2006), 224.

¹⁹ Paul von Zielbauer and James Glanz, 'Under Siege, Blackwater Takes On Air of Bunker', *New York Times*, October 25 2007.

²⁰ The Blackwater mission in question was in protection of a U.S. State Department convoy.

The problem is that an attacker who lives among civilians, hides among civilians and claims to be a civilian, only to suddenly attack from this favourable position, and thereafter immediately re-enter the status as a civilian, operates in an extremely dubious zone of legitimacy. One must not confuse this practice with skill, fieldcraft and deceit as tactical means in combat, such as in an ambush, for example, which is legally justified. However, it is not legal and just to use civilians as terrain. It is nonetheless an increasing trend.²¹ When civilians step out of the theoretically pacified zone and de-pacify it, the military establishment against which these civilians are fighting in more cases than not resort to retributive actions towards the civilians among whom the guerrilla, insurgent or terrorist is hiding.

One could argue that the use of uniforms is a Western bias, which (legally if not tactically) steers armed conflict towards set-piece battles where Western conventional superiority can be brought to bear. However, Western state military personnel also on occasion avoid using uniforms. Intelligence operators are typically the first to enter hostile zones, and they are not identified by uniform. They prepare the ground for SOF, who themselves on occasion work out of uniform. In terms of the SOF they are clearly soldiers in all respects except lacking uniform on occasion, whereas the intelligence operators are conventionally identified as something else than soldiers. This is to a large degree a legal question, including whether a person can evoke rights of protection under the Geneva protocols if captured.

Motivated in part by the ethos of a public servant: The ideal type soldier is not necessarily *personally* motivated by public service. Instead, he or she is serving with the knowledge that as far as can be determined, violence is perpetrated in the name of a public cause. It is socially sanctioned; it is not a private act. Personal motivation can be extremely subjective, and it is rarely attributed mainly with reference to abstract notions of citizenship or duty to the collective group. However, this is not to say that this feature is not important. Instead, the public legitimacy of the military establishment is something the soldier is aware of, to the detriment of his or her motivation if it is *not* in place. Furthermore, if the 'home audience', who the soldier represents in combat, challenges it this has very strong adverse effects on the soldier's combat motivation. Thus the motivation has to do with the legitimacy of the use of violence, which the soldier needs to trust is taken care of by the political authorities he or she serves. Legitimacy under

²¹ Philip Bobbitt, *Terror and consent : the wars for the twenty-first century* (London: Penguin, 2008), chapter 3.

international law is not so much the question, as whether the cause represents the home community, and is thus notionally political.

A counterexample to this would be Slobodan Milosevic's mobilisation of criminals to do the dirty work of executions, rape and ethnic cleansing in the Balkan Wars of the 1990s. Arkan's Tigers, one of the more infamous of these groups, did not act in pursuit of the public good. Similarly, in October 2002 Saddam Hussein released about 100,000 convicted prisoners from jail, probably to create havoc for the invading forces after the combat phase.²² These people would be hard to distinguish from insurgents by externally identifiable criteria, but were (most likely) not politically motivated.

In terms of borderline cases, private military companies (PMCs) are illustrative. Frequently, these people come from a professional career in Western military establishments, very often with Special Forces backgrounds. Their professional abilities as well as the institutionalisation of their employer's company along the lines of military organisations may both be impeccable. Their loyalty to their country may be as well, and many PMCs only accept contracts that are either directly from the country they come from (e.g. UK or US), or is compatible with that country's foreign policy objectives.²³ The difference comes in the motivation superstructure that the institution they belong to espouses. As an institution, a private military company is geared towards profit, and does not institutionalise concerns about long-term effects the way state military establishments must do. For example in wars among the people the risk of alienating the local population is a greater concern for militaries than PMCs.

Use of arms reasonably attributable to a greater political cause: The allied cause in World War II perhaps best illustrates the ideal type soldier's fight for a greater political cause. Even though one can make arguments about victor's justice, the cause, as far as the allies were concerned, was one of almost Manichaean clarity. Liberal democracy was defended against an onslaught by Fascism and Nazism and needed to be repulsed. Similarly for Germans on the Eastern Front, the fight against Communism was for reasons of indoctrination and partially genuinely held beliefs of a just cause. The clashes between the behemoth armies in World War II were not necessarily only about moral transparency, but could be termed political simply by virtue of their ideological potency and their huge scope. If some engagements were not political, it was not for being sub-political (private or

²² Globalsecurity.org, 'News Briefing - Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III: Opening statement', in *Washington File* (Baghdad: U.S. Department of Defense, 2003).

²³ P W Singer, *Corporate Warriors, The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 119.

tribal), but extra-political or existential (for example the war of extermination on the Eastern Front).

A counterexample of what could be attributed as a political cause by a dispassionate observer is on the one hand genocide, which is not war, or on the other hand feuds, which are private. Coker refers to anthropologist Anton Blok's concept of 'social substitutability' to make an existential (aside from the political) case for distinguishing war from private violence.²⁴ When violence is socially substitutable, the violence is directed at members of the other group *as members*. In other words, the violence is not directed at them personally, but because they are members of that group, fighting in a collective cause for that group. One can take social substitutability too far as well, as Coker discusses at length, when membership of that group becomes an objective cause for extermination rather than war, as is the case in genocide.

A borderline case is Al Qaeda's strategic campaign against the West, which has demonstrated tangible goals like American withdrawal from Saudi Arabia, and Spanish withdrawal from Iraq. Nonetheless, conceding that their campaign has strategic elements does not detract from their status as terrorists, or from the fact that their ultimate goal is utopian.

In conclusion, the definition of a soldier is a composition of different criteria, where more than one ought to be in place. As the previous analysis shows, the term has subjective dimensions relating to the normative and legal baggage of distinguishing between soldiers and other combatants. For this reason, we must interrogate the term beyond what the Oxford English Dictionary does. Conversely, it is equally important not to fall prey to relativism and leave the term to personal preference. The following definition of warriors builds substantially on that of a soldier.

Existing definitions of warrior

Before defining warriors it is necessary to address the use of the word 'warrior' found in some of the literature on strategy and war, to clarify how the following definition departs from these.

The Oxford English Dictionary traces the word 'warrior' back to 1297 ('Kniztes & oper worreours'), defined as someone "whose occupation is warfare; a fighting man, whether soldier, sailor, or (latterly) airman; in eulogistic sense, a valiant or an experienced

²⁴ Christopher Coker, *The warrior ethos : military culture and the War on Terror* (London: Routledge, 2007), 75-79.

man of war.”²⁵ Two components in this definition stand out: First, it designates a strong commitment to war - as the word itself does - and the conduct of warfare, where skill and experience is significant, but where valour can compensate both. Secondly, the definition claims a warrior can be a soldier as well. The OED definition is not sufficient to serve as a phenomenological definition of warriors or soldiers for further analysis because it is too vague and does not explain what the main tenets mean precisely. For example, what does it mean that a warrior is “a fighting man” or an “experienced man of war”? These tenets are retained in the definition following below, however they are further developed and refined. Additionally, it is necessary to address the balance between restraint and initiative inherent in any intuitive warrior concept most people carry with them. A warrior, or any experienced soldier, must contribute actively while at the same time have sufficient self-control not to turn into a berserker.

In International Relations a select few writers have confronted the phenomenon of warriors. One example is the American commentator and journalist Robert Kaplan in his *Warrior Politics*²⁶ which is not so much about warriors as it is about the ‘haves and have-nots’ and those fighting for the respective sides. Kaplan does not formulate his own concept of warriors, but quotes Ralph Peters, an ex-U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel turned commentator. Peters refers to warriors as “erratic primitives of shifting allegiance, habituated to violence, with no stake in civil order. Unlike soldiers, warriors do not play by our rules, do not respect treaties, and do not obey orders they do not like.”²⁷ In this essay and in a later essay, Peters expands these introductory remarks into a typology over the origins of warriors “drawn from five socio-psychological pools.”²⁸ The five pools are comprised of the following backgrounds;

1. Warriors who come from the underclass, losers who become ‘somebody’ through exercising violence. Most will quit, but some will have to be killed.
2. ‘Course-of-conflict-joiners’; young men who only sign up for a program of violence when other options are closed off. Although some may acquire a taste for killing and destruction, most of these ‘what-choice-did-I-have?’ fighters gladly attempt to reintegrate into a society upon which peace has been imposed.

²⁵ J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner, ‘Warrior’, in *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 935.

²⁶ Robert D. Kaplan, *Warrior politics : why leadership demands a pagan ethos* (New York: Random House, 2002).

²⁷ Ralph Peters, *Fighting for the future : will America triumph?* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 1999), 32.

²⁸Ralph Peters, ‘The New Warrior Class Revisited’, *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 13, no. 2 (2002): 18.

3. Opportunists, entrepreneurs of conflict, charismatic people asking ‘what’s-in-it-for-me?’ They can be cruel when winning, but rarely put up a fight when losing.
4. Hard core believers, either in a cause, religion, or an individual leader. They fight hard.
5. Mercenaries, people who fight primarily for personal profit.²⁹

There are many problems with Peters’ typology of warriors. The main one is why he chooses to call these people warriors, rather than just ‘fighters’. There is little to indicate they are warriors of the commonly used meaning,³⁰ since they are neither particularly good at, nor committed to fighting, nor do they evoke any kind of warrior ethos. Furthermore, Peters does not specify what makes the people from these five ‘socio-psychological pools’ fight, compared to their great many peers who do not fight, but come from the same demographic groups.

Peters’ former employer, the U.S. Army, has attempted to institutionalise a form of warrior ethos to influence how non-infantry soldiers behave in war zones.: “Soldiers who live Warrior Ethos put the mission first, refuse to accept defeat, never quit and never leave behind a fallen comrade. They have absolute faith in themselves and their team. They are trained and equipped to engage and destroy the enemies of the United States in close combat.”³¹ However, the US Army’s Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) approaches Peters’ level of sweeping generalisation because it defines any soldier as a warrior first. TRADOC’s conception of a warrior is thus rather more a statement of aspiration than fact. Although not stated explicitly, TRADOC’s definition suggests the warrior component is a kind of raw material, which can be streamlined and incorporated into soldiers’ commitment to military values. At the heart of such a view is the idea that anyone can be trained to become a warrior, one is not born a warrior.

Shannon French, who teaches military ethics at the U.S. Naval Academy, provides a contrasting and more academic approach to what constitutes warriors. The primary weakness with French’s argument is her concept of the warrior. She does not define it, but

²⁹ Ibid.: 18-19.

³⁰ As reflected in the OED definition above.

³¹ Joshua J. LaMotte, *The Warrior Ethos and Basic Combat Training* (2004 [cited June 09 2008]); available from http://www.quartermaster.army.mil/OQMG/Professional_Bulletin/2004/Spring04/The_warrior_Ethos_and_Basic_Combat_Training.htm

seems simply to equate warriors with American service members.³² Despite different subcultures – and thus different warrior codes –, “they are all American warriors, sworn to uphold and defend the values of the Constitution.”³³ In this reading, all American soldiers become warriors because it is necessary for them to have a code. She concludes warriors need a code to ensure restraint in war, which in turn safe keeps the warrior’s mental health. Warriors “respect the values of the society in which they were raised and which they were prepared to die to protect. Therefore it is important for them to conduct themselves in such a way that they will be honoured and esteemed by their communities, not reviled and rejected by them.”³⁴ French’s arguments, in terms of restraint, are sound, but like the warrior ethos propagated by TRADOC, it comes out rather more as an aspiration than an lived ethos. Another critique against her warrior conception is that she does not address the active side of the warrior ethos, which is to say aggression, commitment, skill and courage; qualities that are crucial for the instrumental nature of the warrior’s job; to succeed in combat. As John Kiszely puts it: “To be capable of warfighting, an army needs to have as its characteristic cultural spirit, or ethos, one which is warfighting-oriented, and its soldiers need to have a self-perception as warriors. Lose the warrior ethos and you lose the fighting power.”³⁵

Christopher Coker’s work on warriors is the most theoretically sophisticated available.³⁶ Coker’s approach is very wide ranging, informed by history, literature and philosophy, and for that reason is influential throughout this thesis. His conceptual prism of the concepts *agency*, *subjectivity* and *intersubjectivity* is particularly useful, and these concepts together amount to the existential lifeworld of warriors. They structure the historical treatment of six ideal type warriors from Homer to Special Forces in chapters five and six. The approach here departs from Coker’s in pursuing a more systematic definition of warriors, which in turn informs the argument throughout the thesis.

The OED definition raises the most central tenets of a tentative definition of warriors, but it is insufficiently fleshed out and too subjective to stand on its own. Ralph

³² Soldiers in this context is understood as someone serving in the military. In the United States the term soldier typically refers to members of the US Army, while men in the Marines are Marines, in the Air Force they are Airmen and in the Navy they are either Naval Aviators or Seamen. Internationally however, soldier is the term commonly used for anyone who is a member of a state-based military establishment, whatever their trade is inside this establishment.

³³ Shannon French, *The code of the warrior* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield 2003), 15.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁵ John Kiszely, 'Learning about Counter-Insurgency', *RUSI Journal* December (2006): 19.

³⁶ Christopher Coker, *The future of war : the re-enchantment of war in the 21st century* (Oxford: Blackwell 2004), Christopher Coker, *Waging war without warriors? : the changing culture of military conflict* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Pub., 2002), Coker, *Warrior Ethos*.

Peters' definition resonates with a particular perspective on warriors, where they are identified as someone less disciplined and less admirable than soldiers, who are held to be more disciplined and restrained. However, such a view on warriors does not resonate with the self-control and holistic approach to war which the "experienced man of war" from the OED definition emphasizes, which also features in French and Coker's work, and which resonates with intuitive associations to the Samurai for example. French, however, focuses exclusively on restraint, which presupposes that initiative and combat performance come to soldiers by default, which they do not. This initiative separates warriors from bystanders in combat.³⁷ Coker's concept of the warrior is the strongest and resonates throughout the thesis, but it needs clearer definition to serve as a starting point. The following is thus an idiosyncratic amalgam of sustainable tenets of existing warrior definitions and interpretations, which can serve as a starting point for more precise debate about what precisely a warrior is, and will be a foundation for the further thesis.

Warrior definition

The preceding discussion of existing definitions of warriors and soldiers leads to a definition of a warrior as *a soldier with a personal and existential commitment to experience and master warfare, who is willing and able both to kill and to sacrifice his life in combat.*

Soldier

There is no commonly accepted definition of war, but most commentators refer to it as organised collective violence, sometimes specified as having a political purpose, yet acknowledging that it has cultural, existential and metaphysical dimensions.³⁸ To say that it is organised does not necessarily imply the Clausewitzian setup where states are the principal actors, and warfare is an instrument of their policy. Nonetheless, his framework remains the most commonly agreed conception of war as an institution of international society.³⁹ It should be borne in mind that the extraordinary successes of Western ways of organising violence strongly inform the Clausewitzian framework. To say that a warrior is a soldier harbours a number of implications, most of which were addressed above. With respect to warriors, this question is important because the soldier status is the institutional

³⁷ Rune Henriksen, 'Warriors in combat - what makes people actively fight in combat?' *Journal of Strategic Studies* 30, no. 20 (2007).

³⁸ Coker, *Future of War*, 6, Azar Gat, *War in human civilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), chapter 17, Gray, *Another Bloody Century*, 37, Colin S. Gray, *Modern strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), chapter 1,2.

³⁹ Hedley Bull, *The anarchical society : a study of order in world politics*, 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), chapter 8.

superstructure that distinguishes warriors from criminals, lunatics, terrorists, freedom fighters, warlords, insurgents and other categories of fighting men and women. This is, of course, a normative question as well as a political one.

To say that any warrior needs to be a soldier is to distinguish warriors from unlawful combatants and private actors. His political community sanctions a soldier to fight. It is necessary, but not sufficient for a warrior to be a soldier. A warrior is necessarily a soldier first, but very few soldiers are warriors. In addition, to say that a soldier is a warrior is to distinguish him from mercenaries, because the soldier is ultimately serving a – usually political – cause. If one asks soldiers whether they are motivated to sign up primarily by a cause, that is usually not the case. Sergeant Colbert of 1st Recon Battalion, USMC, testifies to embedded reporter Evan Wright a typical attitude on the eve of the Iraq 2003 war:

As a professional warrior, politics and ideology don't really enter into his thoughts about why he is here in the desert, waiting to invade a country. "I'm not so idealistic that I subscribe to good versus evil. We haven't had a war like that since World War II. Why are we here now? I guess it's to remove this guy from power. I'm not opposed to it, and I wasn't going to miss it." For him it is a grand personal challenge. "We're going into the great unknown," he says. "Scary, isn't it?" he adds, smiling brightly. "I can't wait."⁴⁰

However, following unambiguous attacks like Pearl Harbour and 9/11, people do sign up to take revenge and/or defend their country. The professional football player Pat Tillman's giving up his multi-million dollar contract to join the U.S. Army Rangers after September 11 is a case in point.⁴¹ Usually, even if the cause does not figure as a primary reason to sign up, it is present as a subtext, as Samuel Hynes explains with reference to World War II.⁴²

Personal commitment

The commitment to war must be personal. Being a warrior is an individual aspiration, certainly within the West, whether that is expressed in an explicitly formulated ethos by a unit or by virtue of coming from a particular background, for example in having been raised to be a warrior. This commitment does not necessarily have to be voluntary at the outset. It can arise *a posteriori* after having experienced combat as a drafted soldier.

⁴⁰ Evan Wright, *Generation kill* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2004), 31.

⁴¹ Tillman was killed by friendly fire in Afghanistan: Joe Garofoli, 'Tillman wants accountability in son's death', *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 16 2008.

⁴² Samuel Lynn Hynes, *The soldiers' tale : bearing witness to modern war* (London: Pimlico, 1998), 112.

The Vietnam Veteran Dave Nelson is a good example of someone who was raised into being a warrior from an early age. His father, a Ranger who was in charge of the 'Expert Jungle Trainer's School' in Panama when Dave was 12, allowed his son to socialise with the troops, live alone, survive in the jungle, and parachute from age 13:

I was really into the military concept. I was into parades and the pride and the honour and the glory that these guys shared (...) there was a lot of pride and camaraderie. I got to ride in tanks and shoot guns. I got to ride on helicopters and planes. My father exposed me to everything about being a warrior. He taught me to shoot when I was six (...) I could live alone in the woods at ten. He taught me to survive on my own.⁴³

Admittedly, Nelson is a rare case of someone explicitly raised as a warrior, but in certain parts of the United States, it is very common for young men to have fathers and grandfathers with military and even combat experience. Moreover, one can imagine that some of these fathers and grandfathers came to master war in North Africa, Europe or the Pacific without necessarily volunteering first.

Existential commitment

The essential difference between a soldier and a warrior is an existential commitment to war and combat. Being a warrior cannot be reduced to instrumental considerations, because of a number of in-exhaustive reasons such as:

- The experience of combat incurs extraordinary personal suffering and deprivation, such as hunger, cold, disease, wounds, lack of sleep, etc. It also often leads to serious trauma, which is a fact many soldiers now are fully aware of in advance, yet seem to accept.
- The status accorded to warriors, as special people, which is intermixed with a combination of suspicion and admiration from the general public.
- Sacrificing one's life is a gift, not a duty, and the willingness to consistently pursue life-threatening situations is antithetic to instrumental gains.

To say that a commitment is existential is to define it as irreducible to biological drives or instrumental calculations of benefit to the individual.⁴⁴ Arguably, soldiers and warriors can experience these existential factors relatively similarly; it is the order of magnitude in the willingness to commit to such a lifeworld that distinguishes the two.

⁴³ J. T. Hansen, A. Susan Owen and Michael Patrick Madden, *Parallels : the soldier's knowledge and the oral history of contemporary warfare* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1992), 16.

⁴⁴ Existential psychologists hold that if we try to understand man as a bundle of discrete drives or a composite of reflex patterns, we may end up with brilliant generalisations but we have lost the *man* to whom these things happen. 'Existential psychology', in *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences vol 13*, ed. David I. Sills (London: MacMillan, 1968), 76.

Mastering war

Warriors excel in the battlefield because of superior skills combined with the necessary ruthlessness and decisiveness to translate these skills into practice. This excellence is often a result of professionalism in preparation and training, but also a result of on-the-job-training acquired in combat. On the one hand, combat experience clearly is the essence of a warrior's lifeworld, but on the other hand it is also possible to conceive of warriors as being warriors prior to combat, for example Nelson in his youth. The foundation and ultimate test, however, remains combat performance.

Among the skills required in combat, some are universal: situational awareness, keeping calm under pressure, and capability at handling weapons of war, and qualities like willpower and determination, which it takes to be able to master any art thoroughly. However, the special determination required of warriors is that of performing excellently while simultaneously being under a great variety of pressures, specifically being surrounded by death and destruction, suffering deprivation and staying operational in hopeless climatic and terrain conditions. Nelson exemplifies the kind of self-discipline it took to master the difficult conditions in Vietnam sufficiently well to challenge the enemy in his own backyard:

We took very little food. If you know what you're doing you really get into it, you can do it. We used to eat their food. I'd find caches of rice. I used to live off small birds and snakes. If you're out there a period of time, you develop an odour which is undetectable. You can see someone drawing a cigarette for about a mile. Plus – human beings stink. You can smell another human being. You could smell Americans because of the garbage they ate – especially C-rations.⁴⁵

One other veteran validates Nelson's extreme professionalism; he describes the frustration of always feeling the enemy knew where they were, without having the similar edge themselves: "We rarely found Charlie. He could smell us. Some of us felt the C-rations we had to eat caused our body odour to be easy to detect. He *always* hit us when we least expected it."⁴⁶

Some qualities vary with the character of war, such as the particulars of the tactics and weapons used. In Homeric times, mastery of war required physical skills in hand-to-hand combat with spears and swords, where hacking and thrusting was very hard labour. In

⁴⁵ Hansen, Owen and Madden, *Parallels*, 22.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

later times, firearms have taken over. For Franklin Miller the opportunity to handle firearms was definitely a positive experience:

But when I got to ‘Nam and they put a gun in my hand – Whoa! It was like a religious experience. I was born again.

I want to make it clear that I never threatened anybody with a gun. Not one time. But I loved it because a gun made you everybody’s equal... Body size and muscle were no longer factors. So I made it my business to become an expert with weapons... So I got very, very good with weapons. All weapons. When you’re good... you send out vibes unintentionally to people around you. You’re a bad motherfucker. You know it and they know it.⁴⁷

Founding member of the most elite unit in today’s American military – U.S. Army Special Forces Operational Detachment–Delta, popularly known as ‘Delta Force’ – Command Sergeant Major Eric Haney, concurs about the primacy of shooting skills: “But the mastery of this skill is ground zero for the Delta Force operator. Without it, he would be some other type of being. Because when it gets right down to it, a Delta operator is an extremely skilled killer.⁴⁸ For Haney and his colleagues shooting was part talent, but mostly hard work, drill:

We did it over and over and over. Soon the fun went out of it, and it became work. And about that time, it became painful. The .45 is a powerful pistol with sharp recoil, and the tight grip we used meant we absorbed the full force of the recoil in our hands and arms.

Soon, like everyone else, I had a large, painful blister in the web of my thumb from the pounding of the gun in my hand... After a while the blister turned into a big callus that stayed on my hand for the next eight years. The surest way to identify a Delta Force Assault Team member is by that telltale callus on his firing hand. They all have one.⁴⁹

This repetition is testimony to the commitment to professionalism in Delta Force, where the most challenging scenario would involve shooting free hostages in tight dark situations like inside buildings, aircraft and vehicles. “We were training to rescue hostages, and if we couldn’t keep from hitting them in a fight, we weren’t doing our job. If we were no better

⁴⁷ Franklin D. Miller, *Reflections of a Warrior* (New York: Pocket Books, 1991), 112.

⁴⁸ Eric L. Haney, *Inside Delta Force: The Real Story of America’s Elite Military Unit* (London: Corgi, 2002), 134.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 139-40.

than that, then a squad of infantry could do the job. They could just go in and kill everybody.”⁵⁰

Experiencing war

Warriors have a yearning to be tried in battle. A curiosity as to this ultimate test of manhood and prowess is combined with a desire to display courage rather than cowardice, and critically; not shying away from wherever the fighting is hardest. In most contemporary militaries, that involves some degree of voluntarism. The fast track to combat is often volunteering in some kind of elite or Special Forces unit. Mark Bowden describes the excitement among the U.S. Army Rangers deploying to Somalia with Task Force Ranger:

[The Rangers] couldn't wait to go to war. They were an all-star football team that had endured bruising, exhausting, dangerous practice sessions twelve hours a day, seven days a week – for *years* – without ever getting to play a game. They yearned for battle... It was THE test, the only one that counted.

Sergeant Mike Goodale had tried to explain this to his mother one time, on leave in Illinois. His mom was a nurse, incredulous at his bravado.

“Why would anybody *want* to go to war?” she asked...

“You want to find out if you can really do the job,” he explained.⁵¹

His life

The gender aspect is crucial to any study of warriors, since they are virtually always men. There are two relevant dimensions to this question in this context: First, to which extent have there been female warriors in history and have they performed well in combat? Second, are women fit to be warriors today?

Surveying the history of women warriors, military historian Martin van Creveld finds that throughout history, women have been instigators, and victims of war, and they have been a cause over which men have fought. However although there are some individual examples⁵², very few women have participated in what Clausewitz calls ‘the cash payment of war’.⁵³ The 18th and 19th century kingdom of Dahomey in West Africa (present day Benin) is an exception. Dahomey King Agadja had a large standing army including

⁵⁰ Ibid., 141.

⁵¹ Bowden, *Black Hawk Down*, 8-10.

⁵² Notable early examples are those mentioned in the anonymous Roman tract entitled *Women Intelligent and courageous in warfare*, of these possibly five were historical figures. See Martin L. Van Creveld, *Men, women, and war* (London: Cassell & Co., 2001), 68-70.

⁵³ Ibid., 13.

some all-female units. This was a special situation where the whole society was militarised.⁵⁴

In our recent history's age of total war, women have participated rather more. Particularly, they have fought in irregular resistance movements such as in Yugoslavia and Italy in World War II, more than as regular combatants, although the latter has also been the case. In the Western and German militaries, women were not combatants, but in the Red Army, they constituted 2-3 per cent. Among these, the vast majority were engaged in support roles like cooking, nurses and food preparation. Some women did serve as pilots and initially filled three all-female air regiments (two bomber and one fighter).⁵⁵ A significant number of fighter pilots were women, 12 percent at the war's end, including two aces credited with a dozen kills each.⁵⁶ Relatively speaking a large number of Soviet women went through sniper school, but there is little evidence as to whether the majority actually served in combat in the same way that women conscripts in Israel traditionally have had weapons training, though not served in combat.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, there are reports of one sniper killing an entire company of Germans over 25 days.⁵⁸ Conversely, the expert German *Jaeger* sniper Sepp Allerberger engaged a company of women snipers in combat in April 1944, and accounted for 18 of them.⁵⁹ Van Creveld calculates the number of Soviet women to have received weapons training to be about 0.7 per cent of the uniformed Red Army, and he suggests there was at least one line regiment composed of women.⁶⁰

The historical record indicates that there have not been many women warriors, partially because only societies at a state of total war tend to mobilize them. When mobilised most women serve in support positions, some in irregular units, and a few participate in combat, proving themselves in a few exceptional cases to be capable warriors.

Another feature of this issue is whether women are fit to fight in today's frontlines. Are they marginalised out of combat units for moral and normative reasons, or is this related primarily to physical capabilities? According to some research, the latter is

⁵⁴ Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender shapes the war system and vice versa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 60-61.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 66, Van Creveld, *Men, women, and war*, 140-44.

⁵⁶ Goldstein, *War and Gender*, 68-69.

⁵⁷ Van Creveld, *Men, women, and war*, 141.

⁵⁸ Goldstein, *War and Gender*, 69. Goldstein also cites a report about a female Soviet sniper being decorated for killing over 300 Germans. Presumably it is Ludmilla Pavlichenko who was credited with killing 309 Germans, although the accuracy of that number is disputed.

⁵⁹ Shooting from treetops (thus failing to find cover or escape route) the women demonstrated marksmanship, but lacking elementary fieldcraft, which suggests limited combat experience. Sepp Allerberger and Geoffrey Brooks, *Sniper on the Eastern Front: the memoirs of Sepp Allerberger, Knight's Cross* (Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Military, 2005), 70-71.

⁶⁰ Van Creveld, *Men, women, and war*, 142.

substantially to blame both when it comes to physical strength and proneness to injury. Research conducted by the U.S. Army over the last few years shows average female US Army recruits have 55 per cent of the upper body and 72 per cent of lower body strength of the average male. Overall, one study found that only the upper 5 per cent of women are as strong as the median male.⁶¹ Similar findings apply when it comes to running medium and long distances.⁶² In addition, men respond faster to hard exercise because they have relatively more muscle mass. Another important factor that has to do with toughness in the field is proneness to injury. Among the Soviet women who fought during World War II, many suffered severe health problems. Crevelde quotes one woman: “we were all sick... all of us are still [c. 1980] sick... the female body is not built for such hardships... the war not only robbed us of our youth, it has also kept many of us from having children.”⁶³ More scientific contemporary findings back up the anecdotal evidence from World War II: “At West Point during the early 1980s, women suffered ten times as many stress fractures as did men... injury also caused women to sustain five times as many days of limited duty as men... In Canada, only 1 per cent of women who entered the standard infantryman’s training graduated.”⁶⁴

Some would argue that physical fitness is not as important in the military today, with mobile and airmobile infantry and cavalry and substantial use of airpower. There are two counter-arguments to this. First, the use of forced marches to test overall toughness and willpower is the most reliable indicator of combat performance hitherto invented, as the selection procedures for Special Forces indicates. Secondly, the Afghanistan theatre has proven extremely physically challenging, with Norwegian Special Forces sometimes carrying 180-pound backpacks in 60 degrees centigrade conditions.⁶⁵ Veteran from Korea and the most highly decorated officer in Vietnam, David Hackworth’s insight still rings true on this note:

I do know from eight years of ground combat that few women could endure its savagery for long... Ground war is not dead. The line doggies will still engage the enemy eyeball to eyeball, belly to belly. And in that setting women are disadvantaged.

⁶¹ Goldstein, *War and Gender*, 161-62, Van Crevelde, *Men, women, and war*, 152-3.

⁶² Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces’, *Report to the President*, p. C-64 Quoted in Van Crevelde, *Men, women, and war*, 153.

⁶³ Svetlana Aleksijewitch, *Der Krieg hat kein weibliches Gesicht* (Hamburg: Galgenberg, 1989), 165. quoted in Van Crevelde, *Men, women, and war*, 142.

⁶⁴ Van Crevelde, *Men, women, and war*, 194. Original italics

⁶⁵ Jahn Rønne, *En flåk av spesialstyrkene* (Forsvarsnett - official Norwegian Defence Portal, 2002 [cited June 13 2008]); available from <http://www.mil.no/start/article.jhtml?articleID=21667>.

Brawn will count for more than computer smarts for a while yet. A 110-pound woman with the heart of a lion can't pack out a wounded 200-pound comrade.⁶⁶

Despite this, Joshua Goldstein is entirely right in reminding us that if winning wars came down to physical strength alone, then the American army in Vietnam would have easily been victorious, much like any Western force engaged in counter-insurgencies in the developing world. The point is one of strategic context. Western militaries fight far from home and in an expeditionary fashion, most often in campaigns where the enemy does not have to win, only avoid losing. With limited budgets, political will and manpower, Western militaries are forced to make sure every individual who is willing to fight is not just an able individual, but a very capable one. This is in part the reason for the relative doctrinal surge of SOF in postmodern militaries. That said, not all roles are infantry roles, and women serve with distinction as everything from intelligence operators to fighter pilots, so there is little doubt that Western women can be and are warriors, but they remain few in numbers. Thus, the following thesis focuses almost exclusively on men.

Willing and able to kill

The willingness and ability to kill in combination with the same willingness to sacrifice life in combat is the *ultimo ratio* of the warrior. Aggressiveness is the benefit a warrior offers over a soldier in offensive situations. Ruthlessness underwrites killing, but that is not to say wanton killing. For Nelson, precision and restraint in killing was imperative:

I could not tolerate the abuse of civilians – especially not children and women. It was a very personal thing with me... it went against everything I had been taught. That made my decision to be a sniper. Killing clean shows respect for the enemy, but to kill civilians or to lose control of your self and your concepts in life in combat is wrong... that is respect for your enemy... that's the concept behind the warrior. Kill cleanly, kill quickly, kill efficiently, without malice or brutality.⁶⁷

On the other hand, while restraint in killing is critical, it is equally important to be able to kill, and that cannot be taken for granted even in Special Forces units, as Miller reminds us:

⁶⁶ David Hackworth, Newsweek, August 5, 1991. Quoted in Goldstein, *War and Gender*, 159.

⁶⁷ Hansen, Owen and Madden, *Parallels*, 21.

Contrary to popular belief, not all Special Forces soldiers were “bad to the bone”... It was during my time with RT⁶⁸ Vermont I found out that not all Special Forces troops were shooters. I ran across many really good, squared-away individuals who just weren’t killers. These guys would go out on missions and gather outstanding intelligence, but the fact that they couldn’t bring themselves to shoot the enemy caused them grief. It wore on them... to the point where they didn’t want to go out anymore. They’d take any job in the camp that prevented them from going out again.⁶⁹

The same logic applies to snipers, it is a job, which requires a special constitution as it is difficult to pull the trigger but it can also be difficult to stop firing, which leads to risks of discovery.⁷⁰

Willing to risk sacrificing life

The aggression necessary to kill counter-balances the willingness to give one’s life for comrades or for the mission, balancing activating and initiating qualities with restraining ones. It is harder to define the ultimate willingness to sacrifice life – let alone the ability – because it can only be proven by acts, which almost certainly lead to death. Warriors want to survive, not to die, yet to be willing and able to risk life in combat is an essential balance to the willingness to kill. If killing is not in pursuit of a higher cause and combined with at least a miniscule risk of death; then killing is more appropriately called murder and slaughter, respectively. This idea has to be considered in the greater context of war, rather than in detailed situations of combat. In combat a successful ambush may actually be reminiscent of slaughter, but the context of war, wherein there is risk, makes it properly referred to as combat rather than slaughter. Reflecting on an (ultimately climactic) upcoming forward air control mission atop Takur Ghar Mountain in Shah-i-Kot valley during Operation Anaconda, U.S. Navy SEAL “Slab” “figured the chances of running into an enemy were probably “100 percent.” But they would be in “onesies and twosies or a small patrol of four guys.” He weighed the risks, and they seemed reasonable. Besides, he thought at the time, this is not how we work, reducing risk to zero – otherwise, send accountants up there.”⁷¹

⁶⁸ Recon[naissance] Team. These teams ran cross-border reconnaissance missions into Laos and Cambodia for MACV/SOG, often with complete deniability from the U.S. government, which added to the risk, and status.

⁶⁹ Miller, *Reflections of a Warrior*, 89.

⁷⁰ Allerberger and Brooks, *Sniper on the Eastern Front*, 14, David H. Hackworth, *About face* (London: Guild Publishing, 1990), 680, Haney, *Inside Delta Force*, 169.

⁷¹ Malcolm MacPherson, *Robert's Ridge* (London: Bantam Books, 2005), 4. Original italics

Restraint in this context is an extremely important quality, which operates at several levels at the same time. The most basic level is that of the individual itself. An ideal type warrior exhibits such restraint that the use of violence is not excessive or uncontrolled. This is not only a normative aspiration, but also an observable fact in many warriors.⁷² Unfortunately, the precise source of the holistic balance between aggression and restraint in not only theoretical ideal type warriors, but also practicing human beings, is a bit of a mystery. The same mystery applies to the impossibility of predicting who will perform well in combat, and who will either succumb to the pressure, or lose control and go berserk.⁷³ One reason why theoretical explanations lose traction when approaching certain aspects of combat is that combat has what Roger Spiller calls a hidden side, which is the providence of the participants only, and which even for them remains implacable and virtually impossible to put into words.⁷⁴ Some of this hidden side is referred to as the combat sublime in chapter four.

Restraint also operates at the unit level and at the social level. At the unit level, it materialises as professionalism, which is necessary to trump hot tempers, danger and the temptations of overwhelming force, to channel military force into long-term results. Norwegian forces holding their fire while having their camp in Meymaneh Afghanistan attacked and almost overrun by a large group of armed demonstrators is one example. The British in Northern Ireland prioritising de-escalating measures over eliminating IRA members is another.⁷⁵ Finally, at the social level the actions of warriors are intrinsically bound to their societies, because it is on behalf of society they fight. Society's sanction is what morally and socially validates the use of violence. If society does not sanction the individual's violence it is defined as personal and private, and society must and will reject the fighter, among other things because other societies will misunderstand the use of violence to be a social act, and this brings shame and danger upon the society of the wayward fighter. In one example, the Canadian government disbanded their Parachute Regiment in 1995 to demonstrate distance to Regiment members' mortal abuse of a Somali child in 1993.⁷⁶

⁷² See for example "the natural soldier" p. 13, Larry Thome p. 195, and Mad Mark p. 214

⁷³ Henriksen, 'Warriors in combat - what makes people actively fight in combat?'

⁷⁴ Roger J. Spiller, *An instinct for war: scenes from the battlefields of history* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005).

⁷⁵ Tor Arne Andreassen, 'De norske skuddene i Afghanistan', *Aftenposten*, 10.06.2006, Van Creveld, *The Changing Face of War*, 233.

⁷⁶ David Bercuson, *Significant Incident: Canada's Army, the Airborne, and the Murder in Somalia* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1996).

Methodology and plan of thesis

The words in the research question largely structure this thesis. The methodology is interdisciplinary, focusing on both the macro perspective (the West) and the micro perspective (individual experiences).

This thesis generally follows a social science approach, which primarily means that the character and behaviour of warriors are considered social phenomena, which should be studied using commensurate concepts and methods, rather than psychological approaches for example. The research question ‘Does the West Still Need Warriors’ implies an engagement with the wider international society (‘the West’) outside the military realm as well as with instrumentality (‘need’) and history (‘still’), which in each case requires engagement with different literatures.

In addition to these perspectives, the distinction between the existential and the instrumental dimensions of warriors is crucial. While the War Studies literature frequently discusses instrumental utility, the existential features tend to be the subject of literature and philosophy, and first-person participant accounts. The latter, as Samuel Hynes tells us, are stories. Stories are not objectively verifiable as true. Instead, what is important is that they offer the perspectivism inherent in individual experiences, and makes them meaningful. The issue of meaning is an existential property, which is better illustrated by stories, and myth, such as Homer’s work, rather than by rigorous social science methodology. In this there are substantial concessions to the construction of meaning done by ‘the man who was there,’ as Hynes puts it.⁷⁷ Nonetheless, the individual experience perspective will be combined with social scientific generalizations to provide a rigorous analysis of the relationship between warriors and their social context, to ultimately substantiate the argument in the conclusion.

More specifically, the chapters will be using the following methodologies: Chapters One, Three and Four use War Studies, Social Science (sociology, psychology and political science) and personal accounts to define the nature and character of warriors, war, and combat. The focus on warriors is following from the research question in a thesis such as this, whereas the study of war and combat are necessary to analyse the instrumental infrastructure (war) and existential lifeworlds (combat) that use and shape warriors. Chapters Three and Four analyse the difference between war and combat. It is argued that the properties of combat are closely related to what makes warriors who they are, because

⁷⁷ Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale*, chapter 2.

combat is a qualitatively different experience from anything else. Combat is nonetheless enveloped by war, and is influenced by the increasingly instrumental way in which war is fought.

Chapter Two engages with the question of *who* and *what* the West is. The first part of the chapter develops a social theory of the West. This leads to an articulation of three social imaginaries in the second part. Social imaginaries are Charles Taylor's concept for ways of imagining the social realm, using social theory in combination with political theory. These three social imaginaries in turn generate three security paradigms. The identification of these paradigms in part three relies on security studies literature. The chapter thus details three ways of imagining the West, and the consequential expectations and ambitions for security.

Chapters Five and Six are historical chapters that they rely on literature and philosophy. These two chapters offer examples of six eclectic Weberian style ideal type warriors and relate to the 'still' feature of the research question. These chapters demonstrate that the West has always had and needed warriors in the past. The six ideal type warriors are: the Homeric heroes, Plato's guardians, the Medieval knights, stormtroops, citizen warriors, and special operations forces. These types are not by any means exhaustive of the Western experience. Rather, relatively few are chosen to make it possible to engage with them in some depth. As mentioned earlier, Coker's conceptual prism *agency*, *subjectivity* and *intersubjectivity* is used to stratify their existential lifeworld.

Chapter Seven pulls the definition of warriors, the social imaginaries and security paradigms, the context of war and combat, together with the ideal type warriors, to address the contemporary existential and instrumental need for warriors. It analyses the existential need for warriors from the international to the domestic levels and down to the micro level of the warriors themselves, and ends with a consideration of dysfunctions and the consequences of what happens when the warrior refuses to fight. Chapter six on modern ideal types discusses the instrumental need for warriors at the micro level, but the instrumental need for warriors at the macro level is analysed in relation to the security paradigms in chapter two. A contemporary mini-case of warriors in counter-terrorism follows. The methodology in this chapter is reflective of the wide range of approaches throughout the thesis.

Finally, it is argued that we still need warriors, and if anything, we have to few of them.

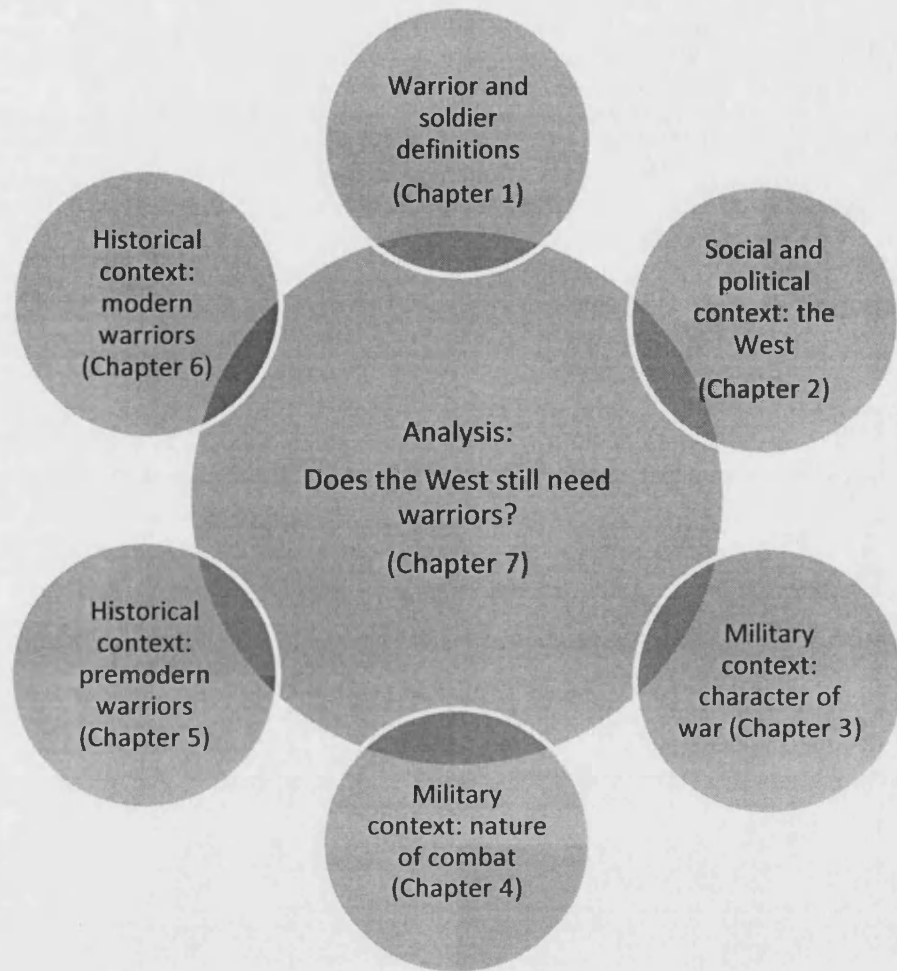


Figure 1: Plan of thesis

CHAPTER 2: WHO IS THE WEST, AND WHAT DOES THE WEST WANT?

Introduction

This chapter explores the issue of what the West is. The characteristics of Western civilization have ramifications for how the West conceives security and the means used to achieve it. Charles Taylor's concept of 'social imaginaries' is a useful way to demonstrate a link between the character of the West and different conceptions of security. As Taylor puts it: "In order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going."⁷⁸ The first section of this chapter identifies the most central vectors of a social theory of the West; rationalization, specialization and secularization, with the attendant effects and reactions that these processes have ignited.

Three social imaginaries in particular represent deeply entrenched worldviews of humanity in general and the West in particular. Most Westerners pledge allegiance to either of these semi-consciously, and these allegiances have security implications. For this reason, part three details security paradigms that are commensurate with the social imaginaries analysed in part two. These security paradigms outline a broad political context for the use of warriors discussed in chapter seven.

What is 'the West'?

The concept of the West is academically elusive, yet of obvious practical value and cultural resonance. As the Oxford English Dictionary shows, the word 'west' is as old as the English language, and from the 9th century indicated the direction of the horizon where the sun sets.⁷⁹ The notion of the West as a civilization with some coherence only arose in the 19th century in a self-conscious manner.⁸⁰ Historically, the concept of the West begins with Western Christendom following the breakup of the Roman Empire into Eastern and Western parts, where the Western part paid allegiance to Rome and the pope. A schism in 1054 saw the two churches falling out in mutual excommunication. In 1204, the Western

⁷⁸ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the self: the making of the modern identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989). quoted in Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and self-identity: self and society in the late modern age* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1991), 54.

⁷⁹ J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner, 'West', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 161.

⁸⁰ Alastair Bonnett, *The idea of the West* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 5,6.

crusaders sacked the seat of the Eastern Church, Constantinople. This reinforced suspicion and hostility.⁸¹

Today a coherent definition of the West is elusive. A couple of factors suffice to illustrate the difficulty. Are Australia and New Zealand by virtue of their unmistakable Western culture and heritage Western? Is Russia Western, who throughout the Cold War constituted 'The Enemy', yet throughout the 19th century was culturally and intellectual a part of Europe? Is established liberal democracy a major characteristic of the West – as Colin McInnes suggests⁸² – when many continental European countries have had very brief historical experience with this form of political organisation? Alistair Bonnett reaches a very reasonable conclusion when he argues:

People use 'the West' to articulate and structure their thoughts. It is a category, an intellectual resource that helps map out the big picture; that gives coherence and statue to what, otherwise, can appear eclectic and tendentious opinion. The fact that contradictory things are said about the West does not imply its redundancy but its extraordinary intellectual and political *utility*.⁸³

In the following section, the work of Agnes Heller, Stephen Toulmin, Max Weber and particularly Charles Taylor is used to devise a social theory of the West.

A Social Theory of Western Modernity

Agnes Heller highlights the role of ideas in the story of the West when she argues that Europe's autobiography begins with "the love of freedom" and culminates in the "grand narratives."⁸⁴ She sees freedom as a foundation, but one which grounds nothing. This paradox structures her theory of modernity. Europe's speciality is, in a sense, specialization, understood as more than just a division of labour, but as a proliferation of lifeworlds, which are both complimentary and competitive. Europe has no core, as Bonnett alluded to above, and any attempt to define an essence would be futile. Thus, Heller focuses instead on intangibles like 'dynamics,' 'constituents' and 'logics' of modernity. A similar approach characterises Toulmin, Weber and Taylor's views on Western modernity.

By synthesising these theorists, we can identify three vectors of modernity. They are *rationalization*, inspired by Weber; *specialization* inspired by Toulmin; and *secularization* inspired by Taylor. Each of these separately and together constitute three social

⁸¹ Ibid., 23.

⁸² McInnes, *Spectator-sport war* 3.

⁸³ Bonnett, *The idea of the West*, 6.

⁸⁴ Agnes Heller, *A Theory of Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1999), 12.

imaginaries; they in turn ground three major security paradigms. The West has always been a realm of self-questioning, critique, subversion and debate: in short a market place of ideas. Consequently, the three vectors have inspired counter-reactions. Western social history is for that reason characterised by pendulum swings between dominating vectors, accelerating effects and reactions that sometimes reinforce and sometimes temporarily reverse the original vector, and so on. Table 1 details these effects and reactions.

Table 1: Western vectors of modernity

Vector	Rationalization	Specialization	Secularization
Effect	Disenchantment	Disembedding	Disenchantment
Reaction/Reinforcement	Romanticism	Insecurity/ Individualism	Authenticity desire

Rationalization and disenchantment

In his interpretation of Max Weber, Raymond Aron argues the main phenomenon that characterises the modern age is that of ‘rationalization’. Rationalization is the process in which ever increasing aspects of society become subject to *zweckrational* thinking and behaviour, when the meaning of an action derives entirely from its utility. *Zweckrational*, or rational action in relation to a goal, is what is called ‘instrumental rationality’ today. This type of action is used by an engineer who wants to build a bridge, or a general who wants to win a battle. It is contrasted with Weber’s three other action types, which are *wertrational* (action based on values); *affective action* (action based on emotion); and *traditional action* (action based on customs and beliefs).⁸⁵

For Weber, rationalization in the modern world is encroaching upon other forms of action; it colonizes areas formerly dominated by value rationality and affective action. As Aron puts it; “Society as a whole tends towards *zweckrational* organization, and the philosophical, existential, human problem is to define that sector of society in which another type of action can and should exist.”⁸⁶ In a striking delivery to colleagues in Vienna in 1909, Weber warned against the proliferation and consequences of rationalization:

⁸⁵ Raymond Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought 2: Pareto, Weber, Durkheim*, trans. Richard Howard and Helen Weaver (Middlesex: Penguin, 1970), 186-87.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 188.

When a purely technical and faultless administration, a precise and objective solution of concrete problems is taken as the highest and only goal, then on this basis one can only say: away with everything but an official hierarchy which does these things as objectively, precisely, and “soullessly” as any machine.

Imagine the consequences of that comprehensive bureaucratization and rationalization which already to-day we see approaching. Already now, throughout private enterprise in wholesale manufacture, as well as in all other economic enterprises run on modern lines, *Reichenhaftigkeit*, rational calculation, is manifest at every stage. By it, the performance of each individual worker is mathematically measured, each man becomes a little cog in the machine and, aware of this, his one preoccupation is whether he can become a bigger cog...we are proceeding towards an evolution which resembles that system in every detail, except that it is built on other foundations, on technically more perfect, more rationalised, and therefore much more mechanized foundations... but what can we oppose to this machinery in order to keep a portion of mankind free from this parcelling-out of the soul, from this supreme mastery of the bureaucratic way of life.⁸⁷

Heller and Jon Elster argue Weber is primarily referring to institutions when he speaks about rationalization.⁸⁸ The proliferation of institutions is itself a development closely tied with specialization and its concomitant lifeworlds, or as Weber calls them; value spheres. Weber lists science, politics, art, religion, law and economy as the major modern value spheres. Each of these has its own norms and rules, and a person must choose among them, and can be loyal to only one.⁸⁹ Which to choose is an existential choice for the individual, which is part of the specialization of modernity, and it stratifies the world of values because it is problematic to criticize social action in one value sphere with norms from that of another. Even though basic values may be the same, they normalise differently in each sphere.⁹⁰ Chapter three and four detail how the lifeworlds of war and combat differ in this respect.

A complimentary development, which is produced in parallel with rationalization, is ‘disenchantment’. Disenchantment is at the same time a reaction to and a constituent part of rationalization and it denotes the replacement of magic, meaning and wonder with

⁸⁷ Max Weber quoted in Alan Sica, 'Rationalization and culture', in *The Cambridge Companion to Max Weber*, ed. Stephen Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 53.

⁸⁸ Jon Elster, 'Rationality, economy, and society', in *The Cambridge Companion to Max Weber*, ed. Stephen Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 22.

⁸⁹Heller, *A Theory of Modernity*, 37.

⁹⁰ See Christopher Coker, *Empires in conflict : the growing rift between Europe and the United States, Whitehall paper series ; 58.* (London: RUSI, 2003), 2,48.

technical, rational, utilitarian thinking. As far as a holistic lived experience is concerned, the concept evokes the reductive void and disillusionment left by rationalization. Yet, it also means “abandonment of fanaticism, madness and legitimation through charisma.”⁹¹

The fate of our age with its characteristic rationalization and intellectualization and above all the disenchantment of the world is that the ultimate most sublime values have withdrawn from public life either into the transcendental realm of mystical life or into the brotherhood of immediate personal relationships between individuals.⁹²

Disenchantment reinforces the integrity of the human individual in the world because it contributes to what Taylor calls the ‘buffered self’, one which is not infiltrated by demons, spirits and magic forces: “More radically, they do no longer impinge; they don’t exist for him”.⁹³ The same goes for desires, which although they impinge as inclinations, are “deprived of any higher meaning or aura... We ought to be able to stand back from all of them, and determine rationally how we should best dispose them.”⁹⁴ Weber expresses a suspicion that this involves some reduction of life quality. Here he was inspired by Schiller who portrayed the dangers of too much instrumental rationality, or too little: “A man can be at odds with himself (and his humanity) in two ways: either as a savage when feeling predominates over principle; or as a barbarian when principle destroys feeling.”⁹⁵

Romanticism, of which Schiller was a major figure, was the most concerted response to the rationalization of modern life. The Romantics expressed a burning dissatisfaction with the reductionism it involved. This was particularly noticeable in Germany, which became a kind of laboratory for the Counter-Enlightenment.⁹⁶ As Heller puts it; “Romanticism soon discovers the ugly side of enlightenment. Everything solid melts into air. For the men and women of romanticism, life is not a technological problem to be solved. It needs to be lived.”⁹⁷ The Romantics complained about the “disengaged, disciplined, buffered self, and the world it had built.”⁹⁸ The buffered self represented a division of emotions from reason and of humans from nature.

Just at the age when the steam engine transformed Europe, Christopher Booker explains how there was a nostalgic yearning for the age of transcendental spiritual certainty.

⁹¹ Heller, *A Theory of Modernity*, 37.

⁹² Max Weber, Hans Heinrich Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in sociology* (New York: Oxford university press, 1946), 155. Quoted Coker, *Future of War*, 4.

⁹³ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 135.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Schiller quoted in Coker, *Future of War*, 27.

⁹⁶ Michael Howard, *Liberation or Catastrophe: Reflections on the history of the twentieth century* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007), 9.

⁹⁷ Heller, *A Theory of Modernity*, 45.

⁹⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 314.

A renewed interest in medieval themes and imagery exemplified this: from Walter Scott's novels through Tennyson and to Gothic architecture.⁹⁹ The nineteenth century was two sided; spectacular material success led to a loss of a transcendently inspired Self. It was "an age in which Matthew Arnold could hear faith's 'melancholy, long, withdrawing roar'; in which Nietzsche could confidently proclaim 'God is dead'. One of the more obvious underlying reasons why Darwin's theory of natural selection was so welcomed was that it made the whole evolutionary process seem impersonal and self-referential, rather than dependant on an imaginary transcendental power or guiding mind."¹⁰⁰ Indeed, many of the most central nineteenth century theorists espoused a worldview where the mainsprings of our being are deep under the surface and denied by the rationalist Enlightenment, yet immanent rather than transcendental. Darwin (evolution), Marx (historical materialism), Nietzsche (will to power, reversal of values) and Freud (unconscious, sub-conscious) are all examples of this.¹⁰¹ Marxism was Romanticism's most conspicuous and lasting legacy. It drew on the same yearnings for authenticity, which in an earlier age had found religious expression, and projected them unto the material world, where the resolution of the plot (dialectical materialism) was set in the future.¹⁰² Romanticism's revival came in the 1960s, which was another pivoting moment, with expressivism as insistent as that of Romanticism, but much more popular in scope and anti-elitist in agenda.¹⁰³

Specialization

In Heller's and Toulmin's work, specialization of disciplines is another major vector of modernity. Specialization refers both to a process of social disembedding and de-localisation¹⁰⁴ of social positions and institutions; it is a modern social arrangement which steamrolls over all traditional social arrangements. Three different logics are at work according to Heller, which correspond well with the abovementioned value spheres; the logic of technology, the logic of functional allocation of social positions, and the logic of political power.¹⁰⁵ Each of the logics derives 'ethical power' from its values. Ethical power

⁹⁹ Christopher Booker, *The Seven Basic Plots: Why we tell stories* (London: Continuum, 2004), 654.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 657.

¹⁰¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 369.

¹⁰² Booker, *Seven Basic Plots*, 658.

¹⁰³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 473.

¹⁰⁴ Disembedding and de-localisation are processes where social interaction is lifted out of the face-to-face interaction that characterises traditional societies. Mechanisms such as money and the internet make interaction more abstract and independent from time and place. Thus, these interactions are *disembedded* from personal relations and local environments. See Giddens, *Modernity and Self-identity*, chapter 1.

¹⁰⁵ Heller, *A Theory of Modernity*, 64.

is effective and can assert normative influence, as long as individuals respect it as more important than their own self-interest.

The logic of technology is predicated on rational action and problem solving as a way of thinking. As Heidegger said, albeit polemically; the essence of technology is not technological. Instead, technology is instrumental in revealing the world to us; specifically by making nature an energy supply. Similarly, man can be made into a reserve. Thus, it opens up unlimited possibilities for modern man, and unlocks the risk of alienation as well:

The essence of technology is verily not technological. It does not reside in the machine, the thing. It resides in the way modern men think. To simplify Heidegger: modern men are thinking in terms of subject/object. The world is the object, men are the subjects. The subject treats the world as the arsenal of things for human use. Men themselves are objects for use. The whole universe is instrumentalized or is in waiting as a “standing reserve” for subsequent instrumentalization.¹⁰⁶

Technology and science reinforce each other since the application of technology must subscribe to the correspondence theory of truth, which in turn makes science a hegemonic paradigm and an overall source of truth and explanation of our world.¹⁰⁷ Accumulation of knowledge is an important feature of this, but only knowledge of a practically useful kind. This leaves poetry, philosophy and aesthetics somewhat marginalized, a realm for anti-Enlightenment subversive protesters.¹⁰⁸

Heller’s second logic – of functional allocation of social positions – breaks with traditional society, where identity and social roles are permanently assigned at birth. In modernity, roles are allocated according to the impermanent function one has in society. This is the logic of civil society. Heller calls it ‘the heart of modernity’, because of its diversity, and because its basic institution is the market; specifically; private property, private law, and human rights.¹⁰⁹ The market logic spins around the axis of individual free choice, most obviously in monetarization, which quantifies worth. Unsurprisingly, the Romantics complained vigorously against such a crass idea. Hegel also saw modernity as a “spiritual animal kingdom”¹¹⁰ because humans become specialized – like animals who can only do one thing – including spiritually. This is against their essence, he claimed, for man as a spiritual being is by essence universal.¹¹¹ Instead, modernity ushers in meritocracy,

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 91.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

whereby people can become equal to their erstwhile superiors, albeit in a piecemeal fashion. This new social mobility is a further instance of specialization.

Because of its relative autonomy and freedom from interference, civil society in a democracy is a space of ‘social power’, according to Marshall Hodgson.¹¹² It is the arena of public opinion, an organic self-reproducing discourse ranging across any conceivable topic, while embodying norms of acceptable discourse. Jürgen Habermas describes how the public sphere arose from the 16th century onwards, as the state was ousted from a free-floating public space where people wanted to express opinions without fear of censorship.¹¹³ This space of discussion could potentially involve everyone, and it was defined as extra-political, explicitly outside – albeit in dialogue – with the state.¹¹⁴ By the eighteenth century the “public sphere thus represents an instance of a new kind: a metatopical common space and common agency... grounded purely in its own common actions.”¹¹⁵

An important but little appreciated dimension of civil society is the notion of ‘collective rationality,’ which refers to the inclination citizens have towards a social duty or an interest in contributing to – and maintaining – the social fabric, recognizing at least semi-consciously that society benefits if individuals adhere to the collective’s norms. A strong sense of collective rationality, along with sufficient order and shared history contributes to social power, such that a society maintains societal coherence even after receiving heavy blows. The Germans sweeping up of the streets to clean up the neighbourhood immediately after Allied bombing raids is an example of a society that has social power. Widespread looting in Baghdad immediately after the American invasion in 2003 shows lack of social power, because the fabric of civil society is short of critical mass where it could make a difference. Instead, what remains are individuals following self-interest. Hodgson, referring to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is careful to denote that this has nothing to do with individual abilities, but is a matter of social organisation:

Individual Europeans might be less intelligent, less courageous, less loyal than individuals elsewhere; but, when educated and organized in society, the Europeans

¹¹² Marshall G. S. Hodgson and Edmund Burke, *Rethinking world history : essays on Europe, Islam, and world history* (Cambridge Cambridge UP, 1993), chapter 4. Quoted in Stephen Toulmin, *Return to Reason* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001), 34.

¹¹³ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

¹¹⁴ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 188-91.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 194.

were able to think and act far more effectively, as members of a group, than could members of any other societies.¹¹⁶

Toulmin sees the rise of academic disciplines as a typical and important instance of social power and collective rationality. The natural sciences of the 17th century, in particular, enjoyed progress in a social environment that welcomed a pursuit of scientific truth. But such social relations needed institutions to be productive, and they existed in the form of universities which divided professions into academic disciplines. As Toulmin recognises, it is not so much the intellectual focus as the style of social organization in which the work is done, that matters.¹¹⁷ The relative non-interference of government, financial interests and religious dogma in universities all contribute to such an environment.

The third logic of modernity discussed by Heller is the logic of 'political power', which is related to domination. Weber, ever the realist, virtually echoed Machiavelli when he observed that: "Anyone who goes in for worldly politics must, above all, be free of illusions and acknowledge one fundamental fact: to be resigned to the inevitable and eternal struggle of man with man on this earth."¹¹⁸ In another passage, Weber very explicitly defines what 'political' means and its parameters:

If one says that a question is a "political" question, or that a minister or official is a "political" official, or that a decision is determined "politically," what is meant in each case is that interests in the distribution, preservation, or transfer of power play a decisive role in answering that question, determining this decision or defining the sphere of activity of the official in question. Anyone engaged in politics is striving for power, either power as a means to attain other goals (which may be ideal or selfish), or power "for its own sake," which is to say, in order to enjoy the feeling of prestige given by power.¹¹⁹

Political authority is in part derived from man-made constitutions in the modern age.¹²⁰ The self-conscious crafting of the constitution is symbolic of the willingness of citizens to submit to their own laws. It is this voluntary aspect which makes Weber's definition of the state so prescient for democracy: "Just like the political associations which preceded it historically, the state is a relationship of rule (*Herrschaft*) by human beings over

¹¹⁶ Hodgson and Burke, *Rethinking world history: essays on Europe, Islam, and world history*, chapter 4.

¹¹⁷ Toulmin, *Return to Reason*, 154.

¹¹⁸ Weber quoted in Peter Lassman, 'The Rule of Man over Man; politics, power, and legitimation', in *The Cambridge Companion to Max Weber*, ed. Stephen Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 84.

¹¹⁹ Stephen Turner, *Cambridge Companion to Max Weber* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 85, Max Weber, Ronald Speirs and Peter Lassman, *Weber: political writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 311.

¹²⁰ Heller, *A Theory of Modernity*, 98.

human beings, and one that rests on the legitimate use of violence (that is, violence that is held to be legitimate). For the state to remain in existence, those who are ruled must submit to the authority claimed by whoever rules at any given time.”¹²¹ This legitimation must continuously be re-confirmed by modern political institutions.

Specialization is dialectically linked to social disembedding and both processes spawn individualism. As Giddens observes, one of the major features of modernization is the separation of space from time, a logical by-product of the invention of ‘empty’ time. Empty time is time in the abstract, lifted from local events, pace and place.¹²² Taylor describes how in archaic societies, distinctions between religious, political and economic institutions make no sense, since the pre-modern counterparts of these lifeworlds were all integrated in a localized space, where living was inherently social:¹²³ “In a world of indigence and insecurity, of perpetually threatening death, the rules of family and community seemed the only guarantee of survival. Modern modes of individualism seemed a luxury, a dangerous indulgence.”¹²⁴

Later in medieval times the world was divided in two; the city of God and the earthly city, each with their appropriate activities. This duality is done away with through what Taylor calls ‘the Reforms’. This is a three-part package with: (1) the eleventh century Hildebrand reforms featuring individual confession and communion; (2) the Protestant Reformation’s head-on attack on the notion that certain people or institutions are closer to God than others, with concomitant reinforcement of everyday life as fully Christian; (3) the general trend of disenchantment which denies that there is such a thing as concentrated sacredness contained in places, people, times, actions, sacraments etc.¹²⁵ This process gradually replaces the duality with an anthropocentric shift to a situation where any conceivable manifestation of belief *or unbelief* becomes possible. In other words: a fragmentation into spiritually disconnected lifeworlds.¹²⁶

Following World War II this process has accelerated and intensified, now constituting what Taylor calls a spiritual super-nova, “a kind of galloping pluralism on the spiritual plane.”¹²⁷ By this, Taylor means a process, which started with the antagonistic dualism of humanism versus Christianity. This antagonism created a dynamic; “something

¹²¹ Weber, Speirs and Lassman, *Weber : political writings*, 311.

¹²² Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Tyranny of the Moment: Fast and Slow Time in the Information Age* (London: Pluto Press, 2001), Giddens, *Modernity and Self-identity*, 17-18.

¹²³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 2.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 168.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 265-66.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 531.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 300.

like a nova effect” which offered an ever-widening gamut of moral and spiritual positions.¹²⁸ Elites, who were unhappy with the choice between deity and unbelief, and wanted a third way, generated this widening gamut. Increasing cross-pressures created ever more third ways.¹²⁹ The nova effect became ‘super-nova’ after World War II: with increasing wealth and individual choice came increasing opportunity to seek individual happiness.¹³⁰

Individualism is part of this story; in particular, the rise of the modern bounded, buffered self, which by virtue of not being porous and sensitive to an enchanted world is able to close out anything outside the mind.¹³¹ Accompanying the buffered self is a general interiorization, which introduces a new language of inner experience and exploration, leading to: “Montaigne, the development of the modern novel, the rise of Romanticism, the ethic of authenticity, to the point where we now conceive of ourselves as having inner depths.”¹³² Disenchantment and the Reforms are central to this story as well: “this first individualism develops through that of self-examination, and then self-development, ultimately to that of authenticity. This naturally generates an instrumental individualism, which is implicit in the idea that society is there for the good of individuals.”¹³³ If we add empty time and the Protestant view of time as a resource that should not be wasted, a lot of the “buffered identity of the disciplined individual” is in place.¹³⁴ This whole journey is neatly summed up by Bauman who says that “individualization consists of transforming human identity from a given to a task.”¹³⁵

The primary existential point about individualism is that life is ephemeral. After the death of God and the loss of external foundations for meaning, the problem is less fear of death than existential anxiety about not having lived and exhausted the many possibilities of modern life before death. Such existential tension is at the core of every major Western discourse. As Richard Rorty puts it, poetry attempts to achieve self-creation by means of recognizing contingency, while philosophy tries to achieve the universal through transcending contingency.¹³⁶ Heller sees the modern condition as being thrown into

¹²⁸ Ibid., 299.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 302, 599.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 473-74.

¹³¹ Ibid., 38.

¹³² Ibid., 539-40.

¹³³ Ibid., 541.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 542.

¹³⁵ Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 31.

¹³⁶ Richard Rorty, *Contingency, irony, and solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 25.

freedom, and to be thrown into freedom is to be thrown into nothing.¹³⁷ Existential philosophy has explored at length the uneasy situation this constitutes for the newly liberated individual. As Nietzsche has once said, it is easy to dance in chains.¹³⁸ The liberation from the chains, a mixed blessing though it may be, owes everything to secularization.

Secularization

The third vector of modernity is secularization. In an effort to distance himself from what he calls the too simple 'subtraction story' where secularization is a result of science's unmasking of religion, Taylor provides an extraordinarily detailed and nuanced account of secularization in the West.

Secularization refers to three different phenomena. They include: (1) religion's retreat from public places where our activities, norms, principles, and politics no longer refer to God; (2) a reduction of religious beliefs and practices such as church attendance; (3) altered conditions of belief; a move from a society in which belief is unchallenged to one where belief is only one among many options.¹³⁹ A crucial distinction here is between immanence and transcendence, where the 'immanent frame' is the one we live in when the transcendent otherworldly element is replaced by what Taylor calls 'exclusive humanism', which is to say a humanism accepting no other agenda than human flourishing.¹⁴⁰ Exclusive humanism needed two conditions: the already discussed negative process of disenchantment, and the positive process of producing a framework of values that could encompass our highest moral and spiritual aspirations without involving God.¹⁴¹

The Protestant Reformation plays a major role in Taylor's story in that it crystallizes and accelerates some existing processes, and adds others. Three processes in particular stand out. Firstly; autonomous changes in popular piety where scholastic disagreements led to individual interpretations of faith from the Middle Ages onwards, which in turn led to the revolutionary concept of individual faith. The Reformation dramatically intensified this aspect, as Luther explicitly made individual faith doctrine.¹⁴² Secondly, the rise of new elites and the bourgeoisie who replaced warrior values with commercial activity. Thirdly, the new

¹³⁷ Heller, *A Theory of Modernity*, 57.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹³⁹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 2-3.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 16-18, 21.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 237.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 85, Peter Watson, *Ideas : a history of thought and invention, from fire to Freud* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 332, Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London: Routledge, 2001), chapter 4.

elites displayed an increased activism in changing nature and human society. A new relationship with nature emerges with disenchantment, where nature is conceived of as a resource to be exploited and manipulated, an attitude that extends into human society as well. A new world order featuring a series of social programmes emerges, including new poor laws; censorship of popular culture such as carnival; increased government intervention in the name of both improvement and domination; more professional government structures including bureaucracies; and increased discipline in terms of methods and procedures in everything from etiquette to warfare.¹⁴³

By the late 19th century the combination of these developments, contribute to fully formed secular alternatives to religion. Nevertheless, as Taylor painstakingly reminds us throughout his study, this is not a process of emptying; when religion is retreating, several of its dimensions are left as residues that are modified rather than replaced. One of Taylor's claims is that humans have a more or less constant need for meaning and existential fulfilment. Thus, when religion no longer does this job, man craves other forms of authenticity.

The concept of authenticity is important because it is sufficiently general to traverse several lifeworlds. It suggests an intimate relationship with truth, albeit in a more holistic and grounded, organic respect than the hard and technical correspondence version of truth we know from science, which at any rate has received some battering in the 20th century.¹⁴⁴ Authenticity also resonates with ethics, implying that it is charged with values, in contrast to instrumental rationality for example. Authenticity suggests something indivisible, unquantifiable and not least something that is in harmony somehow with "what ought to be".

The scene for authenticity was only really set post World War II, after virtually all other similar ideals in the repertory had exhausted or discredited themselves. The secularization process had progressed very far by the nineteenth century, but it took the world wars for nationalism to lose traction. Nationalism is also a concept, which is deemed grounded, and value oriented, and authenticity retains nationalism's virtues but not the baggage of its vices. Zaki Laïdi points out that the move from Christianity (theology) to nationalism (teleology) did not reduce the demands for meaning¹⁴⁵, and we should not expect them to fall after the age of nationalism either.

¹⁴³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 108-12.

¹⁴⁴ Paul Feyerabend, *Against method* (London Verso, 1988), Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and philosophy : the revolution in modern science* (London: Penguin, 2000).

¹⁴⁵ Zaki Laïdi, *A world without meaning : the crisis of meaning in international politics* (London Routledge, 1998), 70.

The post-war yearning for authenticity is deeply embedded in individualism. A simplified expressivism infiltrates everywhere and becomes widely available as an existential option for all of society. It typically calls for people to “do their own thing” and to “find” or “be themselves.” Therapeutic practices geared towards self-discovery or realization multiply.¹⁴⁶ Taylor relates this to the rebellion against structures, particularly the social structures of the 1950s, which were built around the patriarchal and nuclear family. This society was “castigated as conformist, crushing individuality and creativity, as too concerned with production and concrete results, as repressing feeling and spontaneity, as exalting the mechanic over the organic.”¹⁴⁷

The social revolution of 1968 is the most readily identifiable climax of this celebration of subjectivism. The consequences are many, but in terms of spirituality it has led to a privatization of religion, and as Taylor says; a trivialization as well. Religious practices are relativized into one among many other life-style options. Despite authenticity’s conceptual versatility, it does not carry sufficient traction to compensate for the loss of meaning, since its manifestation is private and relativized, and thus fragmented. It strongly denotes freedom without responsibility.

In this respect, Taylor makes some interesting observations about war and warriors. Warriors become existential front figures for anti-humanist thinkers’ celebration of the great, the exceptional and the heroic. Their position is a rebellion against both the alienating industrialized world dominated by utilitarianism on the one hand, but equally much against the self-centred and hedonistic 1968 generation. Nietzsche is the dominating figure in his rejection of the utilitarian idealization of health and a long life, over death and cruelty.¹⁴⁸ For Nietzsche, Ernst Jünger and others, the liberal celebration of peace would extinguish human greatness, heroism and defence of the weak, which to their mind could only find expression in war.¹⁴⁹

The social theory of the West presented here addresses most of the tendencies and existential currents important for the further story. The next section focuses more explicitly on values and how they manifest themselves in social imaginaries, which is traced into security paradigms in the final section.

¹⁴⁶ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 475.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, .

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 373.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 630, 83.

Social imaginaries

It is not easy to conceptualise the West in a politically and ideationally coherent way. The ideological dimension, all-important in most of the wars and conflicts of the 20th century, was infused with ideas that largely were conceived in the 19th century. Ideationally the West has never been at peace with itself, but has always been a battleground of ideas.¹⁵⁰ At the same time, the major ideological contests have exhausted themselves such that liberalism is the only ideology left, tempered by conservative and progressive values in local context, and challenged marginally by Islamic fundamentalism. While ideologies do not drive Western public programmes or the social imagination so much anymore, there is still a plethora of ideas, most of which are residues from past ideological battles. These ideas can be distilled to identify some consistent repertoires and manifestations of social imagination.

The concept of social imaginaries

How should one conceptualise collective self-understandings of what social life is about in the contemporary West? There are different ways to imagine the whole of society.¹⁵¹ Taylor's concept of 'social imaginaries' is a helpful start.¹⁵² An awkward sounding concept though it is, it is nonetheless unsurpassed because it embraces social and moral ideas and incorporates both theory and lived experience. Rather than addressing pure abstractions, the concept covers practical and normative dimensions as well. A social imaginary is;

something much broader and deeper than the intellectual schemes people may entertain when they think about social reality in a disengaged mode. I am thinking rather of the ways in which they imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations which are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations.¹⁵³

Its major strength is that it accords power to ideas without identifying particular axioms. It recognises that ideas are operative in society without explicitly being pursued as programmes. This means there may be coherent strands in the social imagination that encompass the ideas of intellectuals and the allegiances of the masses. As Taylor says:

¹⁵⁰ Christopher Coker, *War and the illiberal conscience* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1998).

¹⁵¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 156.

¹⁵² David Gress has contributed a similar argument to Taylor, focusing on practices and institutions to compliment ideas. His account is less theoretically sophisticated but works complimentary with Taylor. David Gress, *From Plato to NATO: the idea of the West and its opponents* (New York: Free Press, 1998).

¹⁵³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 171. See also Charles Taylor, *Modern social imaginaries, Public planet books* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 23.

“Humans operated with a social imaginary, well before they ever got into the business of theorizing about themselves.”¹⁵⁴ It is different from social theory because it is as much lived as thought. Yet it is an “imaginary”:

(i) because I’m talking about the way ordinary people “imagine” their social surroundings, and this is often not expressed in theoretical terms, it is carried in images, stories, legends, etc. But it is also the case that (ii) theory is often the possession of a small minority, whereas what is interesting in the social imaginary is that it is shared by large groups of people, if not the whole society... (iii) the social imaginary is that common understanding which makes possible common practices, and a widely shared sense of legitimacy.¹⁵⁵

For this reason, a social imaginary does not have the strength of an imperative, but it resonates with an inclination, a way of thinking that people espouse. In particular, it subconsciously addresses those who are part of the social imaginary – the ‘we’ – and what scope of ambition we should have in addressing lives of others. This is the stuff of foreign policy at one level, or a penchant for compassion or xenophobia at a more basic level. In some ways, this is a very general practiced (not just thought) notion of what, whom, and how much we should engage in the world. It is a feeling, a sensibility and a temperament, which brings some coherence to any individual social imaginary. The following discussion will provide examples.

Instead of further pursuing the particularities of Taylor’s conception of a social imaginary, this concept will be used as a denominator of a particular “meta-debate” in the West; that between communitarianism, cosmopolitanism and liberal internationalism. The debate is ‘meta’ because it transcends the particularities of specific political theories and ideologies in its scope. It is a debate between social imaginaries, which are as much lived as thought. Yet it addresses the basic assumptions underlying theories and other – not irrelevant but pre-theoretical – aspects of human nature; like temper and emotional loyalty.¹⁵⁶ At the same time, the concepts in the debate are sufficiently defined to categorize social and political relations. The debate is a ‘debate’ because it is the wider framework against which particular theories have been formed, and because these particular theories

¹⁵⁴ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 173.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 172.

¹⁵⁶ Temper and emotional loyalty are aspects of any human being’s character and personality that has an import on that persons choice of political and/or ideological allegiance, which is not necessarily a product of (and which sometimes transcends) rational intellectual reasoning. An example of this reasoning is Robert Gilpin’s assertion that classical realism can be considered “an attitude regarding the human condition”. Robert O. Keohane, *Neorealism and its critics* (New York: Columbia UP, 1986), 305.

often clash through their irreconcilable assumptions, which can be fleshed out in the antonyms of ‘communitarianism’, ‘cosmopolitanism’ and ‘liberal internationalism’.

At the most basic level the distinction between cosmopolitanism and communitarianism relates to where moral value is ascribed. Cosmopolitans ascribe moral value to both humanity as a whole, or to the individual. Communitarians, on the other hand, ascribe moral value primarily to a community. More precisely, Chris Brown argues, “Communitarian thought either denies that there is an opposition here, or is prepared explicitly to assign central value to the community; cosmopolitan thought refuses this central status to the community, placing the ultimate source of moral value elsewhere.”¹⁵⁷ Liberal internationalism is a pragmatic hybrid between these two, in that it tries to reconcile the concerns of communitarians and cosmopolitans. It is communitarian at home, and cosmopolitan in its ambitions abroad, which by necessity makes it pivot around the state as the central unit that constitutes the distinction between domestic and international.

In the following, I will detail the precepts of these three social imaginaries, relying on the work of international political theorist Chris Brown, and I will discuss to which extent they are operative within the West at the level of international relations. This will serve to specify further the political foundations for what warriors are used for, and what kinds of values they are meant to reflect, in the West.

Cosmopolitanism

‘Cosmopolitanism’ is a word with classical Greek roots, specifically in relation to the Stoics who saw the universe as one divine order (cosmos) with “one rational human nature, and therefore one appropriate attitude to all men. The Stoic is a citizen of the cosmos not of the polis.”¹⁵⁸ A main feature of cosmopolitan thought is this refusal to assign ultimate value to existing political structures, like the state. It is thus universalistic in scope.¹⁵⁹ However, as Brown reminds us, this does not mean that cosmopolitans by necessity are proponents of world government.¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, neither does it mean that all universalistic positions are cosmopolitan.

The main thinker associated with cosmopolitan thought is Immanuel Kant. Kant takes a ‘deontologist’ position in moral theory. This means the morality of an action based on its moral principles and moral motives. This is opposed to the ‘consequentialist’

¹⁵⁷ Chris Brown, *International relations theory : new normative approaches* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 12-13.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

position of most utilitarians, exemplified by Jeremy Bentham, where the morality of an action is judged by its outcome, its consequence rather than on the primary motivation, which is irrelevant.¹⁶¹ Although they are both cosmopolitan positions, Kantians and utilitarians also differ on the centre of gravity of morality. For Kantians the human agent is the focal point. Utilitarians, on the other hand, view happiness as ultimately impersonal.¹⁶² Both positions, moreover, have in common their view of the state as the most satisfactory way of organising politics and social life, but “the driving force of political, social and moral life lies elsewhere, in the pursuit of utility or in following the dictates of the categorical imperative wherever they may lead.”¹⁶³ Therefore, whereas the political community is an end in itself for communitarians, it is merely a means for cosmopolitans.

Communitarianism

For communitarians, the essentially instrumental view of the state (or any other political unit in question) espoused by cosmopolitans is deemed insufficient and is testament to a fundamental misapprehension of what it means to live in a community. The communitarian position does not have a clear-cut genesis since, as Raymond Williams once put it, the remarkable thing about ‘community’ is that it always has been.¹⁶⁴ Communitarians share the idea that groups have a fundamental right to organise themselves into communities which by definition are of an exclusive nature. Indeed, value stems from the community, which is where individuals find *meaning* in life by virtue of membership to it.¹⁶⁵ A basic assumption with this position is that individuals have no being outside, or before, community; life is inherently social and embedded in culture.

Johann Gottfried Herder, one of Kant’s main critics, was an early proponent of communitarianism. Instead of focusing on the juridical-political state, Herder conceived of the nation as a more organic unit, grown from the interaction of its people with history. Nationalism pivoting around language and culture is a very typical contemporary and modern expression of this position. Still, as Herder pointed out, it does not necessarily follow those different cultures cannot live peacefully in a culturally plural world.¹⁶⁶ This is necessary for nationhood to come about at all, since as Frederick Barth has explained, borders do not register existing estrangement; they are constructed before the estrangement exists. Instead, the estrangement is a product of either a conflict or some sort

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 41.

¹⁶² Ibid., 42-44.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 52.

¹⁶⁴ Bauman, *Liquid modernity*, 169.

¹⁶⁵ Brown, *International Relations Theory*, 55.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 59.

of active community building through identification of difference between one group and the other, or both.¹⁶⁷ Richard Sennett argues:

The image of the community is purified of all that may convey a feeling of difference, let alone conflict, in who 'we' are. In this way the myth of community solidarity is a purification ritual... What is distinctive about this mythic sharing in communities is that people feel they belong to each other, and share together, *because they are the same...* The 'we' feeling, which expresses the desire to be similar, is a way for men to avoid the necessity of looking deeper into each other.¹⁶⁸

This tendency is not necessarily a bad thing, unless the process of purification turns into rampant chauvinism, where it could even contribute to genocide. In a more moderate manifestation, it contributes to existential cohesion and harmony for society, or social power.

The opposite, constant self-investigation, or asking "who are we?" is problematic in the same way a constant problematizing of who one *self* is leads to neurosis or pathology in individuals. Hegel was an early proponent of the view that it was healthy for the state to achieve some kind of clarity on this issue, explicitly tying it to the state's ethical health.¹⁶⁹ Philosophically speaking Kant is the leading proponent of cosmopolitan sentiments, whereas Hegel is the chief of the communitarian tribe.¹⁷⁰

Hegel shares Herders view that it is impossible to think of individuals detached from the social and cultural life of communities. Richard Falk agrees, and points out that the basic energy behind patriotism, and one can add any kind of communitarianism, is emotive; "understood as love of country, an affirmation of a bonded political community of fellow citizens sharing memories and identities, as well as a willingness to make sacrifices for the sake of the collective well-being, and especially the security and survival of the country."¹⁷¹ Security and survival are key constitutive factors of communitarian identity since they reinforce the difference between those who are on the inside and those on the outside. Furthermore, communitarians will place an existential value on the coherence and sovereignty of the community, because its destruction or fragmentation involves social and moral loss of great significance. This is not necessarily a point for cosmopolitans.

¹⁶⁷ Bauman, *Liquid modernity*, 177.

¹⁶⁸ Richard Sennett, *The corrosion of character* (London: Norton, 1998), 138.

¹⁶⁹ D. P. Verene, 'Hegel's Account of war', in *The Hegel Myths and Legends*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), Steven Walt, 'Hegel on War: Another look', in *The Hegel Myths and Legends*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996).

¹⁷⁰ Brown, *International Relations Theory*, 65.

¹⁷¹ Richard Falk in Ken Booth and Timothy Dunne, *Worlds in collision* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 327.

Liberal internationalism

The story of liberal internationalism is a lot more complex than the two previous social imaginaries. Liberal internationalism consists of the international application of liberal principles.¹⁷² It has been associated with four main pillars: democracy, free trade, international institutions and human rights. It deserves attention because it represents a blend between cosmopolitanism and communitarianism: which reflects the tensions inherent in any potential merger between the two, yet as the history of the last couple of centuries has demonstrated, it carries a lot of ideational weight in its own right. It is less of an ideal type than the other two, and more of a (still vibrant) ideology; or as Michael Howard has called it, a liberal conscience that has permeated the West.¹⁷³

In fact, liberalism is the only major surviving ideology, having fought off the competitors; Fascism, Nazism and Communism in large scale hot and cold wars during the 20th century.¹⁷⁴ This victory was the backdrop to Francis Fukuyama's argument about the End of History.¹⁷⁵ He did not believe that history had ended as such, whether in historiographical terms or in terms of world conflicts and events. Instead he recognised that in respect of ideological and collective struggles, liberalism reigned alone as a major system for organising economic and political relations after the end of the Cold War.

In his *Anarchical Society*, Hedley Bull discusses three social imaginaries, which resemble the above significantly, though he calls them "ideal-typical doctrines."¹⁷⁶ They are the orthodox or conservative, the revolutionary, and the liberal or progressivist views. Focusing on the seemingly irreconcilable dilemma of prioritising between order and justice, Bull argues the orthodox view favours order whereas the revolutionary view favours justice, and the liberal view tries to reconcile them by pursuing both and denying any contradiction between them.¹⁷⁷ Bull's argument is particularly prescient because in the liberal imagination it is difficult to favour one over the other, while in practice, one must acknowledge the somewhat inevitable conclusion Bull comes to:

World order, or order in the great society of all mankind, is similarly the condition of realisation of goals of human or cosmopolitan justice; if there is not a certain

¹⁷² Chris Brown, *Sovereignty, rights, and justice : international political theory today* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 62.

¹⁷³ Michael Howard, *War and the liberal conscience, George Macaulay Trevelyan lectures ; 1977* (London: Temple Smith, 1978).

¹⁷⁴ See Ibid. and Christopher Coker, *Twilight of the West* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1998), Coker, *War and the 20th Century*, Coker, *War and the illiberal conscience*.

¹⁷⁵ Francis Fukuyama, *The end of history and the last man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

¹⁷⁶ Bull, *The anarchical society : a study of order in world politics*, 90.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

minimum security against violence, respect for the undertakings and stability of rules of property, goals of political, social and economic justice for individual men or of a just distribution of burdens and rewards in relation to the world common good can have no meaning.¹⁷⁸

Bull foreshadows the much more explicit debates that followed in International Relations about normative features of international order.¹⁷⁹ Normative concerns for justice seem to be inherent in any cosmopolitan argument in the sense that they call for improvement of the human condition through either revolution or institutional change. Liberalism's underlying assumption is that not all humans are free. Two things are needed to achieve freedom: Firstly, individuals and nations must be enlightened and self-aware of the demands of liberty. Secondly, people must live under enlightened institutions that allow genuine political choice.¹⁸⁰ This allows for not only political but social freedom and a free market of ideas, which is important for economic, political and social progress. Together these two pillars contribute to civil society, which is often identified as the distinction between liberal democracies and other less complete democracies. As such one of its main focuses is on ruling regimes. For liberal internationalists, democracy is a goal in itself because democratic regimes do not wage war against each other.

Democratic Peace Theory is the closest to a law-like observation in International Relations; it has been explained theoretically, celebrated normatively, measured empirically and criticized. Theoretical explanations focus on the institutional constraints inside democracies to explain peace. Normative explanations rest on the ideas and norms held by democracies.¹⁸¹ In a recent study, John Owen agrees that ideas play a major role and concludes that there is an identifiable mechanism to the democratic peace following from these ideas:

Fundamentally it is the liberal ideas undergirding liberal democracies. Liberalism says that all persons are best off pursuing self-preservation and material well-being, and that freedom and toleration are the best means to these ends. The liberal commitment

¹⁷⁸ Hedley Bull, *The anarchical society : a study of order in world politics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 93.

¹⁷⁹ See in particular Chris Brown, Terry Nardin and N. J. Rengger, *International relations in political thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002).

¹⁸⁰ Norman Angell, *The Unseen Assassins* (New York and London: Harper & brothers, 1932), 201, John M. Owen, 'How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace', *International Security* 19, no. 2 (1994): 94.

¹⁸¹ Steve Chan, 'In Search of Democratic Peace: Problems and promise', *Mershon International Studies Review* 41, no. 1 (1997), Michael W. Doyle, 'Liberalism and World Politics', *The American Political Science Review* 80, no. 4 (1986), Jack S. Levy, 'Domestic Politics and War', in *The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars, Studies in Interdisciplinary History* ed. Theodore K. Rabb Robert I. Rotberg, and Robert Gilpin (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990), 88, Owen, 'How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace', Sebastian Rosato, 'The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory', *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 4 (2003).

to individual freedom gives rise to foreign policy ideology and governmental institutions that work together to produce democratic peace.¹⁸²

Of course although democracies have created a zone of peace between them, this does not mean democracies are not warlike in the encounter with autocratic and dictatorial regimes. Aside from democracy, trade is the second pillar that can help assuage the disease of war. Increasing trade and thus mutual interdependence between democracies, makes war costly and peace more likely.

A third pillar of great importance to the prevention of war is the existence of international institutions like the League of Nations and later the United Nations. The formation of international institutions is the international counterpart to the domestic reform from autocracies to democracies.¹⁸³ The EU is today a real world example of how the three pillars of economic interdependence, international institutions and democracy lead to peace.¹⁸⁴

A fourth and more recent pillar that has been pursued by liberals is that of human rights. I will come back to the issue of human rights in more detail later. Liberals are divided over the issue of human rights since they typically pay allegiance to both the orthodox idea of sovereignty and non-interventionism, which is strongly embodied in the UN-charter, and yet at the same time they support human rights.¹⁸⁵ In certain instances, these two institutions are in conflict, often over order versus justice, as Bull observed.

Table 2: Western social imaginaries

	Source of social imaginary		Scope of ambition for social imaginary	Typical security paradigm
Communitarianism	Local / National	↔	Local / National	Realist
Liberal internationalism	Local / National	→	Transnational / Universal	Liberalist
Cosmopolitan	Transnational / Universal	↔	Universal	Human Rights / Human Security

¹⁸² Owen, 'How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace': 123-24.

¹⁸³ Brown, *Sovereignty, rights, and justice*, 63-64.

¹⁸⁴ Burchill, 'Liberal internationalism' in Scott Burchill and Andrew Linklater, *Theories of international relations* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 36.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

Conclusion

Cosmopolitanism, communitarianism and liberal internationalism are three social imaginaries that conflict on a number of different questions, all of which are inherently normative. They are important because they represent views that are divisive within the West. This is certainly the case in terms of individuals in an era when nationalism decreasingly carries the burden of social cohesion and social power. States increasingly reflect this tendency in their foreign policy and take sides as to which social imaginary they ascribe to. Canada and Norway exemplify this, both of which officially subscribe to human security as a foreign policy doctrine. This has profound consequences for security because different social imaginaries 'securitize' differently, to use Barry Buzan's phrase.¹⁸⁶

Security Paradigms

The question here is how the more general social imaginaries are translated into specific security paradigms. It will be argued that cosmopolitans increasingly subscribe to a human security and human rights based paradigm. Communitarians support the conventional national and/or state security approach, which is dominated by political realism. Liberal internationalists with their typical interventionist persuasion support what is today known as the expanded security concept, which deals in a variety of security risks whose sources are many and complex, but which require attention.

It needs to be pointed out from the start that these three paradigms are not directly comparable in their basic make-up. They do not operate along exactly the same tangent but have different relationships to power, the state and practical applications of security. The cosmopolitan paradigm, for example, is more of an agenda than a comprehensive paradigm, in that it is all but divorced from power, struggles to materialise itself without the assistance of governments, and materialises more than anything in agenda setting and pressure activism. The national-security paradigm on the other hand, has always enjoyed a close relationship with the state's unprecedented power, and its relationship with state structures, military establishments and security policy has been honed over the centuries. The liberal security paradigm again tries to reconcile an increasingly expansive security agenda advocated by cosmopolitans, specifically in the form of humanitarian interventions, with realist state-centricity, to produce an amalgam of state power, interventionist ideology and cosmopolitan moral imperatives.

¹⁸⁶ Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security : a new framework for analysis* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Pub., 1998).

Cosmopolitan security: Human Rights and the Human security agenda

The international Human Rights Regime is not a security paradigm in itself, but it easily lends itself into aspirations for one. Human security is an academic and increasingly a foreign policy approach to operationalising the security implications of putting human rights at the forefront. Several countries including Canada, Ireland and the Scandinavian countries, have made human security an explicit and dominant guiding principle of their foreign policies. Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy argued in 2001 that Canada explicitly sought to develop a “new foreign policy paradigm” based on human security, and that this had been very successful: “Today at every forum I attend or meeting I participate in, states of all station and tradition are using the term, and more important, are accepting the usefulness of the idea.”¹⁸⁷ There is some dispute as to whether the concept of human security adds any conceptual value to that of human rights. At any rate, human security is explicitly concerned with the security aspects of the cosmopolitan worldview.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was declared in 1948 in a political climate eager to find means to prevent the kind of mass atrocities that had occurred during the recent World War. Specifically, there was need for a conceptual legitimation to intervene inside states to prevent genocide, despite the strong standing of the sovereignty principle in international law. Genocide, a modern phenomenon, was usually conducted under the guise of war, and perpetrated by a state against groups of its own people, as was the case with the Armenian genocide, Stalin’s mass killings of Ukrainians and Hitler’s Holocaust. In its fairly liberal bias the Declaration came out purporting to create positive law.¹⁸⁸ This is problematic, particularly in terms of enforcement, Chris Brown explains:

International human rights legislation has not involved the creation of effective enforcement machinery, for the obvious reason that not enough of the states involved actually wished to see human rights law enforced; indeed even some states with a record of general respect for human rights have hedged around ratifications of international agreements with extensive formal reservations... The enforcement of human rights by the international community has been determined, in practice, by the foreign policy imperatives of the major powers and political, commercial and financial considerations frequently get in the way of a high-priority, even-handed policy on human rights.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ Lloyd Axworthy, 'Introduction', in *Human Security and the New Diplomacy: Protecting People, Promoting Peace* ed. Robert Grant McRae and Don Hubert (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 3.

¹⁸⁸ Brown, *Sovereignty, rights, and justice*, 119,20.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

In theory and practice this subordinates the positive law account of human rights to a morally stronger, but politically and practically weaker, essentialist and Universalist notion of human rights, whose “provisions reflect the general moral standards of humanity”.¹⁹⁰ The universalism of human rights clashes with the positivist rights tradition in state based legal systems. This is above the case since the particularistic rights discourse was conceived of as reciprocal; membership in a political community implied not only rights, but also duties. The reciprocal and particularistic strand would develop within a confined community ruled by law, where rights and duties were enforceable. The Universalist strand, on the other hand, did not have any such infrastructure attached to it, and could for that reason be considered universally human.¹⁹¹

The case of the slave trade illustrates the difficulties of enforcement. Although formally abolished at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, which meant an end to transactions, the active enforcement of the *ban* with formal outlawing only happened in 1926.¹⁹² The British anti-slavery movement in the nineteenth century is what Coker considers the inauguration of ‘global civil society’, so in vogue today. Starting as a missionary and Christian creation, global civil society proponents are decidedly more secular today; but no less driven by morality, which is the key instigator of action, and renunciations of injustice. Of equal importance, its scope has increased dramatically from NGOs to charities through to citizen protest groups.¹⁹³

Charles Taylor identifies a clear increase of altruism on a global scale today.¹⁹⁴ As a result, there have been calls to both broaden and deepen the agenda for security. This entails, according to Krause and Williams, a focus on a “wider range of potential threats, ranging from economic and environmental issues to human rights and migration”.¹⁹⁵ Deepening it involves “either moving down to the level of individual or human security or up to the level of international or global security, with regional or societal security as possible intermediate points.”¹⁹⁶ For some, the language of security has turned unapologetically cosmopolitan, which is exemplified by the new concept of ‘human security,’ first introduced in the UNDP 1994 “Human Development Report.” This report

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 121.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 117,18.

¹⁹² Ibid., 119.

¹⁹³ Christopher Coker, *Globalisation and insecurity in the twenty-first century : NATO and the management of risk, Adelpi Paper* (Oxford IISS & Oxford UP, 2002), 29.

¹⁹⁴ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 692.

¹⁹⁵ Keith Krause; Michael C. Williams, 'Broadening the Agenda of Security Studies; Politics and Methods', *Mershon International Studies Review* 40, no. 2 (1996): 230.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

defined human security in a twofold manner as “[F]irst, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life—whether in homes, in jobs or in communities.”¹⁹⁷

Roland Paris finds the ambitions enormous: “the scope of this definition is vast: Virtually any kind of unexpected or irregular discomfort could conceivably constitute a threat to one’s human security.”¹⁹⁸ It is strongly reminiscent of Johan Galtung’s concept of “structural violence”: the inability for everyone to realise his or her full potential.¹⁹⁹ This new agenda challenges both the policy objectives and basic assumptions of the realist paradigm. “The theoretical *targets* being debated are the conceptualizations of security (state security) and threat (military force) and the assumption of anarchy (the security dilemma) that have characterized neorealist scholarship in security studies.”²⁰⁰ However, while sometimes agreeing on the targets pursued, human rights advocates often struggle to operationalize means to protect them, frequently conceding this dimension to liberal government security agendas who can apply power on their behalf.

Human security focuses on the individual human being as the reference point, and it does not necessarily limit its concerns to politically inspired violence, or direct violence at all for that matter.²⁰¹ In this sense, there is a continuum from the traditional national security paradigm’s concern with ‘threats’²⁰², through talk of ‘risks’²⁰³ and within some strands of human security; ‘vulnerabilities’.²⁰⁴ Such vulnerabilities are not obviously solved by use of military force, because they are “not clearly perceived, often not well understood, and almost always a source of contention among conflicting views”.²⁰⁵ Concretely speaking, vulnerabilities can develop into what Liotta calls ‘creeping vulnerabilities;’ that tend to be (if at all) addressed through crisis responses rather than long term strategic planning. Examples of such issues are different levels of population growth, spread of disease (such as HIV/Aids), climate change, water and food shortage sometimes related to

¹⁹⁷ Human Development Report 1993, quoted in Roland Paris, 'Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?' *International Security* 26, no. 2 (2001).

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Johan Galtung, 'Violence, Peace, and Peace Research', *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969).

²⁰⁰ Williams, 'Broadening the Agenda of Security Studies; Politics and Methods': 230.

²⁰¹ P. H. Liotta, 'A Concept in Search of Relevance', *Security Dialogue* 35, no. 3 (2004): 50. Coker, *Globalisation and Insecurity*, 52.

²⁰² "A threat, in short, is either clearly visible or commonly acknowledged." Liotta, 'A Concept in Search of Relevance': 51.

²⁰³ Coker, *Globalisation and Insecurity*. Ulrich Beck, *World risk society* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 1999), Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, *The risk society at war* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006).

²⁰⁴ Liotta, 'A Concept in Search of Relevance': 50.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.: 51.

failing crops or soil erosion and desertification and increased urbanization and pollution in mega-cities and natural disasters.²⁰⁶

Academically there has been little shortage of criticism of the concept of human security. Barry Buzan has argued that if the referent point is collectives then we ought to think of 'identity security' or 'societal security' because they are less reductionist concepts. If the referent object is the individual human being, the concepts adds nothing of analytical value over simply referring to human rights.²⁰⁷ Furthermore, he adds; "The idea also risks mixing up the quite different agendas of international security, on the one hand, and social security and civil liberties, on the other."²⁰⁸ For Buzan, it is imperative to maintain the attention on the level of social collectives:

While a moral case for making individuals the ultimate referent object can be constructed, the cost to be paid is analytical purchase on collective actors both as the main agents of security provision and as possessors of a claim to survival in their own right. Individuals are not free standing, but only take their meaning from the societies in which they operate: they are not some kind of bottom line to which all else can or should be reduced or subordinated.²⁰⁹

Others agree and point to the vagueness of the concept. Paris finds human security to "encompass everything from substance abuse to genocide."²¹⁰ And this has been augmented by the 2003 UN sponsored "Commission on human security", which defined human security "the vital core of all human lives"²¹¹, leaving it up to different cultures to interpret what precisely that involves.²¹² Human security is seemingly the equivalent of 'peace;' difficult to be against, precisely because it is difficult to agree what it is about; the peace of one person may not be the same as the peace of another. It is hard to imagine the materialization of some kind of generally shared conception of human security within practical and political reach anytime soon. Communitarian security, by contrast, does not require intellectual effort to envision.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.: 52-53.

²⁰⁷ Barry Buzan, 'A Reductionist, Idealistic Notion that Adds Little Analytical Value', *Security Dialogue* 35, no. 3 (2004).

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Roland Paris, 'Still an Inscrutable Concept', *Security Dialogue* 35, no. 3 (2004): 371.

²¹¹ UN Commission of Human Security 2003, quoted in Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

Communitarian security: national security

Historically the communitarian logic has been the main contributor to the development of security paradigms, whether the group is a war-band, a tribe, or village, or later feudal entities or city-states. The modern state has been the principal actor in international affairs since the late Middle Ages, and has been the dominant wager of war for that reason. After the French Revolution and the rise of nationalism and conscription, it became more logical to speak of 'national security', and this is an expression that has been with us ever since. National security is the security of some, over others; it is security for 'us' that is those who are members of a particular nation state. This means that in legal terms the individual was a reference point insofar as he or she was a member of a state. Exceptions to this general rule were pirates, who were considered stateless, and diplomats, who were considered immune.²¹³

The modern period between the Peace of Westphalia and World War II was dominated by the national security paradigm, which has distinctly communitarian overtones. According to Realists, who are the kings and queens of security studies, this group-based conception of security has universal validity.²¹⁴ During the Cold War, security studies students tended to focus on issues that could be influenced by national leaders.²¹⁵ Their most central concern was military power. Even though this was not the only source of national security, it was the most important one. Diplomacy, arms control and crisis management were also studied, but mostly because they had a direct bearing on the character and likelihood of war.

While acknowledging the *prima facie* validity of attempts at expanding the security agenda to cover disease, international crime, drugs and environmental issues, realists argue this threatens the coherence of the national security paradigm's focus on military dimensions. For Steven Walt, "[a]ny attempt to understand the evolution of human society, let alone the prospects for peace, must take account of the role of military force."²¹⁶ Thus, the state-based approach to security is the "the study of the threat, use, and control of military force."²¹⁷

So what is the nature of the unit that concerns national security? The paradigmatic symbiosis between the nation-state and security is problematic; it creates two different

²¹³ Brown, *Sovereignty, rights, and justice*, 115.

²¹⁴ Gilpin, Robert 'The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism' in Keohane, *Neorealism and its critics*; Steven M. Walt, 'The Renaissance of Security Studies', *International Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (1991)

²¹⁵ Steven M. Walt, 'The Renaissance of Security Studies', *International Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (1991): 212.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*: 213.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*: 212.

security problems; that of the classical and the inverted security dilemmas. In the classical security dilemma, the state is considered an autonomous rational actor surrounded by an environment of insecurity. Other states may interpret the pursuit of security for the first state as offensive, however, which may lead to arms races, scepticism about both intentions and capabilities and ultimately war. The state is the appropriate authority to provide security in this situation and enlists the citizens in a contractual obligation, often in the form of military conscription. "Contractual obligations between citizens represent the limit (underwritten by the authority of the state) of effective coordination for collective action (or of "community"). The security of "citizens" is identified with (and guaranteed by) that of the state; and, by definition, those who stand outside it represent potential or actual threats."²¹⁸

Conversely, however, there is also the inversed security dilemma, which stems from the potential threats to a state's internal coherence generated by a plurality of domestic communities. This puts the state community at odds with more local and regional communities inside the state. As Bauman argues: "The nation-state, after all, owed its success to the suppression of self-asserting communities; it fought tooth and nail against 'parochialism', local customs or 'dialects', promoting a unified language and historical memory at the expense of communal traditions; the more determined the state-initiated and state-supervised *Kulturkämpfe*, the fuller the nation-state success in the production of a 'natural community'."²¹⁹ In this view, and also supported by some research on nationalism, the nation is rather more a product of the state, and its constructive nation-building and cohesive strategies, than the other way around.²²⁰ This naturally raises the coherence of the state as a nation-state into a security issue as well, which can be exemplified in many different issues today, such as the difficulties of reconciling ethnic groups in the Balkans and in Iraq on the one hand, or the issue of home-grown terrorism in Europe on the other.

This is not to say that national security needs to be associated with identifiable or limited security threats domestically or internationally. It can also be associated with the wider national interest. A national *interest* has a much larger scope than national security, and interests can in themselves lead to security concerns through their sheer scope. A recent relevant example of this is American neoconservatives, who see national security as too narrow a focus for American foreign policy. As a leading neoconservative, Irving

²¹⁸ Williams, 'Broadening the Agenda of Security Studies; Politics and Methods': 232.

²¹⁹ Bauman, *Liquid modernity*, 173.

²²⁰ Umut Ozkirimli, *Theories of nationalism : a critical introduction* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 220.

Kristol, has put it, American foreign policy should be about “the national interest of a world power, as this is defined by a sense of national destiny... not a myopic national security.”²²¹ It follows from this that national security is merely a sub-section of national interest, a vehicle to ensure the accomplishment of the latter.

Liberal security; the new security agenda

A liberal security paradigm has grown out of the end of the Cold War. There are four reasons for this, and they have to do with real world events, theory, scope and institutionalisation.

Firstly, dramatic changes in the distribution of power in the world led to new security concerns. The end of the Cold War meant a strong decrease in the chance of high intensity interstate war involving any Western state. Instead, an expanded security agenda developed in response to the problems associated with a plethora of weak and failing states in areas that saw a withdrawal of superpower sponsorship. The breakdown of state structures in these societies made them relapse to a pre-modern condition, according to Robert Cooper. Among the plethora of problems affecting this part of the world, Cooper cites the fact that all major drug-producing areas are situated in countries of this category: “The pre-modern world belongs, as it were, in a different time-zone: here, as in the ancient world, the choice is again between empire or chaos. And today, because none of us sees the point of empires, we have often chosen chaos.”²²² Nonetheless, this semi-permanent condition in many areas of the world has become a breeding ground for security concerns that liberal states cannot afford to ignore. This has led to interventions: some of them humanitarian, all of them difficult.

Secondly, in theoretical terms the realist state-centric paradigm struggled to make sense of an evidently unipolar world that did not correspond to balance of power and polarity theory. Other paradigms were needed to make sense of an increasingly confusing and chaotic world. As Mark Leonard and Tom Bentley put it in the mid 1990s:

We have not found a name to describe the era we are living in, still less to understand how it might work. George Bush’s triumphant declaration of a new world order in 1990 soon gave way to a widespread sense of disorder, fuelled by ethnic warfare, resurgent nationalism and disintegration. The end of the nation state, global corporate

²²¹ Irving Kristol, *Reflections of a neoconservative : looking back, looking ahead* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), xiii. Quoted in Michael C. Williams, *The realist tradition and the limits of international relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005), 198.

²²² Robert Cooper, *The breaking of nations : order and chaos in the Twenty-first Century* (London: Atlantic Books, 2003), 17.

because of an increase in global consciousness.²²⁷ Such heightened awareness and involvement is in large measure media driven, a dynamic that goes back to the Crimean War. Examples of such risks are the direct and indirect consequences of disease (HIV/Aids primarily), environmental degradation, migration, WMD proliferation, terrorism, inequality and organized crime.²²⁸

Fourth, there is the institutional side to the liberal security paradigm ranging from transformed alliances to think tanks. Western governments, sensitive to the transnational scope of security risks, have tried to institutionalise responses, for example through listing all of these risks on NATO's agenda.²²⁹ NATO is an institution that can pool the power of the state for more flexible (coalitions of the willing) and comprehensive (international contributions) responses than what is possible for any individual state. It combines the retention of state-centricity (and is plagued by national caveats to missions) with institutionalizing of security policies at the inter-governmental level. The institutional side of liberalism is also reflected in the influence of think tanks, which have often generated policy recommendations. Andrew Williams argues that such think tanks have propagated interventionist views and an active leadership role for the UK and the United States in the world.²³⁰

Tony Blair's ten years as prime minister offer an example of a liberal foreign and security paradigm in action. Demonstrating leadership and an active and interventionist foreign policy in defence of liberal values have been leitmotifs of Blair's government. On the eve of taking office, he told an audience in Manchester in April 1997 that: "Century upon century it has been the destiny of Britain to lead other nations. That should not be a destiny that is part of our history. It should be part of our future. We are a leader of nations or nothing."²³¹ Blair has consistently repeated this view: perhaps most famously in his speech in Chicago twenty-two days into the 1999 Kosovo War. In this speech, Blair argued: "we are all internationalists now." More specifically:

We are witnessing the beginnings of a new doctrine of international community. By this I mean the explicit recognition that today more than ever before we are mutually dependent, that national interest is to a significant extent governed by international collaboration and that we need a clear and coherent debate as to the direction this

²²⁷ Coker, *Globalisation and Insecurity*, 27.

²²⁸ Ibid., chapter 3.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Williams, *Liberalism and War*, 42.

²³¹ John Kampfner, *Blair's wars* (London: Free Press, 2003), 3.

doctrine takes us in each field of international endeavour. Just as within domestic politics, the notion of community - the belief that partnership and cooperation are essential to advance self-interest - is coming into its own, so it needs to find its international echo.²³²

During those ten years, Blair has presided over Operation Desert Fox in Iraq 1998, the 1999 Kosovo War, deployment of troops to Sierra Leone in 2000, the attack on Afghanistan in late 2001, and the controversial war on Iraq in 2003. The foreign policy has certainly been interventionist, and in the cases of Sierra Leone and Kosovo in particular, more in defence of values than pure interest. Having shown a remarkable consistency on international affairs, Blair recently reiterated this liberal agenda in his valedictory essay to an international audience in *The Economist*. Britain should be a player and not a spectator in all significant international issues: “the critical point is that we, Britain, should be closely involved in all these issues because in the end they will affect our own future. And the agenda constructed should be about our values – freedom, democracy, responsibility to others, but also justice and fairness.”²³³

This is liberal internationalism through and through: it is state based, it is conceived at home and applied abroad and it inter-mixes a pursuit of interests, specifically security concerns, with moral arguments and agendas. Though the Iraq War was controversial, Blair’s premiership has been less original than critical newspaper editorials might want us to think. His close relationship with the United States has been the default position of every British prime minister since Edward Heath. In addition, the intermixing between morality and interest is a common theme in the foreign policies of France and the United States as well. Indeed, since the liberal security agenda is a little bit of everything it has become the conventional approach to security for most Western states according to Williams: “Since 1990 the liberal idea that foreign policy must ultimately be designed around moral ends, and if possible always means, has become part of the language of international politics.”²³⁴

This inevitably turns into a pragmatic contest between moral imperatives, interests and practical realities. Addressing how to strike such a balance, Chris Brown notes the widespread tendency to infuse such issues with moral absolutism: “The notion that action can only be described as ethical if motives are absolutely pure and untainted by self-interest

²³² Blair’s ‘Doctrine of the International Community’ speech, 24th April 1999 [http://www.pm.gov.uk/output/Page1297.asp].

²³³ Tony Blair, ‘What I’ve learned’, *The Economist*, June 2 2007, 29.

²³⁴ Williams, *Liberalism and War*, 63.

is bizarre, and unsupported by any plausible moral philosophy.”²³⁵ Rejecting such thinking as pop-realism, Brown goes on to argue that

If it is the case that the merest hint of self-interest is sufficient to undermine any claim that a state might be behaving ethically, then states never do behave ethically, because there is always some element of self-interest involved in state-action. If being partly motivated by self-interest becomes morally equivalent to being wholly motivated by self-interest, states then do indeed come to be seen as the kind of nakedly egoistic beings that virtually all ethical theories condemn.

As Brown argues, this is simply not the case, and the existence of a mixture of self-interest and moral motives in state action has always been a part of the international sphere at least as long as it has been credible to call it an international society. What is relatively new, however, is the concept of humanitarian interventions, which take place as the only ethical and increasingly legally justified circumvention of sovereignty

Conclusion

In this chapter, the concept of social imaginaries has been used to bridge the gap between the properties of the West and the security paradigms that today are dominant in international relations. While it is rare to find these social imaginaries clear-cut in either individuals or states, they are useful for delineating the underlying moral and practical stakes inherent in worldviews that strongly influence politics at the basic level. They are also helpful in illustrating why some security policies run into difficulties already at the theoretical level, ultimately creating messy strategies on the ground. There is a large discrepancy between saving the world, and protecting one's own country, and while communitarians and cosmopolitans can defend either view in a rigorous fashion, liberal internationalists are often trapped in an attempt to reconcile the two. Most Western foreign policies are of some kind of liberal persuasion these days. Still, this does not ease the tensions resulting from disagreements between liberals prone to agree with communitarians on the one hand, such as the French and the Americans, and to an extent the British, or the liberals who sympathize with cosmopolitans on the other hand, like the Germans, the Canadians and the Scandinavians. How these tensions manifest themselves on the ground in wars in Afghanistan and Iraq is a topic for the last chapter, which discusses the implications for warriors. The next chapter discusses the instrumental character of war today, which constitutes the military – as opposed to security – context for warriors.

²³⁵ Chris Brown, 'Ethics, interests and foreign policy', in *Ethics and Foreign Policy*, ed. Karen E. Smith; Margot Light (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), 23.

CHAPTER 3: WAR IS INSTRUMENTAL

Introduction

How are we to think of the relationship between combat and war? Whereas soldiers frequently experience combat as a sublime and existential experience, technology and bureaucracy increasingly instrumentalize warfare. The sublime and existential dimension of combat follows from the life and death stakes, the hard work and suffering involved, and the climactic separation between those who can handle the experience and thus repeat it, and those who cannot. This arena distinguishes soldiers from warriors, whereas military service distinguishes soldiers from civilians. Combat is the kernel of war; it is the sphere that has the most continuity with the past. As the character of war changes with social, technological and political developments, the essential nature of combat is constant; it retains its essential elements, which we can identify since Homeric times: sublime spectacle, danger, suffering and incomprehension. As Ernst Jünger put it in his World War II diary: “War isn’t like a cake that the two sides divide up between them to the last crumb; there is always a piece left. That’s the piece for the gods and it remains outside the argument, and it elevates the fighting from sheer brutality and demonic violence. Homer knew it and respected it.”²³⁶ The following chapter is about combat – the piece for the gods, whereas this chapter focuses on war becoming instrumental.

The instrumentalization of warfare is a product of social and economic developments, which put a premium on instrumental rationality and an increasing respect for individual lives. Strategy is pursued with technological methods to reduce casualties. The West is also pursues political objective less ruthlessly than was the case a few decades ago, both in terms of the destruction wrought on the enemy, and in terms of the willingness to sacrifice Western lives.

This chapter presents an analysis of the instrumentality of war. War registers on a continuum between the existential and the instrumental. War is existential in the sense that it manifests itself as a meaningful experience. Van Creveld says; “Throughout history, for every person who has expressed his horror of war there is another who found in it the most marvellous of all the experiences that are vouchsafed to man.”²³⁷ To say that war is instrumental, on the other hand, is to speak about two features: (1) the use of war as a

²³⁶ Ernst Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, trans. Michael Hoffmann (London: Penguin, 2004), xix. Quoted in Coker, *Future of War*, 10,11.

²³⁷ Martin L. Van Creveld, *The transformation of war* (New York: Free Press 1991), 161-2.

means; an instrument, of policy, which is to say as a strategic tool; and (2) a situation where the waging of war is characterized primarily by focus on its means (tactics and technology), rather than its aims (the strategic objective). The following argument is two-fold; it is argued that war no longer constructs existential meaning as it has done throughout history. It is also argued that the second feature of war's instrumentality is usurping the first, specifically in the American Way of Warfare.

War without existential meaning

Existential war is war that constructs existential meaning for people. It is important to be aware that when we speak of waging war, it is waged by whole societies, not necessarily states. This is a point emphasized by Colin Gray, and his example is from both World Wars where the most effective army, that of the Germans, ruled the battlefield but nonetheless lost the wars.²³⁸ To this one could add the Vietnam War, where military resources favoured the Americans in the extreme, but nonetheless led to defeat at the hands of a people utterly committed to victory.²³⁹ For an illustration of what it means when war constructs meaning for people, we have to go no further than World War I, when both internationalist prone workers and suffragettes put their agendas aside and joined in the chorus of war supporters, who crowded every major European city.²⁴⁰ By the late 19th century, European society was very highly militarized, Michael Howard has argued, and the potency of nationalism and democracy imbued entire societies with a desire for war: "It provided purpose, colour, excitement and dignity to peoples who had outgrown the age of miracles and had not yet entered that of pop stars."²⁴¹

As never before, thousands – hundreds of thousands – felt what they should have felt in peacetime; that they belonged to a great nation... Each one was called upon to cast his infinitesimal self into the glowing mass, and there to be purified of all selfishness. All differences of class, religion and language were washed away by the great feeling of fraternity... Each individual experienced an exaltation of his ego; he was no longer the

²³⁸ Gray, *Another Bloody Century*, 113.

²³⁹ See James G. Blight and Janet M. Lang, *The fog of war : lessons from the life of Robert S. McNamara* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), chapter 1. for a discussion between an American and a Vietnamese colonel on the effect the bombing had on the Vietnamese people's will to keep fighting.

²⁴⁰ Barbara Ehrenreich, *Blood Rites: Origins and history of the passions of war* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1997), 13, Howard, 2001

²⁴¹ Michael Howard, *War in European History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 111. See also Eric J Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), chapter 2, Thomas Nevin, *Ernst Jünger and Germany: Into the Abyss, 1914-1915* (London: Constable, 1997), 74.

isolated person of former times; he felt incorporated into the mass, he was a part of the people, and his person, his hitherto unnoticed person had been given meaning.²⁴²

Indeed, war has been as much existential as instrumental throughout history. The difference today is that the existential dimension is miniscule in comparison to the instrumental dimension. This may very well end – as some has argued it will – eventually.²⁴³ But while we are waiting for history to re-assert itself again, we must take stock of the present and investigate what it means that war is overwhelmingly instrumental in more positive terms (as opposed to merely the negative ones of absence of existential meaning). How did war construct meaning in the 20th century? Zaki Laïdi breaks down meaning into three constituent parts of societal experience; project, foundation and unity.²⁴⁴

a) Project

After the age of ideologies – the intellectual powerhouses of the 20th century - war is not used as a means to propel us from the present to the future anymore. The 20th century was in many ways a conflict between three ideologies, worldviews that inspired millions of people and infused their actions with meaning. Liberalism, fascism and communism were irreconcilable; their fundamental principles contradicted to such an extent that peaceful coexistence was unviable. The three decades between 1914 and 1945 saw communism and liberalism together defeating fascism. The Cold War was another stage in this Western ideational civil war, and although not turning nuclear hot, it still became a standoff between the two remaining contenders; where liberalism emerged victorious.

However, as Howard argues, when the Cold War came to an end it became increasingly clear that liberalism was by no means out of work, but became the vehicle to infuse Enlightenment values to the world outside the West.²⁴⁵ However, this is less of a coherent project than a tacit agenda, which is not explicitly pursued by policymakers. The scale of this project is larger than any of the previous ones, and as the previous chapter indicated, the West is existentially much worse equipped in terms of metaphysical convictions to see this project through. Charles Taylor argues that when people define themselves individually instead of in terms of collective values or a common project, an undeniable loss of meaning is generated. This in turn is accentuated by what he calls ‘the

²⁴² Leed, *No Man's Land*, 42,43.

²⁴³ Gray, *Another Bloody Century*.

²⁴⁴ Laïdi, *A world without meaning*, 1,2.

²⁴⁵ Howard, *Liberation or Catastrophe*, 12.

eclipse of ends', or the abandonment of a teleological perspective. When there are no ends, all becomes a matter of means. As Laïdi argues about humanitarian interventions, they can only divert the attention from a lack of telos towards challenges about means, immediacy and emergency.²⁴⁶

Western states increasingly conceive of security in terms of *risks*. Different from stationary, tangible and localized *threats*, a risk is a scenario and its attendant policy proposal for dealing with it. Mikkel Rasmussen specifies that the aim is not perfect security but a forestalling of risks to prevent them from becoming actual crises. The risk metaphor is a useful way to look at the West's outlook on the world in military terms today. The whole paradigm of "new wars" for example, can be aggregated to constitute a large, but fragmented and incoherent project for the West. But it is not treated as a project; it is managed as a risk, which is to say piecemeal, with reservations and more than a little attention to potential consequences, or 'risk traps', as Ulrich Beck calls them.²⁴⁷ These challenges to international order cannot be dealt with coherently and massively as one gigantic project, which would be akin to civilizing, economically developing and institutionalizing liberal democracy throughout the rest of the world.

b) Foundation

According to Zaki Laïdi foundation is "the basic principle upon which a collective project rests."²⁴⁸ Since the fall of religion and the growing suspicion towards science, there appears to be no recognised metaphysical foundation for Western society. Could it be as Nietzsche suggests, that: "Life is a consequence of war, society itself a means to war."²⁴⁹ The close relationship between the nation state and war is discussed in the work of Clausewitz²⁵⁰, Hegel²⁵¹, and contemporary military historians and strategists like Michel Foucault, Christopher Coker, Azar Gat, Colin S. Gray and Michael Howard.²⁵² The role of war in shaping Western states has been dominant for the majority of the Western political experience. Even a cursory view of the frequency with which wars were pursued during the

²⁴⁶ Laïdi, *A world without meaning*, 110.

²⁴⁷ Beck, *World risk society*, 141.

²⁴⁸ Laïdi, *A world without meaning*, 1.

²⁴⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power: In Science, Nature, Society and Art*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1973), 33.

²⁵⁰ Raymond Aron, *Clausewitz, philosopher of war* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986), 101.

²⁵¹ See in particular Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), paragraph 324 p. 210.

²⁵² Coker, *War and the 20th Century*, Coker, *War and the illiberal conscience*, Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, trans. David Macey (London: Penguin, 2003), Gat, *War in human civilization*, Gray, *Another Bloody Century*, Michael Howard, *The Invention of Peace: Reflections on War and International Order* (London: Profile Books, 2001).

Middle Ages demonstrates the point. When feudalism was replaced by state formation, as Charles Tilly sums up, war made the state, and the state made war.²⁵³ At the level of human nature, Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein debated the centrality of war in their famous letter exchange on the question of 'why war?'²⁵⁴

The American thermonuclear strategist Herman Kahn has made a very general but illuminating overview of a war cycle between limited and total wars going back to the 11th century.²⁵⁵ The religious wars of the 17th century were extremely destructive and as deserving of the term 'total' as the World Wars of the previous century. The following Peace of Westphalia in 1648 became the foundation for the modern international system. It was precisely the destructiveness of that war which inspired the princes to reform the system in an innovative fashion. As Howard puts it, peace rather than war needs to be explained in the modern period. "We are all born Fascists, and have to be expensively educated out of it. And when all the structures of civil society painfully built up over generations disintegrate, whether through sudden catastrophe or gradual erosion, it is to those habits we naturally return."²⁵⁶ Gat concurs and concludes his opus on war arguing that there is nothing special about human violence and war; it is the rule in nature.²⁵⁷

The political revolutions of 1989-1991 pronounced the end of war as foundation in the West. The end of the standoff with the Soviet Union meant the likelihood of nuclear War fell sharply, a prospect which itself had all but ended interstate war in Europe. Van Creveld has most vividly summed up the end of interstate war thesis: "Like a man who has been shot in the head but still manages to stagger forward a few paces, conventional war may be at its last gasp."²⁵⁸ Another often-quoted exponent of this idea, Michael Mandelbaum claimed in the late 1990s that: "Major war is obsolete in the way that slavery, duelling or foot-binding are obsolete: it is a social practice that was once considered normal, useful – even desirable – but that now seems odious".²⁵⁹ There are many problems with Mandelbaum's claim, one of which is that war probably does not have the coherence he attributes to it, as a cultural problem. As Gray argues, war is not *one* problem it is a hundred or a thousand problems, because war is not about itself it is about politics.²⁶⁰

²⁵³ Charles Tilly, *Coercion, capital, and European states, AD 990-1990* (Cambridge, Mass. : Blackwell, 1990).

²⁵⁴ Daniel Pick, *War machine : the rationalisation of slaughter in the modern age* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), 217.

²⁵⁵ Quoted in Christopher Coker, *Humane warfare* (London Routledge, 2001), 8-9.

²⁵⁶ Howard, *Liberation or Catastrophe*, 9.

²⁵⁷ Gat, *War in human civilization*, 663.

²⁵⁸ Van Creveld, *Men, women, and war*, 205.

²⁵⁹ Michael Mandelbaum, 'Is Major War Obsolete?' *Survival* 40 no. 4 (1998-99): 34.

²⁶⁰ Gray, *Another Bloody Century*, 36.

Furthermore, he argues, interstate war is very much alive, illustrated by the fact that the 1991 Gulf War, the 1999 Kosovo war, the 2001 Afghanistan War, and the 2003 Iraq War were all interstate wars.²⁶¹ If we see Gray's point in relation to Kahn's table, we find that Western warfare has been directed outwards (except in the Kosovo case) since the end of the Cold War, and that they can be characterized as limited. The West is at peace with itself and war is no longer a foundation of postmodern Western society, as it was throughout the Middle Ages and most of modernity.

c) Unity/coherence

Sam Keen describes a fundamental dynamic of friend-enemy relations when he says that before the weapon there is the image of the enemy.²⁶² Robin Fox agrees, and argues "we" fight "them" because their difference from us threatens the coherence of our identity and the validity of the ideas we live by.²⁶³ Coherence is probably a better term than unity to describe trends at such an aggregate level of international society. If such a dynamic is fundamental to human life, a lot of the existential impetus for war is generated by the social construction of friends and enemies, inside and outside.

At the critical time in the history of war of the early 19th century, Hegel explained how war creates unity and coherence for the state. Recognizing the implications of what seemed a whole people (the French) in arms, Hegel expressed in philosophical terms what sociologists and anthropologists in our time have referred to as self-other relations. The argument holds that the coherence of a social unit becomes strengthened if attacked by the outside. This logic underwrites anything from patriotism, nationalism and chauvinism at the national level, down to combat motivation at the squad level, and crowd behaviour irrespective of war. Published on the eve of the Battle of Jena in 1806, Hegel expresses the implication of this principle for the state:

In order not to let [the citizens] get rooted and settled in this isolation and thus break up the whole into fragments and let the common spirit evaporate, government has from time to time to shake them to the very centre by war. By this means it confounds the order that has been established and arranged, and violates their right to independence, while the individuals (who being absorbed therein, get adrift from the whole, striving after inviolable self-existence [*Fürsichsein*] and personal security) are

²⁶¹ Ibid., 170.

²⁶² Sam Keen, *Faces of the enemy: reflections of the hostile imagination* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 10.

²⁶³ Robin Fox quoted in Ehrenreich, *Blood Rites*, 135.

made, by the tasks thus imposed upon them by government, to feel the power of their lord and master, death.²⁶⁴

Clausewitz also subscribed to such a view: “Now in our days there is hardly any other means of educating the spirit of a people in this respect, except by War, and that too under bold Generals. By it alone can that effeminacy of feeling be counteracted, that propensity to seek for the enjoyment of comfort, which causes degeneracy in a people rising in prosperity and immersed in an extremely busy commerce.”²⁶⁵ Even though the mid and late parts of the nineteenth century were remarkably peaceful, this was as Azar Gat has argued, largely because the great powers were preoccupied with domestic disturbances and a scramble for colonial possessions.²⁶⁶ However, as the 19th century drew to close, self-other relations reasserted themselves very strongly as the nationalist forces, which underpinned the balance of power before 1914. Outside the West during the second half of the 20th century, especially since 1945, nationalism has led to countless liberation movements, both related to post-colonialism and not. This tribal communitarian logic does not even have to assume the grandeur of nationalism to lead to war, as the troubles in Somalia, Chechnya, Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan and Kurdistan illustrate today.

As far as the West is concerned, this feature of political life is all but co-opted into liberal democratic politics (terrorist groups like ETA and IRA apart). The consolidation of European national politics into such a remarkable successful project as the EU is a testimony to how far Europeans have been able to transcend national differences. War no longer leads to unity in the West. Western societal coherence, such as it is, results rather more from contingent factors like democracy, wealth and desire for material possessions and pleasures. As the previous chapter demonstrated, this leads rather more to individualism than societal coherence, but at least there is agreement on the undesirability of war.

9/11 inspired a forceful, yet brief, solidarity with the United States, but the resulting military action was not a NATO operation so much as a coalition of the willing, where most contributors offered highly specialized forces, which served under American command. Coalitions of the willing are designed, in Rumsfeld’s words, to let the mission

²⁶⁴ Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. B. Baillie, 2nd edition ed. (London: 1949), 474. Quoted in Shlomo Avineri, 'The Problem of War in Hegel's Thought', in *The Hegel Myths and Legends*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1996), 132. An alternative reading of Hegel is offered by J. P. Verene and Karl Jaspers, where Hegel explains war through the existence of the warrior as a type. This will be discussed further in chapter 7.

²⁶⁵ Quoted in Pick, *War Machine*, 31.

²⁶⁶ Gat, *War in human civilization*, 536.

decide the alliance rather than vice versa.²⁶⁷ This is very different from the cemented Western alliance of the two World Wars and the Cold War. Furthermore, if Afghanistan was relatively uncontroversial, Iraq 2003 was positively divisive both within individual Western states and within the Western alliance.²⁶⁸

However, the loss of unity does not only transpire at the political level. It is also a question of who in society is doing war. The Cold War saw the transition from conscript militaries to professional forces for most of the European states. The major implication of the professionalization of the armed forces is, as conscript advocates have always argued, that the military and the armed forces are losing touch with each other socially. The end of conscription generates less interest in military affairs by the public, and this affects not only young people but increasingly their financially hegemonic parents in their 50s and 60s, who themselves have not experienced war first hand. This development has been called a 'revolution in attitudes towards the military', (RAM).²⁶⁹ For all these reasons, the West is not a coherent constructor of meaning in war.

Instrumental War I: War as instrument

As chapter two demonstrated, the Western experience is characterised by the increasing spread of, and commitment to, rationalism. It is a dominant mode of strategic thinking as well. Strategy, as Clausewitz defines it, is the continuation of policy with additional means. Therefore, strategy is the use of the engagement in war in relation to policy goals, whereas tactics is about the use of armed force in the engagement. Thus, any combat action is part of the realm of tactics.²⁷⁰ How one defines policy is a matter of semantics, but it is certainly collective action towards achieving goals. It is means-ends thinking. This is agreed by a majority of leading contemporary strategic thinkers. Barry Posen sees grand strategy as political-military means-end chain.²⁷¹ Richard Betts echoes Posen, saying strategies are chains of relationships between means and ends.²⁷² Lawrence Freedman concurs: "Strategy is about the pursuit of political ends with military means in the international

²⁶⁷ Richard Norton-Taylor, 'A Lame Duck?' *The Guardian*, May 22 2003. [retrieved 17/11/2007]

²⁶⁸ See in particular Timothy Garton Ash, *Free world : America, Europe, and the surprising future of the West* (New York: Random House, 2004).

²⁶⁹ Peter Feaver and Richard Kohn, *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), Gray, *Another Bloody Century*, James C. Kurth, 'Clausewitz and the Two Contemporary Revolutions: RMA and RAM', in *Strategic Logic and Political Rationality*, ed. Bradford A. Lee and Karl F. Walling (London: Frank Cass, 2003).

²⁷⁰ Gray, *Modern strategy*, 17.

²⁷¹ Barry Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 13. Quoted in Rasmussen, *The Risk Society at War*, 21.

²⁷² Richard K. Betts, 'Is Strategy an Illusion?' *International Security* 25, no. 2 (2000): 6. Quoted in Rasmussen, *The Risk Society at War*, 21.

environment”²⁷³ There is no question that strategy is a prominent feature of war, but the question is whether all war is subordinate to strategic thinking?

There are two arguments espoused by prominent thinkers on war and strategy on this topic. The first view, held by Colin Gray, is that war is about things that can plausibly be said to be political.²⁷⁴ Politics is about power, and power is the one property for which there is no substitute. Whatever agreements one enters into with neighbours or enemies, it is easier to thwart peace than for peace to be enforced: “In 1939 Hitler truly wanted war, that was a desire the international community was not well equipped to deny him.”²⁷⁵ Hitler’s rise to power illustrates the degree to which power imposes a unity to politics whether domestic or international, or even simply tribal: Power’s language is policy, but the power grammar changes between peacetime policy, and policy, which is supported by arms.²⁷⁶

Van Creveld agrees to an extent with Gray, but he argues that strategy is only relevant to war up to a certain point. When the intensity of war becomes total – an all out effort for sheer survival – strategy is no longer a meaningful part of the equation, since the only relevant goal is survival through victory. At this point the means and ends blur, and war approaches the purely existential rather than being waged strategically.²⁷⁷ It can be helpful to see a correlation between wars becoming existential and escalation to total war. German defensive warfare on the Eastern Front and Israel’s fight for survival in 1948 and to an extent in 1967 are examples of wars where strategy apparently ceases to offer guidance since the options are very limited. Given such circumstances, Van Creveld is right. War can transcend strategy, but it is not typical.

For the majority of modernity, Western warfare has been strategic. It has been less than total, and it has been about politics and power. Once these two conditions are satisfied, war is within the Clausewitzian realm of strategy. Strategy should be understood as instrumentality because it does not in itself explain why wars are happening. War is not autonomous, as Clausewitz insisted, but is influenced by the cultural, social, economic and strategic context. This context explains why there is war and what any given war is about. Strategy comes into its own as a defensive or offensive means to make sure the

⁷³ Lawrence Freedman, 'Indignation, Influence and Strategic Studies', *International Affairs* 60, no. 2 (1984): 210. Quoted in Rasmussen, *The Risk Society at War*, 21.

⁷⁴ Gray, *Another Bloody Century*, 59.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 360.

⁷⁶ Christopher Coker, *Ethics and war in the 21st century* (London: Routledge, 2008), chapter 5, Gray, *Another bloody Century*, chapter 2, Gray, *Modern strategy*, chapter 1.

⁷⁷ Van Creveld, *The transformation of war*, 142.

engagement takes place in the most favourable circumstance possible to translate combat actions into a political outcome.

Van Creveld has argued war can never be a question of interest, contrary to Gray, because dead men have no interests.²⁷⁸ This is a valid point, but strategic interest and combat motivation are two different things, despite sharing the currency of power. Gray says; “Some readers may wonder why it is that soldiers can fight so well in defence of a cause that they do not value highly. The reason is not hard to find: War is about personal survival.”²⁷⁹ However, Gray is also imprecise on this point. The reason soldiers keep fighting on is that *combat* is about personal survival. *War* is about policy and the reason why they are sent to fight. The two are qualitatively different things, even though one is most often embedded in the other. Only in the rare case when war becomes total is war about survival for the strategist and the soldier in equal measure. Otherwise, the concerns of the strategist are not the same as those of the soldier. The strategist’s job is to translate the causes of war, whatever they may be, to favourable circumstances for the soldier to do his (tactical) job. Neither strategy nor tactics are about motivation. Strategic thinking does not explain war’s occurrence, nor does tactical thinking explain combat motivation.²⁸⁰

This is not to say that the relationship between strategy and politics has always been clear. Van Creveld demonstrates how during the early 20th century politics was completely excluded from the thinking of the German general staff. Indeed there was little overall coordination of warfare at all, making it an almost entirely self-referential series of operations. Naval operations and army operations were not coordinated in either Germany or the United States; their only common link was the Kaiser and the President respectively.

This was a time when strategy was inspired by the American Civil War and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, where railroads had proven decisive for logistics and strategic mobility. Consequently general staffs were typically staffed with talented railway-experts, people with a technical and bureaucratic mindset.²⁸¹ The U.S. military academy West Point heavily focused on management and engineering, rather than strategic (in the Clausewitzian sense) thinking in its curriculum.²⁸² World War I was a gridlock and saw limited scope for strategy short of attrition. But during World War II technology had

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 158.

²⁷⁹ Gray, *Modern strategy*, 46.

²⁸⁰ I will come back to combat motivation in more detail in the following chapter.

²⁸¹ Howard, *War in European History*, 101, Van Creveld, *The Changing Face of War*, 16.

²⁸² Chris Hables Gray, *Postmodern war* (New York: Guilford Press, 1997), 117, Philip K. Lawrence, *Modernity and war: the creed of absolute violence* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 27.

unlocked the potential of mobility, which in turn offered strategists relatively more agency at the operational level. This development in combination with the global scope of the conflict greatly facilitated the return of strategic thinking. Even so, the Allied demand for unconditional surrender on the Western Front, and a war of extermination on the Eastern Front curtailed the scope for strategy, reinforcing the impression that this war was also one of attrition. The Cold War became the strategic age par excellence, with the establishment of strategic studies as a separate academic discipline, with such technical sophistication that strategists were more often than not civilian academics. However, strategic thinking was almost entirely focused on how to avoid thermonuclear war, rather than refinement of the link between conventional capabilities and desired political outcomes.

Thus, it is perhaps no wonder that the discourse of war today is still largely focused on the means of war, rather than the character of war as a *means* towards political goals. There are many means in war that one can focus on instead of the intractable challenges of politics. Among these, technological development is the easiest one to control; it is about manipulating mechanical matter and the attendant frame of mind that this involves. Strategy, which is about the manipulation of people's will and interests, is infinitely more difficult for no more profound reason than that people have their own conceptions about what their interests are and do not easily allow themselves to be convinced otherwise.

Instrumental War II: War by technological instruments – the American Way of Warfare

*American civilization is of a purely mechanized nature.
Without mechanization, America would disintegrate more swiftly than India.*
Hitler's Table Talk²⁸³

Today it is all but commonplace to equate the Western Way of Warfare almost exclusively with American warfare.²⁸⁴ Wars pursued by Western states after the Falklands War of 1982 have all been American dominated. Grenada 1983, Panama 1988, Iraq 1991 and 2003, Somalia 1993, Bosnia 1995, Kosovo 1999 and Afghanistan 2001 are all examples of this. There are three major tenets to American warfare, all contributing to make it very instrumental. Firstly, strategically it is virtually apolitical, fought with a managerial rather than strategic ethos. The method of choice is attrition, which leads to a focus on tactics over

²⁸³ Hugh Trevor-Roper, ed., *Hitler's Table Talk* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1953), 188.

²⁸⁴ Christopher Coker, 'Is there a Western Way of Warfare', *IFS Info - Institute for Defence Studies (Oslo)*, no. 1 (2004): chapter 4, Gray, *Postmodern war* 115-20.

strategy.²⁸⁵ Secondly, technology has always been a favourable means, whatever the goal. Thirdly, during the 20th century airpower has developed into the pre-eminent American tool of war.²⁸⁶

a) Apolitical war

The main reason why American warfare has tended towards the apolitical is an insistence on a clear division between the military and political establishments, as Samuel Huntington has argued is appropriate for a democracy.²⁸⁷ This sentiment was strongly reaffirmed recently by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen in an open letter to serving officers.²⁸⁸ Politicians make decisions about military power and the military execute them. Unfortunately, this leads the military, in Gray's words to "eschew politics, and in practice to discount consideration of, and preparation for, the character of the context of peace that should follow. This is a classic example of an army having the vices of its virtues."²⁸⁹ Retired Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers (2001-05) has also expressed this view: "No military officer, even at the very top, can know all that is involved in the highest levels of decision-making, which is inherently political (in the generic, not partisan, sense)."²⁹⁰ Myers echoed the newly appointed commander of the US 8th Army in Korea, in 1951, who when asked what American objectives in the war were, replied: "I don't know. The answer must come from higher authority."²⁹¹ An essentially apolitical attitude by even the very top military echelon is a continuous topic of debate, and is illustrated by the very strong reservations held by generals to publicly voice their objections against the wisdom of attacking Iraq with only 150,000 troops in 2003, and also with respect to the ongoing strategy. Retired generals, like the half dozen in the 2006

²⁸⁵ Dyer, *War*, 139, Gray, *Another Bloody Century*, 364, Colin S. Gray, 'National Style in Strategy: The American Example', *International Security* 6, no. 2 (1981): 32, Edward Luttwak, 'The Operational Level of War', *International Security* 5, no. 3 (1980-91): 413, Russell Frank Weigley, *The American way of war; a history of United States military strategy and policy* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), xxii.

²⁸⁶ Gray, *Another Bloody Century*, 89, Gray, *Modern strategy*, 63, Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 164, McInnes, *Spectator-sport war* chapter 5, Martin Shaw, *The New Western Way of War* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 35, Van Creveld, *The Changing Face of War*, 202.

²⁸⁷ Samuel P. Huntington, *The soldier and the state; the theory and politics of civil-military relations* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1957).

²⁸⁸ Thom Shanker, 'Military Chief Warns Troops About Politics', *New York Times*, May 26 2008.

²⁸⁹ Gray, *Another Bloody Century*, 190. See also Huntington, *The soldier and the state*, 11.

²⁹⁰ Richard Myers and Richard H. Kohn, 'The Military's Place', *Foreign Affairs* 86 (2007).

²⁹¹ Quoted Michael Evans, 'Australia's War in Korea: Strategic Perspectives and Military Lessons' (paper presented at the 2000 Chief of Army's Military History Conference: The Korean War 1950-53, Australia, 2000).

'generals revolt' who demanded Rumsfeld's resignation, tend to speak out, but their words carry less weight.²⁹²

The main problem with such deference from senior military leaders is at the *strategic* level, where there appears to be a shortage of debate about what the goals of a war are. This is illustrated for example by the failure to appreciate the political and strategic character of the Vietnam war by both civil and military leadership,²⁹³ and the military's acceptance and institutionalization of linking the Iraq war and 9/11 into a general Global War on Terror. If the top military echelons could be excused for failing to think sufficiently strategic (and they should not), there is no such excuse for the civilian leadership. Secretary Rumsfeld's focus on military transformation (which is essentially about means) at the expense of strategic thinking about Afghanistan and Iraq was alluded to by former CENTCOM commander, retired Marine General Anthony Zinni:

There's a difference between winning battles, or defeating the enemy in battle, and winning the war... What strikes me is that we are constantly redesigning the military to do something it already does pretty well... If we're talking about the future, we need to talk about not how you win the peace as a separate part of the war, but you've got to look at this thing from start to finish... The military does a damn good job of killing people and breaking things... But that is not the problem...²⁹⁴

If managerial/technological transformation is the major preoccupation with the civilian military leadership, the question is: who is going to do the imperative strategic thinking? It appears that instead of strategic thinking the American military has relied rather more on managerial thinking, which is to say a systematization of the preparation and conduct of battle, rather than on what the war is for.

b) War by management

From the Civil War experience onwards, engineering and managerial thinking appear to have been more important to American military leaders than political reflections. Having consolidated her borders, the pressing geopolitical challenges faced by Europeans did not apply to the same extent in the United States. Two social developments accompanied this political reality; the mechanisation of labour and the introduction of management thinking to labour and war. John Ellis has argued mechanisation of labour followed from a shortage

²² Robert D. Kaplan, 'What Rumsfeld got right', *The Atlantic* July/August 2008.

²³ Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*.

²⁴ General Anthony Zinni, Address to the Marine Corps Association and U.S. Naval Institute Forum, Arlington, Virginia, 4 September 2003. See also Kaplan, 'What Rumsfeld got right'.

of manpower and growing needs for machines, absence of worker guilds who would see machinery as threatening, and rapid innovation in mechanical thinking.²⁹⁵ Mechanical approaches to production were later integrated with Taylorist and later Fordist managerial thinking. As Coker explains: “What the US witnessed from the 1870s was the growth of what the distinguished economist John Kenneth Galbraith calls a “techno-structure”: the application of science to production... What emerged was a technicist ideology promising a technological fix to every military problem.”²⁹⁶

Experience in either of the two world wars did not contradict this technicist ideology; attrition decided both. Even the Korean War (though it did not end because of it) was waged through attrition strategy.²⁹⁷ Indeed, the American economy, production power and logistical skill contributed substantially at the strategic level to the outcome of the three wars; securing victory through production in the two world wars, and a draw through the threat of using the atom bomb in Korea. Only in Vietnam did what William Gibson calls ‘technowar’ run into serious trouble.

The problems on the ground in Vietnam were heralded by the arrival in Pentagon of a generation of young, brilliant ‘whizz kids’ spearheaded by Kennedy’s Secretary of Defence Robert Strange McNamara. McNamara’s career was indicative of his quantitative approach. It started with McNamara developing systems analysis for the War Department to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of strategic bombing against German and Japan.²⁹⁸ McNamara went on to become Professor of Harvard Business School and later President of Ford America before entering politics. He and his assistants brought quantitative, managerial and scientific techniques into the Pentagon, governed by a mindset perhaps best summed up by Henry Kissinger, who argued that since 1945 US foreign policy was based on “the assumption that technology plus managerial skills gave transformations in ‘emerging countries’”.²⁹⁹ As Gibson puts it: “By adopting microeconomics, game theory, systems analysis, and other managerial techniques, the Kennedy administration advanced “limited war” to greater specificity, making it seem much more controllable, manageable, and therefore desirable as foreign policy.”³⁰⁰ Gibson describes a three-step process whereby the military became permeated with managerial

²⁹⁵ John Ellis, *The Social History of the Machine Gun* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975).

²⁹⁶ Coker, 'Is there a Western Way of Warfare': 13-14.

²⁹⁷ Van Creveld, *The Changing Face of War*, 89, 154.

²⁹⁸ Blight and Lang, *The fog of war : lessons from the life of Robert S. McNamara*, James William Gibson, *The perfect war : technowar in Vietnam* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986), 14.

²⁹⁹ Kissinger, *American Foreign Policy*, 1974 quoted in Gibson, *The Perfect War*, 15.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 80.

thinking: Firstly, warfare was a problem of organizing quantities, which was seen by McNamara to epitomize the highest form of human reasoning. Secondly, quantification was followed up by constructions of models for production of warfare, a process of thinking inspired by analyses of the behaviour of firms in the capitalist economy. Thirdly, the enemy was conceptualized to behave according to the same logic.³⁰¹

The two dominant forms of war fighting in Vietnam illustrate the implementation of this kind of thinking; search and destroy missions on the ground, and bombing from the air. Early in the war the American military leadership had learnt that two of the major political challenges in the counterinsurgency war were outside of reach.³⁰² One was the failure to reform governance in the south led to a focus on the revolutionary enemy instead. The other was that in 1965 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Earl Wheeler privately advised President Johnson that pacifying the countryside in South Vietnam³⁰³ was deemed to require somewhere between 700,000 and 1 million troops fighting for seven years.³⁰⁴ The only remaining solution became attrition on the ground backed up with what SACEUR General Wesley Clark, referring to the strategy behind the 1999 Kosovo War, called ‘coercive diplomacy,’³⁰⁵ which is to say bombing as communication.

Not only were these techniques unviable in themselves, but they contradicted each other as well. Aside from the many tactical problems,³⁰⁶ search and destroy generated operational concepts and promotion rewards governed by a tally of body counts, which became inflated. Even at inflated rates, the production of body counts did not yield sufficient results. During the Tet offensive, which was a rare battle-type engagement where the Americans won easily, the attrition of the enemy was far from sufficient. Indeed, even at Tet attrition rates: “The DRV could fight for up to *thirty years* before its manpower account would bankrupt. Vietcong forces could only fight for another three and a half years, a figure reflecting the order of battle, but three and a half years of fighting at Tet levels meant tremendous American casualties.”³⁰⁷ In addition, Tet exposed that the

³⁰¹ Ibid., 79-80.

³⁰² Ibid., 82.

³⁰³ Not to mention Laos, Cambodia, and if it came to that, North Vietnam.

³⁰⁴ Gibson, *The Perfect War*, 97. This would of course necessitate full conscription.

³⁰⁵ James Der Derian, *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network* (Oxford: Westview, 2001), 192.

³⁰⁶ Troops in the jungle Vietcong virtually always knew when and where the American forces would be inserted, hearing helicopters from far away, making search-and-destroy an inherently defensive tactic.

³⁰⁷ Gibson, *The Perfect War*, 169 original italics.

American military leadership's claim to the American public that Vietcong was beaten was a lie.

The search and destroy missions also came in conflict with the coercive diplomacy of bombing. Bombing in support of ground search-and-destroy operations was annihilatory in logic, where precision and actually hitting targets was essential. However, the strategic bombing campaign called 'Rolling Thunder', aimed at sending a message through regularised bombing which escalated and de-escalated to coerce the North Vietnamese into negotiation. In the latter case, it was more important that bombing took place at decipherable intervals rather than what the bombs hit. These two approaches logically subverted each other. Both interdiction bombing and search-and-destroy on the ground followed the principles of attrition, forcing the enemy to expend resources. While such an approach was nominally successful against the highly mechanised Germans in World War II, it had hardly any impact on the jungle bound Vietcong and the unindustrialised agrarian subsistence economy of the North Vietnamese.³⁰⁸ The CIA found that that no conceivable conventional bombing campaign could deny the North Vietnamese sufficient supplies for their needs.³⁰⁹

Compounding these mistakes was a fundamental misapprehension on both sides of what the war was about for the opposite side. At root, the North Vietnamese saw the war as a national liberation struggle, whereas the Americans saw it as a strategic Cold War theatre influenced by Soviet and Chinese communism. American generals failed to identify how critical the political and willpower dimensions were to the enemy's thinking. A conversation with an American correspondent recalled by the inventor of the concept of air-mobility, General Williams, illustrates this well:

Sitting and talking to him, he made the charge. He said, "You are doing more in your helicopters to prevent our side from winning this war than anyone else." I said, "How's that?" He said, "Well, let me illustrate it this way. Everybody agrees that this is a war for the hearts and minds of the people. How do you expect our forces to win the hearts and minds of the people when all they do is take off from one Army base and fly overhead at 1500 feet while Charlie is sitting down there and he's got 'em by the testicles jerking, and every time he jerks their hearts and minds follow. Now, until

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 342-7.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 353.

the Americans are willing to get down there with Charlie, he's got their hearts and minds."³¹⁰

Reflecting upon this, General Williams agreed that "if you really want to be cost-effective, you have to fight the war the way the VC fought it. You have to fight it down in the muck and in the mud and at night, and on a day-to-day basis." Yet, the general told the correspondent, "that's not the American way, and you are not going to get the American soldier to fight that way."³¹¹

This is not necessarily true for all American forces, as the relatively successful early counter-insurgency campaign waged by US Army Special Forces proves.³¹² However, the Special Forces' lessons and experiences were not what survived the war.

Today management thinking, attrition warfare and a failure to appreciate the political dimensions of warfare continue to plague American efforts. To this the experience of Vietnam has added another dimension of great importance; risk aversion, which reinforces and is reinforced by management thinking. Risks are inherently based on estimates of likelihood, coupled with the gravity of an actualisation of a worst case scenario along a large spectre of security areas from crime, WMD proliferation, terrorism through to migration.³¹³ This does not generate much in the way of political capital, which makes it very hard to convince the public that risks ought to be accompanied with willingness for sacrifice. That is an important feature of why the war in Iraq was so unpopular with the public in most countries, and it helps explain why many NATO countries in Afghanistan are unwilling to take up the fight with Taliban in the south. As far as military instrumentality goes, this reality generates risk aversion, both politically and militarily. In addition, risk aversion in turn reinforces the temptations of the magic bullet, which is sent instead of the men.

c) Technology and airpower

The preferred means of American warfare are technology and airpower. As Gray puts it, American leaders have tended to prefer sending in steel rather than men to do military

³¹⁰ Quoted in Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 171.

³¹¹ Thomas C Thayer, 'How to Analyze a War Without Fronts: Vietnam 1965-72', *Journal of Defense Research* 7B, no. 3 (1975): 827.

³¹² Francis J. Kelly, *The Green Berets in Vietnam, 1961-71* (Washington: Brassey's, 1991), Charles M. Simpson and Robert B. Rheault, *Inside the Green Berets : the first thirty years, a history of the U.S. Army Special Forces* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1983).

³¹³ Coker, *Globalisation and Insecurity*, Yee-Kuang Heng, *War as Risk Management: Strategy and Conflict in an Age of Globalised Risks* (London: Routledge, 2005), Rasmussen, *The Risk Society at War*.

tasks.³¹⁴ Commanding General in Iraq David Petraeus argued in 1997 “never send a man when you can send a bullet”.³¹⁵ This is reflective of an attitude that prioritises conventional warfare, which translates into strategic preference for annihilation,³¹⁶ and attrition in tactics.³¹⁷ The use of steel instead of manpower attempts to achieve several things at once; efficiency and effectiveness (more military effect per man); less exposure (to enemy fire); and less discomfort (long term field deployments). However, for all of these virtues there are vices.

The tactical military effectiveness that is created is not easily translated into a desired strategic outcome in anything short of conventional war, particularly since massive use of firepower alienates civilians who invariably experience what is euphemistically referred to as ‘collateral damage’. Martin Shaw calls this ‘risk transfer warfare’, where risk is transferred from the troops and over to the local population in the given warzone.³¹⁸ Furthermore, exposing oneself to risk and staying long term with the local population is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for success in any insurgency-like campaign. Today, most if not all, campaigns have insurgency-like traits. Intellectual generals like Petraeus do not fail to see the subtleties of counterinsurgency as the new counterinsurgency field manual, to which he contributed substantially, illustrates. However, within the American military, there is a culture for relying on firepower, which has led to strong exchanges between Americans and the British in particular, in both Iraq and Afghanistan.³¹⁹

This firepower very often comes from the most mechanized and technology-intensive of all the branches of military power; air power. Airpower’s prominence today is hardly surprising given how airpower won the naval Pacific campaign in World War II, and how air superiority in Western Europe was a precondition for the ultimately successful march on Germany. Standing on the beach soon after D-day Dwight D. Eisenhower’s son advised his father that the following campaign would never succeed without air supremacy,

³¹⁴ Gray, *Modern strategy*, 63, Weigley, *The American Way of War*.

³¹⁵ Damian Carr David H. Petraeus, John Abercrombie, 'Why we need FISTs - never send a man when you can send a bullet', *Field Artillery* (1997). Available http://sill-www.army.mil/FAMAG/1997/MAY_JUN_1997/MAY_JUN_1997_PAGES_3_5.pdf

³¹⁶ John A. Nagl, *Learning to eat soup with a knife : counterinsurgency lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, Paperback ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 43, Weigley, *The American Way of War*, xxii.

³¹⁷ Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 164, Luttwak, 'The Operational Level of War'.

³¹⁸ Shaw, *The New Western Way of War*.

³¹⁹ See in particular: Nigel Alwyn-Foster, 'Changing the army for counter-insurgency operations', *Military Review* November December (2005), Richard Norton-Taylor and Rory McCarthy, 'Coalition divided over battle for hearts and minds', *The Guardian*, April 1 2003, Michael Smith, 'Secret war of the SAS', *The Sunday Times*, September 16 2007, Declan Walsh, 'Strategy that fails to win hearts and minds', *The Guardian*, August 25 2007.

to which Eisenhower senior replied; “Without air supremacy I wouldn’t be here.”³²⁰ In every subsequent war, airpower has played a defining role, and the success is illustrated by the fact that American ground forces have not been submitted to (hostile) air attack since the Korean War. Nonetheless, airpower has been much more successfully applied in conventional warfare than what has been the case in insurgency-like wars, of which Vietnam is the primary example.

Airpower’s lure is, as McInnes puts it, that it offers “gratification without commitment.”³²¹ Following the indeterminate results of strategic bombing in World War II, sceptics could argue, as Colin Gray has, that air power is merely a supportive arm, it cannot win a war alone: “the whole object of the exercise is to influence the behaviour of an enemy who needs to be controlled where he lives, on land.”³²² Gray’s point is supported by the 1999 Kosovo War; peace could only be established on the ground, and some would say that it followed as much from Russian diplomatic pressure, threats of ground invasion, and economic blockade as much as from air bombardment.³²³ At any rate, the war gave proponents of air power renewed energy. As did the role, airpower played in providing firepower for American Special Forces and the Afghan Northern Alliance in 2001.

The debates about the role of technology in the US military has for the last couple of decades revolved around concepts like ‘revolution in military affairs’ (RMA), ‘Network Centric Warfare’ (1990s), and ‘Military Transformation’ (2000 onwards).³²⁴ Andrew Marshall of the Pentagon’s Office of Net Assessments coined the term RMA and was influential in its wider spread following the first Gulf War. Marshall himself was inspired by the Soviets who had taken a lead in thinking about these issues in the 1970s, particularly Marshall Nikolai Ogarkov.³²⁵ Andrew Krepinevich’s definition of RMA from 1994 is still standing as a formulation of the pre-eminent structural effort in the American military: “What is a military revolution? It is what occurs when the application of new technologies into a significant number of military systems combine with innovative operational concepts

³²⁰ Quoted in McInnes, *Spectator-sport war* 80.

³²¹ Eliot A. Cohen, ‘The Mystique of U.S. Air Power’, *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 1 (1994): 109.

³²² Gray, *Modern strategy*, 207.

³²³ Gray, *Another Bloody Century*, 101.

³²⁴ Lawrence Freedman, *The revolution in strategic affairs, Adelphi paper 318* (London: IISS & Oxford University Press 1998), Gray, *Another Bloody Century*, 104-20.

³²⁵ Colin S. Gray, *Strategy for chaos: revolutions in military affairs and the evidence of history* (London: Routledge, 2002), 33,37,246.

and organizational adaptations in a way that fundamentally alters the character and conduct of conflict.”³²⁶

What are the material properties of this revolution? The debate centres on how information will revolutionise warfare. Information is sometimes referred to as C⁴ISTAR, which means command, control, communications, coordination, intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance, or in more simple terms; collection, integration and dissemination of tactical (actionable) information about the enemy (whereabouts, capability, intention, direction) relative to friendly forces. Admiral William Owen, a staunch proponent of RMA, has promised technology can conquer both the fog and friction of war through technology: “That technology can give us the ability to see a ‘battlefield’ as large as Iraq or Korea – an area 200 miles on a side – with unprecedented fidelity, comprehension, and timeliness; by night or day, in any kind of weather, all the time.”³²⁷ It is hoped that this sensory capability will reduce the necessity to kill the enemy, because they will realize they cannot win. This was the sales pitch for transformation.

Three major critiques can be levelled at the RMA/Transformation idea. The first critique argues it is not a revolution. Van Creveld and Colin Gray are equally exasperated by the many “revolutions” in naval warfare and combined arms warfare, from the nuclear to the jet engine, from the computer to the cruise missile, and from space warfare to information warfare.³²⁸ Lawrence Freedman agrees that what is happening is evolutionary not revolutionary.³²⁹ Even though new technologies increase the speed, precision and destructiveness of firepower, the essential principles of combat remain the same. Van Creveld observes that the basic idea behind the U.S. Army’s 1980s forerunner to RMA, called AirLand Battle, is not very different from German operations in 1943.³³⁰ Indeed, when he asked some generals whether they could identify any significant difference between Norman Schwarzkopf’s operations in the Gulf War of 1991 compared with Patton’s operations in Western Europe in 1944-45, they could not.³³¹

The second critique is that the RMA does not necessarily work. The recent victories against “Afghan military rabble”³³² and an Iraqi (2003) enemy that was

³²⁶ Krepinevich quoted in Gray, *Another Bloody Century*, 112.

³²⁷ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 102.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 105, Van Creveld, *The Changing Face of War*, 202.

³²⁹ Lawrence Freedman and International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Revolution in Strategic Affairs, Adelphi paper 318* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 8, Van Creveld, *The Changing Face of War*, 203.

³³⁰ Van Creveld, *The Changing Face of War*, 203.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 197.

³³² Gray, *Another Bloody Century*, 193.

“extraordinarily incompetent”³³³ to the point that one Marine commander argued Iraqi generals “couldn’t carry a bucket of rocks”³³⁴ do not necessarily prove much. With respect to a potentially more able and capable enemy Van Creveld emphasizes how most of the technologies in question can be used to produce countermeasures that are often as significant as the initial invention, neutralizing gains.³³⁵ Furthermore, whatever the ability of the enemy, there are problems of information overflow - or bottlenecks - a characteristic challenge of command and control, which came up as bandwidth shortage in the 2003 Iraq War.³³⁶

The third and most serious critique of the RMA/Transformation debate, however, is whether it yields anything to strategy in any relation to the vast efforts, amounts of brainpower, and financial resources expended on it. Such a degree of prioritization is matched only by the vastness of RMA as a strategic ambition. What matters is not even servicing of targets, but “the availability of targets and the consequences of hitting them.”³³⁷ This is akin to a belief in having the ability to capture enemy troops electronically, and then to have them concede defeat (to the electronic sensors) permanently, so that any combat becomes unnecessary. Such a form of technological hubris and ethnocentrism suggests that enemy forces *want* to play by the rules of technicist warfare. The degree to which this is not the case can be illustrated by a comparison of combat time in Afghanistan and Iraq. Compare the transitions from, and aftermath of, major combat operations in both Afghanistan and Iraq (six years and counting + four years and counting) with the combat phases of those two campaigns (two months + three weeks). A tally of allied casualties in those times would yield a similar imbalance. Despite all its promises war by instruments does clearly not quite do what it promises.

Conclusion

When taking a measure of what war has become it is very tempting to rephrase the question into; what have the Americans turned conventional war into? This is only partially unfair. The instrumentality of war today is a product of social and political developments on the one hand, and American military supremacy on the other. Among the social and

³³³ Ibid., 193.

³³⁴ Rick Atkinson, *In the Company of Soldiers; a chronicle of combat in Iraq* (London: Little, Brown, 2004), 4.

³³⁵ Van Creveld, *The Changing Face of War*, 203.. Granted, the US has monopoly on many of these technologies today, but that in turn also means they have not been validated against a (nearly) peer enemy.

³³⁶Rasmussen, *The Risk Society at War*, 55.

³³⁷ Ibid., 59.

political developments, the most significant factors are the end of the Cold War and war as a source of meaning.

The American military superiority is a product of massive funding and military research, and the absence of a viable peer in this field. American military culture has always been about instrumentality: war *as* instrument and war *by* technology. It is not necessarily more so today than 150 years ago, but the military superiority breeds hubris on behalf of its utility. Freedman is undoubtedly correct to argue that it would be unwise not to exploit the advantages of the information revolution in war, “as long as they are kept on tap, rather than on top”.³³⁸ As Freedman also recognizes, it is equally important to recognise General Earl Tilford’s observations that all of America’s defeats since World War II came at the hands of enemies who had little or no air or naval forces, and whose ground forces were essentially light infantry.³³⁹

It is appropriate to refer back to Clausewitz, because he struck the right balance between asking what war is and saying what it ought to be about. Clausewitz established that war is about things external to itself. In Gray’s words; “war is about politics, it is not about fighting”³⁴⁰ This is as much a normative statement as a descriptive one. It is not normative in the moralistic sense, but in the sense of imbuing wisdom that is well worth heeding. The new American way of warfare denies politics and equates war with fighting, continues Gray, and even equates fighting with the servicing of targets.³⁴¹ As Clausewitz put it:

Theorists soon found out how difficult the subject was and felt justified in evading the problem by again directing their principles and systems only to physical matters and unilateral activity. As in the science concerning *preparations for war*, they wanted to reach a set of sure and positive conclusions, and for that reason considered only factors that could be mathematically calculated.³⁴²

Clausewitz here directs our attention to the two major problems with instrumental war. It reduces war to quantitative and physical properties on the one hand, and treats the enemy as an essentially constant and static property on the other hand, not an agile and fluid one, which has his own, will, and frequently lots of it. Of course, there are exceptions to this

³⁸ Freedman, *The revolution in strategic affairs*, 64.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁴⁰ Gray, *Another Bloody Century*, 198.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Quoted Der Derian, *Virtuous War*, 2.

view, in the American military principally represented by the US Marine Corps; their persistent focus is on history and the human element over the tools of war.

The instrumentality of war has two lessons for us in this respect, one implicit and the other explicit. The first point has to do with the role of warriors and how they are able to negotiate an existential lifeworld for themselves within a highly instrumentalized form of war. The second point is that the instrumentality of war reaffirms Clausewitz's claim that war's *nature* is constant whereas war's *character* is changing. It is appropriate to turn now to what Jünger called the piece for the gods.

CHAPTER 4: COMBAT IS EXISTENTIAL

Man, I think, is an infantry animal.

Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

Mother Night

Introduction

Combat is an overwhelmingly existential realm, and this has consequences for how warriors and soldiers experience it. While combat is more existential than warfare, it is also instrumental. For this reason, a caveat similar to the one featuring in the discussion of war in the previous chapter is offered here as well. Combat is the sharp end of the instrument of the state, its cash payment, as Clausewitz observed.³⁴³ Nonetheless, any closer analysis of the lifeworld where this cash payment takes place is bound to encounter the tension between the existential and the instrumental.

Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* illustrates this very well. Special Forces Captain Willard is instructed to travel into Cambodia to find the enigmatic and wayward Special Forces Colonel Kurtz, and "terminate" his command. Kurtz is running the war with ruthless effectiveness in his private kingdom, but in an unrestrained and personal manner. His senior officers back in headquarters are rather more concerned about his "unsound method"; his cruelty, than the contribution to the war effort he evidently produces. Kurtz has submitted entirely to the Dionysian forces in his soul and revels in destruction and gratification. For the military establishment, however, he has breached the codes and restraints on war, and thus the bounds of civilization, and so he must be stopped.

Willard does execute the mission, but not without significant sympathy for Kurtz's willpower and existential journey from the seemingly Apollonian instrumental dimension of war to its Dionysian cruelty. Kurtz sees a lot of this cruelty in the enemy who are willing to cut off inoculated children's arms to demonstrate their willpower and conviction. Willard's conundrum in whether to terminate Kurtz is wrought with further tension when he encounters Lieutenant Colonel Bill Kilgore, a battalion commander with the 1st Air Cavalry. Kilgore's conduct of the war appears no less restrained Kurtz's, but in contrast to Kurtz's way, his still carries the blessing of the military establishment. Whereas heavy reliance on airpower and overwhelming firepower with the risk of killing and alienating

³⁴³ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1984), 97.

villagers is acceptable, heads on stakes is bad form, even if they are the heads of the enemy. It is all a question of method. Kurtz's apparent unrestraint recalls Achilles' private anti-social – yet ultimately understandable - rage at the beginning of the *Iliad*.

Apocalypse Now thus captures the dilemma at stake between war and combat, and how the essential properties of combat only reluctantly and unstably allow themselves to be subordinated to the instrumental will of the state. It is good that a cause and a decision-making body (government) and professional apparatus (military) that do not pursue violence privately, wantonly, randomly and without restraint or purpose govern war. On the other hand, the nature of war and combat is extremely violent, which raises existential issues that have to do with sacrifice and purposeful infliction of suffering. The pursuit of victory requires such effort and willpower that its restraint must not overrule its ruthlessness. Yet the ruthlessness must not descend into barbarism either. For this reason, the world of combat is a world unto itself, which is qualitatively different from the more cool-headed calculations that govern the instrumentality of war.

The trinitarian nature of combat

A recurring theme in the literature on war across history, fiction and non-fiction alike, is that the experience of combat is an *existential event* in any individual's life.³⁴⁴ Combat has a trinitarian nature, which is composed of: (1) the human being, (2) the sublime encounter with combat and (3) the social structure of combat. The first chapter focused on the human element and clarified the distinction between warriors and soldiers. This chapter explores the two other dimensions of combat in depth, and will revisit the human element from chapter one to address voluntarism. The argument here focuses more on the nature of combat than warriors, and seeks to explain what it is about it that warriors find bearable, even attractive, for all its cruelty. In addition to arguing that combat is a realm apart, it will be argued that there is a reflexive dialectic between combat (the phenomenon) and the actors (warriors and soldiers) which both transforms the latter and creates a social structure of combat. As all other human activity combat also has a social structure, which is more than anything is characterised by cohesion. Cohesion is a process that works for warriors and soldiers alike, by making combat somewhat bearable for soldiers, while making it an intoxicant for warriors.

³⁴⁴ Coker, *Waging war without warriors*, Jesse Glenn Gray, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1959), John Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme* (London: Pimlico, 2004), Theodore Nadelson, *Trained to Kill: Soldiers at War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 112, Van Creveld, *The transformation of war*.

Both the combat sublime and cohesion are timeless essential features of combat irrespective of the context of the war in question. Whereas war is above all a political instrument, in some measure controllable through rational means, combat is a realm dominated more by Dionysian elements, to use Nietzschean terminology.

Trinity I: Combat is an encounter with the sublime

Theodore Nadelson argues that ordinary men who have seen combat remain attached to its “arresting elements, to its *wonder*.”³⁴⁵ By wonder he means “the changed state of mind caused by an encounter that shifts the usual and expected into something dramatic, dazzling, and bewildering. Wonder happens when an event unexpectedly lifts a corner of the ordinary universe to reveal another plane of existence. For anyone who has been in serious combat, it claims the pivotal reference point for an entire life, and it strangely shadows – eclipses all that happened before or after.”³⁴⁶ Nadelson here exposes virtually all sides of the sublime of combat: its wonder; a changed state of mind; another plane of existence; and a pivotal reference for life.

The point is that combat is a qualitatively different form of activity from anything else in life. The organised, protracted and purposeful killing often in spectacular circumstances and the attendant sacrifice of life it involves, have no parallel in civilian life. As Coker explains, for these reasons combat inspires awe: “What awe produces in the subject is a feeling of vastness which covers anything that can be experienced as larger than the self, or the self’s ordinary level of experience or frame of reference.”³⁴⁷ ‘Awe’ is closely related to ‘sublime’. The etymology of the Latin *sub-limen*, Olya Gayazova points out, is “usually understood to signify rising up to and over some ‘*limen*,’ some metaphorical ‘threshold.’”³⁴⁸ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the sublime can either refer to persons; “their attributes, feelings, actions: Standing high above others by reason of nobility or grandeur of nature or character; of high intellectual, moral and spiritual level;” or, it can refer to “things in nature and art: Affecting the mind with a sense of overwhelming grandeur or irresistible power; calculated to inspire awe, deep reverence, or lofty emotion, by reason of its beauty, vastness or grandeur.”³⁴⁹

³⁴⁵ Nadelson, *Trained to Kill*, 112.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Coker, *Warrior Ethos*, 82.

³⁴⁸ Olya Gayazova, 'Sublime Alienation? Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche on “supermen” and the sublime', (International Studies Association, 2006), 1. 426

³⁴⁹ J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner, 'Sublime', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), West, 39.

Coker argues the use of the concept awe in relation to war has to do with its spectacle and excess: “At the heart of war lies an excess incompatible with the values we celebrate in peacetime. The warrior soul is at one with excess, with the sublime of destruction, with ‘awe’ – war is indeed awesome in a way peace is not.”³⁵⁰ What does this awe do to us? Edmund Burke speaking of the sublime in nature conceived of it as having a paralyzing astonishing effect: “astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it.”³⁵¹ William Broyles uses similar language to say war is “the only way in which most men touch the mythic domain of their soul.”³⁵²

Combat veterans speak of combat as being “in it”, implying that combat does not inspire questions about what its meaning is to the degree war does, as Nadelson suggests: “Life in combat is not “about anything” but simply “is”.³⁵³ Danger makes us “more aware of being alive by calling attention to our physical selves” he continues, and this is due to combat’s irreversibility. It inevitably becomes a group effort which for many is the high point of their lives.³⁵⁴ This comes out very clearly in an extraordinary passage by the German World War I veteran and *Pour le Mérite* winner Ernst Jünger:

The great moment had come. The curtain of fire lifted from the front trenches. We stood up.

With a mixture of feelings, evoked by bloodthirstiness, rage, and intoxication, we moved in step, ponderously but irresistibly toward the enemy lines. I was well ahead of the company, followed by Vinke and a one-year veteran named Haake. My right hand embraced the shaft of my pistol, my left a riding stick of bamboo cane. I was boiling with mad rage, which had taken hold of me and all of the others in an incomprehensible fashion. The overwhelming wish to kill gave wings to my feet. Rage pressed bitter tears from my eyes.

The monstrous desire for annihilation, which hovered over the battlefield, thickened the brains of the men and submerged them in a red fog. We called to each other in sobs and stammered disconnected sentences. A neutral observer might have perhaps believed we were seized by an excess of happiness.³⁵⁵

³⁵⁰ Coker, *Warrior Ethos*, 45.

³⁵¹ Isaac Kramnick, *The Portable Edmund Burke* (London: Penguin, 1999), 64.

³⁵² Quoted in Coker, *Warrior Ethos*, 3.

³⁵³ Nadelson, *Trained to Kill*, 115.

³⁵⁴ Gray, *The Warriors*, 33-34.

³⁵⁵ Quoted *Ibid.*, 52.

Jünger was an unusual warrior, but this description resonates with many combat veterans. Reflecting on his experiences of combat as a founding member of the U.S. Army's most elite unit, Delta Force, Eric Haney puts it thus: "I hate the destructiveness and waste of warfare, but I love the sensation of it. In combat, mankind is seen in absolutes – at his very best or his very worst. There are no in-betweens. No one has a place to hide."³⁵⁶ Now we must turn to the constituent parts of the combat sublime: danger and suffering; incomprehension; and transformation.

i) Combat sublime is danger and suffering

Clausewitz says danger is a part of the friction of war; "without an accurate conception of danger we cannot understand war,"³⁵⁷ or combat. Danger and destruction combine making combat not just spectacular, but sublime. The essential quality of combat that separates it from everything else is its inherent and willed danger, which is purposefully created by someone who goes to his or her utmost effort to kill and destroy.

Evan Wright embedded with Marine 1st Recon Battalion during the initial combat stage of the recent Iraq war compared the danger and hardship of the Marines in that unit with normal life: "In my civilian world at home in Los Angeles, half the people I know are on antidepressants or anti-panic attack drugs because they can't handle the stress of a mean boss or a crowd at the 7-eleven when buying a Slurpee."³⁵⁸ While Wright's account of his civilian life probably rings true for many in the contemporary West, there was a time when large segments of the male population were called on to serve in war. S. L. A. Marshall relates a reflection that must have been pervasive among many of his generation serving in World War II: "What normal man would deny that some of the fullest and fairest days of his life have been spent at the front or that the sky ever seems more blue or the air more bracing than when there is just a hint of danger in the air?"³⁵⁹ For General Sir John Hackett this means the soldier is serving under an "unlimited liability which lends dignity to the military profession" and which makes the military virtues like fortitude, loyalty, endurance and courage not luxuries but "functional necessities."³⁶⁰

Combat is suffering because of climatic and topographical features, stress, hunger and sleep deprivation on the one hand and the extreme violence and atrocities associated

³⁵⁶ Haney, *Inside Delta Force*, 8.

³⁵⁷ Clausewitz, *On War*, 112.

³⁵⁸ Wright, *Generation Kill*, 37.

³⁵⁹ S. L. A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire* (2000, University of Oklahoma Press), 185

³⁶⁰ Quoted in Dyer, *War*, 140.

with war and combat on the other. The landscape of the First World War is symbolically captured by the mud of Passchendaele, the Eastern Front of the Second World War by one of the coldest winters in memory, its ferocious fighting and its cruelty, and Vietnam is remembered for its endless search-and-destroy patrols, often in areas of impenetrable triple canopy jungle.

Lieutenant Edwin Vaughan of the Royal Warwicks describes how on Passchendaele Ridge, wounded were screaming in agony in the dark: “It was too obvious to me that dozens of men with serious wounds must have crawled for safety into shell holes, and now the water was rising above them and, powerless to move, they were slowly drowning.”³⁶¹ Guy Sajer, an Alsatian fighting for the Germans in the Ukraine in the winter of 1943 recalled why their fighting tended towards white-hot hatred for the enemy after they had found their own, with:

faces smashed open with axes, so that the gold teeth could be pulled out; the hideous agony of wounded men tied with their heads inside the gaping bellies of dead comrades; amputated genitals; Ellers’ section, whom we had found tied up and naked, on a day when the temperature had dropped to thirty degrees below zero, with their feet thrust into a drinking trough which had frozen solid; and the faces of tortured men under the dark winter sky...³⁶²

Philip Caputo, a lieutenant with the U.S. Marines in Vietnam describes how on patrol the dense jungle made it impossible to see, which inspired the type of fear we are programmed to feel in attics and dark alleys. A strong sense of imagination was not your friend in such a place, Caputo understates, which geared up tensions. The dampness of the jungle rotted and corroded everything; “bodies, boot leather, canvas, metal, morals”:

There was nothing familiar out where we were, no churches, no police, no laws, no newspapers, or any of the restraining influences without which the earth’s population of virtuous people would be reduced by ninety-nine percent. It was the dawn of creation in the Indochina bush, an ethical as well as a geographical wilderness. Out there, lacking restraints, sanctioned to kill, confronted by a hostile country and a relentless enemy, we sank into a brutish state.³⁶³

Decaying morals are generated not only by the indirect suffering that combat leads to, but also the brutalization that inevitably follows, sometimes leading to absolutely unspeakable

³⁶¹ Quoted in Richard Holmes, *Acts of War – The Behaviour of Men in Battle* (London: Cassel Military Paperbacks, 2004), 186-7.

³⁶² Guy Sajer, *The forgotten soldier* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2000), 449.

³⁶³ Phillip Caputo, *A Rumour of War* (London: Pimlico, 1996), 85.

cruelty. It is important to avoid too much abstraction when speaking about experiences to bear in mind the extremity of warriors' lifeworld. Another feature of the combat sublime is its attendant incomprehension.

ii) Combat sublime is incomprehension

For Burke, whatever is dangerous and terrible is also sublime, but danger is not all. "To make anything very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary. When we know the full extent of any danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes."³⁶⁴ The confusion and chaos that seems to rule in combat is hard to make sense of if one is not experienced.

Clausewitz held experience as necessary to compensate for incomprehension. "In war the experienced soldier reacts in the same way as the human eye does in the dark: the pupil expands to admit what little light there is, discerning objects by degrees, and finally seeing them distinctly. By contrast, the novice is plunged into the deepest night."³⁶⁵ The darkness of this deepest night is very strongly influenced by danger and suffering, since death and destruction virtually creates a new landscape, entailing hitherto unimagined deformations of the human body. The young lieutenant Jünger conveyed how the horror itself leads to incomprehension:

Seeing and recognizing are matters, really, of habit. In the case of something quite unknown the eye alone can make nothing of it. So it was that we had to stare again and again at these things that we had never seen before, without being able to give them any meaning. It was too entirely unfamiliar. We looked at all these dead with dislocated limbs, distorted faces, and the hideous colours of decay, as though we walked in a dream through a garden full of strange plants, and we could not realize at first what we had all round us.³⁶⁶

Clausewitz and Jünger allude to the difference in situational awareness between the experienced warrior and the novice. Sometimes this experience is accompanied by a brutally blasé attitude, where even the dead can become a source of physical comfort. Holmes reports one Wheeler to have used dead Frenchmen to protect himself against the cutting wind at Salamanca, and a Spanish Foreign Legionnaire sergeant used corpses as mattresses to protect himself while sleeping on wet ground.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁴ Kramnick, *The Portable Edmund Burke* 65.

³⁶⁵ Clausewitz, *On War*, 122.

³⁶⁶ Quoted in Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale*, 67.

³⁶⁷ Holmes, *Acts of War*, 180.

Whatever the degree of experience, however, combat veterans tend to see combat in a remarkably fragmented way, very often having great difficulty agreeing with their peers precisely what happened in a given action. This inherent perspectivism follows from the incomprehensibility of combat, which further underlines what a challenging environment it is. A British tank commander fighting in the Normandy invasion became frustrated with having to report developments continuously: “I was told by the brigade major to report more precisely and more often what was going on. I replied that since I was shut up inside a camouflaged, stationary tank with its turret closed down I had precisely nothing, often or not, to report... Could he tell *me* what was going on?”³⁶⁸

Another point raised by Gerald Linderman is the way in which war, and combat in particular, guards its secrets such that successive generations become attracted to its dangers: “Why, in war after war, do soldiers first approaching battle remain convinced that the loss of their own lives is an impossibility? Why do so many soldiers, having discovered the realities of warfare, still persevere in battle? Why, of those whose experience of training and battle appears virtually identical, do some but not others succumb to neuropsychiatric collapse? Or, following the war, suffer post-traumatic stress disorder?”³⁶⁹ On the other side of experience, since combat is incomprehensible, it is also likely that a warrior is unable to rest content that he has “seen it all,” especially if the exhilaration becomes addictive. A combat veteran of 175 patrols in the Korean War expected more: “I had the feeling I had missed the complete experience.”³⁷⁰

iii) Combat sublime is transformative

The more general point is; how can we make sense of the ecstasy Jünger describes above in relation to such danger and suffering as combat evokes? The answer is that the encounter with combat is transformative.³⁷¹ It is transformative for all in the sense that the experience leaves marks for those who survive. Most frequently, this leads to psychological trauma (of which there is a large and growing body of literature). Yet, it is also transformative in the moment, for some in a positive sense. Combat’s extraordinary demands lead to a transformation into warriors for those who are able to translate the encounter with the sublime into focus and concentration. In a very basic way, it separates those who are able to cope with it and those who do not. To appreciate this dimension of combat is to move

³⁶⁸ Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale*, 13.

³⁶⁹ Gerald Linderman, *The World Within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II* (London: The Free Press, 1997), 2.

³⁷⁰ Quoted in James Hillman, *A Terrible Love of War* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 148.

³⁷¹ Coker, *Warrior Ethos*, 4.

beyond such simple dichotomies as cowards and heroes. As Swank and Marchand found out, after sixty days of protracted combat following D-Day, 98 percent of surviving soldiers had become psychiatric casualties. The remaining two percent were diagnosed as “aggressive psychopathic personalities”.³⁷² A warrior is not someone who is unbreakable, simply someone who has overcome the initial shock of combat and turns it into strength, until combat exhaustion inevitably sets in. Having discussed what the combat sublime *is*, it is necessary to move over to what it *does*.

What makes combat transformative? It appears the duress and suffering of combat reveals a reservoir of strength and tenacity in some soldiers. This is not to deny that coercion, social pressure, alcohol, drugs or other forms of pressure are irrelevant to this transformation.³⁷³ However, they are not enough, and tend to be equally distributed to all. Given the opportunity, some warriors go back for more combat, even though from society’s perspective they have done more than what could be asked of them. They have changed. This is by no means a common reaction. A more normal reaction is well illustrated by Cavalry Sergeant Allan Paul following his first combat experience in Vietnam:

Honey, I was never so scared in my life... This was my first look at war, and it sure was an ugly sight. I helped carry some of the wounded away, and boy, I sure hope I don’t have to do it again. It was an experience you can never explain in a million words. The noise from shooting is enough to drive a person crazy. Even after the attack last night, we had to stay up and wait for a ground attack which lucky for us never came... I was surprised last night to see that the men here were willing to risk their lives to save a buddy’s. It really makes you have faith in people again, but I hope I don’t have to go through what I did last night in a long time (like never!).³⁷⁴

Sergeant Paul has been changed by his experience. It is unclear whether he will be ready to repeat the experience, but he is nonetheless changed. Jesse Glenn Gray notices this point: “They may write home to their parents and sweethearts that they are unchanged, and they may even be convinced of it. But the soldier who has yielded himself to the fortunes of war, has sought to kill and to escape being killed, or who has even lived long enough in the disordered landscape of battle, is no longer what he was.”³⁷⁵ Gray struggles to explain precisely the nature of this transformation, but his conclusion is probably as

³⁷² R. L. Swank and W. E. Marchand, 'Combat neuroses: development of combat exhaustion', *Archives of Neurology and Psychology* 55 (1946).

³⁷³ Ehrenreich, *Blood Rites*, 11.

³⁷⁴ Letter of Allan Paul (May 8, 1968) in Bernard Edelman, ed., *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam* (New York: Pocket Books, 1985), 51. Quoted in Sanimir Resic, *American Warriors in Vietnam; Warrior values and the Myth of the War Experience during the Vietnam War, 1965-1973* (Malmo: Team Offset & Media, 1999), 117.

³⁷⁵ Gray, *The Warriors*, 27.

close as anyone has given: “Man as warrior is only partly a man, yet, fatefully enough, this aspect of him is capable of transforming the whole. When given free play, it is able to subordinate other aspects of the personality, repress civilian habits of mind and make the soldier as fighter a different kind of creature from the former worker, farmer or clerk.”³⁷⁶

Combat does not directly change anyone into warriors; rather it presents the individual with an imperative to reveal a different part of one's nature and to defeat fear. The transformation of a scared soldier into a warrior happens when the exposure to combat reveals character; it refines the randomly distributed character traits already in place within an individual into a hardened warrior. Random in this respect means that there is no sure way of predicting that this is going to happen to any particular individual. The history of war is full of examples of warriors who struggled to be accepted among their peers in training, but who became fully-fledged warriors in the field. Both the Marines and Army Airborne, for example, rejected Audie Murphy, because of his slight build.³⁷⁷ Similarly, Medal of Honor winner Tom Norris struggled to keep up in Navy SEAL basic training (BUDS).³⁷⁸ The precise dynamics of the transformation are hard to pin down precisely, but it appears to have a narrative structure. There is the initial stage of fear, which some will overcome and others will not. Then there is the transformative moment; the encounter with the sublime, an inexplicable and unpredictable development. Finally, there is the achievement of focus and mastery.

This process can be found in testimonies from veterans who have written about their experiences. Sepp Allerberger describes the transformation he experienced in his first combat action as a machine gunner:

Within me a strange metamorphosis was taking place. The low-brow who had risen from the trench would, during the next few hours of violent battle, become an infantryman, better still a warrior in the original sense of the word. Fear, blood, death were the ingredients in an alchemy that intoxicated and drugged its participants: it marked the end of my personal innocence and swept away all visions and dreams of ‘my future’; swept away my life. I was being forced to kill. Killing on the battlefield was to be my trade. Fate required of me that I should perfect it to mastery.³⁷⁹

To overcome the combat sublime requires experience in mobilising a certain kind of temper through willpower, Burke reminds us: “Indeed, so natural is this timidity with

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Audie Murphy, *To Hell and Back* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2002), 8.

³⁷⁸ Dick Couch, *The Warrior Elite - The forging of SEAL class 228* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001), 274.

³⁷⁹ Allerberger and Brooks, *Sniper on the Eastern Front*, 5.

regard to power, and so strongly does it inhere in our constitution, that very few are able to conquer it, but by mixing much in the business of the great world, or by using no small violence to their natural dispositions.”³⁸⁰ Mixing in the business of the world is to acquire experience, and for a warrior that means combat. ‘Using violence’ to our natural dispositions is to use willpower to defeat the natural inclination to run away from danger. Allerberger had come to a place of focus and concentration: “I had lost the feeling for time, anxiety, fear, compassion. I was a living football of events, propelled by the boot of an archaic survival instinct fuelled by the interchange of fighting, hunger, thirst and exhaustion.”³⁸¹ According to J. Glenn Gray this is when the self is completely absorbed by the objects, it concerns itself with, which is what one veteran calls hyperclarity.³⁸² Surfers call it the “green room” - a state of complete physical and mental awareness.³⁸³ It is a kind of focus and concentration, which follows from experience and increasing skill in extremely challenging situations. It is not uncommon for warriors at this stage to consider themselves already dead, as did Audie Murphy at some points. This fatalism releases freedom of action to focus on the job at hand.³⁸⁴

Focus is not enough, however, because it can be translated into either passivity or activity. Mark Bowden’s study of the Battle of Mogadishu illustrates this difference in the actions of experienced Delta Force operators compared with inexperienced Rangers. Delta SFC Howe’s combat experience had inculcated him with the knowledge that survival in a tight situation depended on translating this focus into initiative and pro-active soldiering: “You constantly assessed your position and worked to improve it.”³⁸⁵ Listening to the radio and observing some of his less experienced peers, however, he observed that not everyone shared this lesson: “Howe sensed that some of those in charge were out of their depth. There was just too much going on. He could see it in their faces. Sensory overload. When it happened you could almost see the fog pass over a man’s eyes. They just withdrew. They became strictly reactive.”³⁸⁶

The warrior is never able to master the combat environment completely; nobody ever can. Nevertheless, he can master himself and his own reactions to translate the experience into something tolerable and exciting. To master or overcome this danger can

³⁸⁰ Kramnick, *The Portable Edmund Burke* 71.

³⁸¹ Allerberger and Brooks, *Sniper on the Eastern Front*, 8.

³⁸² Nathaniel Fick, *One bullet away* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 204.

³⁸³ Bowden, *Black Hawk Down*, 250.

³⁸⁴ See for example *Ibid.*, 255, Murphy, *To Hell and Back*, 77, Wright, *Generation Kill*, 242.

³⁸⁵ Bowden, *Black Hawk Down*, 233.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 233.

be an exhilarating experience, precisely because it takes so much to happen, as an American soldier in Huertgen Forest found; “Now the fight was at its wildest. We dashed... from one building to another, shooting, bayoneting, clubbing... The wounded and the dead... lay in grotesque positions at every turn. Never in my wildest imagination had I conceived that battle could be so incredibly impressive – awful, horrible, deadly, yet somehow thrilling, exhilarating.”³⁸⁷ J. G. Gray again; “The novice may be eager at times to describe his emotions in combat, but it is the battle-hardened veterans to whom battle has offered the deeper appeals. For some of them the war years are what Dixon Wecter has called “the one great lyric passage in their lives.””³⁸⁸

This discussion has centred on the second tier of combat’s trinity; the encounter with the sublime. The third feature is the social structure of combat.

Trinity II: The social structure of combat

Social structure is a critical component for warriors *repeatedly* to expose themselves to combat. Combat inspires, provokes and reinforces small group loyalties. The combat soldier’s world is a social world whose degree of integration is shaped by centrifugal and centripetal forces, which increase and reduce the density of its fabric, its cohesion. Theoretically, the soldier’s loyalty is to the state before he deploys and experiences the immediate and closer loyalty to his unit. At this point, the degree of identification with the primary groups increases and decreases depending on experiences.

i) Cohesion

Cohesion is a word that describes the strength of the bond between those who have experienced combat together and the loyalty it involves. As in all other social processes that are predicated upon a degree of exclusivity, the bond of battle narrows the focus to the primary group, often to the exclusion of all other concerns. Karmela Liebkind argues; “only extreme social situations such as battles in war may temporarily eradicate all other group affiliations but one.”³⁸⁹

As soon as the soldier has joined his unit, the social world for all practical purposes becomes identical to that unit. His freedom, comfort and indeed his survival is all up to the

³⁸⁷ Linderman Gerald F. *The World within War*, pp 244-45 Quoted in Hillman, 142

³⁸⁸ Gray, *The Warriors*, 28.

³⁸⁹ Samuel P. Huntington, *Who are we? : the challenges to America's national identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 23.

effectiveness and coherence of that unit, as the combat motivation literature argues.³⁹⁰ Symbolically the shape of the soldier's social world has centripetally shrunk from being identical with the state, to being identical with the unit. The rules, norms and values of the unit or the situation are what counts, not those of the state as such, as Franklin Miller explains:

It took me a long time to throttle back from the 'Nam years. In 'Nam, I didn't have to wait for anything – I got everything instantaneously. Order an airstrike and *wham!* Fast movers appeared immediately. Crank up the radio and ask for artillery and *bam!* On its way. I operated in a high speed environment that was stripped of normal rules, bureaucratic red tape, indecision and bullshit. Those conditions didn't exist, couldn't exist in that realm. A sense of urgency was attached to all actions, and with good reason.³⁹¹

These processes are similar, only stronger, when the soldier is in actual combat. The social world shrinks even more; to the immediate primary group, usually a squad of half a dozen to a dozen men. It all comes down to the *here and now*, the essentialised and crystallised experience. Military psychiatrist Jonathan Shay quotes one of his patients, a Vietnam veteran who initially identified with the whole battalion. However, after failing to be saved by the neighbouring Bravo Company, the social horizon shrunk to only a few: "It was constant now. I was watching the other five guys like they was (sic.) my children... It wasn't seventy-two guys [in the company] I was worried about. It was five guys."³⁹² These five men became the entire social world for the combat soldier. When combat ends and the squad retreats to the rear areas again, the social world centrifugally increases to encompass the whole unit again, although probably not to the same extent as before.

Shay also describes shrinkage of the moral horizon. An obvious example is the way in which people – as far as racism went – became colour blind in combat, but back in the rear racism flared up again.³⁹³ Back in camp, furthermore, there are usually more officers and thus more spit-and-polish type discipline than out in the field, where such practices would be ridiculous and counter-productive. Re-adjustment to the pettiness of garrison

³⁰ Bruce Newsome, 'The Myth of Intrinsic Combat Motivation', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 26, no. 4 (2003).

³¹ Miller, *Reflections of a Warrior*, 237.

³² Quoted in Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam – Combat trauma and undoing of character* (London: Scribner, 2003), 24.

³³ *Ibid.*, 60.

procedures is very hard after the all-out win-or-lose of combat, and other social tensions were easily provoked by such normative ruptures.³⁹⁴

The practice of fragging (killing officers on one's own side by hand grenade) is another example of how the social and moral world undergoes dramatic changes in the field as opposed to in camp. Fragging would be impossible in a base area because of too many witnesses and difficulties enforcing loyalty among the instigating primary group. In combat, however, the brutalisation, danger and fierce peer loyalty regrettably makes this adverse effect of combat possible. Paradoxically, both the existence of fragging and stellar performance in combat are due to the same dynamic; cohesion.

ii) An exclusive community

This closure affirms membership in an existentially exclusive community. Combat is an enduring and instant divider and unifier. Combatants are distinguished from non-combatants, warriors from soldiers, and friends from enemy. A Vietnam veteran and ex-mercenary in Rhodesia explains how shared bonds and comradeship constitute this community:

There's a love relationship that is nurtured in combat because the man next to you – you're depending on him for the most important thing you have, your life, and if he lets you down you're either maimed or killed. If you make a mistake the same thing happens to him, so the bond of trust has to be extremely close, and I'd say this bond is stronger than almost anything, with the exception of parent and child. It's a hell of a lot stronger than man and wife – your life is in his hands, you trust that person with the most valuable thing you have. And you'll find that people who pursue the aphrodisiac of combat or whatever you want to call it are there because they are friends, the same people show up in the same wars time and again.³⁹⁵

The dynamics of this comradeship is governed by inclusion and exclusion, where common suffering is the deciding trait. This logic can lead to unexpected outcomes, sometimes of a negative nature.

Another potential effect is readjustment of friend and enemy distinctions. The enemy can become appreciated as someone who is sharing a similar fate, which, if he has proven himself, leads to respect. Colonel Hackworth recalled a hardcore Vietcong reconnaissance-company commander prisoner who refused to talk to anyone. He was:

³⁹⁴ Linderman, *World Within War*, 185-212.

³⁹⁵ Quoted in Dyer, *War*, 104.

as defiant as I'd been warned and even more banged up. The worst of his many battle scars was a leg that had a depression in it almost as deep and wide as my fist. A huge chunk of flesh had been blown out and never sewn up. It would have been a bad, bad wound even if medical attention *had* been available. Still, it had healed and the guy had gone back to duty. This was one hardcore stud.

He didn't want to talk to me, so I pointed to the old wound in his leg and through an interpreter asked if he had been hit. He said he had. "No hospital?" I asked. The prisoner shook his head almost scornfully. Then I showed him some of my wounds, which provoked the first bit of interest from the guy. He asked if they were from Vietnam. "No, no." I replied. "Before. Korea. But this one," I continued, showing him my leg wound, "this one came from the VC here in the Delta." The wound was still red and raw, with big, vicious-looking stitch marks.

"Maybe I did it," said the VC lieutenant, and he roared with a huge belly laugh.

"Yeah, maybe you did," I replied.

The warrior-to-warrior exchange broke the ice. It was a common bond that transcended patriotism or nationalism or causes. We laid down our flags and allowed ourselves to be friends.³⁹⁶

The individual rotation and replacement systems in Korea and Vietnam generated another dynamic, which was adverse for both combat performance and cohesion. The goal was to give soldiers a fair chance to survive brutal combat through not having to survive it for years. On the other, it weakened morale by making troops focus on their return date, rather than combat. It also removed the combat effective veterans from the scene when they were getting good. For the replacements, this was outright dangerous because continuous casualties provoked a reaction among survivors wherein they could not bear to lose more close friends. The solution was not to get to know new arrivals. This in turn eroded cohesion and made it difficult for new arrivals to adjust and learn since they could not integrate socially into the units until they had survived the first contacts with the enemy, which tended to kill inexperienced troops disproportionately.

Nevertheless, for some the loyalty to the fighting men persists, new guy or not. When Franklin Miller was receiving the Medal of Honor from the President, Nixon asked him what he wanted now – implying he could get any service he wanted. Miller replied that he would like to go right back to his unit.³⁹⁷ In a similar situation that was exactly opposite

³⁹⁶ Hackworth, *About face*, 697.

³⁹⁷ Miller, *Reflections of a Warrior*, 229.

to the fragging incidents, Shay relates the story of a soldier who had a lieutenant who was strongly loved by his men, and who did not want to leave them. He had to be forced out of the jungle under armed guard when he was due to rotate.³⁹⁸ This kind of loyalty does not necessarily stop when the fighting stops. Grossman argues that guilt about leaving buddies behind frequently became so strong that many could not bring themselves to find out whether their friends had made it out alive or not.³⁹⁹ For others, however, the option simply became to return for subsequent tours.

After having analysed two of the tiers in the trinity of combat; the encounter with the sublime (combat as a phenomenon) and the social structure of combat (combat as a social process), it is appropriate to return to the first tier; the human element. Voluntarism is a critical difference between soldiers and warriors, and it is generated by the impact of the two previous tiers of combat upon warriors.

Trinity III: Warriors and combat voluntarism

Two interrelated processes spawns the return to combat. The first is the warrior's encounter with the exhilaration and satisfaction of combat leading to a desire for more. They become multiple volunteers. The second process is the very strong bonds formed between comrades in arms enduring and sharing the risks and suffering of combat. The strength of social bonds established in combat exerts a strong loyalty on the individual warrior, also after having left the combat zone.

The process from a society's decision to go to war to the individual soldier experiences combat is one of numerous selection processes. Sometimes these are voluntary, whereas other times this is done under coercion through conscription. The first selection is between those who serve and those who do not. Among those who serve, only a minority are sent to combat units where some, but not all, experience combat. For a select few soldiers, the encounter with combat is one of empowerment rather than one of being overpowered, and they often volunteer to repeat it, if they are not professionals at the outset. Satisfaction is a recurrent theme in their arguments as to why they go back. Philip Caputo admits outright to have enjoyed the compelling attractiveness of combat:

It was a peculiar enjoyment because it was mixed with a commensurate pain. Under fire, a man's power of life heightened in proportion to the proximity of death, so that he felt an elation as extreme as dread. His senses quickened, he attained an acuity of

³⁹⁸ Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam* 17.

³⁹⁹ Dave Grossman, *On killing : the psychological cost of learning to kill in war and society*, 1st ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995), 276.

consciousness at once pleasurable and excruciating. It was something like the elevated state of awareness induced by drugs. And it could be just as addictive, for it made whatever else life offered in the way of delights and torments seem pedestrian.⁴⁰⁰

What we find in Caputo's words is not just the satisfaction and exhilaration of combat, but a fear, or realisation, that life in peacetime, given survival, is not going to measure up. Alan Seeger, a Harvard educated American fighting for the French Foreign Legion in World War I shared precisely this sentiment. Seeger wrote to his mother in October 1914 that "every moment here is worth weeks of ordinary *experience*. . . This will spoil one for any other kind of life." After having fought for two years Seeger was killed in the first wave on the Somme in 1916, which was a fate he had reckoned with in a letter to a friend just before: "I am glad to be going in the first wave. If you are in this thing it is best to be in it to the limit. And this is the supreme experience."⁴⁰¹

Back in Vietnam, Franklin Miller had no difficulties appreciating this point of view. Commenting on why he chose to volunteer four times to go back to Vietnam he simply referred to job satisfaction. As he had demonstrated an ability to keep his head cool under fire he was granted the responsibility of leading patrols, while just a Private First Class: "As my leadership skills grew, I became more and more respected. Guys came to me for advice and assistance. I was looked upon as someone to be emulated, someone you could count on in tight spots. My self-esteem skyrocketed."⁴⁰² Miller also argued that because of these special skills he was given total freedom while on mission, escaping the hassle he was certain to face as an employee anywhere in the States. Thus he figured: "Job Satisfaction, plus Responsibility plus Respect plus Freedom equals A Pretty Outstanding Deal. So why in the hell would I want to leave?"⁴⁰³ Moreover, Miller was very unwilling to leave, even as the war was winding down in 1972, when combat motivation was for most other troops at an all time low (as the antiwar movement put it "how do you ask someone to be the last soldier to die in Vietnam?"). He was so unwilling, in fact, that he had to be drugged down, under supervision of "a very large man," by medical personnel at a military hospital, strapped to a stretcher and put on a plane bound for the United States, where he woke up when it was too late to do anything about it.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰⁰ Caputo, *A Rumour of War*, xvii.

⁴⁰¹ Quoted in Holmes, *Acts of War*, 271.

⁴⁰² Miller, *Reflections of a Warrior*, 38.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., 234-35.

This kind of voluntarism does not have to do with personal satisfaction exclusively, however, it is also strongly in evidence with respect to individual missions, typically with respect to rescuing colleagues who are evading the enemy or have already been captured. “Leave no man behind” is an ethos shared by the American Special Forces community. In Somalia SFC Howe and his Delta colleagues did not rest on the morning following the battle of the previous night; they went back out again, something, which was not an option for the Rangers. The point is not that warriors are unafraid, but that they overcome their fear: “What distinguishes a warrior from a soldier” Coker emphasizes, “is not that one is courageous and the other isn’t: it is that for the warrior courage is habit forming.”⁴⁰⁵ Bowden describes the mindset of Delta Force: “Howe was surprised to still be alive. The thought of heading straight back out into the fight scared him, but the fear was nothing next to the loyalty he felt to the men stranded in the city. Some of their own were still out there – Gary Gordon, Randy Shughart, Michael Durant, and the crew of [downed Blackhawk] Super Six Four.”⁴⁰⁶

Conclusion

The preceding discussion has established the existential properties of combat, understood as a trinity between (1) the agency of the individual, (2) the phenomenology of what combat consists of for the individual; danger, suffering and incomprehension, and (3) the social structure of combat, which is above all characterised by cohesion. These three features of combat work reflexively in affecting each other, creating the unique existentiality of combat where warriors are made and broken. But what can be said about the interplay between war and combat?

Frontline soldiers experience tension between the experiences of combat versus the relatively businesslike manner in which war is perceived by the public. Casualty aversion and technology offer better physical protection to soldiers suggesting to society that war is now almost safe. For this reason, soldiers do not receive the recognition and moral support they have in previous times, despite still experiencing existential hardship. However, recognition and social support are much more critical to sustain combat motivation and assuage sacrifices than the benefits technology can bring.

In the postmodern West, more than any time in history previously, the overwhelmingly instrumental character of war insulates the largely existential character of

⁴⁰⁵ Coker, *Warrior Ethos*, 99.

⁴⁰⁶ Bowden, *Black Hawk Down*, 300.

combat from society. The West today is at peace with itself for the first time in history. War is happening only in countries far away and to such a limited extent that most people can ignore it, most of the time. The soldiers fighting are all professionals, and in many ways specialists. Limited war is a realm for those especially competent or especially interested. These two factors cushion and isolate society from direct experiences of combat. That does not mean that combat is not going on, nor that warfare is not happening. Instead it means that combat is *insulated* by military institutions that manage it in a way that does not involve or necessitate constant attention from the rest of society.

In a democracy it is considered right and proper that military establishments handle military affairs. However, military establishments can only manage the ever-expanding instrumental side of warfare. The Ministry of Defence or the Pentagon cannot cater for the existential and social exchanges between fighting troops and society, which involve recognition. The sacrifices that accompany combat are very much present in today's wars as ever before, yet the wars are largely unpopular or ignored.

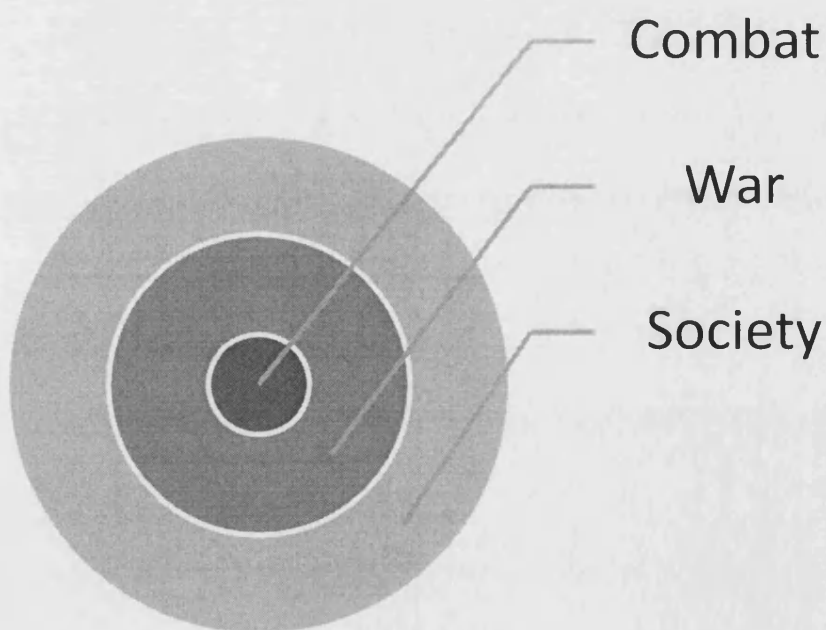


Figure 2: Combat, war and society

During most of European history, the continent has been constantly plagued by war, and combat has not been insulated from society. During the Cold War the anticipation

of total war led to conscription in many countries. Conscription did not make the majority of the population experienced in combat, but it generated direct experience of military life and institutions, along with the understanding that it involves. After the end of the Cold War the number of people directly involved with military institutions is very marginal, and the number of people with direct experience of combat much smaller still. Today a surrogate experience of combat can be acquired through video games, films and artistic depiction. It is in this way war is virtual today, not in terms of the high technological information technology through which pilots guide their missiles and guns. The argument that warfare is less real in the latter respect is a gross exaggeration; it is merely another instance of distance, no different in effect from the use of cannon in the past.

An example of the way in which the experience of violent political action has been insulated from society is the degree to which (in material terms) very limited terrorist actions against the West have been granted political importance and media attention. The attacks in New York, Madrid and London (2001, 2002, 2005) involved a total number of casualties comparable to one single atrocity inflicted by the Taliban on ethnic Hazara civilians in Afghanistan in 1998.⁴⁰⁷ However, the political ramifications both domestically and internationally have been dramatic, most notably in the War on Terror. A possible reason for the terrorists' success in achieving a strong reaction is not the character of the attacks themselves, but the degree to which willed violent political action has been absent from prosperous and democratic Western societies for the last few decades. Quite simply, people in the West are not used to it and find it shocking.

Terrorism is thus an example of "combat" breaking through the layer of war (within which we expect it to stay) and applying violence directly onto civil society. The War on Terror in turn is an attempt to reapply the insulation and prevent terrorism from breaking out of the bonds of warfare, and to remain within its grammar. At least this is the idea prevalent in the United States, where September 11 is perceived as an act of war. For Europeans however, terrorism is a problem for civil society, even in the international realm, and is ideally met with law enforcement means. The American debate about unlawful combatants is a way of protesting that terrorists refuse to stay within the grammar of warfare, yet do not belong within the discourse of criminal justice either.

The West has its own unlawful combatants as well, but they tend to get rather less attention. They are the Special Operations Forces and intelligence operators who

⁴⁰⁷ Kenneth J. Cooper, 'Taliban go on a bloody rampage', *Washington Post*, November 28 1998.

frequently bypass the laws of war regulating the use of uniforms for example, and operate with theoretical (but in practice hardly believable) deniability, taking the risks of being captured as spies rather than acknowledging their state-sponsored missions. They are niche warriors because they have a capacity, which terrorists tend to use as a force multiplier as well; they bring combat to bear where there is no war taking place. In many areas of Afghanistan and Iraq, and to a lesser extent inside Pakistan and Iran, these operatives gather intelligence in missions that involve much of the risk, danger and incomprehensibility that accompanies combat, but without all the trappings of war, indeed without the company of the benefits of the American Way of Warfare.

This shadow war is paradoxical. It features Western troops that are extremely self-reliant when it comes to motivation; they receive little direct recognition from society, and rather more from themselves as a peer group. Yet the governments and the extended foreign relations committees that send them sanction their activities. They frequently fight against terrorists whose entire lifeworld is predicated on being seen and recognised for what they do. The fight is also a public relations exchange for this reason. When there is combat between these two specialised groups it tends to work better for both parties when it is done outside war. Terrorists have a tendency of being cornered and outgunned in war. Special Operations Forces on the other hand, tend to get caught up in other missions, like nation building, to which they are unsuited or wasted. They also tend to use airpower, which plays into the hands of terrorists and insurgents by alienating the local populations.

This section concludes the context dimensions for warriors in the present day. The previous chapters have covered the social, political and military features that have a bearing on the degree to which Western societies want and need warriors. It has been a stocktaking of the dialogue between civil society and the use of force at macro level, culminating with a closer look at the sharp end, combat. With the exception of the introduction chapter, this context section of the thesis has not engaged very much with warriors per se. The conclusion of the thesis will bring all the context dimensions and all the features of the warrior covered together to answer the question. Before that happens, however, we must go back through history to ask how warriors have constituted themselves as warriors with respect to themselves, society and their enemies. It is important to understand that not only does society provide a (lateral) context to the thesis question, but warriors also have a (vertical context) legacy that strongly inform who they are today, who they want to be, and what society expects of them. This historical analysis will be presented in two chapters, one covering the pre-modern age, and another analysing warrior in the modern era.

CHAPTER 5: A HISTORY OF PRE-MODERN WARRIORS

Introduction

Today's Western warriors have come a long way to their present state of organization and institutionalization, and in many respects these developments antecedent modernity, albeit in a non-linear fashion. In order to appreciate the lifeworld of present day Western warriors it is necessary to reach back to their ancestors to determine which aspects of their ethos have been present all along, and which are contingent. Rather than a chronological history of premodern warriors, this chapter highlights three ideal type warriors and their different contexts.

These ideal types have strongly shaped Western associations of warriors. The social definition of warriors is unthinkable without the lateral context of society, and the vertical context of history. The three periods discussed in this chapter were chosen because the warriors fit the criteria of the warrior definition while highlighting distinct features that still resonate with today's warriors. Homer's Achilles is the archetype warrior, whereas Hector is an ideal type soldier-warrior who sacrifices himself for his community. Plato's concept of the guardian introduces the soldier as a disciplined and professional servant of the state. The age of chivalry sees a warrior class willingly submit to an ideal that imposes restraint on their warrior estate in the interest of civilization, but which at the same time enhances their social and moral stature. In an example of their present day resonance, Michael Evans describes how the setting both of the real battle for Gallipoli and the later movie depiction *Gallipoli* (1981), played on the historical inheritance of all three ideal types: "Gallipoli lends itself to romantic tragedy and legend by virtue of its setting on the Aegean Sea and its proximity to the plains of ancient Troy. For British and Anzac officers educated in the Greek classics and the poetry of Byron, the idea of fighting the Turks at the Hellespont and close to Troy combined legendary romance with an ideal of Christian chivalry."⁴⁰⁸

The fact that the ideal types spring from very different sources and levels of analysis makes them difficult to compare. Homer, for example, writes epically about individuals, Plato philosophises about the city, and the chivalric knights carved out their ethos between romantic literature, a particular feudal social structure and incessant wars.

⁴⁰⁸ Michael Evans, 'Remembering Gallipoli: A View from the new century', *Quadrant Magazine* XLV, no. 5 (2001).

This makes them very eclectic. Before moving on to the substantive discussion, however, it is necessary to unlock Weber's concept of the ideal type.

Weber conceived of the 'ideal type' as a methodological means to isolate selected features of a phenomenon for purposes of generalization and comparison. The ideal type is a reduction of a phenomenon, which enhances its central properties. Perfect cases of an ideal type will rarely exist in the real world, although some examples will be nearer to it than others. An ideal type is necessarily reductionist because it discards those variables that are not relevant to the analysis.⁴⁰⁹ Coker offers three existential variables that improve the precision in comparing ideal type warriors. They are 'agency', 'subjectivity' and 'intersubjectivity'.⁴¹⁰ Coker does not define these terms but sharpening them enhances the comparative clarity.

Agency is the degree to which the warrior has freedom of action on the battlefield, whether he can leave an imprint, his own authorship, upon the conduct of war. If a warrior can affect combat personally in any way, for example through his own physical prowess, that is a manifestation of agency. A situation, which reduces agency, is typically, where agency's opposite; structure, is pervasive and dominant, whether those structures are class structures, technology, or any other structure of power and domination that reduces freedom.⁴¹¹

Subjectivity is a more complex property, which has to do with two dimensions of the communal 'we-perspective'. Firstly, the subjective *experience* of warfare (i.e. how do I/we experience this situation/war?), as opposed to the purely material or ostensibly objective dimensions like weapons and terrain. Secondly, the *social context* of fighting refers to both social institutions, such as aristocracy, military establishment, rites of passage etc., and the reasons for war as conceived by the social group. The latter differentiates it from purely private, random violence. This can become somewhat problematic in chiefdoms where rulers more or less unilaterally decide for war. Nonetheless, there is usually a class of rulers who benefit and legitimize the war effort. Subjectivity thus encompasses both 'civil-military relations' and 'the experience of war', to use military-sociology vernacular. In short, it has to do with how warfare is invested with meaning. Here I will restrict this meaning to apply

⁴⁰⁹ Turner, *Cambridge Companion to Max Weber*, 10, 258.

⁴¹⁰ Coker, 'Is there a Western Way of Warfare', Coker, *Waging war without warriors*.

⁴¹¹ See Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986), Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999). On agency and structure see also Peter Berger, Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York: Anchor books, 1966).

to either the warriors themselves, or to the way in which the warriors are invested or divested with meaning by society.

Intersubjectivity has to do with the relationship with the enemy at the social level, and at the individual encounter level for warriors. It asks, for example, whether the enemy is respected or hated. Intersubjective relations are also relevant in society as such when warriors exist as a class with attendant antagonism towards other classes that affect the warrior lifeworld. Primarily, however, the focus is on wartime enemies.

To summarize, agency is about the warrior's impact, subjectivity is about the meaning for the warrior and social group and intersubjectivity is about relations with the enemy other.

Homer and the Archetypal Warrior

Social and intellectual context: The Iliad and myth

The first and pre-eminent epic of Western Civilization - written approximately 2750 years ago - and an astonishing poem of war and warriors – is Homer's *Iliad*. Most commentators agree that at least large segments of the written *Iliad* is predated by oral storytelling, and as such it is at the same time a work of fiction and myth. Homer's work has left a lasting imprint on the Western imagination, perhaps because myths are in George Steiner's words; "among the subtlest and most direct languages of experience. They re-enact moments of signal truth or crisis in the human condition."⁴¹²

Classicist James Redfield warns us against making jumps between poem and culture too quickly. For this reason, the *Iliad* is not a reliable source for making objective claims about Mycenaean warfare. Nonetheless, in the history of warriors Achilles and Hector have had a profound effect in shaping our concept of what a warrior is, precisely because the poem engages with the existential features of warfare in such a timeless and comprehensive manner. They are founding ideal types, in that they are the first warriors we get a wide-ranging exposure to. However, they were not a feature merely of their age.

Steiner's emphasis on re-enactment is important for this reason because myths like the *Iliad* were not reproduced by simply being retold, they were re-enacted, which is to say re-experienced. "Myth is perhaps fable", writes George Bataille, "but this fable is placed in opposition to fiction if one looks at the people who dance it, who act it, and for whom it is

⁴² George Steiner quoted in Barry Sandywell, *The Beginnings of European Theorizing: Reflexivity in the Archaic Age* (London: Routledge, 1996).

living truth.”⁴¹³ For Alexander the Great, Achilles was living truth and, as Coker points, made attempts to emulate his hero: “Alexander spent his life, short as it was, trying to surpass Achilles, a task in which inevitably he failed, as every warrior must. Our fictional heroes are beyond reach because they are archetypes, not flawed human beings. But at least Alexander died in the knowledge that after Achilles he must be considered supremely worthy of emulation.”⁴¹⁴ As a language of experience, the *Iliad* is descriptive, prescriptive and foundational. It is the master text of war and warriors, in which we find the only archetype warrior, Achilles. There are many ideal types, but only one archetype. The *Iliad* enacts warriors for us before there was ever a systematic attempt at understanding them in conceptual terms.

Agency in the *Iliad*

The question of agency in the *Iliad* is multifaceted; unparalleled fighting skills are combined with intrusive gods in a society revolving around honour. At the face of it, Achilles and Hector both enjoy virtually unbounded agency as fighters. They both have the power to turn the war in favour of their side because of their inspiring leadership and unsurpassed fighting qualities. Book one refers to Achilles as ‘swift’ and ‘the most violent man alive’.⁴¹⁵ He swears they will want him in the fight when ‘man-killing Hector’ enters the fray.⁴¹⁶ He is right: Hector leads the Trojans to victory until Hera and ultimately Zeus intervenes. Zeus arranges it so that when Achilles’ lover Patroclus is killed, Achilles returns to rejoin the fight with savage ruthlessness and takes the Greeks to victory sacking Troy. The relative agency of these warriors is further exemplified by their being able to come and go from the battlefield as they please.⁴¹⁷ Consequently, those who are there are fighting voluntarily.

Achilles the archetypical warrior

Achilles is the archetypical warrior because he fights for himself. He is what a warrior looks like if he has no structural constraints. That is not to say he fights in isolation, which would be pointless. Achilles is a character torn between his desire for independence and his desire for recognition from his community. He cares deeply for recognition, which is illustrated by Agamemnon’s confiscation of Chryses, Achilles’ war bounty. This violation dishonours

⁴¹³ George Bataille (original italics) quoted in *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴¹⁴ Coker, *Warrior Ethos*, 32.

⁴¹⁵ Homer, *The Iliad* trans. Robert Fagles (London: Penguin, 1990), 79,82.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.280-87.

⁴¹⁷ For a discussion on the shape of battle in the *Iliad*, see; Hans Van Wees, ‘Kings in Combat: Battles and Heroes in the *Iliad*’, *The Classical Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1988).

him and effectively severs the reciprocity between warrior and society.⁴¹⁸ It is not so much that Achilles has walked out on his community, as the other way around.

Once detached from the communal war effort Achilles has total freedom to disengage or re-engage in the fight at will. There is nobody to prevent him from indulging his temper and sense of dejection. Although he is bickering with king Agamemnon, he does not respect the king at all, and there is little Agamemnon can do to control Achilles because of his fierceness. While in combat, there is no discipline, which Achilles must submit to, no tactical or technological feature of the battlefield, which limits him in his conduct of warfare, or constrains his ability to leave his authorship on the war. The fact that Achilles is only concerned with honour shows the degree to which he has agency within war and society. Nonetheless, this concern with honour ties him to society; he cannot go home.

The community asks of some members that they leave the community and enter the anticomunity of combat. There they must overcome mercy and terror and learn to value their honour above their own lives or another's. The community praises and honours those who have this capacity. As this praise is internalised it becomes a self-definition. Achilles is trapped by this self-definition, which permits him neither reconciliation nor retreat.⁴¹⁹

Achilles' desire for recognition is unconditional. He cannot compromise his honour because it is his only recompense for his violent death – which he knows will come. This does not necessarily make him entirely self-referential. The link between altruistic heroism and egoism is honour Redfield argues, quoting Pitt Rivers: "Honour felt is honour claimed, and honour claimed is honour paid."⁴²⁰

What Achilles demonstrates is self-respect. He stays true to his warrior ethos, and he is so confident that he is in the right that he would have nothing but scorn for anyone who would judge him otherwise.⁴²¹ In one section, he expressly forestalls any suggestion that the reason for his disengagement from the fight is his mother's prophecy that he will die shortly after Hector.⁴²² An example is Odysseus' embassy to Achilles where Odysseus asks him to return to battle. Achilles blankly refuses and angrily castigates Agamemnon for taking more than the lion's share of the spoils, albeit not of the combat, which is

⁴⁸ James M. Redfield, *Nature and culture in the Iliad: the tragedy of Hector* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 7

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁴⁰ Pitt Rivers quoted in *Ibid.*, 129.

⁴¹ French, *Code of the Warrior*, 40.

⁴² Homer, *Iliad*, 16.67-85.

dishonourable for a warrior in the Homeric world. At this point Achilles himself is not fighting at all, but if he did accept Agamemnon's offers, he would compromise his warrior ethic; his conception of what it means to be a warrior. Agamemnon's offer is of material goods, it is not an apology and admittance of wrongdoing. Acceptance of these goods would imply that Achilles fights for loot rather than honour, an honour Agamemnon as leader has symbolically withdrawn.⁴²³ That Achilles fights for himself is nowhere more evident than when he returns to battle after Patroclus' death. Before that he had melancholically fantasised about what it would be like if he and Patroclus were the only ones left on the battlefield.⁴²⁴

Subjectivity in the Iliad

Warfare is a constant feature of life in the *Iliad*, and this leads to a warrior class of heroes who effectively constitute an aristocracy and whose foundation is their members' willingness to risk death and mutilation in combat, as Odysseus reminds us:

the men whom Zeus decrees, from youth to old age,
must wind down our brutal wars to the bitter end
until we drop and die, down to the last man.⁴²⁵

Honour is the existential quality that links warriors with society and it brings with it the paradox that warriors and community need each other but are at the same time a problem for each other, for honour propels the warrior into war, or at least reinforces his craving for combat. The community considers war an evil, but it needs security, and the human qualities required to create and maintain security lead to a warrior ethos – a moral code that ascribes courage and manliness in battle as a primary virtue to be conferred honour for.

Shannon French describes how warriors need an ethos because they are mandated by society to kill, which breaks with a fundamental taboo. In order to do so they must strictly police themselves to kill only certain people under certain circumstances. Violators of this code can be ostracized, shamed or even killed. The warrior ethos protects the warrior from psychological damage because it institutionalises society's sanction on what is happening.⁴²⁶ French emphasizes the restraining features of the warrior ethos exclusively, but warriors can be equally ostracized, shamed and killed for not being aggressive enough, which is to

²³ Redfield, *Nature and Culture* 105.

²⁴ Homer, *Iliad*, 16.115-19.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.105-07.

²⁶ French, *Code of the Warrior*, 3,4.

say for being identified as cowards. Redfield, however, observes that norms and values are not constraints on action but rather sources of action.⁴²⁷

The warrior needs to navigate a rather precarious existential line, where aggressiveness and restraint are both rewarded, yet also punished if they are not exhibited sufficiently, or at the right time, which is to say in a controlled manner. The aggressive dimension of the warrior ethos logically leads to a desire to find opportunities and situations in which to display the coveted warrior qualities. “Heroism is initially a social task; it then becomes a definite set of virtues associated with the performance of this task. The warrior’s virtues, further, entitle him to claim a social status. But he can claim that status only if he can show that he has the virtues, and he can demonstrate the warrior’s virtues only on the battlefield.”⁴²⁸ This in itself can generate aggressive warfare, which puts society more at risk. This bears resemblance to the security dilemma between states today. As Redfield puts it;

When the background condition of life is war – when men feel themselves free to steal from anyone with whom they are not acquainted and to plunder and exterminate any town against which they have a grievance - men must place great trust in those close to them. Thus combat generates a tight-knit community. A Homeric community consists, in effect, of those who are ready to die for one another; the perimeter of each community is a potential battlefield. Under these social conditions, war is perceived as the most important human activity because the community’s ability to wage defensive war is perceived as the precondition of all other communal values.⁴²⁹

The elite fighters are those who step forward from the mass, the *promachoi*, “those who fight among the foremost”.⁴³⁰ They form an aristocracy and are called heroes precisely because they submit their fear of death to their commitment to fight in battle. Sarpedon makes this very clear in his speech to Glaucus in book 12:

He quickly called Hippolochus’ son: “Glaucus,
why do they hold us both in honour, first by far
with pride of place, choice meats and brimming cups,
in Lycia where all our people look on us like gods?
Why make us lords of estates along the Xanthus’ banks,
rich in vineyards and plowland rolling wheat?
So that now the duty’s ours-

⁴²⁷ Redfield, *Nature and Culture* 70.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, 99.

we are the ones to head our Lycian front,
brace and fling ourselves in the blaze of war,
so a comrade strapped in combat gear may say,
'Not without fame, the men who rule in Lycia,
these kings of ours who eat fat cuts of lamb
and drink sweet wine, the finest stock we have.
But they owe it all to their own fighting strength –
our great men of war, they lead our way in battle!'⁴³¹

Sarpedon in effect says it is better to die for something than nothing, and to achieve immortality through being remembered.⁴³² The privileges of aristocracy spring from bravery in battle as a reward granted in advance, which has to be repaid on the battlefield.⁴³³ The downside is the corresponding constant proximity to death:

All men are born to die, but the warrior alone must confront this fact in his social life, since he fulfils his obligations only by meeting those who intend his death. The community is secured by combat, which is the negation of community; this generates a contradiction in the warrior's role. His community sustains him and sends him to his destruction. On behalf of community he must leave community and enter a realm of force.⁴³⁴

The heroes are not the only fighters; there are also others, who are not among the aristocracy, but constitute a multitude of anonymous fighters. In the Homeric world it is taken for granted that the aristocracy is composed of the fiercest fighters, the *aristoi*, and conversely that all aristocrats are warriors. Leadership is hereditary, and all the great families have a glorious history of bravery and battlefield exploits. Homer does not problematize this social structure, which becomes plain in those rare instances when a character breaks from the formula. For example, Hector's brother Paris prefers staying in bed with Helen to fighting, a decidedly un-heroic choice in the Homeric moral landscape.

The distinction between men is not merely between warriors and non-warriors, nor between warriors and fighters that are more anonymous: it distinguishes different levels of warriors. Among them, Achilles is depicted as the finest (fiercest), because he is the most skilled and ruthless killer. However, Achilles is god-like, only part human since his mother Thetis is a goddess. Hector is the fiercest of the (all-) human warriors. Conversely, for those who do not excel on the battlefield, they had better keep their mouth shut. When

⁴³¹ Homer, *Iliad*, 12,359-81.

⁴³² Redfield, *Nature and Culture* 101.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

Odysseus in book two is running around marshalling the army, there is a clear distinction between his tones when speaking to warriors; “Whenever Odysseus met some man of rank, a king, he’d halt and hold him back with winning words: “My friend – it’s wrong to threaten you like a coward, but you stand fast, you keep your men in check!””⁴³⁵ On the other hand, when he speaks to commoners, he exposes the rigidity of the social structure: “When he caught some common soldier shouting out, he’d beat him with the sceptre, dress him down: “You fool – sit still! Obey the commands of others, your superiors – you, you deserter, rank coward, you count for nothing, neither in war nor council. How can all Achaeans be masters here in Troy?””⁴³⁶ This responsibility is that of the warrior leaders, and the leaders are consistently named the best warriors, as Van Wees has charted on both the Greek and Trojan sides.⁴³⁷

Hector, the ideal type soldier-warrior

What does this mean for what today we would call combat motivation in Homer? Do the heroes fight for themselves because of their aristocratic privileges, or do they genuinely risk their lives for their communities? The two leading heroes yield different answers to this. Achilles fights rather more for himself as has already been discussed. Hector on the other hand, is the leading representative of his community, and the likely heir of King Priam’s throne as the best of his sons. He experiences difficulties reconciling his role as a family father with his role as the primary defender of his community.⁴³⁸ If Hector is to fight for his community, he cannot commit to his family. Conversely, if he chooses his family, the community will surely suffer, and thus in consequence his family as well. Hector has no choice, and he decides to go for the first line of defence, which at the end pits him all alone outside the walls of Troy, to face off Achilles.

Does Hector’s embeddedness within the community make him more into a soldier type, a servant of his community? He is less a warrior who loves war like Achilles does, than a soldier-warrior who fights for others, and the approval of others – implicitly fearing their disapproval. Redfield argues Hector is a hero of *aidos*, which is the fear of *nemesis*. Nemesis is the moral disapproval of others, which is a strong feature of the Homeric shame culture. In this context, disapproval follows poor performance in combat, which the whole of Hector’s community attributes, including his fellow warriors. A comparison

⁴³⁵ Homer, *Iliad*, 2.218-21.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.228-34.

⁴³⁷ Wees, 'Kings in combat': 19.

⁴³⁸ Redfield, *Nature and Culture* 123,24.

between Hector and his brother Paris accentuates this argument because Paris is insensitive to *nemesis*.⁴³⁹ Hector passionately tries to shame Paris out of bed and into combat. Nevertheless, one cannot argue Paris is a complete coward, since he volunteers to duel Menelaus early in the poem, and here Hector in his first appearance rejoices because there seems to possibly be a way to avoid all-out war. That, however, is not what the gods want; they have set the scene for war, not duelling.

Hector in this way eventually finds himself in an impossible situation, alone outside Troy. Nevertheless, why does he not go to safety inside, since he cannot possibly expect to beat Achilles in one-on-one combat, and since he appears reluctant to fight the war unless it is necessary? After Andromache begs Hector not to return to the battlefield for the sake of his son and wife, he retorts forcefully:

“All this weighs on my mind too, dear woman.
But I would die of shame to face the men of Troy
and the Trojan women trailing their long robes
if I would shrink from battle now, a coward.
Nor does the spirit urge me on that way.
I’ve learned it all too well. To stand up bravely,
always to fight in the front ranks of Trojan soldiers,
winning my father great glory, glory for myself.
For in my heart and soul I also know this well:
the day will come when sacred Troy must die...⁴⁴⁰

Then far off in the land of Argos you must live,
labouring at a loom, at another woman’s beck and call,
fetching water at some spring, Messeis or Hyperia,
resisting it all the way –
the rough yoke of necessity at your neck.
And a man may say, who sees you streaming tears,
‘There is the wife of Hector, the bravest fighter
they could field, those stallion-breaking Trojans,
long ago when the men fought of Troy.’ So he will say
and the fresh grief will swell your heart once more,
widowed, robbed of the one man strong enough
to fight off your day of slavery.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 110-19.

⁴⁴⁰ Homer, *Iliad*, 6.522-33.

No, no,
let the earth come piling over my dead body
before I hear your cries, I hear you dragged away!"⁴⁴¹

Hector pronounces his reputation as a recognised warrior in a remarkably self-aware series of choices. He is advised by the people around him to exercise caution, and to withdraw. Polydamas calls for him to withdraw from the battlefield. Later, his father king Priam desperately calls for him to withdraw within the city walls,⁴⁴² and finally his mother too.⁴⁴³ These are tests of Hector's warrior ethic. Faced with the choice of staying home with his family or going to battle; faced with the choice of withdrawing or keep charging the Greeks; and finally in the choice between withdrawing and facing Achilles, Hector always chooses combat. As he says to Polydamas;

If it really was Achilles who reared beside the ships,
all the worse for him – if he wants his fill of war.
I for one, I'll never run from his grim assault,
I'll stand up to the man – see if he bears off glory
or I bear it off myself! The god of war is impartial:
he hands out death to the man who hands out death."⁴⁴⁴

Having stood and fought, Hector has demonstrated agency and commitment to his community at the same time. He has stayed as true to his warrior ethos as Achilles did when he refused to fight. The fact that he loses to Achilles in mortal combat is in a sense unimportant, because as Agamemnon says, that Achilles is an excellent soldier is to some extent an accident of the gods.⁴⁴⁵ As a warrior, Hector was all he could be.

Intersubjectivity in the Iliad

The relationship between the gods and the humans and the relationship between the Greeks and the Trojans are the two major intersubjective dimensions of the *Iliad*. In intersubjective relations between enemies in war, the primary question to ask is the intensity with which warfare is pursued, and whether the enemies respect or despise each other. Both questions are extremely important for the warrior's lifeworld. With respect to the warring parties in the *Iliad*, the intensity of the warfare waxes and wanes from limited, through ruthless, and back to more limited warfare, and finally increasing to total war; the

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 6.542-55.

⁴⁴² Ibid., 22.44-89.

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 22. 93-107.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 18.355-60.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 1.211.

sack of Troy, which takes place outside the poem. This waxing and waning is dramatized at the individual level in particular. The primary example of civilized courteous relations between enemies is Glaucus' encounter with Diomedes in book 6. Inaugurated by the typical boasting, Diomedes extends a long speech to describe his lineage, to which Glaucus replies:

Splendid – you are my friend,
my guest from the days of our grandfathers long ago!
(...)
So now I am your host and friend in the heart of Argos,
you are mine in Lycia when I visit your country.
Come, let us keep clear of each other's spears,
even there in the thick of battle. Look,
plenty of Trojans there for me to kill,
your famous allies too, any soldier the god
will bring in range or I can run to ground.
And plenty of Argives too – kill them if you can.
But let's trade armour. The men must know our claim:
we are sworn friends from our fathers' days till now!"⁴⁴⁶

While not a typical scene, this encounter represents the ultimate respect between enemies, to the point that they arrange a separate peace in the midst of fighting. The recital of Tydeus' lineage preceding Glaucus' decision for friendship indicates that Tydeus comes from a family of noble, famous for courage in the field, and worthy of respect.

Another indication of the importance of respect for the enemy is the constant boasting that prefigures individual duels. Boasting has two functions: The hero asserts himself and sets a high standard of conduct, essentially promising of himself brave acts and announcing that he will win before the fighting.⁴⁴⁷ Instead of more passively expecting himself to do his best and then cashing in the glory *if* he wins, the hero insists he will and risks the existential and physical failure this promise entails. "His excellence is not so much a power which he has as a hypothesis on which he stakes his life. Combat is a kind of experiment which falsifies the hypothesis of one party or the other."⁴⁴⁸ A typical boast is Hector's taunt to Ajax in book seven:

Ajax, royal son of Telamon, captain of armies,

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 6.257,58,68-77.

⁴⁴⁷ Redfield, *Nature and Culture* 129.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

don't toy with me like a puny, weak-kneed boy
or a woman never trained in works of war!
War – I know it well, and the butchery of men.⁴⁴⁹

Another function of the boast is to increase the glory of the victor, for fighting a confident and able enemy. Nietzsche recognized this particular point when he said, “You may have only enemies whom you can hate not enemies you despise. You must be proud of your enemy: then the successes of your enemy are your successes also.”⁴⁵⁰

Even though the warriors in the *Iliad* generally respect their enemies, the tendency for escalation, for cruelty, threatens to spiral the violence upwards to such an extent that the hatred disrupts the norms of how to treat the enemy. The source of escalation in the *Iliad* is not straightforward; it can be either on a mere whim of the Gods, or as part of a deal brokered, for example between Zeus and Hera.

Escalation is also a result of human actions, such as Hector's killing of Patroclus which transforms Achilles' already considerable rage into a killing frenzy. Achilles' altered fighting spirit is evident when he refuses to spare Priam's son Polydorus, who is begging for his life:

Fool,

don't talk to me of ransom. No more speeches.
Before Patroclus met his day of destiny, true,
it warmed my heart a bit to spare some Trojans:
droves I took alive and auctioned off as slaves.
But now not a single Trojan flees his death,
Not one the gods hand over to me before your gates,
none of all the Trojans, sons of Priam least of all!
Come, friend, you too must die. Why moan about it so?
Even Patroclus died, a far, far better man than you.
And look, you see how handsome and powerful I am?
The son of a great man, the mother who gave me life
a deathless goddess. But even for me, I tell you,
death and the strong force of fate is waiting.⁴⁵¹

Achilles even implicitly admonishes Polydorus to appreciate being killed by him, the greatest of heroes, rather than just anyone.

⁴⁴⁹ Homer, *Iliad*, 6.272-76.

⁴⁵⁰ Quoted in Coker, *Waging war without warriors*, 38.

⁴⁵¹ Homer, *Iliad*, 21.111-14.

A third explanation for escalation is random force. Simone Weil describes force as the true hero and subject of the Iliad: “force – it is that x that turns anybody who is subjected to it into a thing. Exercised to the limit, it turns man into a thing in the most literal sense: it makes a corpse out of him.”⁴⁵² Weil’s understanding of force is a structure, which denies agency to the warrior; it is life denying, not only in a literal but also existential sense. Force itself inspires cruelty because the warrior subject to it sees no obvious reason to spare his enemy, much like Achilles reasons above.

True enough, all men are fated to die; true enough also, a soldier may grow old in battles; yet for those whose spirits have bent under the yoke of war, the relation between death and the future is different than from other men. For other men death appears as a limit set in advance on the future; for the soldier death *is* the future, the future his profession assigns him. Yet the idea of man’s having death for a future is abhorrent to nature (...) if the existence of an enemy has made a soul destroy in itself the thing nature put there, then the only remedy the soul can imagine, is the destruction of the enemy. To respect life in somebody else when you have had to castrate yourself of all yearning for it demands a truly heartbreaking exertion of the powers of generosity.⁴⁵³

This kind of generosity is not particularly widespread, and the total destruction of Troy is something Hector is well aware is coming. His expectation underlines the fact that respect for the enemy does not necessarily exclude the presence of cruelty. Indeed, the hatred Achilles nurtures for Hector breaks the bonds of respect for the enemy, and he illustrates the dark side of the boasts:

The dogs and birds will maul you, shame your corpse
while Achaeans bury my dear friend in glory!”⁴⁵⁴

Would to god my rage, my fury would drive me now
to hack your flesh away and eat you raw –
such agonies you have caused me! Ransom?
No man alive could keep the dog-packs off you,
not if they haul in ten, twenty times that ransom
and pile it here before me and promise fortunes more –
no, not even if Darian Priam should offer to weigh out
your bulk in gold!

⁴⁵² Siân Miles, *Simone Weil – An Anthology* (London: Virago Press, 1985), 183.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 201-04.

⁴⁵⁴ Homer, *Iliad*, 22.396-97.

...

The dogs and birds will rend you – blood and bone!⁴⁵⁵

His rage at its highest frenzy, Achilles kills Hector, lashes his body to his chariot and drags him back to camp. Weil sees force to entail this double quality, its “power of converting a man into a thing is a double one, and in its application double edged. To the same degree, though in different fashions, those who use it and those who endure it are turned to stone.”⁴⁵⁶ Achilles shames himself as much as he shames Hector by stepping out of bonds with community’s norms. Redfield calls this Hector’s antifuneral: “The warrior’s act in battle wounds an alien community. The perfected negation of community, further, inheres not in killing the enemy but in denying him a funeral, for by this means the alien community is not only wounded but is also denied the means of healing itself.”⁴⁵⁷

Only when Achilles is reconciled with Priam at the very end of the poem are Hector and Achilles reintegrated in their respective communities; one in death, the other in life. It may not matter much, under the watchful eye of the gods; all lives are brief interludes, a fact which Achilles is well aware of, being half god himself. As Weil says: “the death of Hector would be but a brief joy to Achilles, and the death of Achilles but a brief joy to the Trojans, and the destruction of Troy but a brief joy to the Achaeans.”⁴⁵⁸ In the eyes of undying gods and eternity, it may appear that humans, even heroes, are temporary distractions.

Conclusion

The *Iliad* is above all significant because it enacts all the basic features that characterise war and warriors. The main heroes Achilles and Hector both fight for honour, but in different ways. Achilles refuses to fight because his inevitable and foretold sacrifice is not sufficiently honoured. When he rejoins the fight, it is entirely on his own terms because of Patroclus’ death. Achilles’ relationship with society is racked with tension and never entirely resolved. Honour is what links the warrior’s sacrifice with society, but it is a complex property. Too much honour makes the warrior insolent and vainglorious, yet too little discredits his sacrifice. Hector is held in the highest esteem already. His challenge is not recognition, but the cashing in of this honour with battlefield prowess. He needs to face Achilles even though he cannot expect to win; honour demands he stands up to fight even if it means

⁴⁵ Ibid., 22.408-17.

⁴⁶ Miles, *Simone Weil*, 204.

⁴⁷ Redfield, *Nature and Culture* 183.

⁴⁸ Miles, *Simone Weil*, 198.

certain death. Such is the responsibility of defending the community. It is in this the central properties of Achilles and Hector as ideal types lie.

Plato invents the Soldier

Context: The Ancient Greek world

Moving on from the Homeric age to the age of the ancient Greeks we are not so much leaving behind myth, as integrating it and gradually replacing it with philosophy and rationality. Myth cannot be replaced because of its enduring role in conceiving existential properties of human life that cannot easily be captured in purely rational language. As Paul Feyerabend argues: “if science is praised because of its achievements, then myth must be praised a hundred times more feverently because its achievements were incomparably greater. The inventors of myths started culture while rationalists and scientists just changed it, and not always for the better.”⁴⁵⁹ Indeed, the achievements of science were preceded by philosophy. Whereas myth tells stories, without a recipe for interpretation, philosophy is a more systematic attempt to reach answers to important questions like “what is right and wrong?”, “how should we live?”, “what is truth?” etc.

With Plato, philosophy is given a more clear delimitation from other forms of discourses, and it inaugurates a more systematic approach to any subject at hand, including that of war and warriors. Socrates is the first Greek on record to ask – rather than just assume – what is praiseworthy about a man fighting in battle. He gives a systematic analysis of the role of warriors in Plato’s *Republic*. Socrates, through a dialectic method, tries to answer the fundamental question of whether a ‘better life is provided for the unjust man than for the just by gods and men’ (362c)⁴⁶⁰. To answer this question he decides to erect an imagined city from scratch.

In Socrates’ dialogue with Glaucon, the two confront the issue of how the city should be protected. This job is given to highly educated soldiers, professionals whose upbringing and life is centred on guarding the city. It is appropriate that Plato discusses this issue, because in the intervening years since Homer wrote his epics, social, political and military developments had progressed far from purely warrior cultures to the more regimented and disciplined qualities that we associate with soldiers and states. The dialogue is infused with war to an extraordinary degree. The term ‘war’ and its cognates, such as ‘waging war’, ‘warrior’, ‘the art of war’ and ‘enemies’ occur nearly ten dozen times, not to

⁴⁵⁹ Paul Ricoeur (original italics) quoted in Sandywell, *Beginnings of European Theorizing*, 10.

⁴⁶⁰ Quoted in Angela Hobbs, *Plato and the Hero* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 5.

mention others like 'manliness', 'strife' and 'the hated'. It is reasonable to conclude, as does Leon Harold Craig, that The Republic's treatment of politics, philosophy and justice is "painted primarily in the colours of war."⁴⁶¹ Peace, in contrast, is mentioned less than a dozen times, and as a means to accentuate war more strongly.

Socially and politically the ancient Greeks inaugurated democracy, which from the beginning had a close relationship with warfare. Robin Lane Fox argues the polis probably arose sometime between 900-750s BC.⁴⁶² The polis was centred on the people – the citizens – rather than territory. It was a citizen state and the citizens were free males, a community of warriors who would fight for their state. Freedom and justice were very important for them. The city-states were thus contrasted with the earlier Mycenaean Age (c 1100-900 BC) which was dominated by aristocrats in all major political decisions. The aristocracies were replaced by monarchies, or tyrannies as the Greek contemporaries called them, round about the 650s BC.⁴⁶³ A couple of generations following the change to tyranny, the aristocrats united in pushing the tyrants away. The new freedom in practical terms involved elected magistrates, the rule of law and growing political and legal autonomy for city-states. The elder statesman Cleisthenes' constitutional reforms in Athens in the summer of 508 BC moved sovereignty to the citizens, and inaugurated local government and decision by assembly.⁴⁶⁴ This was very different from modern democracy since political rights were excluded from slaves, women and foreigners. Nonetheless, Greek democracy was unparalleled in neighbouring Persia, Egypt and Carthage. It was to remain so for the coming one hundred and eighty years, despite frequent military challenges. Victory in war thus became a victory for law for the Greeks,⁴⁶⁵ and the victory of law was victory for freedom, because the Greeks had willingly submitted to their own laws.

Perhaps the most famous Athenian of all, Socrates, is better known for his philosophy than his fighting skill, but he was a renowned warrior in his time. A veteran of the Potidea and Amphipolis campaigns, at 45 Socrates found himself a hoplite withdrawing from a defeat at Delium, a sideshow of the Peloponnesian War. In Plato's *Symposium* Alcibiades gives an account of the middle-aged philosopher moving with his characteristic swagger;

⁴⁶¹ Leon Harold Craig, *The War Lover: A Study of Plato's Republic* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 15.

⁴⁶² Robin Lane Fox, *The Classical World - An Epic History from Homer to Hadrian* (London: Allan Lane, 2005), 24-28.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, 40-58.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 95-97.

So he looked around calmly at both his friends and the enemy; he was clearly giving the message to anyone even at a distance that if anyone touched this man, he quickly would put up a stout defence. The result was that he and his partner got away safely. For it is true that attackers do not approach men of this calibre but instead go after those fleeing headlong.⁴⁶⁶

This firmness also characterised Socrates at his trial, where he argued he never broke ranks in the line, and therefore would not flee the trial where he was condemned to death.⁴⁶⁷

Warrior agency in Plato's Republic: Suppressing thymos

In Plato's ideal city, the warrior's agency is severely curtailed. Plato ultimately tries to domesticate warriors into being soldiers, specifically by manipulating their relationship with thymos, death and overall society. He instrumentalizes certain aspects of the warrior and makes him a servant of society, where others define his mission. This inaugurates a different kind of fighting ethos, where loyalty to the state is more important than the warrior ethos. The warriors do not existentially police themselves and each other, but are monitored by a higher institution to which they must be completely loyal; the state. Leadership is transferred from the prima facie privilege of the warring classes to a civilian decision-making class. Plato is in effect turning warriors into soldiers for the first time in history. Whereas there might have been soldiers of some kind in the service of warrior leaders before Plato's time, this is the first time soldiers conceptually replace warriors within the social and political structure of society. To say that soldiers conceptually replace warriors is to emphasize the theoretical rather than the historical nature of Plato's framework. He was after all a philosopher, not a head of state. Nevertheless, as the historical upheavals in Plato's time illustrate, these dramatic changes from Homer's world were not unthinkable, if somewhat idealistic. Indeed, Plato's vision of the state as split between civil and military leaderships and the military as a servant of the civil leadership is a vision that has become ingrained in modern Western thinking.

Early on in Plato's treatment of warriors, we are confronted with the somewhat enigmatic concept thymos, which is one of the three parts of the soul ('psuche'), the other two being reason and appetite. The concept 'thymos' originally comes from Homer, where it is "a general term for both the seat of feeling and thought and for the passions

⁴⁶ Quoted in Victor Davis Hanson, 'Socrates Dies at Delium, 424 B.C.' in *More What If? - Eminent historians imagine what might have been*, ed. Robert Cowley (London: Pan Books, 2003), 9.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

themselves, particularly anger,”⁴⁶⁸ argues classicist Angela Hobbs, and it is perhaps best viewed “as the life force, and from it stem fierceness and energy (menos), boldness and courage (tharsos) and anger (cholos)”⁴⁶⁹. Hobbs traces this understanding of thymos to the tragic poets and particularly to “Aeschylus’ *Seven Against Thebes*, where it is said of warriors before a battle that, ‘Their iron-lunged thymos, blazing with valour, Breathed out as if from lions glaring with the war-god’s might.’”⁴⁷⁰ In the *Republic*, Socrates generally argues that the guardians should be more soldiers of steadfast courage and resilience than warriors whose hearts are filled with lust for war, as Achilles’ heart is. Specifically the guardians will need some natural qualities: speed, strength and courage.⁴⁷¹ Courage is translated as ‘andreia’, which “requires thymos: it is thymos which makes both men and animals fearless and indomitable.”⁴⁷²

Thymos is the essence of the warrior’s energy, aggression and courage. It distinguishes him from a soldier, and even more from a civilian. As a metaphor, we can consider it the self-produced fuel of the warrior; and it is necessary for the kind of aggression, ruthlessness and resolve, which the warrior needs in war. As Plato sees it, the problem with thymos is that, for all its necessity, it is hard to control and domesticate. It produces more aggressiveness and initiative than restraint, and Plato values the latter very much in this setting. Warriors are asked to, or allowed to, unleash their thymos against the enemy. However, immediately after combat they have to “switch off” as they return from the front: “we want them to be gentle in their dealings with their own people, and fierce in their dealings with the enemy. Otherwise they won’t need to waste time looking for someone else to come along and destroy their city; they’ll be in there first, doing it for themselves.”⁴⁷³

While the guardians’ thymos must be reigned in, they must actively “possess characters which combine thymos with its natural opposite, gentleness; further, they must be naturally inclined to display this gentleness to those they know, reserving thymos for strangers.”⁴⁷⁴ The consequential challenge for the training regime naturally becomes how to achieve the perfect balance between stimulating thymos and civilising it. If thymos is

⁴⁶⁸ Hobbs, *Plato and the Hero*, 8.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Plato, ed., *The Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 2.375c, 59.

⁴⁷⁴ Hobbs, *Plato and the Hero*, 9.

over-stimulated, the possessor will be wild, hard and harsh.⁴⁷⁵ To avoid this, the thymos may be softened by combining physical training with literature and musical studies. The latter should not be overdone, or the Guardian will turn too soft, feeble and passive.⁴⁷⁶

The essence of the warrior's agency is thymos as it cannot be totally colonised by society. Achilles is the archetypal thymoedic character in literature. Indeed, thymos in Homer is virtually limitless.⁴⁷⁷ Achilles' rage is of course a product of his community dishonouring him. Still, the rage also comes from within, from his interpretation and subsequent emotional response to wrongdoing. Compared to Hector, and indeed to most other warrior-characters in literature, Achilles stands alone as uncompromisingly self-referential. Plato, with his more sophisticated moral psychology than that of the Homeric world, sees Achilles as "the archetypal exemplar of the thymos gone awry: a terrible warning of what can happen to a man when he is not only characterised by his thymoedic elements... but is actually dominated by them, instead of being ruled by his or someone else's reason."⁴⁷⁸ Since Plato's concern is with a city seen from the macro perspective, his warriors have a functional, not a mythical, role, and must be educated to behave accordingly, which is to say rationally. This has two important consequences: the instrumentalization of war, which in turn paves the way for the soldier as a military institution.

Warrior subjectivity in Plato's Republic: The challenge from emotions and death

Plato instrumentalizes both metaphysics and emotions to reduce the Homeric influence on young impressionable, aspiring guardians. For Plato, the human soul is in balance when the three elements are in harmony and ruled by reason; a worldview which is widely reflected in Plato's concept of philosophy. Homer, in contrast, does not emphasise reason, but celebrates the joy of battle. This is a problem for Plato insofar as his susceptible young Guardians may, in their search for someone to look up to as an example, want to emulate the fierce Achilles rather than the tempered Socrates, as Plato's near contemporary Alexander the Great did to such a high degree. Plato wants the guardians to emulate the self-controlled disciplined and reasoned Socrates, rather than warriors. Indeed Plato has Socrates rank the life governed by appetite last, the thymoedic life second, and the

⁴⁷⁵ 410d quoted in *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 43-44.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 200.

philosophic life – informed as it is by superior experience, intelligence and reasoning ability – first.⁴⁷⁹

Socrates is concerned that Homer unhelpfully paints too bleak a picture of the underworld, making death scary. This does not inspire the guardians to become warlike.⁴⁸⁰ For example, when Odysseus visits Achilles in Hades, the latter is a restless and deeply unhappy wraith:

‘No winning words about death to *me*, shining Odysseus!
By god, I’d rather slave on earth for another man –
some dirt-poor tenant farmer who scrapes to keep alive –
than rule down here over all the breathless dead.’⁴⁸¹

Whereas Plato has a different view of the underworld from that prevailing in Homer, it is still illustrative of the magnitude of his ambition in the *Republic* that he wants to educate people metaphysically, ultimately for the well being of the state. To this end, Homer must be censored. The warriors’ intimate relationship with death will not count for much, and must be transcended, which in turn means that the special covenant the warrior has with his community will be rewritten. That is precisely what Plato does; translating the warriors’ covenant into the guardian by social design. The creator of the state prescribes the guardians’ values, and they infused through education. They serve less for honour and more for prestige and duty, and they are soldiers instead of warriors.

There is also the weeping and wailing of the heroes⁴⁸² to get rid of, since in Platonic metaphysics there is no reason to dread the transition to the world of pure forms. Considering the importance modern psychology attributes to the emotional dimensions of combat incurred post-traumatic stress disorders, Plato’s approach is instrumental in the extreme in depriving his guardians of an emotional life, unless the emotions in question have a direct utility to their function as guardians.

Plato’s attempt to engineer soldiers inaugurates a slow domestication of the warrior spirit within Western society. In this respect, he is the first thinker who explicitly and theoretically consider how humans can be trained to serve strategy. He professionalizes the guardians: “‘Since the guardians’ job, then,’ I said, ‘is the most important, it must

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., 24.

⁴⁸⁰ Plato, ed., *The Republic*, 71.

⁴⁸¹ Homer, *The Odyssey* (trans. Robert Fagles), trans. Robert Fagles (London: Penguin, 1996), 11.555-58.

⁴⁸² They do not weep and wail of fear, but rather of sorrow.

correspondingly call for the greatest freedom from other activities, together with the highest levels of expertise and training.”⁴⁸³

Plato’s treatment of warriors also features an existential side. The battle of Delium made a strong impression on Socrates, which can be discerned in Plato’s work. In the *Laws*, Plato admonishes military drill for all citizens, including women and children, specifically for fluid combat environment (defensive or mopping up) where there is a risk of fighting one on one.⁴⁸⁴ In the *Republic*, the guardians are trained from childhood onwards. Their fathers bring them to battle so they can see what combat is about first hand from an early age. For how can one merely pick up a shield or “any other instrument of war – and immediately be ready to take your place in the battle-line, or in any of the other sorts of fighting which occur in time of war?”⁴⁸⁵ The guardians are billeted in barracks leading a suitably austere lifestyle, without frills or vain individuality. It is Plato’s ideal that everyone should do what they do best, and this aggregates to produce a better state for all as well. Despite this existential dimension, Plato is a reformer, and he instrumentalizes the guardians radically in comparison to the warriors’ more existential lifeworld in Homer. War recedes from a condition of life into a tool for improving and safeguarding a particular way of life; organised as a state. Thus, Plato is an important precursor to the Clausewitzian notion of war as a trinity of government, army and people.

Plato’s explicitly prescriptive argument further introduces a separation between the reality of war and the discourse of war, which has remained ever since. Since Plato, the power to define what war should be about is taken from the warrior aristocracy and given to ‘civilian’ leaders and to an extent from practitioners to theoreticians. Part of this equation is the eviction of the gods from the scene. The “civilian” philosophers replace them. Furthermore, war is conceived as controllable, not merely endured. The guardians are stripped of all powers that do not concern their duty as guardians, and are put under the total influence of their powerful rulers. While warriors were the property owning class in Homer, Plato’s guardians will not be allowed to own property at all because of the inherent risks of a possessive mindset: “Once they start acquiring their own land, houses and money, they will become householders and farmers instead of guardians. From being allies of the other citizens they will turn into hostile masters.”⁴⁸⁶ According to Plato, their

⁴³ Plato, ed., *The Republic*, 374e p.58.

⁴⁴ Hanson, ‘Socrates dies’, 19.

⁴⁵ Plato, ed., *The Republic*, 374d p.57.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 417a p.110.

lives will be freer and happier than that of an Olympic victor,⁴⁸⁷ thus attractive, but there is no doubt that compared to the Homeric warriors the guardians are severely emasculated in virtually all respects.

Warrior intersubjectivity in Plato:

Plato's discussion of the ideal city and the guardians is quite brief on the treatment of the enemy. However, two points stand out. One is a rather self-sure attitude as to the superiority of the guardian in combat with an enemy in superior numbers. Debating with Adeimantus, Socrates argues the guardians can take on large wealthy cities because they are accustomed to hardship and they have more knowledge of war than "rich, fat people."⁴⁸⁸ The asceticism of the guardians can even be used advantageously in alliance building:

‘What if they sent an embassy to one of the other two cities, and said to them, quite truthfully, “Gold or silver are no use to us. We are not allowed them. But you are. Be our allies in this war, and you can have our opponents’ wealth.” Do you think anyone who heard this offer would choose to make war on dogs who are lean and fit, rather than side with the dogs against the fat, tender sheep?’⁴⁸⁹

The other point concerns the civilizing of the conduct of war. Socrates and Glaucon both subscribe to better than hitherto treatment of the enemy, whether captive or dead. This holds especially true if the enemy is a fellow Greek.

‘When Greeks fight barbarians, then, and barbarians Greeks, we shall say they are at war. We shall say they are natural enemies, and that hostilities of this sort are to be called a war. But in cases where Greeks fight Greeks, we shall say that they are natural friends, but in this situation Greece is sick, and divided against itself. We shall say that hostilities of this kind are to be called a civil war.’⁴⁹⁰

In cases of civil war, Socrates and Glaucon agree that the guardians should provide a good example of civilized conduct. Enslavement of fellow Greeks is thus discouraged, and so is plundering of the enemy dead, which gives “cowards an excuse not to go after those who are offering resistance”⁴⁹¹ and is generally to be considered demeaning, mercenary, petty and womanish.⁴⁹² On the other hand, the demands of the guardians in the face of the enemy stop nowhere short of the utmost skill and courage. If they throw away their

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., 465d p.165.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., 442b p. 114.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., 422d p.114.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 470c-d p.171.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., 469c-d p.170.

⁴⁹² Ibid., 469d p. 170.

weapons and give up they should be demobilized and reduced to the rank of a farmer. If they are taken alive by the enemy then the enemy can do to them what they please.⁴⁹³

Conclusion

For Plato, warriors no longer remain exemplar in representing the most desirable qualities of free men; fierceness in combat primary among them. Instead, this power of definition becomes democratised. The warriors of Homer's *Iliad* need the recognition of the entire society to become true warriors, but the power of definition rests overwhelmingly with the warrior peers as the existentially dominant (indeed only) reference group and far less with the common people. In Plato's world men chosen by selection and education can to a much higher extent achieve admirable qualities through rational thought and discourse. Paradoxically, for Plato was an anti-democrat, this leads to social mobility, increased democracy and it introduces meritocracy in war. Now the philosopher is highest on the food chain with the guardians second, because it is the philosopher who defines norms and values.

In Plato's ideal state the guardians as instruments – rather than leaders – of the state, must be willing to submit to the will of their superiors, a far leap from Achilles' unrestrained contempt for Agamemnon. Discipline, professionalism and restraint are keywords for the guardian's attitude. To find an approximation towards Plato's ideal we need not move further through history than to the hoplite, and thus Socrates himself, to find representatives of this civic virtue.⁴⁹⁴ Hobbs ponders whether one could imagine Achilles in a phalanx, and concludes, "his yearning for individual glory might prove too much. All in all, the chances are that he would be a pretty disastrous inhabitant and defender of the ideal – and perhaps any city-state."⁴⁹⁵ Achilles is a warrior, not a soldier, and one of the distinguishing characteristics is the desire for individual freedom and honour, not only in the face of the enemy, but relative to other soldiers on the same side as well. While not explicitly identifying the difference between soldiers and warriors, Hobbs puts it well: "The state needs obedient soldiers, not overmighty warriors."⁴⁹⁶ The defence of the city-state does in fact confer honour upon the participant, and it is true that the honour is collective, but it is also individual as Socrates' reputation testifies. Yet, warriors

⁴⁹³ Ibid., 468ab p. 168.

⁴⁹⁴ Hobbs, *Plato and the Hero*, 201.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., 202.

typically desire more recognition than that which is granted to soldiers for 'mere' participation, since they usually contribute disproportionately to fighting.

The Platonic guardian is an ideal type of what warriors would look like if they were perfectly domesticated and instrumentalized; if they were reduced to a function. There is a formidable challenge involved in uprooting so many of the organic balances that we saw in Homer's world. The balance between honour and sacrifice that occupied the doomed Achilles so much is an example of this. Plato's drawing board version of warriors has much to recommend it as far as society is concerned, but it requires a social structure that acknowledges other sources of authority than war leaders. In the age of chivalry, we are in many ways back to the existential properties of Homer's world, rather than that of Plato.

A romantic Ideal in a Rough Reality: The Chivalric Knight

Context: The Medieval World

It is commonly held that the medieval world was divided into three estates: those who fight (warriors), those who pray (clergy) and those who work (peasants). This idea was well known already in the late 9th century, when King Alfred of Wessex expressed it.⁴⁹⁷ The notion of the three estates predates chivalry, and it is important to appreciate how deeply war affected this society to understand the circumstances under which the chivalric warrior ascended.

Michael Howard has argued that the "origins of Europe were hammered on the anvil of war."⁴⁹⁸ Several reasons account for the prevalence of war in the Early Middle Ages. Externally there was pressure from tribal migration and invasions in various forms: the German tribes from the East, the Vikings from the North, and the religiously inspired Muslims who were propelled by the recently deceased prophet from the South and East.⁴⁹⁹ Later, during the 11th century, these external pressures were largely assuaged, particularly for the Franks, but society was no less warlike because of the instability of power and authority, as historian of the Frankish Middle Ages Luchaire describes:

At that time the country had disintegrated into provinces, and the inhabitants of each province formed a kind of little nation that abhorred all others. The provinces were in turn divided into a multitude of feudal estates whose owners fought each other incessantly. Not only the great lords, the barons, but also the smaller lords of the

⁴⁹⁷ Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 3.

⁴⁹⁸ Howard, *War in European History*, 1.

⁴⁹⁹ Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners and State Formation and Civilization*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994), 288-89.

manor lived in desolate isolation and were uninterruptedly occupied in waging war against the “sovereigns,” their equals, or their subjects. In addition, there was constant rivalry between town and town, village and village, valley and valley, and constant wars between neighbours that seemed to arise from the very multiplicity of these territorial units.⁵⁰⁰

What Luchaire describes here is feudal society. Feudalism is a social structure characterised by a decentralizing – or centrifugal – dynamic. Land ownership was the source of wealth and power and a popular saying held that there was ‘no land without a lord’.⁵⁰¹ Society was stratified between small and big landowners, where the big landowners would give land in payment to smaller lords in return for loyalty and war service. This decentralizing of land and loyalty repeated itself from the level of the king all the way down to the disenfranchised peasants. In turn, the smaller lords enjoyed from the bigger lords: land, arms, money, a hand towards good marriage, and particularly later; protection of privileges against the rising bourgeoisie.⁵⁰² The problem for the bigger lords and kings was that their need of assistance was constant if they were to rule with any continuity. The smaller lords would need favours only occasionally so could shift or withdraw their loyalties anytime, which frequently happened, and which led to the centrifugal dynamic and instability.

Militarily and politically, kings and great lords dominated Europe throughout the Middle Ages and they and their appointees were social aristocrats equipped as heavy cavalry. Victor Davis Hanson has argued that it was not cavalry that dominated warfare during this time, but the much more numerable infantry.⁵⁰³ While true in numerical terms, this underestimates the social standing and near absolute power of the equestrian aristocracy during the feudal period. Gat underlines this in his definition of feudalism as “the gravitation of local-regional political and juridical power from the central authority to equestrian warriors and lords sustained by land allocation.”⁵⁰⁴ For Gat, feudalism could only take place in societies that possessed the horse and made it a primary instrument of war. These states were large but agrarian and rudimentary, lacking “the economic and bureaucratic infrastructure to support and administer the desired, but expensive, mounted troops by means other than land allocation in return for military service.”⁵⁰⁵ Cavalry became dominant because of the invention of stirrups that made possible the shock charge

⁵⁰⁰ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 165.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 295.

⁵⁰² Keen, *Chivalry*, 29.

⁵⁰³ Victor Davis Hanson, *Why the West has won : carnage and culture from Salamis to Vietnam* (London: Faber, 2001), chapter 5.

⁵⁰⁴ Gat, *War in human civilization*, 333.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 334.

with the locked-under-arm lance;⁵⁰⁶ increased the mobility and range of the horse;⁵⁰⁷ and increased the prevalence of skirmishes rather than set-piece battles, particularly in relation to controlling a dispersed and uncoordinated domestic peasantry.⁵⁰⁸ The Western Frankish were the first to develop the form of heavy cavalry that was associated with the chivalric knight, and one of the reasons for this is that they needed the mobility against the horse-dominated Islamic enemies that had conquered Spain.⁵⁰⁹

Both Gat and Hanson argue that the stirrup did not make much of a difference as an invention because infantry could defeat cavalry in battle, using longbows or pikes.⁵¹⁰ This is true if the stirrup is considered as a technological invention in isolation and particularly with respect to its role in battle. However, in the feudal context, the stirrup strongly empowered the heavy cavalryman who could easily dominate small groups of disorganized peasants and small holders in the countryside because of tactical superiority and mobility - and such subjugation was essential before the knights could lead them into battle. The supremacy of the knight arose outside battle. That infantry would play an important role once committed in battle is undisputed, but the infantry as a weapon there did not translate into social dominance, or command responsibilities. Indeed infantry in medieval battles tended largely to be disenfranchised commoners rather than free farmers.⁵¹¹

Agency and the chivalric knight

In relative terms, the medieval period was one where knights enjoyed almost unrivalled agency. We have to return to Homer for a comparable account. This is not the highly regimented and patrolled soul of the guardian in Plato's Republic, nor is it the disciplined professionalism of the Greek phalanx or the Roman legion. Chivalric knights were effectively lords – and sometimes actual kings – on the battlefield, with little to constrain them. Mounted knights had freedom of movement, the support of their retainers, and outside larger battles relative impunity. This makes Victor Davis Hanson's comparison

⁵⁰⁶ Keen, *Chivalry*, 23, Lynn White, *Medieval Technology and Social Change* (Oxford University Press, 1968). The role of the stirrup is a controversial issue. It was by no means a sufficient cause for the arrival of shock cavalry attack, but it was absolutely necessary for it, and by continuation the rise of the tournament and jousting.

⁵⁰⁷ Gat, *War in human civilization*, 329.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 330.

⁵⁰⁹ Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 293, John France, *Western Warfare in the age of the crusades 1000-1300* (London: UCL Press, 1999), 5,54.

⁵¹⁰ Gat, *War in human civilization*, 339-41, Hanson, *Why the West has won*, 152.

⁵¹¹ Keegan, *Face of Battle*, chapter 2, John A. Lynn, *Battle : a history of combat and culture* (Boulder, Colo. ; Oxford: Westview, 2003), 79, Nicholas Wright, *Knights and Peasants – The Hundred Years War in the French Countryside* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998), 25.

with present day fighter pilots apt.⁵¹² However, membership access among chivalric knights was extremely limited. The feudal social structure directly influenced the degree to which power was personal (rather than associated with the state) and physical (rather than technological).

In the feudal warrior society considerable physical strength is an indispensable element in social power, but by no means its sole determinant. Simplifying somewhat, one can say that the social power potential of a man in feudal society is exactly equal to the size and productivity of the land and the labour force he controls. His physical strength is undoubtedly an important element in his ability to control it. Anyone who is unable to fight like a warrior and commit his body to attack and defence has in the long run little chance of owning anything in this society.⁵¹³

Medieval warfare was clearly an extremely physical affair. It had a very limited killing zone, which extended to the maximum reach of the longbow, about 300 meters, but more typically took place at the length of the lance or sword. For this reason, knights were compelled to stay in great shape, and prowess with arms was the material counterpart of the more general allegiance to manliness, courage, honour and loyalty, values discussed below in the subjectivity section.

Physical prowess

Physical prowess was important for several reasons. One is that society was exceptionally violent, which generated a need for meeting force with force without hesitation and at any given moment. This kind of situation lends several developments weight. It illustrates the importance of a capacity for personal and physical violence for self preservation. The pacific monasteries certainly suffered from its absence. It also shows the necessity for some kind of restraining code, whether the explicitly Christian Just War doctrine, or the more secular chivalric code. There was no *social* institution or power that could constrain individual knights since any affective outburst: whether violent or sexual, was commonplace, and not particularly frowned upon.⁵¹⁴ The only possible means with which to limit cruelty was overwhelming physical force with an explicitly spelt out warrior code; chivalry. Indeed such readiness – even necessity – for violence among knights, whether cruel or relatively civilized, also translates into an implicit challenge to peers, which led knights everywhere to be deeply concerned with honour, which cannot be reduced to, but

⁵¹² Hanson, *Why the West has won*, 136.

⁵¹³ Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 312n.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 319.

still resembles, reputation.⁵¹⁵ Any knight would have to be prepared to fight for his honour, which was a reflection of courage and his willingness to shed the blood of his enemy as well as his own. Honour became a currency, which abstractly reflected combat prowess claimed and demonstrated. Its repeated manifestation over generations was thus crucial for the nobility, both materially and existentially.

A second reason for the need for physical prowess was the way in which warfare was organised. Knights typically needed to rely on personal relationships of loyalty, cajoling and persuading fellow lords to go on campaign. Lesser lords were free to decline, and there was no system of punishment in place to force someone to fight unless it was in their interest. For this reason knights had to personally embody warrior values, leading by example from the front. Kings were no exception to this. In the Viking period (793-1066), six of sixteen kings fell in combat.⁵¹⁶ Leading from the front has always been very hazardous, so kings took their physical prowess as seriously as other knights. Thus it was said that the 10th century Norwegian King Olav Tryggvasson could juggle daggers and balance on an extended oar.⁵¹⁷ Similarly, English King Henry V was said to be able to vault into the saddle in full armour.⁵¹⁸ There are also extreme examples of dedication and professionalism like the French knight Boucicat who could run up the inside of a ladder using only his hands, in full battle armour, which would weigh somewhere in the range of 30-45 kg, and could somersault in the same.⁵¹⁹ Such a level of fitness is far beyond merely natural talent and knights underwent hard physical training from an early age, and fought until old age.⁵²⁰ In some cases, they would learn to jump, run and swim in armour. Weapons handling and horsemanship were both integral parts of this training. The training was underpinned by a heavy meat rich diet, which in combination with the rigorous exercise made the knights physically bigger than their less privileged peers.⁵²¹ If this makes the lifeworld of a knight seem rather comfortable in comparison to the poor, disenfranchised and relatively defenceless peasants, an illustration of the kind of hardship knights sometimes underwent on campaign can even the picture. The Spanish Knight Don Pero Nino the Victorious was wounded in the leg in a skirmish near Tunis:

⁵¹⁵ Lawrence James, *Warrior Race – A History of the British at War* (New York: St Martin's Griffin, 2004), 40, Lynn, *Battle*, 80.

⁵¹⁶ Paddy Griffith, *The Viking Art of War* (London: Greenhill Books, 1995), 26.

⁵¹⁷ James, *Warrior race*, 21.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁵¹⁹ Keen, *Chivalry*, 112.

⁵²⁰ Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 160.

⁵²¹ James, *Warrior race*, 119.

Don Pero was in fever, his life was regarded as endangered and the doctors wished to amputate. He wanted to save the leg and insisted that they try cauterising the wound. 'They heated an iron, big as a quarrel, white hot. The surgeon feared to apply it, having pity for the pain it would cause. But Pero Nino, who was used to such work, took the glowing iron himself and moved it over his leg, from one end of his wound to the other.'⁵²²

But it was not only on campaign the knights were able to show their skills and hardness. Parallel with the development of the chivalric ethos, tournaments and jousts became the preferred arena for displays of prowess and courage outside warfare proper.

Tournaments and jousts

Tournaments started taking shape between the mid 11th and 12th centuries.⁵²³ Jousts were set piece individual duels between knights. A tournament, on the other hand, was a semi-organised fight between teams, such as between North and South England, or by nationality.⁵²⁴ The weapons were usually swords and lances, encouraging close quarter combat and discouraging missile weapons. Prisoners were taken for ransom, and conquered equipment was usually kept. The tournaments served as excellent practice for war, not least because they were usually composed of kin and territory based teams, which increased the contingents' cohesion by serving together in a situation barely short of war. In fact in the earliest instances tournaments were hard to distinguish from skirmishes in real warfare. There are several examples of high casualty figures, such as in Saxony during 1175, when sixteen knights were killed over the year in tournaments. Worse, in Neuss in 1241, about eighty knights were killed in a single tournament.⁵²⁵

During the 13th century, the tournaments became more restrained and stylized, with the introduction of bated weapons, and much more strict rules of admissions. Only nobility were admitted, ranging from having recognised coats of arms, to the extreme German example of only allowing participants who could prove that their family had fought in tournaments for the last fifty years.⁵²⁶ The church had tried to stop tournaments from their inception, threatening ex-communication for those who fought, and refusal of Christian burial for those who died. It was argued that the tournaments encouraged all of the seven

⁵²² Keen, *Chivalry*, 223-24.

⁵²³ Ibid., 83, Lynn, *Battle*, 94.

⁵²⁴ Keen, *Chivalry*, 85.

⁵²⁵ Ibid., 84,87.

⁵²⁶ Ibid., 90.

sins.⁵²⁷ This is probably a reasonable claim, but more importantly, it illustrates the degree to which knights felt unrestrained by the edicts of the church. A possible reason for this is that the brutality of warfare vis-à-vis heavily constrained rules of engagement in tournaments would prove not only ridiculous, but would also deprive the latter of their value as military exercises. Indeed, during the 13th century some knights, like Henri de Laon, complained that the tournaments were getting too soft, and could no longer serve to train and select those: “who have the courage to endure bodily hardship, which is what marks out the man who is fit to lead a company... the man who can support the weight of his helmet and who does not pause for heat or breathlessness... to be soaked in one’s own sweat and blood, that I call the true bath of honour.”⁵²⁸ His concerns were probably valid because real war was savagely brutal, and knights did not always feel constrained by either chivalry or the church’s invocations on campaign.

Subjectivity and the chivalric knight

The single most important subjective dimension of medieval warfare is chivalry. However, it is important to be aware of the limitations and paradoxes that surround chivalry. Chivalry was not a code that had the power to ensure that warfare was conducted in a humane manner, nor was its ethos subscribed to by all fighting men, or even by all knights. These limitations apart, chivalry was an imposing ideal, particularly for the upper nobility, and their social standing would surely suffer if they took this ideal lightly. To criticize chivalry for not containing all the transgressions – and there were many – of an extremely violent society is to enter a moral world of absolutes which knights, who had to balance and reconcile social, political, existential and military responsibilities and interests, could ill afford to indulge in.

A leading historian of chivalry, Maurice Keen puts the age of chivalry as between the 11th and early 16th centuries, between the first crusade and the Reformation. Chivalry in its abstract form has had many meanings, designating an order; knighthood; and an estate and a martial social class. For Keen, the definition reads; “Chivalry is a word that came to denote the code and culture of a martial estate which regarded war as its hereditary profession.”⁵²⁹ Wording his definition thus Keen is careful to include both the more idealised (‘code’) dimension, and its more practical manifestation (‘culture’). Indeed: “Chivalry cannot be divorced from the martial world of the mounted warrior: it cannot be

⁵²⁷ Ibid., 94-97.

⁵²⁸ Quoted in Ibid., 88.

⁵²⁹ Ibid., 239.

divorced from aristocracy, because knights commonly were of higher lineage: and from the middle of the twelfth century on it very frequently carries ethical or religious overtones.”⁵³⁰

With this in mind, a chivalric knight is an aristocratic mounted warrior who subscribes to a particularly Christian inspired warrior ethos. From the 12th century, a chivalric career would usually constitute an adventurous youth, an apprenticeship in tournament, and then war service in a far-away place.⁵³¹ Geographically, chivalry started to be a notable way of life in France and then spread throughout Europe.⁵³² An important forerunner and perhaps inspiration for the later explicit code of chivalry was the experiences of the knights who volunteered to fight against the Muslims in Spain.⁵³³ This was a war that accentuated the need for cavalry (because the Muslims fought almost exclusively on horse), and at the same time pronounced religious differences as well as the imperative to fight the invading infidels. In these historical developments, we can trace some sources of the origins of the chivalric ethos. There are three major components in the ethos that needs clarification; what were its dominant values; to which degree was it religious or secular; and, to which extent did the ideal translate into the real world?

The chivalric knight had to conform to a number of ideals. The most important and overarching value of all was honour, and its obvious social utility was explored above. In addition, loyalty and truth, courage, hardiness, prowess, largesse and humility were principle qualities.⁵³⁴ Various treatises on knights emphasized either of these as the primary one. Loyalty was very important because of the way the social structure encouraged multiple allegiances between lords and vassals. For the higher nobility control over territory, which they could not rule over in person, was very much a question of delegating power to selected lords, which put trust at a premium. Hardiness was a necessity to perform well in war, over a lifetime. Largesse became more important in the medium and later stages of the period, when it served as a distinction against the socially expanding bourgeoisie who, by contrast, did not live by the sword, and whose view of material wealth was an inclination towards acquisition rather than largesse.⁵³⁵ There were actionable imperatives associated with these values. A chivalric knight should be prepared to defend the faith of Christ against unbelievers; defend both his lord and the weak, for example by

⁵³⁰ Ibid., 2.

⁵³¹ Ibid., 21.

⁵³² Ibid., 42.

⁵³³ France, *Western warfare*, 54.

⁵³⁴ Keen, *Chivalry*, 10, 112.

⁵³⁵ Lynn, *Battle*, 82.

leaving the castle and pursuing robbers; exercise their body and skills, particularly in horsemanship; and fight in jousts and tournaments to prepare mind and body for war.⁵³⁶

To which extent were the chivalric knights religiously inspired? Keen describes the origins of chivalry as largely secular, but nonetheless the religious aspect is significant. Military, social and literary developments all coalesced towards the explicit code of chivalry. Economically, owning and maintaining a large horse with entourage was something that raised the knight above the footmen. The martial function marked him as separate from the clergy. Romantic literature and the chansons celebrated the social and military distinctiveness of knights, and not least in the increasingly popular family genealogies, which emphasized noble lineage and martial honour.⁵³⁷ Nonetheless, Keen argues that without its clerical component, chivalry would have been akin to a rather crude, though at times heroic, military professionalism. The Christian element thus elevated it above merely political matters, and later the Crusades constituted the highest expression of this element.⁵³⁸ Knights were deeply steeped in Christian morality and observance, which the rich Christian symbolism of the process of dubbing to knighthood illustrates.⁵³⁹ Knighthood was a Christian calling. At the same time, the knights were no more servants of God than of their secular lords, not even in the age of the crusades.⁵⁴⁰

There is a Christian and a secular side to chivalry, rather than an either-or. Of course there are extremes in either direction, such as the strictly observant Templars. This conditionality of the concept of chivalry is reflected even more clearly in the case of the crusades, which in a sense were the external manifestation of chivalry in action. Deciding whether the Crusades were fought for religious or political motivations is notoriously controversial.⁵⁴¹ Part of the historical relevance of the crusades to a study of warriors comes from the fact that the crusaders were volunteers, which accentuates their individual commitments.⁵⁴² For the clergy and the higher nobility, however, it is likely the crusades could not hold a lasting appeal if they did not firmly believe they had a just cause, which generated a lot of serious thought on the matter.⁵⁴³ Among the Templars for example,

⁵³⁶ Keen, *Chivalry*, 9-10.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, 23-32.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁵³⁹ See *Ibid.*, 327, chapter IV.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁵⁴¹ Norman Housley, *Contesting the Crusades, Contesting the past* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 331, chapter 1.

⁵⁴² Jonathan Riley-Smith, *What Were the Crusades?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 72.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*, 23.

there was a genuine concern that their motivations be pure enough (i.e. not material).⁵⁴⁴ On the other hand, to use the phrase of a leading historian of the crusades, Jonathan Riley-Smith, the crusades were certainly more than 'military monasteries on the move.'⁵⁴⁵

One result of the crusades was that they brought warriors and the clergy closer together under a common project, which made the chivalric knight something other than just an aristocratic warrior, with all the additional religious and ethical commitments and existential baggage a closer allegiance to Christianity entailed. On the other hand, it also made the church more militant, relative to its rather pacifist past.⁵⁴⁶ Recalling the servants of God's vulnerability from external invasion of Vikings and Saracens as well as from less than chivalric knights within Europe, the church would see an alliance with warriors as both giving it a military arm that could re-conquer the Holy Land abroad, as well as protecting the clergy militarily via the existential medium of the code of chivalry at home. In Lyndon B. Johnson's vivid phrase, it would be better to have them inside the tent pissing out, rather than outside pissing in.⁵⁴⁷

Intersubjectivity and the chivalric knight

Intersubjectively speaking the chivalric knights had battlefield enemies in the Holy Land as well as in Europe, they had the intransigent church persistently trying to impose restraint, and they felt the social pressure of the general civilizing process in Europe, which was strongly influenced by the new estate; the bourgeoisies. These intersubjective relations point in different directions, but have in common a general trend towards restraint.

As mentioned already, medieval society was incredibly brutal, and cruelty was commonplace both in the battlefield, in gratuitous outbursts of violence and in punishment. Elias illustrates a 16th century Parisian tradition of burning one or two dozen cats on Midsummer's day. This is in no way worse than burning heretics or torturing people to death in penal spectacles, except for the very significant point that there seems to have been no functional side to this ritual; but instead an outright revelling in cruelty.⁵⁴⁸ It is probably reasonable to argue, as James does, that fighting men had more experience of extreme violence and thus more capacity for it.

The social structure of the age played a significant role in this cruelty. The absence of a money economy and the relative weakness of government led armies on the march to live

⁵⁴⁴ Housley, *Contesting the Crusades*, 76.

⁵⁴⁵ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 16.

⁵⁴⁶ Keen, *Chivalry*, 45.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 46. LBJ quoted in James, *Warrior race*, 100.

⁵⁴⁸ Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 167.

off the land, positively ravaging the countryside as they went.⁵⁴⁹ There was a surplus of men relative to land which attracted many to the prospects of loot in war. Aside from the high nobility there was not necessarily a clear distinction between small lords and robber barons, mercenaries who lived off loot and the occasional paymaster.⁵⁵⁰ The brutality wrought on peasants in enemy territory was totally unrestrained, and struck those who had no way of defending themselves the hardest.⁵⁵¹ Among captives after battle, the rich nobles would usually be ransomed and could thus expect to be spared. The commoners, on the other hand, were literally worthless and would often suffer mutilation. Elias who quotes a contemporary chronicle illustrates the savagery:

“He spends his life,” we read of a knight, “in plundering, destroying churches, falling upon pilgrims, oppressing widows, and orphans. He takes particular pleasure in mutilating the innocent. In a single monastery, that of the black monks of Sarlat, there are 150 men and women whose hands he has cut off or whose eyes he has put out. And his wife is just as cruel. She helps him with his executions. It even gives her pleasure to torture the poor women. They had their breasts hacked off or their nails torn off so that they were incapable of work.”⁵⁵²

Prisoners of war could also expect to be so mutilated as to be unfit for war or work, or simply to be executed. The Flemish and the Swiss, for example, typically did not take prisoners.⁵⁵³ This cruel treatment of the weak strongly offended the church, and mercenaries typically became a target of its wrath. The church was relatively powerless to outright condemn the higher nobles, so cooptation – to an extent through the code of chivalry – and alliance were more fruitful approaches. This was not necessarily a cynical reflection as the church could cite the motivation of the knights as superior to that of the mercenaries.⁵⁵⁴

In the crusades, the church and the knights saw eye to eye. It could be argued that in re-conquering the Holy Land, “the military orders – The Temple, the Hospital, and the Teutonic and Spanish orders – came to be just that, the strong right arm of the militant church.”⁵⁵⁵ For the knights, the crusades became an alternative outlet for violence, and “established itself firmly as the highest mode of expression of the chivalric virtues of

⁵⁴⁹ See Keen, *Chivalry*, 228.

⁵⁵⁰ James, *Warrior race*, 147.

⁵⁵¹ Lynn, *Battle*, 89.

⁵⁵² Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 159.

⁵⁵³ Ibid, Keen, *Chivalry*, 221.

⁵⁵⁴ France, *Western warfare*, 71.

⁵⁵⁵ Keen, *Chivalry*, 49.

courage and endurance.”⁵⁵⁶ The relations with the Islamic enemies were ambivalent. Captives were ransomed if there were prospects of such, but commoners were either killed or sold into slavery, since the economy of the Middle East was based on slavery in a way that the European was not. In their treatment of captives, there was no appreciable difference between Western and Islamic armies. In the case of invasions, it was no more common to outright slaughter populations – unless it was a siege – than in Europe. In both cases the local peasantry was necessary to work the land.⁵⁵⁷ Indeed, the similarities between Europe and the Holy Land in respect of intersubjectivity are more striking than the differences. Just as in Europe, treaties were also made between Catholics and Muslim powers.⁵⁵⁸

Warfare in this period often approached the intensity that a later age would call total war. Typically, total war is accompanied with a high degree of cruelty and destruction. The widespread use of chevauchées in the Middle Ages is testimony to this, and they are comparable to the strategic bombing raids six hundred years later. The English relied on chevauchées eleven times during the first 40 year of the Hundred Years War; in 1339, 1342, 1345, 1346, 1355, 1356, 1359-1360, 1369, 1370, 1373 and 1380.⁵⁵⁹ ‘Chevauchée’ translates literally into ‘ride’ but is more accurately a raid, mainly constituting pillage, burning, rape and murder. Both King Edward’s chevauchée of 1346 and King Henry V’s chevauchée in 1415 were aimed at forcing the French side into a decisive battle, successfully as it turned out, at Crecy and Agincourt respectively.⁵⁶⁰

Reminiscent in some ways of strategic bombing raids in World War II, the chevauchées were extremely brutal affairs, such as the Black Prince’s 1355 chevauchée, which laid waste to some 18,000 square miles. At this time, the armies had to rely on pillaging to feed both their horses and men at the rate of several hundred tons a week.⁵⁶¹ This fact, aside from downright necessitating looting, also lent more effect to scorched earth tactics as well as discrediting the ruling prince, exposing his inability to protect the population.⁵⁶² In addition many of the commoners fought simply for a chance to loot, which frequently was the only possibility in their lifetime to enrich themselves. But it was not only commoners who had such motivations. There are plenty of examples of nobles

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., 76.

⁵⁵⁷ France, *Western warfare*, 233.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., 228.

⁵⁵⁹ Lynn, *Battle*, 85.

⁵⁶⁰ Keegan, *Face of Battle*, chapter 2, Lynn, *Battle*, 91-93.

⁵⁶¹ Lynn, *Battle*, 86.

⁵⁶² Ibid., 87.

who shamelessly plundered for personal profit. Keen offers the example of the “English knight Sir John Harleston and a group of captains who were all sitting together drinking from silver chalices, which they had looted from churches”.⁵⁶³

Conclusion

Given the complexity of chivalry and the more determinate character of the crusades, what is the verdict on chivalry in terms of its impact on knights? Was it all merely a romantic gloss or could it be granted status as an important existential feature that gave meaning to the life of knights over and above the military and political concerns that have occupied feudal chiefs everywhere? Lynn does not credit chivalry with much value, arguing that the basic incompatibility of chivalry relative to the brutality of real war was too large for these two worlds to reconcile in anything better than hypocrisy. In his view, the tournament was invented to bridge this gap, essentially inventing an artificial form of war to find an arena where chivalry could flourish.⁵⁶⁴

But the incompatibility of chivalry and real war is not necessarily that great. If we apply the warrior definition,⁵⁶⁵ and bear in mind Keen’s emphasis on both code and culture as constituting chivalry we find that the chivalric ideal embraced as much the active aggressive values (courage, prowess, hardiness) as well as the more restraining ones (loyalty, humility, largesse). Today the notion of chivalry is perhaps exaggeratedly associated with restraint exclusively, which leads to an under-appreciation of the degree to which chivalry was applied, and not a merely an existential dress-up for peacetime and tournaments. At all times the knights had to be willing to commit to battle. Without this, all other military activity was bluff.⁵⁶⁶ Any warrior ethos that does not acknowledge such realities of power will be bluff in turn.

As lords of their estates, knights had responsibilities towards all people in their domain and this secular role frequently levied challenges that the idealist and scholastic clergy could afford not to worry about. Being leaders in war was always at the forefront of their minds, and chivalry became a way of reconciling the warrior’s status of risking their lives in battle with ideals that recognized security for all three estates. It added a welcome religious dimension to a sacrifice the knights were hereditarily accustomed to give anyway. The warriors thus benefited by being elevated in status and became inundated with the

⁵⁶³ Keen, *Chivalry*, 232.

⁵⁶⁴ Lynn, *Battle*, 77.

⁵⁶⁵ See p. 22

⁵⁶⁶ France, *Western warfare*, 150.

glory of God, able to distinguish themselves from robber barons and the bourgeoisie who were more concerned with personal acquisition than the travails of honour. The church gained a powerful ally and had some – rather than no – influence over warriors' existential currency. The peasants gained from their masters' acquisition of a moral code which by no means was an absolute imperative, but which attributed them status as non-combatants. Transgression against peasants (though not the peasants of the enemy) thus became a violation of the chivalric code, which was significantly better than the alternative; abject indifference to the suffering of the lowest estate.

Holding the status of a chivalric knight, as well as that of a warrior in general, was (and is) an existential process that very much relied on witnessing and display. Values claimed had to be values observed in action. Whereas military campaigns were fought in foreign lands, the tournaments were very much public spectacles. They became arenas where all chivalric values, codes and courageous feats could be displayed. Knights could show off for the women and, not least, their peers. There was much to show off: the magnificence of their largesse, their courage at arms, and their noble lineages as displayed by their coats of arms. Of course, there was also the opportunity to practice for war. War remained the ultimate challenge for the chivalric knight, and the tournament was a ceremonial occasion to reap some of the glory that their role in war accorded them.

Another way to assess the properties of chivalry is to discern the further historical development of the notion. Was it discredited because of its ostensible discrepancy with real war, or was it further refined? Elias describes how the civilizing process and the early developments of more permanent state formation affected the chivalric knights. A consistent and increasing internalisation of restraint on affective behaviour was a parallel development with the arrival of a money economy and state formation in the late middle ages.⁵⁶⁷ Increasingly rich great feudal lords were able to establish and maintain monopoly of taxation and violence in their domains. This very significant constraint on the smaller lords was compensated by granting them privileged positions at the courts, which ensured their social standing above that of the bourgeoisies, against whose increasing commercial power the aristocrats increasingly lost out. They retained martial responsibilities, but now as captains in the kings' army rather than as independent knights.⁵⁶⁸ Elias calls this the domestication of the knights, where they move from free nobility to essentially being

⁵⁶⁷ Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 326.

⁵⁶⁸ Keen, *Chivalry*, 240.

servants of the king, effectively housebroken.⁵⁶⁹ It is because of this development that it was often charged in the 14th and 15th centuries that chivalry was losing touch with its origins and became too preoccupied with display.⁵⁷⁰ Essentially chivalry fizzled out since it did not resonate with battlefield realities. Most of its values continued to be cherished but in new contexts and in a diluted form.

Conclusion

Most of the variables addressed in this chapter repeat themselves in the coming chapter on modern ideal types, albeit in different forms. This includes the continuum between fighting for oneself, as Achilles does, through fighting for mixed motives, as do Hector and the knights, through to fighting as a public servant, as do Plato's guardians. It also includes the continuum between unlimited agency and severe structural constraints.

With modernity the constraints on agency become more focused on technology and the scale of warfare increases dramatically. Increasing enfranchisement of warriors also decentralizes the subjective construction of meaning to new classes of warriors while the civil-military split becomes more pronounced, as power is divorced from personal presence on the battlefield. The chivalric knights played an important part of this road towards modernity because they took on a civilizing device, chivalry, as much voluntarily as by pressure. They were already at the top of the social pyramid of feudalism, and imbued it for a time and to a degree with higher values than those exhibited by their contemporaries; the robber barons. The world of the chivalric knights demonstrates a society in conversation with itself, much like Plato in his dialogues. This is perhaps the greatest contrast with Homer, whose heroes may doubt themselves, but not their social reality. The chivalric knights are for this reason social beings; attuned towards spectators other than their own peers and God. Their version of chivalry was an attempt to etch out an answer to the question that the warrior definition raises, but does not answer; how much aggression, and how much restraint? Another angle on the importance of chivalry can be taken by asking 'what was the alternative?' The alternative was all too often apparent for anyone to see; the unrestrained violence of freebooters and mercenaries. For this reason, any critique of chivalry was an implicit call for more chivalry.

An important part of this story is the intersubjective dimension. It is quite likely that the civilizing impetus that we can see in the domestication of knights into courtiers

⁵⁶⁹ Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 417,37, 66.

⁵⁷⁰ Keen, *Chivalry*, 200.

would have been accelerated if it were not for the dramatically increasing scope for overseas engagements of warriors on the eve of modernity with the discovery of America, and the explorations into Africa and Asia. The enemies found there were not as much familiar peers as Achilles and Hector are towards each other, nor were they a civilization with which a dialogue of sorts was entered such as that between Islam and Christianity. Dehumanization was the result rather than an increase in restraint. The expansion into the rest of the world by the West and the social and technological developments of modernity necessitated a different type of warriors, who in certain respects are continuous with their premodern ideal type warriors, but in other ways are contingent. It is now time to turn to modernity's ideal type warriors.

CHAPTER 6: A HISTORY OF MODERN WARRIORS

Introduction

Some elements of modernity indisputably make the battlefield a vastly different lifeworld than it was for Homer's figures or that of the medieval knights: this instigates a break with premodern warrior ideal types in several respects, but retains continuity in others.

Technological development accelerated by the industrial revolution produced advances in heavy industry and logistics, which fashioned a battlefield dominated by firearms and high explosives. Some features of this new world of war could be discerned in Crimea; certainly the American Civil War; the Boer War; and the Japanese-Russo War. However, the Great Powers did not foresee the attrition slaughter of the First World War, where these factors produced years of bloodletting rather than decisive battles. The German stormtroops are important figures, as revolutionaries, against the machine-dominated world. They attempted to retain a focus on the human element rather than a total merger with technology. Nonetheless, they ended up being consumed by the "war machine," with the notable exception of Ernst Jünger. The failure of the stormtroops to carve out a sustainable lifeworld, within the storm of steel, testifies to the alienating potential of technology in war.

Another feature of modernity, which breaks profoundly with the past are the social and political revolutions; from the Protestant Reformation to the French and American Revolutions. This created wholesale change in the formation of the body politic: affecting also the shape and size of armies, who were now composed of citizens, rather than mercenaries and subjects. These citizens in principle fought for themselves as soldiers, not as aristocratic warriors; their motivations were more grandiose and abstract than before; freedom and the nation, rather than personal glory and loot. With the new revolutionary ideals came a more personal sense of meaning in war, but this meaning also became perverted and turned into existential and total wars where aims in some cases were not limited to subjugation, but annihilation. If the technologically dominated battlefield of World War I alienated warriors, technology had altogether changed these terms by the time of the Second World War and the Cold War. These wars became total because of different vectors: unbounded political and social ambitions.

Finally, towards the end of the 20th century the grand narratives of modernity were increasingly discredited because of the large-scale suffering and contradictions they had

caused. This has led to an era of limited wars: counterinsurgency and anti-terrorism have dominated the agendas of the Post-Cold War and the militaries have become more specialised and downsized. The Special Forces Warrior typifies the warriors of the postmodern world: specialized in both function and existential remit. In some ways, this is a return to aspects of the premodern world because Special Forces warriors fight very much for themselves, and find meaning in the individual struggle of the moment, rather than in the cause and promises of the future. Ultimately, present day warriors have the benefit of hindsight and can heed the lessons of all of their predecessors back to Homer, but particularly their modern counterparts like Ernst Jünger.

Ernst Jünger and the Stormtroop Ideal Type

Context

The stormtroop ideal type – embodied by its fiercest representative, Ernst Jünger – portrays the warrior struggling to find agency and meaning within new modern structures, particularly technology. Jünger's experiences exemplify the human element at an extreme where the chances of survival are small, and the prospects of a life affirming experience even less. The First World War was a meat grinder where soldiers served until the war ended or they were medically evacuated or killed. It was a total war in a confined killing space where politics and manoeuvre played marginal roles.

Max Weber had argued that the material conditions of Western man, dominated by instrumental rationality, had become an iron cage.⁵⁷¹ This metaphor, while generally illustrative of the increasing rationalization of Western societies in the 19th and 20th century, is even more apt to capture the first industrial war, and resonates with Jünger's own words:

There was nothing to see but the activity of machine work. As far as the eye reached, one shell hole gaped next to another, and man was driven away as from out of the crater landscape of a dead star. And when again and again, even though every square meter had been plowed up and plowed up once more, the steel curtain came down, then these events expressed the features of a cosmic, soulless force before which man almost disappeared.⁵⁷²

A leading man of letters almost throughout the 20th Century, Jünger (1896-1998) was a warrior and a stormtroop company commander who virtually grew up in the First World War. Even before the war in 1913, aged seventeen, Jünger ran away from home to

⁵⁷¹ Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, 123.

⁵⁷² Ernst Jünger, 'Materialschlacht', *Standarte I*, no. 5 (1925). Quoted in Leed, *No Man's Land*, 156.

volunteer with the French Foreign Legion, who had to return him from Algiers at the request of his parents.⁵⁷³ Jünger again volunteered on the day of the outbreak of the First World War, but did not join the line until November 1914, when he joined the 73rd Rifles around Champagne. He won the Iron Cross First Class in January 1917, and the highest German award for valour, the Croix de Pour le Mérite⁵⁷⁴ in September 1918. At the close of the war, Jünger had fought for nearly four years and had been wounded at least fourteen times – leaving out the “trifles” as he put it; ricochets and grazes. Despite the anonymity of most of the fighting, Jünger had found himself targeted at least eleven times, where, of course, he prevailed every time.⁵⁷⁵ Very few warriors in the line had an equally distinguished record, and none more.⁵⁷⁶

Jünger was almost obsessively motivated for the war, and remained so throughout. But he quickly realised the war was not going to be as he imagined; a place for manly action in “flowered blood-bedewed meadows.”⁵⁷⁷ Instead the central image of the war became for him as for many others that of the sentry “with his spiked, grey helmet, fists buried in the pockets of his greatcoat, standing behind the shooting-slit, blowing pipe smoke over his rifle butt.”⁵⁷⁸ This image was regularly interrupted by extreme violence where the war “showed its claws, and stripped off its mask of cosiness.”⁵⁷⁹ Yet, Jünger persisted in preferring the war with its claws to the stiflingly boring bourgeois peacetime life he had found so life denying.

Agency

In *Storm of Steel* (1920) Jünger takes us into the heart of Weber’s iron cage, quite literally. The war was already stationary when Jünger joined, but it would go through phases of increasing industrialization and mechanization, as he himself noticed. From the Battle of the Somme, Jünger perceived the war to be a battle of materiel, *materialschlacht*, which from 1917 turned into more mechanized warfare when the British introduced tanks on a significant scale.

⁵⁷³ Leed, *No Man's Land*, 154.

⁵⁷⁴ This award was bestowed upon only fourteen lieutenants in the war. Gerhard Loose, *Ernst Jünger* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1974), 22.

⁵⁷⁵ Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, 288.

⁵⁷⁶ Other famous notables of comparable distinction were Manfred von Richthofen and Erwin Rommel.

⁵⁷⁷ Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, 5.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

The stormtroop concept

Stormtroops were shock troops specially trained, equipped, organised and motivated for storming enemy trenches covered by artillery curtains and other supporting fires that were walked up to the enemy trenches in synchronisation with the advance. The artillery barrage that preceded the stormtroop assault sounds very much like an objectification of Weber's iron cage metaphor: "A box barrage was used to isolate the objective, while a curtain of fire was placed on the French front trench until the moment when the assault troops were ready to move into that trench. At that point, the fire was shifted to the second trench. Once the first trench was cleared, the process was repeated with the artillery being shifted to the third and last French trench."⁵⁸⁰ As soon as the enemy trenches were taken, the stormtroops were immediately reinforced.

The use of stormtroops was clumsily inaugurated already in 1914 in the Argonne forest. Further experimentation and training led to tactical innovations: (1) advancing skirmish lines replaced by surprise assaults conducted by autonomous stormtroop squads. (2) Supporting fires like machine guns, infantry guns, mortars and flamethrowers were decentralized in squads for covering fire, and (3) trench clearing was done mainly by hand grenades.⁵⁸¹ The selected stormtroops were young bachelors, maximum 25 years old, at the peak of their physical prowess. In compensation for the risks and violence of their missions, they were billeted in the rear, and enjoyed extensive rest periods between storms.⁵⁸² Once engaged, it was essential that the various units interacted with precision and discipline, and not least that command was decentralized and the people who were conducting the missions, and taking the risks made decisions. Both these features had a long tradition in the German way of warfare.⁵⁸³ Training was conducted behind the lines often involving live ammunition in to-scale replicas of enemy trench systems, courtesy of reconnaissance aircraft. This type of fighting was tailor-made for the German, argued Jünger, "with his feeling for discipline and order, analogous, one might say, to the musical coordination of an orchestra."⁵⁸⁴ This approach lent itself well to give the lower echelons ownership over their successes and failures, which generated a sense of agency for the stormtroops.

⁵⁸⁰ Bruce I. Gudmundsson, *Stormtroop Tactics: Innovation in the German Army, 1914-1918* (London: Praeger, 1995), 92.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*, 151.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*, 172,76.

⁵⁸⁴ See Ernst Jünger, *Copse 125*, quoted in *Ibid.*, 43.

Jünger's war

Storm of Steel provides us with an almost clinical detachment and objectivity in its observer. Jünger writes with the coldness and precision of a naturalist; excluding virtually any conceivable contextual dimensions of the experience, such as the causes or progress of the war, or any political questions whatsoever. He is not particularly interested in his fellow soldiers, although his account is not completely void of emotional observations. People around him are being killed on every other page, yet there is little generic reflection on the horrible human waste. As Michael Hoffman observes; Jünger was in it for himself.⁵⁸⁵ The question is firstly whether Jünger was able to find agency inside the storm of steel within which to display *arête*, and secondly whether his experiences and observations can speak credibly for anyone but himself. The whole point with the stormtroop concept was, after all, to reintroduce the possibility of breakthrough and manoeuvre into the war.

Marx had asked; “Is Achilles possible with gunpowder and lead?”⁵⁸⁶ Jünger answered: “That was my problem.”⁵⁸⁷ Technology made the battlefield inhabitable, much less conquerable through skills, denying Jünger the agency to emulate the greatest warrior. Although he was speaking about something else, namely his early experience of being submitted to Prussian discipline, one passage from Jünger portrays equally well the violent ballet between bullets and shells inside and between the trenches: “against the edges and corners of which I initially hurled myself violently and to which yet I owe more than to all the schoolmasters and books in the world”⁵⁸⁸ His combat accounts sees the same violent hurling against the edges of the iron cage of the war’s industrial battlefield, which necessarily left him very bruised, yet following his survival would boost his confidence immeasurably.

Jünger’s restlessness and initiative generated an ethos that was fundamentally paradoxical: it was life affirming for him, but in a way that was not transitive to the general soldiery. He embodies one of the very few ways the modern warrior could regain agency for himself; by engaging with an aggressive style of warfare. Yet the stakes were so high that the outcome stopped short of a sustainable example for others; it could only remain self-referential and temporary, and even that at great cost. The evidence is plain from both Jünger’s own experience and that of his friends. He recounts a number of aggressive raids,

⁵⁸⁵ Michael Hoffman, ‘Introduction’ in Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, ix.

⁵⁸⁶ G. Hillman, ed., *Karl Marx: Texte zu Methode und Praxis* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1967), 3:35. Quoted in Nevin, *Ernst Jünger* 42.

⁵⁸⁷ Ernst Jünger, *Autor und Autorschaft* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984), 258. Quoted in Nevin, *Ernst Jünger* 42.

⁵⁸⁸ Quoted in Nevin, *Ernst Jünger* 43.

some of which were voluntary extra-curricular activities, for example when he strikes up a friendship with an older, married NCO, Kloppmann; a man who had “distinguished himself by his great zest for battle. He was one of those men in whom, in respect of courage, there isn’t the slightest deficiency anywhere, a man among hundreds.”⁵⁸⁹ Together Kloppmann and Jünger would pay visits to the French trenches at night, several times met with rifle fire and hand grenades. Jünger describes the attractions of such voluntary raids:

Eyes and ears are tensed to the maximum, the rustling approach of strange feet in the tall grass an unutterable menacing thing. Your breath comes in shallow bursts; you have to force yourself to stifle any panting or wheezing. There is a little mechanical click as the safety-catch of your pistol is taken off; the sound cuts straight through your nerves. Your teeth are grinding on the fuse-pin of the hand-grenade. The encounter will be short and murderous. You tremble with two contradictory impulses: the heightened awareness of the huntsman, and the terror of the quarry. You are a world to yourself, saturated with the appalling aura of the savage landscape.⁵⁹⁰

In one of these raids with Kloppmann Jünger returns with only three others, out of a patrol of fourteen going out.

The stormtroops had to mobilize a remarkable degree of commitment to fight. This was especially the case late in the war, during the ‘peace offensive’ of the spring 1918: when Ludendorff attempted to win the war through using the tactically superior stormtroops to break through the front decisively.⁵⁹¹ Jünger’s climax of the war occurred around this time, when he was wounded seriously enough never to return to the front.

Jünger’s last storm is like his war experience in a nutshell, demonstrating the elitism of the stormtroops, and his own unique combination of detachment and ferocious energy. He led his three companies in the attack with the typical outlook; ominous yet detached: “I had a very impartial feeling, as if I were able to view myself through binoculars. For the first time in the entire war, I heard the hissing of individual bullets, as if they were whistling past some target.”⁵⁹² One of these bullets caught Jünger in the chest while he was jumping over a trench; bringing him crashing down, which inspired some curious reflections: “As I came down heavily on the bottom of the trench, I was convinced it was all over. Strangely, that moment is one of very few in my life of which I am able to say they were truly happy.

⁵⁸⁹ Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, 183.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁵⁹¹ Gudmundsson, *Stormtroop tactics*, 152.

⁵⁹² Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, 280-81.

I understood, as in a flash of lightning, the true inner purpose of my life.”⁵⁹³ Yet, following a brief spate of unconsciousness, Jünger came to again at the same time as the British counterattacked, which made him feel his “life force beginning to glimmer again like a spark.”⁵⁹⁴ In a confusing melee where people on both sides surrendered, Jünger shot himself free as he headed for his own lines, where he was rolled in a tarpaulin to be carried away. Three separate individuals carried him alone: both the two first were shot in the head; the third made it out with Jünger on his back.⁵⁹⁵

Strategically the stormtroops did not yield the results that were hoped for, primarily for three reasons. Firstly, the sheer human cost in manpower was too large. As Jünger himself illustrates, even though stormtroops would often complete their mission, they would also suffer 50% casualties.⁵⁹⁶ Secondly, the coordination with supporting arms, which in many ways gave the stormtroops their unparalleled agency, also became their weakness, because if the fires were not timed exactly right the enemy would be weakly suppressed and would catch the stormtroops in the open. Thirdly, the lightly equipped stormtroops would have to quickly empty the first trenches so that the vital reinforcements from behind could get to cover, otherwise they would quickly run out of hand grenades. Such success was by no means a foregone conclusion in combats dominated by hand grenades.⁵⁹⁷ Jünger vividly describes the stakes:

From all sides, bullets whistled round our steel helmets or struck the trench parapet with a hard crack... During those instants of waiting, you had to try to get to a place where you could see as much of the sky as possible, because it was only against its pale backdrop that it was possible to see the black jagged iron of those deadly balls with sufficient clarity. Then you hurled your own bomb, and leaped forward. One barely glanced at the crumpled body of one’s opponent; he was finished, and a new duel was commencing. The exchange of hand-grenades reminded me of fencing with foils; you needed to jump and stretch, almost as in a ballet. It’s the deadliest of duels, as it invariably ends with one or the other of the participants being blown to smithereens. Or both.

Some have argued Ludendorff put so much stock in the stormtroops’ tactical skills that he sacrificed strategy for tactics as the Germans became so preoccupied with breaking through

⁵⁹³ Ibid., 281. He does not specify what this purpose is, but it is tempting to suggest the Nietzschean aphorism below.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., 284.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., 286-87.

⁵⁹⁶ Hugh Cecil & Peter Liddle, *Facing Armageddon: The first World War Experienced* (London: Leo Cooper, 1996), 273.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid.

the enemy trenches that the operational gains following from this were insufficiently followed up.⁵⁹⁸ The concept did not explain how sufficient reserves could be brought into the breach to prevent the counter-attackers from immediately tightening the noose – a predicament Jünger was well acquainted with.

Even though the Germans lost the war and the stormtroop concept came out less than vindicated, Jünger emerged personally victorious, as a first among equals. As Nevin puts it, his elevation to storm company commander individualised his perception of the war, and effectively made him a chieftain:

His sheer endurance in the front line became an oblique performance of those deeds of singular renown known as *aristeia*. His merits accrued with his wounds, as the war assumed an ever more imposing, metallic indifference, of which the coming of tanks served as emblem. The introduction of steel helmets (1916) conferred a hard, uniform dullness, the tarnhelm under which all individuality disappeared, but Jünger proved himself a splendid anomaly amidst all the mechanization and the rutted trenches.⁵⁹⁹

For everyone but Jünger the losses were a very heavy price to pay for agency. Reflective of the almost fantastic skill and luck that helped Jünger survive, it was perhaps no wonder that his lessons of the war referred primarily to himself. This is strongly captured in a hyper-Nietzschean aphorism of his: “What doesn’t kill me makes me strong, and what kills me makes me incredibly strong.”⁶⁰⁰

Subjectivity

To Jünger the war was not a problem; it was just a fact. He was not someone who complained: if anything the war was a personal challenge he welcomed. In his work, two questions about meaning are raised: what was the meaning of the war; and, if the war was a machine, what is the relationship between the warrior and this machine? Nowhere does he come to a clear-cut answer to these questions, and there is certainly evolution in his outlook. Yet, there is a sense in which the first question is answered by the premises of the second.

What was the meaning of the war?

Taking the train home after being wounded for the first time, Jünger saw the river Neckar flowing peacefully enshrouded by flowering cherry trees, and he felt a surge of nationalist

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid., 275.

⁵⁹⁹ Nevin, *Ernst Jünger* 41.

⁶⁰⁰ Quoted in Hoffman Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, xix.

sentiments: “What a beautiful country it was, and eminently worth our blood and our lives. Never before had I felt its charm so clearly. I had good and serious thoughts, and for the first time I sensed that this war was more than just a great adventure.”⁶⁰¹ However, much later in the war, after having endured many years of it, this motivation was running dry and he was visited by a new mood:

A profound reorientation, a reaction to so much time spent so intensely, on the edge. The seasons followed one another, it was winter and then it was summer again, but it was still war. I felt I had got tired, and used to the aspect of war, but it was from this familiarity that I observed what was in front of me in a new and subdued light. Things were less dazzlingly distinct. And I felt that the purpose with which I had gone out to fight had been used up, and no longer held. The war posed new, deeper puzzles.⁶⁰²

There is nothing unique about moving from nationalist motivation to exhaustion; the same was experienced by millions and is reiterated in countless memoirs. Yet, Jünger did not stop at this, his motivation remained vibrant, but its character transformed. He did not conclude that the war was pointless, a nihilistic exercise. Instead, he found “new, deeper puzzles.” His subsequent writing can be seen as an attempt to figure these puzzles out.

A leitmotif in Jünger’s reflections is that the experiences themselves generate meaning. The war experience was not an instrument (as Clausewitz would say) towards attaining something else; the experience was the point itself. In Coker’s words; “His fellow men-in-arms looked for some meaning outside the struggle – they did not understand that the war *was* the meaning of their lives.”⁶⁰³ This is where Jünger departs from most of his peers; he absolves his surroundings from the responsibility to provide meaning for himself, and turns the responsibility on himself to the point of almost evaporating the question altogether. Jünger complained that his peers were asking the wrong question: “They take the war to be not an expression but a cause and in this way hope to find outside what is only to be found within.”⁶⁰⁴ His independence and steadfast motivation recalls Achilles, and makes him one of the most self-referential warriors in Western history. Like Achilles, Jünger does not ask what the war can give him, but what he can give the war. Thus he comes to conclude in *Kampf als innere Erlebnis / Battle as Inner Experience*; “what is important is not what we fight for, but how we fight.”⁶⁰⁵ Huyssen reminds us that this is not a

⁶⁰¹ Ibid., 33.

⁶⁰² Ibid., 260.

⁶⁰³ Coker, *War and the 20th Century*, 119.

⁶⁰⁴ Quoted in Ibid., 119.

⁶⁰⁵ Quoted in Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (London: Routledge, 1995), 133.

chivalric reflection on the intersubjective relations with the enemy; it is an existential wager where combat is a transcendent event that defines the warrior.⁶⁰⁶

For all his motivation, there is also tension in Jünger's view. While he wants to rest content the war is its own reward, he seems impatient to see the war provide a meaningful trajectory towards the future. In an essay entitled "Der Wille" / "The will" from 1926, Jünger insisted "[w]e must believe in a higher meaning than the one we were able to give to events, and we must believe in a higher destiny within which that which we believe we determine is being fulfilled."⁶⁰⁷ This was a time with no shortage of contenders for that higher destiny, but Jünger remained sceptical of reductive ideologies and mass movements. A brilliant aside from his Second World War diaries illustrates this; "the genius of Hitler was to realise that the twentieth century is the century of cults – which was why men of rational intelligence were unable to understand or to stop him."⁶⁰⁸

Jünger never explicitly articulates the warrior ethos he stands for in writing, but his behaviour in the war is suggestive of a budding warrior-aristocrat. Perhaps this label is not such a misnomer as Hoffmann insists it is.⁶⁰⁹ Norbert Elias describes how in 19th century Germany a self-conscious warrior code, expressed most visibly in duelling with its attendant scars, stamped a common code on the newly unified upper classes. From the student fighting fraternities, duelling spread to the upper middle classes and persisted into the twentieth century. The aristocratic dimension to this goes back to the time when lords personally subjugated their subjects, often through single combat.⁶¹⁰ Jünger displayed such an aristocratic warrior code. He clearly fought for himself yet he refused to accept that the war was either nihilistic or a purely private affair. Nevin is right to argue that Jünger exhibits Germany's pre-Hitler conscience, which was a conscience that carried a strong romanticism for war and the hardship war entails. Yet in this hardship, some warriors stand above others in endurance, skill and commitment:

It has been proven here that man is capable of enduring more than one could have supposed, that he grows with his means, and that his powers of resistance prevail again and again in this contest. It becomes ever more difficult to approach him; it demands a kind of preparation which borders on magic. One can say that in this arena in which mass national armies and gigantic concentrations of artillery hold the balance,

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁷ Quoted in Ibid.

⁶⁰⁸ Bruce Chatwin, *What am I doing here?* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1989), 312.

⁶⁰⁹ Hoffman Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, ix.

⁶¹⁰ Norbert Elias, *The Germans*, trans. Eric Dunning; Stephen Mennel (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 50-52.

still a second and higher form of warfare begins to unfold: the war of twenty men who alone among the tens of thousands are changed by the gravitational pull of fire and earth, and are still capable of breaking into that elemental, and, in a far deeper sense, decisive stratum where one looks the enemy in the eye.⁶¹¹

In this remarkable passage Jünger outlines the major properties of what distinguishes warriors from soldiers: the exposition to combat; it's more or less natural selection; which "borders on magic;" and the transformation that happens to the few; and finally, the direct confrontation with the enemy. This higher form of warfare was embodied by the stormtroop, a "new breed of fighter"⁶¹² of which Jünger himself was a leader. The war becomes, in other words, its own reward for this new breed of warrior, and thus generates its own transcendent meaning. Nevertheless, how was the stormtroop to prevail in the industrial killing fields, as Marx had asked, was this a viable lifeworld for warriors?

The relationship between the warrior and the war-machine

The image of the war as a machine raises not so much the issue of technology itself as the relationship between human agency and mechanical forms of interaction. As Leed puts it; "Actual technologies, the "stuff," provide only the material and the occasion for the examination of ineffable but highly significant matters: to what extent is "man" gaining or losing control over himself, over his fate, his environment?"⁶¹³ The stormtroops were at the same time born of the war machine, yet the machine provided its principal enemy in both literal and existential terms. Since stormtroops were conceived to facilitate breakthroughs, their capabilities as warriors represented nothing short of a human equivalent of the tank. This provided an arena for either unquestioned heroism, or unmitigated disaster, or, frequently, both. For Jünger, the former overshadowed the latter. It is not clear whether his repeated invocations of the high morale⁶¹⁴ among the stormtroops even late in the war could be attributed to his leadership, or whether this was a widely shared sentiment. Jünger's friend Ernst Toller, who had been evacuated because of psychological trauma, spoke for many who could not find any redeeming qualities in the war machine:

Instead of escaping the soul-killing mechanism of modern technological society, they learned that the tyranny of technology ruled even more omnipotently in war than in peace-time. The men who through daring chivalry had hoped to rescue their spiritual

⁶¹¹ Ernst Jünger, *Werke* (Stuttgart: E. Klett, 1960), vol I, 352. Quoted in Nevin, *Ernst Jünger* 149.

⁶¹² Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, 266.

⁶¹³ Leed, *No Man's Land*, 150.

⁶¹⁴ See for example Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, 140,84.

selves from the domination of material and technical forces discovered that in the modern war of material the triumph of the machine over the individual is carried to its most extreme form.⁶¹⁵

If anything, this further underlines the depth of Jünger's commitment to the stormtroop lifeworld, but it raises doubts about the viability of the stormtroop concept for anyone but the smallest group of *condottieri*, as the stormtroops named themselves.⁶¹⁶

For those who could survive years of war, the existential question beckoned: had they not simply become embedded in the war machine and become machinery themselves, just like their role as human tanks would imply? As Coker observes, such an interpretation was not necessarily problematic for Jünger. "If the whole of life had become an industrialized phenomenon, war was merely the central hub of the machine."⁶¹⁷ In addition, this did not necessarily lead to estrangement; it could just as well lead to a successful symbiosis.⁶¹⁸ Jünger's world was a world of total war, and he clearly believed such a symbiosis was achievable:

The hardest sons of the war, the men who lead the stormtroop, and manipulate the tank, the aeroplane, and the submarine, are pre-eminent in technical accomplishment; and it is these picked examples of daredevil courage that represent the modern state of battle. These men of first-rate qualities with real blood in their veins, courageous, intelligent, accustomed to serve the machine, and yet, its superior at the same time, are the men, too, who show up best in the trench and in the shell holes.⁶¹⁹

However, is this convincing? The industrialized killing field as a new arena where warriors can seek self-fulfilment, realizing their potential by becoming like Achilles achieving agency and recognition? Is Jünger rare even among stormtroops? Was he right in announcing that the war had produced a new Gestalt of warriors, "a "technological man" who was as "hard," "callous," and "unfeeling" as the machinery of war itself?"⁶²⁰ It is tempting to attribute his call for a merger with the machine as less a prescription than an ex-post facto rationalization of exceptionalism. A warrior as formidable as Jünger could conceivably find meaning in any war, and the way in which he finds the meaning to reside in the war itself is as much a testimony to the barrenness of the alternatives, as to a viable

⁶¹⁵ Quoted in Leed, *No Man's Land*, 30.

⁶¹⁶ Nevin, *Ernst Jünger* 63.. Ernst Jünger and Basil Creighton, *Copse 125; a chronicle from the trench warfare of 1918* (London,: Chatto & Windus, 1930).

⁶¹⁷ Coker, *War and the 20th Century*, 121.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid.

⁶¹⁹ Jünger quoted in Gudmundsson, *Stormtroop tactics*, 91.

⁶²⁰ Leed, *No Man's Land*, 153.

existential realm. Indeed, for those who survived, the rationalization of what had transpired would retain the subjective impression of having been shaped by a machine:

Never before has a generation stepped out into the light from a door so dark and immense as from out of this war. And we cannot lie, however much we wish to do so: the war, father of all things, is also our father. It has hammered, cast and tempered us into what we are. And always, as the whirling wheel of life turns in us, the war will be the axis around which it turns.⁶²¹

“Arms or the man?” asks Nevin, “Is war decided by the will or the dynamo? Having set one against the other, Jünger wants to affirm both.”⁶²² The machine could produce two products: cast iron warriors, and dead and mangled victims, very few and very many respectively. Paradoxically, the war forges hardiness for those who survive, precisely because its life-denying character is such a profound challenge.

It is easy to see how this conclusion could slip into fascism, and some writers have tried to paint Jünger as a fascist.⁶²³ However, Jünger’s outlook is at once simpler and more complex than that. It is simpler in that it entails no cult of the sacrifice; Jünger more or less ignored the dead, except for observing them as dead matter in passing. Contrastingly, the cult of sacrifice is pronounced in a whole other degree in one of Jünger’s *Pour le Mérite* colleagues, Fedor von Bock, who became a Field-Marshal on the Eastern Front in the Second World War, and who lectured his soldiers that there was no greater honour than dying for the German Fatherland (“Our profession should always be crowned by heroic death in battle”).⁶²⁴ Jünger, on the other hand, was rather more interested in affirming life through combat than seeking its end.

Jünger’s outlook is more complex as well: he struggled with whether agency in the midst of the war’s “machine work” could be life-affirming; even transcendent. Furthermore, could this affirmation be a collective solution, or merely an individual decision? This “drive for movement of a singular individual and the limitation of this impulse by the forces which hold him in his surroundings”⁶²⁵ has been a recurring dilemma for warriors since Homer, and it is safe to say that Jünger did not solve it either. If he did, it was only for himself; through effort, will and luck. On the other hand, neither did he demand anyone else to present the solution to him. In his insistence on taking

⁶²¹ ‘Kampf als Innere Erlebnis’ in Jünger, *Werke*, vol V p 13. in Leed, *No Man’s Land*, 153.

⁶²² Nevin, *Ernst Jünger* 64.

⁶²³ See Huysen, *Twilight Memories*, 130.

⁶²⁴ ‘Two Men, Two Faces’, *Time Magazine*, September 21 1942. Available <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,773573,00.html> [retrieved 21 Jan 2008]

⁶²⁵ Jünger, ‘Materialschlacht’. quoted in Leed, *No Man’s Land*, 156.

responsibility for his own experience; in his resisting becoming a figurehead for mass movements; there is very much an aristocratic touch to Jünger's work. This aristocratic outlook comes out even stronger in his relations with the enemy.

Intersubjectivity

Ernst Jünger; chivalric stormtroop

Unsurprisingly, the stormtroops relations with their enemies were not without paradoxes either. On the one hand, the war's cruelty was largely contained within a military lifeworld, which was a strongly shared predicament of front line troops on both sides, with ample resentment towards those enjoying relative safety and comfort in the rear. Such a situation occasioned both friendly encounters and chivalric attitudes between belligerents, both of which Jünger recounts episodes. On the other hand, the stormtroops were, as the name itself suggests, organised and trained for extremely aggressive assaults directly into the enemy line, where they frequently became enveloped. This sort of action did not pair up well with mercy or hesitancy. Furthermore, in what had become a stalemate war of attrition, killing enemy troops was a measure of success.

In several instances, Jünger describes friendly encounters across no-man's land with attendant non-belligerent exchanges:

'Hey, Tommy, you still there?'

'Yup!'

'Then get your head down, I'm about to start shooting at you!'⁶²⁶

Jünger explains that throughout the war he endeavoured to "view my enemy without animus, and to form an opinion of him as a man on the basis of the courage he showed." Yet, this did not prevent him from doing his job: "I would always try and seek him out in combat and kill him, and I expected nothing else from him."⁶²⁷ Prisoners, however, were well taken care of.

Jünger frequently expresses admiration for the British enemy in particular. Sometimes he articulates a sportsmanlike admiration, although the fact that this was anything but sports is clear from the handiwork of a brave British – "an amazing character" – who paid a visit to the German trench one night, running along the back of the sentries, who suffered from restricted view due to their gas masks, and broke the skulls of eight of

⁶²⁶ Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, 45, 56, 57, 125.

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

them before returning, equally unnoticed.⁶²⁸ Jünger himself was no stranger to such ruthlessness. When opportune targets presented themselves he was generally set on killing rather than on mercy: Once he saw a British soldier break cover and immediately tore a rifle from a sentry, set the sights on six hundred; “aimed quickly, just in front of the man’s head, and fired” and killed the man.⁶²⁹

The choice between aggression and mercy became even more pronounced in the attack. In theory, there would be no mercy in the assault, where encounters with counterparts equally deadly could be expected; “Of all the stimulating moments in a war, there is none to compare with the encounter of two storm troop commanders in the narrow clay walls of a line. There is no going back, and no pity.”⁶³⁰ If anything, this image recalls the mix of violence and chivalry in the jousts of the Middle Ages. A further parallel to the jousts is the lethal shooting sport Jünger and his friends invented, “quite exciting, though not without its perils,” which entailed picking up unexploded shells, “little ones and big ones,” in no-man’s land, setting them up some distance away and “bang away at them”.⁶³¹ Clearly the risks they were willing to take to keep their skills sharp were in themselves potentially lethal.

One assault in particular illustrates the mixture of chivalric impulses and killing imperatives. Striding forward in the assault, pistol and riding crop in hand, Jünger felt “we were in the grip of a berserk rage. The overwhelming desire to kill lent wings to my stride. Rage squeezed bitter tears from my eyes.”⁶³² Enshrouded by a “red mist,” (which he claims disinclines the fighter to take prisoners⁶³³) Jünger stalks his first enemy, a wounded British officer: “A bloody scene with no witnesses was about to happen.” Up close he puts his pistol to the man’s temple, when unexpectedly the man pulls out his wallet showing pictures of his family: “It was a plea from another world. Later, I thought it was blind chance that I let him go and plunged onward. That one man of all often appeared in my dreams. I hope that meant he got to see his homeland again.”⁶³⁴ A subsequent scene in the same assault sees Jünger run into another English officer. Grabbing him by the tunic he hears a white-haired Major behind him urge to “Kill the swine!” yet, he lets this one go as well. Moving on and killing an Englishman quickly Jünger for the third time runs into an

⁶²⁸ Ibid., 84.

⁶²⁹ Ibid., 126.

⁶³⁰ Ibid., 216.

⁶³¹ Ibid., 54.

⁶³² Ibid., 232.

⁶³³ Ibid., 239.

⁶³⁴ Ibid., 234.

Englishman he urges to give up. This one refuses and is dispatched with hand grenades.⁶³⁵ Such an episode repeats itself several times and Jünger kills again. The last one, a young fellow, was hit in the temple: “It wasn’t a case of ‘you or me’ any more. I often thought back on him; and more with the passing of the years. The state, which relieves us of our responsibility, cannot take away our remorse; and we must exercise it. Sorrow, regret, pursued me deep into my dreams.”⁶³⁶

Reflecting more generally on this, Jünger argues that although battle is made sacred by the cause, the cause is made more sacred by its battle: “How otherwise could one respect his foe? Only the brave can understand that?”⁶³⁷ This is recognizable Jünger, Nietzschean and self-referential. As Nevin reads it, this is an embrace of chivalry, because despite the inhumanity and brutality of the battlefield’s “iron harvest,”⁶³⁸ it cannot negate the possibility of magnificence or glory.⁶³⁹

In terms of combat motivation – or what Nevin calls “the civilian’s question, how could anyone continue to stand, let alone fight, facing imminent death?” – Jünger does not evoke the familiar motivations of the literature.⁶⁴⁰ Neither the cause, nor the small-group cohesion, nor an urge for survival or endurance features strongly. Instead, there is a pure warrior ethos; a voluntarism that stems from the encounter between man and the war: “Everything that can be expended in steel and fiery energies in a night a hundred men can affirm or confound. There’s nothing terrible to which a man cannot show himself superior in the end. And it’s exactly the annihilating intensification of means that also seems to fetch forth from him the ultimate in boldness and willpower.”⁶⁴¹ This has a strong tone of romanticism: the more pronounced the endurance and overcoming; the stronger the suffering and the harder the opposition. Clearly, such an understanding and experience of combat requires and welcomes an enemy that is respected. For Nevin, that is why Jünger “could claim proudly, even in the face of apparent defeat, that the storm troops he led were a match for any opponent in war, and harbingers of an iron future.”⁶⁴²

That iron future became anything but; the quick unravelling of the war followed by a rapid demobilization was not welcomed even by the many stormtroops who had grown

⁶³⁵ Ibid., 237-38.

⁶³⁶ Ibid., 241.

⁶³⁷ Jünger quoted in Nevin, *Ernst Jünger* 67.

⁶³⁸ Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, 235.

⁶³⁹ Nevin, *Ernst Jünger* 67.

⁶⁴⁰ Newsome, ‘The Myth of Intrinsic Combat Motivation’.

⁶⁴¹ Quoted in Nevin, *Ernst Jünger* 70.

⁶⁴² Ibid.

to love the war. A major feature of intersubjectivity was where – and in what form – the passions of war were to be directed once the war had abruptly ended.

From storm to home front

It is a historic fact that many stormtroops – particularly stormtroops – became engaged in the *Freikorps* between 1918 and 1920. This development tells us some things about the stormtroops, which the war itself did not expose. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that Ernst Jünger did not join them, a man who by any estimation could have been their arch-representative.

The Freikorps was a large semi-professional unit of volunteer soldiers who between January 1919 and April 1920 were a repressive force within the Weimar Republic. They partially worked for the government; partially comprised a restless entity, which needed to be deflected towards the not quite pacified eastern boundary. Contrary to myth, the Freikorps had little in common with the Nazi movements of the 1930s, a trajectory which has been portrayed by Nazi historiography, which hijacked the Freikorps model for their own purposes. As Ben Scott explains, the Freikorps volunteers were not interested in politics. They were interested in war; their outlook was not into an ideologically conceived future, but towards the battle-hardened past.⁶⁴³

Their unique identity as elite warriors set them apart from any group. After the war their identity remained bound up with all the dimensions, the war had evoked in them: heroic ideals; a fascination with technology; and an elitist individualism combined with a longing for belonging to a whole. The whole, however, had been tainted with the defeat in war, which also affected their sacrifices and newfound identity as demobilized ex-stormtroops. “Yet these men were in no mood to admit defeat, nor relinquish their arms, nor consent to a cessation of hostilities. Consequently, they began to form into volunteer corps, organized and led by charismatic stormtroop officers.”⁶⁴⁴ What they had in common was to resurrect the front experience and to overcome the defeat handed to them by backstabbing civilians. “If hot blood had cooled without a battle, it was put to boil again by revolutionary Germany, the insult of the “stab-in-the-back” defeat, and the prospect of a renewal of the trench spirit in combat against insurrectionists or eastern invaders.”⁶⁴⁵ Indeed, their energies and activism became a vehicle towards deflecting and denying the

⁶⁴³ Ben Scott, 'The Origins of the Freikorps: A Reevaluation', *University of Sussex Journal of Contemporary History* 1, no. 1 (2000): 1-2.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid.: 5.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid.: 5.

painful disparity of their warrior identity and the disappointing state of domestic politics in Germany, and with it their role in society.⁶⁴⁶ As one of the veterans of that movement put it: “People told us that the War was over. That made us laugh. We ourselves are the War. Its flame burns strongly in us. It envelops our whole being and fascinates us with the enticing urge to destroy.”⁶⁴⁷

But where was Jünger in relation to these warriors without war? The stormtroops embodied much of what Jünger would later prescribe as the *Frontsoldatenstaat*, where the “new man” would materialize; yet, he was not tempted to join them. For all his naturalist and self-referential outlook, Jünger was not a man for the masses; his temper, curiosity and restlessness urged him ever forward, often into opposition. The Freikorps did not appear glamorous enough for the youngest Pour le Mérite winner ever. He had little to prove and quickly settled into writing. In addition, Jünger managed to keep his commission in the radically downsized *Reichswehr*, from which he resigned only in 1923. Thus, he did not, in Coker’s words, “deign to dirty his hands in the political violence of the 1920s.”⁶⁴⁸

After some early flirtation with the Nazi movement, he also detached himself from them, rejecting their offer of a chair in the Reichstag in 1933. Later he dipped into resistance against them, culminating in *On the Marble Cliffs*, an allegory novel on totalitarianism, close to a prophecy on the assassination attempt on Hitler.⁶⁴⁹ Nonetheless, he rejoined the army in 1938 and won his second Iron Cross First Class during the invasion of Western Europe. Except for a stint on the Eastern Front, he remained in Paris as a staff officer throughout the occupation.

Conclusion

In attempting to sum up Jünger’s life and work, Gerhard Loose points to the contradictions, complexities and disparities: “the lack of enduring commitment, the sudden and frequent changes of posture, the rich and seemingly inexhaustible variety of his concerns, all point to a man at play.”⁶⁵⁰ The idea of combat as play is not unique with Jünger, as George Steiner points out in his introduction to Johan Huizinga’s *Homo Ludens*, and was particularly pronounced in feudal combat. Total war, however, is an antithesis to play, and Jünger’s playfulness is all the more remarkable for having taken place in spite of

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid.: 6.

⁶⁴⁷ Friedrich Wilhelm Heinz, *Sprengstoff* (Berlin: Frundsberg-verlag, 1930). quoted in Scott, 'Origins of Freikorps': 6.

⁶⁴⁸ Coker, *War and the 20th Century*, 124.

⁶⁴⁹ Chatwin, *What am I doing here?*, 303.

⁶⁵⁰ Loose, *Ernst Jünger*, 12.

this.⁶⁵¹ Jünger was the first among stormtroopers, but after the war he did not represent them. A fiercely independent warrior, he embodied and insisted on an anachronistic chivalry in a form of war, which was all about denying it, demonstrating the possibility, if not exactly likelihood of, agency and intersubjectivity in virtually impossible circumstances.

Citizen warrior ideal type

Context

The social and material structure of the nation state contributed to make war the paradigmatic theme of modernity, certainly of the 20th century.⁶⁵² The nation state was shaped by war and became war's greatest vehicle in turn. Giddens has argued that society in the period of modernity equals the nation state.⁶⁵³ Where the nation state was the structure, citizens were the actors, and in a context of war, they became citizen soldiers and warriors. These societies were not dragged into war through material factors like industrialization, which merely made killing more effective and mobilization for war more total. What stirred the masses into war were powerful ideas, which were consistently conceived of as more important than individual – and in some cases collective – lives.

Coker has usefully identified three different 20th centuries, consistent with the different speeds, scopes and ambitions of the contending ideologies conceived in the 19th century but played out in the 20th: liberalism, communism and fascism. The first categorization of the 20th century was continuous with the Enlightenment past: a liberal belief in progress through economic development.⁶⁵⁴ Rather than boasting a materialist worldview as Marxism did, it proved itself materially viable through success in war, especially as an intellectual structure that facilitated capitalism and growth in industrial production. Nonetheless, the liberal conscience was an ideational endeavour where citizens were asked to put principles before people, and ideas before interests.⁶⁵⁵

The second categorization of the 20th century was one where man attempted to break free from history, to shape the world in revolutionary terms.⁶⁵⁶ The United States and the Soviet Union were both vast states that had been born by revolution and shaped by civil war; the latter had been born in a world war to boot.⁶⁵⁷ After playing dominant roles in

⁶⁵¹ George Steiner, 'Introduction' in Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens; A study of the play element in culture* (London: Temple Smith, 1970), 11. See also chapter 5.

⁶⁵² Coker, *War and the 20th Century*, 2,3, Coker, *War and the illiberal conscience*, xiv.

⁶⁵³ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-identity*, 15.

⁶⁵⁴ Coker, *War and the 20th Century*, 5.

⁶⁵⁵ Coker, *War and the illiberal conscience*, 16.

⁶⁵⁶ Coker, *War and the 20th Century*, 10.

⁶⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

the Second World War they effectively divided Europe between them, and in the ensuing decades raced to divide the world. America's liberalism proved more ambitious in scope and energised by a stronger crusading spirit than its British counterpart; it strove to make the world safe for democracy in both world wars and through the Truman Doctrine in Korea and Vietnam as well.

The third categorization of the 20th century was one neither continuous with the present nor the past. It was dominated by the possibility of species suicide by nuclear weapons. Christa Wolf aptly called it "bomb induced futurelessness."⁶⁵⁸ As it happened, these weapons did not prevent bloody proxy wars in the southern hemispheres, but remained in their own right a threat to civilization of an altogether new existential nature, as the Cuban missile crisis demonstrated beyond doubt.

What all three centuries had in common was a tight knit relationship between war (medium), citizens (actors) and nation states (structure). World War II became the paradigmatic war that saw the three different 20th centuries as well as the three principal ideological contenders intersect. Citizen warriors carried the burden of translating ideas into battlefield decisions by rising above self-interest⁶⁵⁹ in pursuit of political programmes where, in Howard's words; "every individual felt his value system as well as his physical survival to be threatened by alien forces with which there could be neither communication nor compromise."⁶⁶⁰ The Second World War was for this reason, as well as for its tremendous scope, profoundly influential in shaping virtually all dimensions of warfare, and the self conception of citizen warriors, which today's warriors define themselves against, for good or ill.

Agency

The warrior's agency comes to a fundamental break with modernity. As Giddens argues, the concept of agency presupposes some form of choice between different alternative life-worlds, where the commitment to fight is adopted rather than handed down from the demands of a warrior class.⁶⁶¹ This complicates modern agency in comparison to its pre-modern equivalent because the combination of industrialization and the nation state greatly increases the ranks of soldiers. At the same time, the individual is literally only one among millions, which generates alienation. Despite this alienation, the citizen soldiers were expected to display unconditional loyalty to the nation-state. Auden captures this shift very

⁶⁵⁸ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁶⁰ Howard, *War in European History*, 134.

⁶⁶¹ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-identity*, 81.

well. He contrasts the Epic (Homeric) hero with the modern hero. Whereas modern heroes have a multitude of moral choices, the epic hero concerns himself uniquely with displaying *arête* through his exceptional fighting skills. “The moral standard by which he lives is not a universal requirement, the Law, but an individual one, honour... He exists in the present moment when he comes into collision with another heroic individual.”⁶⁶²

World War II also demanded enormous amounts of physical courage. It was a war largely characterised by attrition. Rather than an arena for heroic acts, the memoirs of warriors reveal exhaustion, disillusionment, brutalization and trauma, in different but also in similar ways as during the previous war. Infantry constituted 14 percent of the U.S. military’s manpower, but they absorbed 70 percent of the casualties. Bomber crews suffered a large share of the remaining casualties.⁶⁶³ Front line troops asked in a War Department poll in 1945 what they would like to change about the army, overwhelmingly replied: “relief from the hard grind of combat.”⁶⁶⁴

Even though many found combat exhilarating and meaningful initially, Gerald Linderman’s comprehensive survey of participant accounts indicates that there were several stages in this experience: from initial excitement to numbness; coarsening; and eventually brutalization.⁶⁶⁵ A widespread experience of being left to fate spread in the infantry both in the European and Pacific theatres as the war grinded on unrelentingly, for years. Many felt that rather than being inspired by the cause, or seeing opportunities for individual achievement, the war was simply a job to do. The idea of ‘the job’ was something that applied equally well for combat troops, rear echelon troops and for the nation as a whole alike.⁶⁶⁶

Nonetheless, even in the grinding massive machine that the war had become, there were warriors who rose to the occasion. Audie Murphy was an American replacement infantryman who entered service in North Africa. He did not see combat there, but stayed in unremitting combat throughout the Italian and Western European campaigns. Initially rejected by both the Airborne and Marines for his slight build he proved them badly wrong serving in the same platoon of the 3rd Infantry Division throughout the war, to become the

⁶⁶² W. H. Auden and (ed. Edward Mendelson), *Prose – Volume II 1939-1948* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), 378.

⁶⁶³ Linderman, *World Within War*, 1, 39-41.

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 354.

⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 49-52.

most highly decorated American serviceman of the war. When the war ended Murphy had not turned twenty years of age.

What characterised him in particular was his loyalty to his friends and his unit, and his penchant for taking on the Germans singlehandedly. In respect of his loyalty, Murphy struggled to transfer his love for his friends, who all got killed, over to replacements, which was a typical response from infantrymen whose comrades had become the entire world, for years.⁶⁶⁷ When close comrades died, the men would lose everything they had in the world. Nonetheless, Murphy remained loyal to his unit and once explained to a nurse why he would not quit: “Oh, hell. As long as there’s a man in the lines, maybe I feel that my place is there beside him.”⁶⁶⁸

In the case of the Germans, Murphy carried an increasingly personal hatred and anger based upon atrocities he had witnessed and friends he had lost. He was repeatedly decorated for individually storming German machineguns and positions, and he was battlefield commissioned to Lieutenant. Murphy earned every medal the American military could bestow upon him, including the Distinguished Service Cross, two Silver Stars, three Purple Hearts and the Medal of Honour. His is one of the most spectacular Medal of Honor citations, which states how he singlehandedly took on advancing enemy infantry using a .50 calibre machine gun while being positioned on top of a burning tank destroyer which could blow up any moment. Exposed to fire from three sides, Murphy fended off Germans coming as close as ten yards. Halting their attack, Murphy returned to the rear with a wounded leg and reorganised his company to attack, saving them from encirclement.⁶⁶⁹ Despite his achievements, however, Murphy was deeply traumatized by his experiences and derived neither romanticism nor pleasure from them. About fear, he said he had it by the throat.⁶⁷⁰ He struggled with insomnia, depression and nightmares from his battles.

However, not every warrior developed post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); as the extraordinary career of the German fighter pilot Erich Hartmann illustrates. Hartmann was the highest scoring fighter pilot of all time, with 352 aerial victories, 345 of which were against the Soviet Air Force, throughout 1,404 combat missions. As he passed 300 kills in

⁶⁶⁷ Ironically, since he was a replacement himself. Linderman describes well the difficulties experienced by replacements to become part of the units’ cohesion, which was essential to survival. See *Ibid.*, 288,89.

⁶⁶⁸ Murphy, *To Hell and Back*, 139.

⁶⁶⁹ Max Hastings, *Warriors: Extraordinary Tales from the Battlefield* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005), 246.

⁶⁷⁰ See *Ibid.*, 255.

August 1944, Hartmann was decorated with the German Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves, Swords and Diamonds. Surrendering his squadron *Jagdgeschwader 52* to the American army on 8th May 1945, Hartmann was turned over to the Soviets and spent the next ten years in Soviet prison camps. The year after his return in 1955, Hartmann joined the West German Air Force where he commanded their first all-jet squadron *Jagdgeschwader 71*. He continued to serve until he retired early over disagreements with his superiors over the German Air Force's adopting the fatally flawed F-104 Starfighter in 1970.⁶⁷¹ Technology allowed pilots like Hartmann to enjoy unparalleled agency in the war, and it suited the German penchant for celebrating individual warrior skill. However, in the context of the war, careers like Hartmann's were rare. The infantryman, like Murphy, represented a rather more typical experience of citizen warriors.

Subjectivity

World War II has often been referred to as 'the good war' from the perspective of the Allies. However, it was considered no less worthwhile for the Axis powers, and despite the political and ideological infusion of meaning before, during, and after the war, these reasons did not feature strongly in the minds of those who fought. As Hynes argues, the stories told by warriors, citizen warriors included, are often a-historical in that they do not engage much in questions of victory or defeat.⁶⁷² Audie Murphy was utterly indifferent to VE-day, and was more concerned with the comforting prospects of a warm bath and a proper bed, as well as the less comforting likelihood of fighting the Japanese.⁶⁷³

Hynes explains how most who volunteered for World War Two did so because they simply wanted to witness and participate in "the great commotion". Rather than moral reasons, they signed up because of the powerful current of war, where other people were enlisting, making it irresistible to join.⁶⁷⁴ Propaganda played some part in this: posters would portray soldiers sitting after the war facing some little girl's question; "Daddy, what did you do during the war?" Such sentiments were also used to motivate men in the line, as Patton did before the Normandy invasion: "When it's all over and you're at home once more, you can thank God that twenty years from now, when you're sitting around the fireside with your grandson on your knee and he asks you what you did in the war, you

⁶⁷¹Ursula Hartmann, *Der Jagdflieger Erich Hartmann* (Stuttgart: Motorbuch-Verlag, 1978).

⁶⁷²Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale*, 11.

⁶⁷³Murphy, *To Hell and Back*, 270-74.

⁶⁷⁴Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale*, 51.

won't have to shift him to the other knee, cough, and say, "I shovelled shit in Louisiana."⁶⁷⁵

Indeed, both Fussell and Linderman note the degree to which the fighting men were unsure of – or indifferent to – the cause they were ostensibly fighting for. To be sure, an attempt was made to put 'liberty' and 'freedom' at the forefront, but these appeared notoriously hard to define, and to Fussell the effort appeared contrived: "few terms extend a more powerful invitation to imprecision and even total non-meaning than *freedom* and *free*, buzz-words which appear everywhere and constitutes the essential *leitmotif* of wartime high-mindedness."⁶⁷⁶ Several attempts were made to fill in the meaning of freedom, featuring Bertrand Russell, Albert Einstein and Thomas Mann, among others in a book from 1942.⁶⁷⁷ At the Eastern Front Guy Sajer received a different lecture on what freedom is, from his much admired and loved company commander: "'That's why you're fighting,' Hauptmann Wesreidau, our captain, said to us one day. 'You're nothing more than animals on the defensive, even when you're obligated to take the offensive. So be brave: life is war, and war is life. Liberty doesn't exist.'⁶⁷⁸

For the men on the ground it was exceedingly difficult to get a sense of what was going on in the war in general, much less to gain a sense of ownership over its progress. However, personal contribution to the primary group becomes both possible and necessary, and this was where soldiers put their efforts. One soldier observed: "It took me darn near a whole war to figure what I was fighting for. It was the other guys. Your outfit, the guys in your company, but especially your platoon... When there might be 15 left out of 30 or more, you got an awful strong feeling about those guys."⁶⁷⁹ Combat became a matter of survival, utterly detached from the political picture. While the initial indoctrination of German troops was much stronger than for the Allies, after sustained combat on the Eastern Front it all came to the same, as Sajer testifies to:

We no longer fought for Hitler, or for National Socialism, or for the Third Reich – or even for our fiancées or mothers or families trapped in bomb-ravaged towns. We fought from simple fear, which was our motivating power. The idea of death, even when we accepted it, made us howl with powerless rage. We fought for reasons which are perhaps shameful, but are, in the end, stronger than any doctrine. We fought for ourselves, so that we wouldn't die in holes filled with mud and snow; we fought like

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid., 114.

⁶⁷⁶ Paul Fussell, *Wartime - Understanding and Behaviour in the Second World War* (Oxford University Press, 1989), 174.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid., 175.

⁶⁷⁸ Sajer, *Forgotten Soldier*, 264.

⁶⁷⁹ Quoted in Fussell, *Wartime*, 140-41.

rats, which do not hesitate to spring with all their teeth bared when they are cornered by a man infinitely larger than they are.⁶⁸⁰

The question may well be asked, did the cause feature at all for the warriors? The answer is that the cause matters before and after combat. Ideology and indoctrination is particularly relevant before the fighting ensues, and it can lead to dehumanization of the enemy, but in terms of motivation, there is little evidence that it features strongly during combat. An American soldier made a typical point: “You’re fighting for your skin on the line. When I enlisted I was patriotic as hell. There’s no patriotism on the line. A boy up there 60 days in the line is in danger every minute. He ain’t fighting for patriotism.”⁶⁸¹

Nonetheless, the cause featured as a subtext, which was rarely addressed explicitly. Samuel Stouffer, the American sociologist who studied American soldiers during World War Two concluded that despite this general attitude there was “a tacit and fairly deep conviction that we were on the right side and that war, once we were in it, was necessary.”⁶⁸² Samuel Hynes has made the same point: “But though “war between good and evil” doesn’t appear explicitly in the narratives it is there, behind the telling – an unexpressed conviction, so certain that it doesn’t need to be said – that this was a war worth fighting.”⁶⁸³ The Germans had a harder time rationalising the cause of their fighting as good, although it can be argued that ideological indoctrination played a strong role in the beginning for some, like Henry Metelman who started as a firm believer but became increasingly doubtful of the official line as the war went on.⁶⁸⁴ Towards the end, the ruthless behaviour in the east and Allied demands for unconditional surrender contributed to infusing the Germans with a genuine sense of self-defence as the Allied armies surrounded Germany.

After hostilities end the reasons for the war can assuage a degree of guilt and help rationalise what has been experienced: if one is on the winning side. Many combat veterans resented flag-waving patriotism by civilians who did not understand what combat was about,⁶⁸⁵ and who were unreceptive to learning about it.⁶⁸⁶ However, there was an upside to it as well. Linderman concludes that the “civilian insistence on the worthiness of the Cause,

⁶⁸⁰ Sajer, *Forgotten Soldier*, 382.

⁶⁸¹ Quoted in Holmes, *Acts of War*, 276-77.

⁶⁸² Quoted in *Ibid.*, 277.

⁶⁸³ Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale*, 112.

⁶⁸⁴ Henry Metelmann, *Through hell for Hitler* (Havertown, PA: Casemate, 2001).

⁶⁸⁵ Linderman, *World Within War*, 329-34.

⁶⁸⁶ Miles, *Simone Weil*, 328.

victory over tyranny, did much to dispel veterans' fear of inefficacy."⁶⁸⁷ This is a good point, as a comparison with Vietnam makes clear. Homecoming Vietnam veterans had the opposite experience from their World War II forebears. The cause they fought for was not celebrated but resented, which hardly contributed to post-war readjustment. Their homecoming experience thus probably resonated more with that of German combat veterans following World War II.

Intersubjectivity

Citizen warriors' interaction and relations with the enemy have occurred both in state-to-state warfare and in various settings against non-state armed groups throughout the twentieth century. The first section engages with intersubjectivity in symmetric conflicts; the titanic conventional wars like World War II. The second section analyses intersubjectivity in asymmetric wars like insurgencies typical of the Cold War years.

The people in symmetric warfare

The symmetric story is of liberalism's ideational civil war in Europe with illiberalism; specifically fascism and communism, between the 1930s and 1989.⁶⁸⁸ This was a symmetric war in the sense that it pitted nations and ideologies against each other. The ideologies had very clear mass appeal and a territorial definition, both made possible by the vehicle of nationalism. Crucially, however, the ideologies were incompatible and there could be no compromise since they were contests about the viability of social and political systems, not merely military engagements.⁶⁸⁹ For this reason, the struggle became an existential one, which made the widespread mobilization of whole peoples not only possible and desirable, but necessary.

Carl Schmitt has argued that warfare in the Westphalian period, after 1648, was "bracketed" within ethical and legal bounds, organised as interstate conflict, in the Clausewitzian sense, where the people, the army and government could be delineated. The state system made this possible, incorporating the state as an ethical and not just a political entity.⁶⁹⁰ The laws of war were enshrined in this state system, and were for the most part respected, particularly between the Allies and the Germans in North Africa, and largely in

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid., 360.

⁶⁸⁸ See in particular Coker, *War and the 20th Century*, Coker, *War and the illiberal conscience*, Howard, *War and the liberal conscience*.

⁶⁸⁹ Coker, *Ethics and War*, 29.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., 54.

Western Europe as well.⁶⁹¹ For example, when the North African campaign ended in May 1943, each side agreed that the other had fought temperately and decently. It had been a “pretty clean war.”⁶⁹² However, in the case of the Eastern theatres (Europe and the Pacific) they were botched. The Soviets saw international law as a bourgeoisie invention, but signed up last minute before World War II, whereas the Germans decided they should not apply in the East.⁶⁹³

The brutality was not only inherent in images of the enemy, but also derived from the view in which the enemy held human life in general, including those of their own side. The Soviets massacred tens of thousands of their own soldiers using NKVD units to shoot stragglers and anyone not charging the enemy with sufficient aggression. In some cases they would use Mongols to clear minefields by trampling them down.⁶⁹⁴ Similarly, the Germans executed thousands for indiscipline, where police battalions behind the Eastern frontline practiced what their Soviet counterparts did, albeit at a lower scale.⁶⁹⁵ Linderman also documents how the Japanese treated their own wounded as wastage. As a captured Japanese medical officer put it: “We would leave them with a hand grenade apiece, and if they didn’t use the grenades, it would be a simple matter to slit their jugular veins.”⁶⁹⁶ For Japanese who were captured the consequence was to be disownment by their comrades and even their families at home. It was not simply that they were effectively dead; they had never existed.⁶⁹⁷

With such an attitude to incapacitated Japanese, and with the high degree of racism in Japanese culture at the time, it is little wonder that the Pacific war descended into Barbary. The Japanese were initially able to exploit the American penchant for respecting the laws of war, particularly in the first six months when they had the military initiative. However, following the Guadalcanal campaign of late 1942, the Americans began readjusting to the brutality. Atrocity stories abounded. As airman turned infantryman Samuel Grashio said, it was “commonplace to find the bodies of one’s comrades, tightly bound, obviously tortured, disembowelled, with their severed genitals stuffed in their mouths.”⁶⁹⁸ In Burma, one of Merrill’s Marauders, Bill Hoover, had found some of their number captured: “They’d be staked or strapped down, and [the Japanese] would rub some

⁶⁹¹ Miles, *Simone Weil*, chapter 3.

⁶⁹² Linderman, *World Within War*, 91.

⁶⁹³ Coker, *Ethics and War*, 57.

⁶⁹⁴ Sajer, *Forgotten Soldier*, 415.

⁶⁹⁵ Murphy, *To Hell and Back*, 339. For eyewitness accounts see Rolf Ivar Jordbruen, *Helvete på Jord – en norsk frontkjempers historie* (Oslo: Spartacus, 2007), Metelmann, *Through Hell for Hitler*.

⁶⁹⁶ Quoted in Linderman, *World Within War*, 148.

⁶⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁶⁹⁸ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 147.

honey and food... on them, around their mouth and eyes, and their eyes were forced open, and they were just laid out and left in the sun, with the bugs crawling all over them.”⁶⁹⁹

This savagery begat brutality from the Americans as well, particularly in that they stopped taking prisoners. One unit fought five island campaigns before they took their first prisoner.⁷⁰⁰ On top of this, the hatred rose to such a pitch that many elected to kill the Japanese with their bare hands if they could, rather than shooting them.⁷⁰¹ The Japanese refused to give up, and the Americans knew that behind them stood a nation with equal resolve, a fact that the Okinawa campaign had proven beyond doubt.⁷⁰²

When the war ended, many allied infantrymen felt a sense of justice and relief: at having won and at not having had to invade Japan. The sense of righteousness at the outcome came with the usual notions of the victor’s justice, but it was augmented by the moral shock of the death camps. As Fussell puts it; “Hardly any boy infantryman started his career as a moralist, but after the camps, a moral attitude was rampant, and there was no disagreement on the main point. In the last few weeks of the war close to five thousand labour camps and prisons were discovered, most filled with unspeakable evidence of wanton cruelty.”⁷⁰³ The moral coding of the war was evident at the top military leadership even before this point. General Eisenhower expressed on 10 July 1944 in a lunch meeting with the British Ambassador to the United States, Lord Halifax, that upon victory he would prefer to liquidate the entire German General Staff (about 3,500), all Nazi leaders from mayor and up, and all members of the Gestapo, but conceded that permanent deportation was also a possibility.⁷⁰⁴

A symmetric grammar of killing is not only a feature of an engagement between two or more parties; it is also a feature of the relationship between peace and war. As Coker says, “modern morality is embodied at this moment in our history in *intersubjectivity*”⁷⁰⁵ But what does this mean specifically? Coker turns back to Clausewitz: “If Clausewitz was right to insist that wars are only won not when one side prevails but when it prevails upon its enemy to concede defeat, then the manner of effecting that defeat is likely to be crucial.”⁷⁰⁶ The differences in the grammars of killing between the Eastern and

⁶⁹⁹ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 159.

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁷⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*, 162.

⁷⁰³ Paul Fussell, *The Boys’ Crusade; American GIs in Europe: Chaos and Fear in World War 2* (London: Phoenix, 2005), 157.

⁷⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁷⁰⁵ Coker, *Ethics and War*, 124. Original italics

⁷⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

Western fronts were born out by the ensuing peace. Both armies liberated German death camps; however the Soviets raped their way into East Germany, which was subjugated for the next four decades as a Soviet satellite state. The Allied treatment of Western Germany and Japan made for a stark contrast; involving reformed constitutions, democracy, and perhaps the two most successful economies in the post-war decades. The symmetry here goes both ways: because the West German and Japanese governments sensibly elected to embrace the visions of the victorious parties, which made it possible to draw a line and move on.

The people in asymmetric warfare

Since the invention of large conventional armies initiated by Napoleon, non-state actors - like the Spanish guerrillas - have in different manifestations used asymmetric tactics to compensate for military might. Clausewitz's idea of war as an act to compel the enemy to submit to our will manifests itself asymmetrically when it involves non-state actors like partisans, insurgents and terrorists. The latter actors can compel regulars to submit to defeat, but regulars cannot easily force irregulars to do anything. Precisely because they are irregulars, to identify, define, or much less capture or kill them is difficult. This is because the 'calculus of pain' includes the local population, and can be manipulated by the combatants to achieve their aim.⁷⁰⁷ The asymmetry arises from the fact that government forces are always at a disadvantage; if they are not to lose credibility or actively alienate the local population, they must successfully pursue the violent non-state actors; at the same time they must successfully protect the local population.

Colonel David Hackworth's experiences in Vietnam are symbolic of Western engagement with unconventional opponents in the 20th century. These have typically been characterised by tactical successes, but strategic failure. Despite his distinguished combat record and battlefield commission as the youngest Captain in the Korean War, Hackworth understood early that guerrilla warfare, not push-button-warfare was the wave of the future.⁷⁰⁸ Already in the mid-1950s he studied all he could find about guerrilla warfare: from the American Indian campaigns; the Revolutionary War; the Spanish American War; Soviet, American, French and Yugoslav guerrilla warfare in World War II; the British in Malaya; and the French in Indochina. He also kept an eye on a "young Cuban stud named

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid. And of course any number of other belligerent parties.

⁷⁰⁸ Hackworth, *About face*, 304.

Castro” while submitting (unsuccessful) applications to the newly forming Special Forces.⁷⁰⁹

In 1962, Hackworth attended infantry school at Fort Benning and realised that the Army was teaching for the right war using the wrong instructions. Their emphasis was on Malaya, which to Hackworth’s mind related more closely to the Indian campaigns than to Vietnam. He was in good company, exchanging opinions with outspoken Green Berets such as the legendary Larry Thorne.⁷¹⁰ The Special Forces warriors who had already fought in Vietnam warned that the Army was not fighting counterinsurgency at all, but conventional tactics with increased air-mobility. Instead, they called for new tactics for a protracted guerrilla war.⁷¹¹ For the coming thirteen years they were proven right, so much so that another outspoken critic of Army tactics; John Paul Vann, would argue that the U.S. had not been ten years in Vietnam; they had been there one year ten times.⁷¹²

Hackworth deployed to Vietnam in 1965 with the 101st Airborne Division. He quickly discovered the difficulty of finding an enemy who used civilians as well as the jungle for camouflage, patiently waiting for favourable terms of engagement. The enemy was “like an audience at a play in which we, the counter guerrillas, were the unwitting actors: the VC sat in their darkened redoubts and watched and learned, while we played out our roles, warts and all, on a well-lit stage.”⁷¹³ In that context Hackworth customised his battalion, realising airborne infantry (and marines) were the wrong type of units for guerrilla warfare; they were too aggressive, impatient and unappreciative of the finesse necessary to “out-g the g” as Hackworth put it.

The Special Forces and the Australians employed the more successful tactics. The latter particularly impressed Hackworth, with their use of small patrols to find the enemy, and reinforcement platoons to do the killing.⁷¹⁴ He recommended the army to embed troops with the Australians to learn from them, but this was rejected because it suggested the Americans did not know what was going on.⁷¹⁵ The American military argued that airpower would pound the guerrillas into submission, which Hackworth doubted, having employed a lot of airpower on a tiny spot in an engagement, to no effect.⁷¹⁶

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid., 303, 05.

⁷¹⁰ See p. 195 below for more on Thorne. Philip Caputo also complained he was trained for the wrong war, arriving in Vietnam knowing all there was to know about fighting an insurgency in Malaya. Caputo, *A Rumour of War*, 35.

⁷¹¹ Hackworth, *About face*, 431.

⁷¹² Ibid., 602.

⁷¹³ Ibid., 465.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid., 495.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid., 494-98.

⁷¹⁶ Ibid., 505.

In 1966, the army offered Hackworth the opportunity to accompany Army Historian S.L.A. Marshall across Vietnam to assess the progress of the war. Relations soured between them, however, as Hackworth began suspecting Marshall's methods and motives, and they had profound disagreements about the war.⁷¹⁷ As they toured the country, Hackworth met former Chief of Staff of the Israeli Army, General Moshe Dayan, who travelled around the country with platoon and company sized units in the Highland jungles (unlike any American generals). Dayan was incredulous of the American style of war; particularly their enormous expenditure of firepower and eagerness to rush into combat, with its attendant consequences: "that the enemy almost invariably had the initiative on the battlefield, and he quoted Mao's rules of warfare verbatim, suggesting that until these simple guidelines were acknowledged by our leaders, the enemy would continue to have the upper hand."⁷¹⁸ Marshall countered this, claiming: "No one can take the kind of punishment we're dishing out and win,"⁷¹⁹ which reflected an attitude manifested broadly throughout the army. The body count system was used as a measure of success, which Hackworth argued made "everyone a bounty hunter and a liar." The body count system had been an important measure of success for the British in Palestine and Malaya, but was not suited to Vietnam. In Malaya, a platoon could patrol the jungle for a year without seeing any enemy, whereas the Vietnamese had divisions and regiments, and no shortage of sanctuaries.⁷²⁰

What was more; they had willpower where the Americans had firepower. Hackworth had a chance to talk to a large number of Vietnamese prisoners from all levels: "When I asked how long they were prepared to fight, almost every prisoner, from the uneducated simple farm boys to the better-versed officers, said ten to fifteen to twenty years. They were going to win, they said, and they were prepared to stay in South Vietnam as long as necessary to do so. "Are you?" one asked."⁷²¹ Another illustration of this asymmetry was the amount of effort the Americans spent on the subject "why Vietnam?" in training (one hour) relative to the North Vietnamese (50% of training time).⁷²²

At this point in the war, Hackworth was disillusioned; nevertheless, he returned for another combat billet, reasoning his abilities could reduce the cost to "the young citizen soldiers who make up the "thin red line"".⁷²³ Creating innovative new tactics and reorganising his battalion into a guerrilla formation, Hackworth had significant tactical

⁷¹⁷ Ibid., chapter 16.

⁷¹⁸ Ibid., 551.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid., 552.

⁷²⁰ Ibid., 572.

⁷²¹ Ibid., 575.

⁷²² Ibid., 628.

⁷²³ Ibid., 642.

successes, which General Abrams acknowledged, but which were not published throughout the army.⁷²⁴ Hackworth's final performance in the Army was to publicly critique it on ABC's 'Issues and Answers', where he expressed that the war was pursued in the wrong way; that the South Vietnamese were not doing their share, and that the troops were receiving the wrong training; and for all these reasons the war was unwinnable.⁷²⁵ Arguably showing moral courage, but narrowly avoiding court-martial, Hackworth was granted honourable discharge from the Army shortly after.

Two specific lessons emanate from Hackworth's career and both relate to warriors. As a citizen warrior, Hackworth felt compelled to pursue the cause rather than living up to career expectations, turning down War College billets twice, thereby losing any chance to make general. His lesson for leaders was for them to "*think* from the moment they step on the first rung of the leadership ladder. They should be encouraged to become students of war... Combat now and in the future will require leaders who are able to act independently, and who are not afraid of taking risks. A knowledge of history and the ability to think and synthesize are the tools a warrior needs."⁷²⁶

As far as the type of warriors he would want in combat, Hackworth referred back to men like Thorne; "combat bums" who volunteered for several tours rather than returning stateside and the "multitudinous career-related activities that were expected." These people were necessary Hackworth insisted, "what we'd *always* needed, to win this war were combat bums."⁷²⁷ Combat bums came in two (overlapping) categories; "those who would have marched to the sound of guns wherever they were blazing (and/or had become, as I had, obsessed with figuring out a way to win this particular conflict) and/or those who had gone native."⁷²⁸ Many of those who had gone native were Special Forces, and they loved the food, spoke the language and had local girlfriends:

As a body, almost by definition, the Special Forces in Vietnam were combat bums *and* the best guys to fight the G in this war. But the Special Forces were also animals, which offended all the prancers, and they considered themselves an elite force, which offended most everybody else. General Abrams *hated* them. Yet if these Green Berets had been allowed to run the show, there's little doubt in my mind that the outcome of the war would have been quite different.⁷²⁹

⁷²⁴ Ibid., 679, 81, 703,04.

⁷²⁵ Ibid., chapter 22.

⁷²⁶ Ibid., 832.

⁷²⁷ Ibid., 767.

⁷²⁸ Ibid., 767n.

⁷²⁹ Ibid.

As a citizen warrior, Hackworth was able to combine physical courage with a commitment to both his men and to the cause, to the risk of his physical safety and the loss of his career. Upon retirement, Hackworth was the most decorated American officer fighting in Vietnam.⁷³⁰ General Abrams said Hackworth was the best battalion commander he had ever seen in the U.S. Army.⁷³¹ Despite his proven warrior credentials, Hackworth made it a mission to understand the enemy, and he successfully employed these insights at the tactical level, and fought hard – albeit in vain – to have them implemented at the strategic level as well.

Conclusion

The twentieth century was the age of the citizen warriors, and it is against their experiences and actions today's wars and warriors are compared. From the conventional clashes to the intricacies of counterinsurgency warfare, the demand *for* warriors has been constant, but the demands *of* them have changed. As Hackworth's career illustrates, warriors fighting asymmetric wars need to be more cerebral and less kinetic, without losing sight of the latter.⁷³² The recipe Hackworth seems to be asking for is combat bums with history degrees and plenty of physical and moral courage. This is a tall order indeed, but military establishments have attempted to reflect this change, giving Special Operations Forces almost unlimited political support in today's wars.

The Special Forces Warrior ideal type

Special Operations Forces (SOF) are the signature examples of warriors in the strategic landscape today. These units attract soldiers with combat experience who want to enhance their skills further and work with the best possible peers to develop a wide template of skill-sets. The continued social specialization of the West, the dramatic reduction of the size of Western militaries, and the arrival of new threats have all conspired to necessitate the existence and maintenance of a lifeworld that can exploit and develop such warriors. The Special Forces ideal type has evolved historically from two related but different major roles. The difference is important in part because of the strategic environment they act in, and in part because of the way they are organised.

⁷³⁰ However Hackworth never won the Medal of Honour. What he did win was the Distinguished Service Cross with oak leaf cluster, ten Silver Stars, four Legion of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, eight Bronze Stars, 34 Air Medals and eight Purple Hearts.

⁷³¹ Hackworth, *About face*, 811.

⁷³² See also John Kiszely, 'Post-Modern Challenges for Modern Warriors', *Shrivenham Papers*, no. 5 (2007).

Special Operations Forces caught the eye of the public in a series of dramatic operations throughout the 1970s and 1980s when the revolutionary and post-colonial waves of terrorism dominated international security: The Israeli raid on Entebbe (1976); the German hostage rescue in Mogadishu (1977); the SAS hostage rescue at the Iranian Embassy in London (1980); and the infamous debacle at Desert One (1979) are most well known. The forces employed in this role are often called ‘tier-one’, since they represent the most highly trained and carefully selected forces doing the most technically challenging tasks. They are SOF in the counter-terrorism (CT) role. Whereas counter-terrorism means everything and anything today, in the 1970s and 1980s it referred to precise small-scale actions against terrorism, typically in hostage rescue operations.⁷³³

Before the age of revolutionary terrorism, however, SOF were active in counter-insurgency wars throughout Asia, where they learned many of the lessons that underwrite their selection procedures and operations today. During decolonisation, the British SAS had mixed successes but learned a lot about what insurgency is and how these forces can work in direct action, reconnaissance and as teachers of indigenous government or rebel forces. U.S. Army Special Forces had significant success in Vietnam between 1957 and 1965, most notably when they were embedded in villages, organising local villagers to fight the insurgents, provide intelligence and contain infiltration. These are SOF in the counterinsurgency (CI) role.

Agency

Special Forces warriors enjoy extraordinary freedom and support once deployed in the field. They can make an imprint on the war far exceeding that of other soldiers in such low numbers. However, to achieve this privilege and trust the individuals have to volunteer repeatedly for high-risk service and prove themselves in gruelling selection processes, which in the case of most tier one SOF, last for up to a year. In some cases, particularly with respect to maritime forces, the time between selection and combat readiness can be up to three years.⁷³⁴ The attrition rates in selection and education are such that the freedom and influence in the field can be said to be pooled unto very few people who have succeeded in paying the admission fees to the fraternity. Independence in the field requires

⁷³³ These types of operations also go back to World War II, when there was a proliferation of Special Forces which mostly focused on raids (SAS in North Africa, Brandenburgers in Belgium); undercover intelligence gathering (SOE, OSS and the Jedburghs in occupied Europe) but also at least one case of a spectacular raid (Skorzeny in *Operation Eiche* rescuing Mussolini in 1943).

⁷³⁴ E.g. US Navy SEALs, British Special Boat Service, German *Kampfschwimmer* and Norwegian *Marinejegerere*.

the right character and an ability to take preparations professionally, with patience, thoroughness and attention to detail.

There is substantial romanticism associated with their lifestyle: and it has to do with the degree of risk; independence from discipline and micromanagement; pride and a sense of achievement – even superiority - for having overcome the challenges of both selection and the dangers of working behind enemy lines.⁷³⁵ SOG veteran Franklin Miller explains the rewards granted for skill:

The more special your abilities, the more privileges and benefits you receive, especially if you deal in high-risk ventures. The privileges and benefits might range from greater pay to setting your own schedule to total, unquestioned control of an operation or project. But always there is that special status... As long as you were out there doing your job, killing people or gathering intelligence, nobody fucked with you. They left you totally alone to do whatever you wanted. Any flaws in your character or personality were conveniently overlooked. You were doing something they couldn't do, so you were unique. You were the player. The bandito. The gunfighter.⁷³⁶

The character of particular forces is strongly flavoured by their context of evolution. The British, who are widely regarded to have the finest Special Forces in the world, derive some of their heritage from the colonial fighting where conventional warfare was rare, and continuous operations far away demanded decentralised and independent decision-making and operational ingenuity.⁷³⁷ This encouraged a rugged individualist spirit, which today is reflected in the SAS' absolute intolerance of class structures.⁷³⁸ This spirit is also captured in the motto of the US Marines' Recon Battalion's inversion of a popular proverb: For them "the strength of the pack is the wolf."⁷³⁹

In general, the American early Special Forces experience is more different from the British than one would immediately think, even though the War of Independence was a guerrilla war that presumably would demand some of the same qualities. John Ellis argues that George Washington was adamant that the Revolutionary Wars were motors of a political rather than a social revolution. The goal was to maintain the status quo ante bellum, minus the British. For this reason, the forces were controlled relatively strictly, for unconventional forces.⁷⁴⁰ The most significant corporate experience for the US military

⁷³⁵ Roger Beaumont, *Special Operations and elite Units, 1939-1988* (London: Greenwood Press, 1988), 5.

⁷³⁶ Miller, *Reflections of a Warrior*, 88.

⁷³⁷ J. Paul de B. Taillon, *The Evolution of Special Forces in Counter-Terrorism* (London: Praeger, 2001), 4,10.

⁷³⁸ David M. Last, Bernd Horn and J. Paul de B. Taillon, *Force of choice : perspectives on special operations* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 23.

⁷³⁹ Wright, *Generation Kill*, front matter.

⁷⁴⁰ Taillon, *Evolution of Special Forces*, 61.

came from the Civil War, where the warrior spirit of today's Special Forces was displayed rather more by the Confederacy, who lost the war. The British, in contrast, waged colonial policing warfare until the 1950s, only interrupted by the World Wars, where some campaigns like Burma reinforced the lessons.

The two different types of Special Forces exercise agency in a variety of ways. The CT operators are allowed to use all their time to hone their skills and choreograph exercises. Hostage rescue missions require a very precise coordination of different elements, including helicopters (for insertion, sniper support and extraction); blocking forces (often Rangers or Marines); and the snatch teams themselves (1st tier SOF) in combination with ruthless, precise and decisive execution. Such choreography inspired Schoemaker to liken the Eagle Claw raid rehearsals to a ballet.⁷⁴¹ Eric Haney believes willpower, resolve and determination are the qualities that make Delta as capable as they are.⁷⁴² The 1970 Son Tay Raid aimed at rescuing American POWs inside North Vietnam – which failed because the camp had been evacuated – illustrates that agency does not necessarily equal freedom to roam around on the prairie like a cowboy; the preparations for that raid were extremely thorough and professional. Colonel “Bull” Simons ran the force through 170 full dress rehearsals in a mock camp, which was regularly dismantled and built up again to hide the activity from Soviet spy satellites.⁷⁴³

The upshot of all of this is that the consequences of successful raids can be likened to a full strategic resolution for good or ill. If the “strategic corporal” on a peace-keeping patrol can cause dramatic effects outweighing his rank, these missions are akin to the strategic corporal concept on steroids. Major General Shlomo Gazit (ret.) has argued that rescue operations constitute the “climax of a war which must be resolved in a single military act. The diplomatic, psychological and military struggles to free the victims – all bear a remarkable microcosmic resemblance to war. And the success or failure of such an operation makes the victory of defeat in that war.”⁷⁴⁴ On the other hand, the political costs of failure – domestically and internationally – can be very considerable too, and often stronger than anticipated. Strong medicine; strong side effects.⁷⁴⁵

The October 3rd 1993 raid in Somalia illustrates this well. While the raid was tactically a success because it achieved its mission, albeit at unacceptable cost, the

⁷⁴¹ Mark Bowden, *Guests of the Ayatollah : the first battle in America's war with militant Islam* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2006), 225.

⁷⁴² Haney, *Inside Delta Force*, 451.

⁷⁴³ Linda Robinson, *Masters of Chaos: The secret history of the Special Forces* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 30.

⁷⁴⁴ Quoted Taillon, *Evolution of Special Forces*, 125.

⁷⁴⁵ Beaumont, *Special Operations*, 42.

subsequent withdrawal from Somalia generated a host of unforeseen consequences. The most important of these was the strong inculcation of risk aversion at the highest political *and* military levels, which prevented intervention in the Rwanda genocide the subsequent year, and in Srebrenica the year after that. In Srebrenica, Norwegian helicopter pilot Tom Johansen was involved in plans to ship 32 helicopters worth of SAS troops into Srebrenica to intervene, but the plan was rejected by the UN command in Zagreb.⁷⁴⁶ Another consequence was the emboldening of Al Qaeda. Osama bin Laden, who stayed in Sudan between 1991 and 1996, has said that Al Qaeda imported veteran Mujahedeen to help oust the Americans from Mogadishu.⁷⁴⁷ When this succeeded he perceived that the United States would run away from any operation if a few of its soldiers were killed.⁷⁴⁸

The CI tasked SOF also plan very thoroughly for their missions, but there is a much stronger premium on improvisation when they are in the field. Their missions are often as much diplomatic as tactical. Whereas the CT SOF use preparation, speed and violence of action to force an outcome as close to their planned scenario as possible, counterinsurgency operations are predicated on the degree to which plans can be moulded into the ambitions and capabilities of ostensibly friendly local forces.

US Army Special Forces are the only ones in the American military with compulsory language requirements, which enhances both their potential impact on an operation and their independence in the field. They also put a strong premium on cultural and situational knowledge and awareness – particularly in the preparation for missions. On deployments, they work with locals in a capacity that combines teaching with leading, aiming to make friendly forces self-sustainable. Such missions are undertaken all over the world, not only in Afghanistan and in Iraq. These missions require maturity; judgement; independence; and sound social and political awareness. The average age of an Army Special Forces trooper is close to 32 years, compared to nearly 19 in the entire U.S. Marine Corps.⁷⁴⁹ Accumulated experience in a typical 12-man A-team can approach a century and a half.⁷⁵⁰ The officers – typically Captains - in charge of these teams can expect to lead planning and execution of missions behind enemy lines on their very first assigned mission.

⁷⁴⁶ Tom Bakkeli, *Norges Hemmelige Krigere* (Oslo: Kagge Forlag, 2007), 215.

⁷⁴⁷ J. T. Caruso, "Al-Qaeda International", in *Statement for the record before the Subcommittee on International Operations and Terrorism, Committee on Foreign Relations by Acting Assistant Director, Counter Terrorism Division, FBI, U.S. Senate* (Washington D.C.: 2001), 2,14, Peter Bergen; Douglas Wood, 'Bin Laden, millionaire with a dangerous grudge', CNN, September 27 2001. available at <http://www.cnn.com/2001/US/09/12/binladen.profile/index.html> [retrieved 18 June 2008]

⁷⁴⁸ Professor Ken Menkhaus quoted in Nicholas Kristof, 'The Wrong Lessons of the Somalia Debacle', *The New York Times* February 5 2002, A29.

⁷⁴⁹ Dick Couch, *Chosen soldier: the making of a Special Forces warrior* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2007), 6.

⁷⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

These forces are most effective when they are allowed to 'go native', which they largely did when they were responsible for catching over half of the American military's deck of cards of high value targets in Iraq.⁷⁵¹

The agency of the CT and CI operators is even more apparent with respect to intelligence operators who work under cover. Their missions require an almost absolute freedom of independent judgement and execution. The risks they endure are even more extreme than those experienced by SOF, since they are very lightly armed, hardly ever have air support and cannot even expect notional protection under the laws of war. Donald Rumsfeld was impressed with the work of The Intelligence Support Activity (ISA), which is a unit composed of individuals in the margins of the military and espionage worlds. So much so that he recommended the formation of a unit referred to as Proactive, Pre-emptive Operations Group (P2OG), which would embed themselves in local environments all over the world, including non-hostile ones – and over time develop local intelligence, gathering contacts and accumulating cultural familiarity.⁷⁵²

Subjectivity

The signature 'special' in SOF refers to the qualities of the individuals who make up the units; their reputation for excellence as well as their specialized function. In most units there is an unabashed celebration of warrior values and a commitment to fighting. The ruling worldview is that only a few people in any population are fit for the job, leaving no place for those who cannot carry their weight and actively contribute to the team. Selection is structured to select *out* unwanted candidates rather than selecting in.⁷⁵³ In this respect SOF subscribe to an almost fascist ethos, where strength, courage, manliness, winning, and action are celebrated. Nobody has a *right* to be a member. However, selection is not only about physical fitness and about military skills; it is a holistic evaluation of the individual, made necessary because of the responsibility and agency enjoyed in the field. For example, the US Army Special Forces live by a creed, which denotes a heavy emphasis on public service and self-sacrifice.⁷⁵⁴ Demands for integrity are high since they live by an honour system where lying, cheating and stealing are completely unacceptable behaviour.

⁷⁵¹ Robinson, *Masters of Chaos*, 189, 286. 610

⁷⁵² Michael Smith, *Killer elite : the inside story of America's most secret special operations team* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2006), 249-50.

⁷⁵³ Anna Simons in Last, Horn and Taillon, *Force of choice*, 84.

⁷⁵⁴ Couch, *Chosen Soldier*, 1,2.

Selection

Selection is a way to predict who will function well in a combat environment. As a simulation of combat, it has proven itself better than alternatives hitherto conceived. Psychologists are unable to predict who will perform well, so selection is critical. Most volunteers are strongly qualified, having already volunteered for military service, and in most cases for airborne and commando, or ranger training. Completion of the latter programmes increases candidates' chances. Selection success for SAS candidates tends to be between 5 and 20 percent.⁷⁵⁵ US Army Special Forces success rate is at 22 percent⁷⁵⁶, and 15 percent in German GSG9⁷⁵⁷, whereas the first three selection rounds for Delta Force were 23, 8 and 22 percent.⁷⁵⁸

A Norwegian *Marinejeger* argued that anyone who succeeded in selection was a warrior, despite not having been to combat.⁷⁵⁹ This degree of confidence in the selection regime is exaggerated. As Miller reminds us, not every Green Beret in Vietnam was "bad to the bone" and psychologically able to patrol behind the lines with the tremendous pressure that involves, while performing excellently if ambushed or otherwise compromised. What seems to be the case, however, is that the SAS' selection procedure, which is widely copied around the West, seems to work better than any other predictor. When Delta founder Charles Beckwith liaised with SAS in the late 1970s to construct his own selection regime, the late Lieutenant General John Watts, then commanding officer of SAS, told him that he did not know why selection worked, only that it had done so for twenty-five years.⁷⁶⁰ By all accounts it still does. The details of the selection regimes in many Special Forces are available in published accounts.⁷⁶¹

The SOF worldview is well summed up in the four "SOF-truths" coined by Major General David Baratto when he became the first chief of operations at USSOCOM:⁷⁶²

Humans are more important than hardware

Quality is more important than quantity

SOF cannot be mass-produced

Competent SOF cannot be created after the emergency arises⁷⁶³

⁷⁵⁵ Michael Asher, *Shoot to kill: a soldier's journey through violence* (London: Cassell Military, 2003), 205, Last, Horn and Taillon, *Force of choice*, 24, Philip Warner, *The Special Air Service* (London: Kimber, 1972), 33.

⁷⁵⁶ Couch, *Chosen Soldier*, 6.

⁷⁵⁷ General Ulrich Wegener quoted in Last, Horn and Taillon, *Force of choice*, 24.

⁷⁵⁸ Charlie A. Beckwith and Donald Knox, *Delta Force* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 123, 37, Leroy Thompson, *The rescuers: the world's top anti-terrorist units* (Boulder, Colo.: Paladin Press, 1986), 127-28.

⁷⁵⁹ Interview with Norwegian *Marinejeger*. [Anonymous]

⁷⁶⁰ Beckwith and Knox, *Delta Force*, 130.

⁷⁶¹ Asher, *Shoot to kill*, Couch, *Chosen Soldier*, Couch, *Warrior Elite*, Haney, *Inside Delta Force*.

⁷⁶² Robinson, *Masters of Chaos*, 114.

Most Special Forces entertain an underlying philosophy that selection *reveals* candidates. It does not make them. Warriors are born, not made. This approach is in contrast to the philosophy of the US Marines, for example, where it is held that most people can be moulded into warriors.⁷⁶⁴

Why they volunteer

The motivations behind Special Forces warriors are a combination of extrinsic factors, such as 9/11; a desire for the lifestyle it entails; and an explicit desire to become warriors. There are also professional motivations for working with the best in the trade. Dick Couch has interviewed selection candidates for Army Special Forces at Fort Bragg. A favourite question he put to them was why they would put up with all the hardship, cold, exhaustion, and deprivation to join Special Forces. Many related it to having been moved by 9/11, intermixed between boredom with their existing occupation, whether military or civilian.⁷⁶⁵ A sense of adventure was important for some. One soldier from New Jersey elected the army over a college soccer scholarship after 9/11.⁷⁶⁶ Another returned to the army after a stint in the civilian world because of 9/11 and because he did not feel cut out as a “nine-to-fiver”.⁷⁶⁷

Some, however, are more self-conscious in their desire to work among warriors. An officer candidate with combat experience from Iraq signed up because of 9/11 and the role he expected Special Forces to have in the war on terrorism. Another reason was “the quality of the NCOs in Special Forces; they’re the best in the Army. These are the kind of men I want to serve with and lead.”⁷⁶⁸ One 25-year-old combat veteran who had served two tours in the 75th Ranger Regiment realised on his second tour that “this is what I was born to do – to lead in combat and to teach others how to perform in combat. I’m finally where I belong.”⁷⁶⁹

For those aspiring to be warriors, the selection cadre leave them in no doubt they have come to the right place. With a mixture of enticement, encouragement, brazenness, and allure, the most senior training NCO in Special Forces, 1st SF Group Command Sergeant Major Van Atkins, with 28 years experience in the army, urges the men to keep making effort:

⁷⁶⁵ Couch, *Chosen Soldier*, 10, Robinson, *Masters of Chaos*, 114, 610

⁷⁶⁴ Thomas Ricks, *Making the Corps* (New York: Touchstone, 1998).

⁷⁶⁵ Couch, *Chosen Soldier*, 57,80.

⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁷⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁷⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁷⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 172.

Training's hard, men; it's supposed to be hard. Not everyone can be a Green Beret, but you can. You all showed that when you were selected. Suck it up; make it happen... In the groups and on deployment, you will get less sleep, be colder, carry more, do more – and you know what? You'll have a helluva lot of fun doing it. Being a Green Beret is the greatest thing in the world... This is the best organization in the Army – in the world. So when it gets cold and you're hurting, drive on. We have to play with pain in Special Forces... This is serious stuff. Your nation is at war. All of you are going to war – if not with a Special Forces ODA team, then with some conventional unit. So if you're going to the fight, why not go with the best – where you can make the biggest contribution in fighting your nation's enemy.⁷⁷⁰

The late Colonel Francis J. Kelly, a World War II veteran of Omaha beach who commanded 5th Group in Vietnam June 1966 - June 1967, also expressed praise of Special Forces NCOs' quality. Reminiscent of Colonel Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now*, Kelly went through jump school at age 44.⁷⁷¹ He argued that “The “special” about Special Forces is simply that the non-commissioned officers are the finest to be found anywhere in the world. If today's Special Forces NCO has ever had any peer, it was probably the tough, self-reliant, combat-tested soldier who fought on the Indian frontier of our own country during the 1870s.”⁷⁷²

Another cadre, First Sergeant Stewart Donnally impresses on the candidates that a warrior reputation needs to be earned: “Be clear on this thing, people. We are here to train warriors, and we are deadly serious about this. The reputation you established during selection will continue after you leave here.”⁷⁷³ Company commander Captain John Block reinforces his message:

If you don't want to be a warrior, this is the wrong place for you and you're wasting our time. If you want to be a warrior, then show us you want to be a warrior – a Special Forces warrior... The groups need every one of you... but we'll not cut corners and we'll not relax our standards. You have to perform, and you have to demonstrate character. Show us you want to be a Special Forces warrior, and forget about everything else.

Such unabashed warrior celebration was not always expressed. During the mid 1970s, following the standing down of many special forces units after Vietnam, the 5th and 7th

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid., 180.

⁷⁷¹ Richard Goldstein, 'F.J. Kelly, Green Beret Leader In Vietnam War, Is Dead at 78 ', *New York Times* January 4 1998.

⁷⁷² Kelly, *Green Berets in Vietnam*, 86.

⁷⁷³ Couch, *Chosen Soldier*, 167.

Special Forces Groups initiated development projects, building roads and medical facilities on Indian reservations. Although useful, this kind of training made many transfer to infantry units to get back to the action.⁷⁷⁴ This lesson was not lost on General Schoomaker when he commanded USSOCOM that “As SOF engage in additional peacetime operations, it is important to remember that we are, first and foremost, warriors.”⁷⁷⁵

However, the exertions of basic training and selection merely ensure that minimum requirements are fulfilled. The real test is combat, not only experiencing it, but also being willing to keep volunteering for it. That shows the personal and existential commitment of the warrior definition. There is no doubt that Special Operations Forces have such individuals.

One example of this is the career of Finish-American Larry Thorne. Thorne had fought the Russians in Finland during the Winter War 1939-40, subsequently commanding his own guerrilla group conducting raids behind the lines in the war of continuation 1941-44. During one of these raids, Thorne and his men killed 300 Russians, without incurring losses.⁷⁷⁶ He won every Finish military medal, including the Mannerheim Cross, the nation’s highest award. Upon Finland’s surrender in 1944, Thorne signed up for the Germans, in a marine unit, which was wanted by the Russians, leading to Thorne’s post-war arrest in Finland by the Russians. After escaping to the United States, he became a U.S. citizen and signed up for the U.S. Army as a private. He subsequently joined Special Forces where he received his commission in 1956. An excellent scuba diver, skydiver, boxer, skier and mountain climber, Captain Thorne naturally volunteered for the most elite unit of the Vietnam War, the “Studies and Observation Group” (MACV/SOG). In October 1965, during SOG’s first cross-border mission into Laos, Thorne was accompanying a team insertion near Laotian Highway 165 in heavy fog. The helicopter did not return and Thorne was never seen again.⁷⁷⁷

The point is that people like Thorne, who have a personal covenant with war, will seek out the units where the professionalism, risks and demands are the very highest, and in the contemporary strategic landscape, that is SOF. Thorne was even willing to start as a private in the U.S. Army before climbing his way back into the rank of Captain, despite his officer background. He is not the only warrior trading rank and privileges to stay in Special

⁷⁷⁴ Michael Lee Lanning, *Blood Warriors: American Military Elites* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2002), 114,15.

⁷⁷⁵ General Peter J. Schoomaker, 'Special Operations Forces: The way ahead', in *Force of Choice*, ed. Last et al. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2004), 163.

⁷⁷⁶ Peter Harclerode, *Fighting Dirty: The inside story of Covert Operations from Ho Chi Minh to Osama Bin Laden* (London: Cassell Military Paperbacks, 2001), 463.

⁷⁷⁷ John Plaster, *SOG – The Secret Wars of America’s Commandos in Vietnam* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 33-37.

Forces. For example, many SEALs could not hope to reach far up the ranks if they stayed in Special Warfare, since that was not a separate career path in those days. One long serving SEAL officer who had made this commitment explains: “You could reasonably stay in [for your entire career] and have all your assignments within naval special-warfare-related jobs... Reasonable expectation after a twenty-year career would be to retire as a lieutenant commander... And all of us entered into it knowing that. Just because this is what we wanted to do for a living.”⁷⁷⁸

Intersubjectivity

SOF must be prepared to work in so-called non-permissive environments. In the decades between Vietnam and 9/11, US Army Special Forces specialized in “foreign internal defence” missions: training friendly, often but not necessarily government forces, to a level of military skills that would make them independent of outside help. Such missions underlined the teacher dimension of the Special Forces skill-set. However, today with two ongoing wars, and a more widespread campaign against terrorist groups, the whole range of skills are in demand.

Operating independently in foreign cultures

Some writers have underlined the degree to which SOF operate in a grey moral, juridical and political environment, where sound social awareness and political judgement are critical characteristics of the operators.⁷⁷⁹ Couch describes how the concluding exercise of US Army Special Forces, a massive role-playing event called Robin Sage, focuses heavily on testing how they handle establishing contact with a guerrilla force, which has a chief who is not easy to get along or cooperate with. Finding a balance between his interests and their mission is difficult. Troops returning from the field report that the real thing – anywhere in the world – is like “Robin Sage on steroids.”⁷⁸⁰

Out in the field, the forces will often have to confront real dilemmas such as judging whether to stop cruelty against prisoners, or executions on behalf of the laws of war, or to ignore such behaviour, and focus on good relations with the local big men, in the interest of mission accomplishment. For these warriors, fighting blends in with diplomacy and development. Army Special Forces integrate development projects into their mission

⁷⁷⁸ Quoted in Susan L. Marquis, *Unconventional warfare : rebuilding U.S. special operations forces* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1997), 36.

⁷⁷⁹ Beaumont, *Special Operations*, 37, Taillon, *Evolution of Special Forces*, 28.

⁷⁸⁰ Couch, *Chosen Soldier*, 289.

profile, as this is essential to win the hearts and minds of neutral populations in disputed territories.

To decentralise mission execution like this can be a double-edged sword. It empowers these forces greatly, where their accumulated field experience is a necessity rather than an asset. They can manipulate all the vectors that have a bearing on the conflict; whether economic (giving out bribes, manipulating local economy, seizing funds), social (empowering one local tribe/strongman while ostracizing others), political (protecting friendly figures and targeting or arresting unfriendly ones) or military (advisory role to friendly forces, or direct action against unfriendly ones). On the other hand, all this power and influence requires professionalism in a careful adherence to the rules of engagement, laws of war, and respect for the civilian leadership at home. If powerful military institutions are not in place to manage operations, the operators work on trust alone. The concept of Special Forces is for this reason potentially risky for any political leader in countries with less stringent civil-military structures than those in the West. While there is no immediate risk that Western Special Forces will turn on their own governments, this is far less true of the forces they train around the world, who will become powerful factors on any side after Western forces have left the area, or even before that.

For these reasons – and as deference to the risks they are taking – special operators have much more power in the field than their rank formally signifies.⁷⁸¹ This bolsters their agency, but also places a lot of responsibility on their shoulders. One way this responsibility is rewarded is through recognition from conventional troops or from home. Recognition, however, is not a straightforward dynamic since SOF are not allowed to reveal their personal identities to the public, nor even be recognised for extraordinary deeds.⁷⁸²

Recognition

For some operators, lacking recognition from the public is understandable and acceptable, even romantic. During the preparations for *Operation Eagle Claw*, the Iranian hostage rescue operation on April 24th 1980, the Delta operators all wanted to be part of one of the boldest military actions in history:

The fact that their countrymen would not know who they were made it all the more appealing. It made the heroism pure. *They* would not be celebrated, only their

⁷⁸¹ Bakkeli, *Norges Hemmelige Krigere*, 48.

⁷⁸² An exception to this is posthumous awarding of the Medal of Honour, as in the case of Navy SEALs Lt Michael P Murphy and Master-at-arms 2nd Class Michael A. Monsoor. Gidget Fuentes, 'First Navy MoH since Vietnam to go to SEAL', *Navy Times*, October 15 2007, Gidget Fuentes, 'SEAL to receive Medal of Honor for Iraq heroism', *Navy Times*, March 19 2008.

achievement. None of these men would be in the ticker-tape parades or sitting down for interviews on national TV or have their pictures on the covers of magazines, nor would they be cashing in on fat book contracts. They were quiet professionals. In a world of brag and hype they embodied substance. They would come home and after a few days off go right back to work. Of course, within their own world, they would become legends. For the rest of their lives, behind them knowing soldiers would whisper, “He was on Eagle Claw.” That was honor worth having.⁷⁸³

Yet in other contexts, it can be tempting to welcome attention, which conflicts with blending in with the local population during missions, or at the very least cutting as discreet a profile as possible. The freedom to dress as they please; sport long hair and beards; rove around the area of operations in customised vehicles; pack customised weapons; exhort a cool air of independence and confidence; becomes its own style and distinction, which invariably draws admiring looks from “lesser orders of soldiering”, i.e. normal infantry.⁷⁸⁴ Occasionally seeing special operators in action, or even just exhibiting their typically causal cool attitude, inspires soldiers to volunteer to try out for the unit in question. Other times it leads to resentment.⁷⁸⁵

In some cases, this difference in operational style – as in both meanings of ‘style’ – can lead to friction between allied SOF elements. In Iraq, British Special Forces aim to keep a low profile using local battered vehicles and cheap clothes bought in the markets. Some of them were shocked at their American colleagues who initially used brand new Dodge pickups.

“We used to laugh when we saw the Americans around the green zone,” one source said. “They would be wearing designer jeans, heavy boots and T-shirts - that was their idea of local dress. To a man they would all have pistols strapped to each leg with black plastic holster and webbing, and of course they would be wearing the latest shades. We called it ‘living the dream’.”⁷⁸⁶

Such conspicuous flashing generated unwanted attention to the British working alongside them, which was especially undesirable for the latter in a counterinsurgency campaign where the Americans had earned a “well deserved reputation for being trigger-happy” according to one SAS operator.⁷⁸⁷ Such aggressiveness is not necessarily unwarranted as the

⁷⁸³ Bowden, *Guests of the Ayatollah*, 436.

⁷⁸⁴ Bowden, *Black Hawk Down*.

⁷⁸⁵ Robinson, *Masters of Chaos*, 225.

⁷⁸⁶ Smith, 'Secret war of the SAS'. This particular dress style among Delta goes back at least to Desert One. See Bowden, *Guests of the Ayatollah*, 439.

⁷⁸⁷ Smith, 'Secret war of the SAS'.

conflict level has been very high, with hundreds of engagements. But the British have exhibited a more high risk approach to their confrontations with insurgents, and suffering heavy losses in doing so. By one count, British SOF had suffered seven dead and 47 seriously wounded by September 2007, which exceeds 20 percent of the SAS' fighting strength.⁷⁸⁸

These displays of distinction garner respect from enemy forces as well as friendly ones. In Somalia, the Rangers were both despised and respected for their ruthlessness, but the clan fighters detected in them an unwillingness to die, apparent from their preference for travelling by helicopters or armoured columns at high speed. Clan fighters considered it unmanly to yield in a fight, even against overwhelming force, and would brave enemy fire often in suicidal frontal assaults.⁷⁸⁹ One of these fighters, Sheik Ali, a professional gunman, respected the "black vests" that came with the Rangers as "especially ruthless killers."⁷⁹⁰ One Delta operator, Sergeant First Class Paul Howe in turn respected the clan fighters as "smart street fighters" who were "disciplined" and "determined."⁷⁹¹ This dimension of SOF is underappreciated, since their very difference, existentially speaking, is much more than just their instrumental role. It leads to recruitment, effort, a sense of brotherhood among the operators, and the critically important small group cohesion in combat.

Conclusion

Ultimately, SOF represent a sub-culture where the warrior ethos is celebrated unabashedly and explicitly as necessary and desirable. Such an ethos further pronounces the 'special' in these forces, such that their specialization is increasingly existential rather than instrumental. Are SOF warriors? The answer is a definite yes insofar as the warrior ethos is cultivated in these units. There is a pragmatic existential truce between society and SOF as the latter's culture is insulated by secrecy and the wider military, which allows them to cultivate masculine values in a way frowned upon by the rest of society. The US Marines illustrate the civil-military tensions better because they are a more open organisation. In one illustrative example, Lt. General James Mattis, who commanded Marine expeditionary forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, faced fierce criticism for admitting that he found combat a lot of fun: "Actually it's quite fun to fight them, you know. It's a hell of a hoot... It's fun to

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁹ Bowden, *Black Hawk Down*, 110.

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid., 180.

⁷⁹¹ Ibid., 234.

shoot some people. I'll be right up there with you. I like brawling.”⁷⁹² In another example, Lieutenant Nathaniel Fick explains how the US Marine Corps had to drop a recruiting campaign with the words “Nobody likes to fight, but somebody has to know how.” It was dropped because the Marines *do* like to fight.⁷⁹³

Conclusion

The late modern warrior ideal type, most recently embodied in the Special Forces warrior, has evolved out of an age that has produced a great variety of military experiences. When Western SOF rapidly dissembled organised resistance in the 2001 Afghanistan campaign, their achievement was celebrated as a successful combination of the human element and technology. Airpower and mule-equipped SOF appeared to combine the best of the fighting spirit of the erstwhile stormtroops and the values of citizen warriors.

However, what we are seeing is that the human terrain in Afghanistan is perhaps more challenging than in any previous wars. World War II veterans would tell those fighting in Vietnam that one did not know what war was before one had fought the Germans. The Vietnam veterans in turn replied, justifiably, that a war without frontiers or clearly identifiable enemies was a challenge of a different nature, but in no way preferable. Today's warriors in Iraq and Afghanistan face an even more complex human terrain where the local population is to be won over through developmental nation building efforts. This has led to admissions in the American military of lacking cultural and ethnographic knowledge in previous counterinsurgencies, like Vietnam. To counter this the American military is stepping up Human Terrain Teams, which are “specifically designed to address cultural awareness shortcomings” by giving brigade commanders social scientists to advise on the ““human terrain” – the social, ethnographic, cultural, economic and political elements of the people among whom a force is operating.”⁷⁹⁴ Such teams will undoubtedly contribute to cultural and local awareness. However, they still constitute an add-on device to provide a human intelligence service, which ought to have been integrated as a foundation throughout command from the very start.

At the same time, some operators sent to Afghanistan are instructed not under any circumstances to allow themselves to be taken prisoner, because they would face public

⁷⁹² 'General: It's 'fun to shoot some people', *CNN*, February 4 2005. Available <http://edition.cnn.com/2005/US/02/03/general.shoot/> [Retrieved 27/04/2008]

⁷⁹³ Fick, *One bullet away* 33.

⁷⁹⁴ Jacob Kipp et al., 'The Human Terrain System: A CORDS for the 21st century', *Military Review* September/October (2006): 9.

beheading.⁷⁹⁵ Consequently, the operational scope of action stretches from extreme violence to development efforts – often in the same village. If Ernst Jünger found himself struggling to define a Homeric realm, latter day SOF find themselves having to carry a citizen ethos into a medieval warlord dominated war scenario, using technology to compensate for numbers, and no Homeric duel in sight. Indeed, the fighting taking place in Helmand is as fierce as anything since World War II, but without the feeling of an overriding threat. The fighting could be said to be privatised and specialised as much in the social and existential sense, as economically and instrumentally. This is unsurprising given how specialization is one of the major vectors of modernity, and it would be odd not to expect it to materialize in war. Precisely how this plays out in the relationship between warriors and society is the subject of the next chapter.

⁷⁹⁵ Bakkeli, *Norges Hemmelige Krigere*, 66.

CHAPTER 7: DOES THE WEST STILL NEED WARRIORS?

Introduction

It is now time to answer the research question directly. Does the West still need warriors? The warrior definition (chapter 1), the social and security context (chapter two), the war and combat context (chapter three and four) and the premodern and modern warrior ideal types (chapter five and six) come together in this chapter. While the first part of the thesis provided theoretical context, the previous two chapters provided a historical context. This chapter is about warriors today and in the near future.

Warriors' lifeworld has a cultural grammar, Coker tells us. A grammar is composed of meaning and function. What is the meaning and function of warriors in today's strategic landscape and society? This corresponds to their existential meaning and their instrumental function. A related dimension is the inverse of the question: not what are warriors for the West, but what is Western society for warriors?

The presentation of the Special Forces warrior ideal type has already answered part of the instrumental question. The instrumental utility of SOF is readily apparent, and this is primarily where we find Western warriors today. Hitherto, however, the discussion of the instrumental utility of warriors has focused on the micro level, particularly in chapter one, five and six. This leaves the macro level analysis of instrumental utility for this chapter.

To identify the existential meaning of warriors for society is much more difficult, for several reasons: Firstly, Western society is increasingly instrumentalized and specialized, where the existential questions are little addressed by society as a whole. They are instead a matter of subculture devotion and entertainment. Even religion (every society's most substantial existential discourse and most coherent reservoir of meaning) is threatening to become a subculture, in the form of a faith community. For believers in the West, religion is immanent: God is mediated into humanity rather than as in other parts of the world – notably the Islamic – where religion still offers transcendence, and God mediates humanity.⁷⁹⁶

Secondly, within the military realm there is an extraordinary shortage of self-awareness on these issues, presumably because such issues border on philosophy,

⁷⁹⁶ Luc Ferry, *Man Made God: The meaning of life*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

encourage introspection and generally shake up seemingly self-evident reigning values. To do these things is incompatible with the instrumental rationality that necessarily governs most military activity. Some exceptions exist, such as the US Marine Corps' very strong historical self-awareness, and the cultivation of warrior ethos in Special Forces, which inevitably leads to attention towards the human element. Nonetheless, even in Special Forces instrumental rationality governs virtually all activity, as a Special Forces instructor who was talking about attention to drill and detail recently reminded some candidates in selection: "This is Special Forces, not some liberal arts feel good programme; we don't have time for your self-esteem. If it's not right we have to get it right. We are at war."⁷⁹⁷ A third reason is that we are living in an age characterised by a strong degree of cultural and moral relativism, which is due both to the erosion of major value systems (religion and other grand narratives) and to discrediting or erosion of the celebration of higher moral values (glory, honour, physical courage) after extremely destructive world wars.

As a consequence of these social developments, the celebration of warrior values in semi-closed military subcultures is often regarded as stubborn retention of more or less reactionary values, which a society no longer dominated by war can afford to ignore, or even resent. Aside from the civil-military gap, this pulls warriors between the imperatives of military instrumentality on the one hand and a kind of moralising against the use of violence from the civilian world, on the other hand. Ancient values like honour, sacrifice and recognition still play an intuitive and meaningful role in the military lifeworld. While some warriors fight for themselves, they do not fight for personal gratification; but for personal recognition.

The existential role of warriors in society

Warriors at the international level – ambassadors of Western society?

The contemporary West is a group of largely established liberal democratic societies. As such it is one of the first societies where political decision making can de-facto abolish warriors, whether they are deemed needed or desired, or neither. For some, this represents progressive thinking along the lines of the abolishment of slavery, foot-binding and duelling, practices that are judged incompatible with the progression of civilization today.⁷⁹⁸ The military also acknowledges a cultural gap between the two civilian and military worlds. Thomas Ricks' 1998 book on the U.S. Marine Corps reveals a military culture increasingly

⁷⁹⁷ Couch, *Chosen Soldier*, 314.

⁷⁹⁸ Mandelbaum, 'Is Major War Obsolete?' 34.

at odds with civil society, to such an extent, that some Marines interviewed at the time predicted that the next big war would be a kind of cultural civil war inside the United States.⁷⁹⁹ Since then the events following 9/11 have re-introduced warriors on the scene with no risk of mission drought. This contrasts with the 1990s. In a popular comedy *Major Payne* from 1995 the main protagonist, Major Payne, is told that, despite being a “mean killing machine,” he is not needed in the Marine Corps anymore because of cutbacks, and that the “battles are fought in the halls of Congress these days”.⁸⁰⁰

Today there are wars, however, but their rationales cross over each other from self-defence and deterrence to peace enforcement and development. Even before these issues are securitized by different security paradigms, they are reflective of different social imaginaries, or different ways of saying ‘we’. Being reveals itself in war, says Levinas,⁸⁰¹ or, in other words, who *we* are reveals itself in war. This is only partly true today, or if it is true, a neutral observer may well conclude the ‘we’ is schizophrenic. The complex picture of the West at war reflects many ambitions and desires on behalf of many groups, with less coherence and will as a result. Consider the war in Afghanistan, in relation to Coker’s insight about social existence: “What do all societies say? All social discourse can be reduced to “I am.””⁸⁰² If one is an Afghan trying to surmise the being and intentions of Western expeditionary forces there, there are several competing impressions, which say different things. In addition to the social contrast of seeing our wars from the receiving end, it can also be useful to bear in mind Clausewitz’s insight that war is (meant to be) a force to compel the enemy to do our will.⁸⁰³

As a given example, an Afghan farmer can have several incompatible simultaneous military experiences of the West. (1) He can have his opium poppies eradicated by poppy eradication teams that are mostly composed of Afghan national army with Western advisers. They do not offer any alternative means of income for him, which leads to frustration and resentment. (2) The farmer can be visited by intelligence operators who approach him as a tribal elder to extract information, a visit that can lead to suspicion, curiosity or even optimism and pride for being treated with respect and listened to. (3) He or members of his family may fall victim to collateral damage because of the proximity of fighting he is not personally interested in, or much less involved with. This will also lead to

⁷⁹⁹ Ricks, *Making the Corps*, 292.

⁸⁰⁰ Nick Castle, 'Major Payne', (United States: Universal Pictures, 1995).

⁸⁰¹ Hillman, *A Terrible Love of War*, 2.

⁸⁰² Coker, *War and the illiberal conscience*, 92.

⁸⁰³ Clausewitz, *On War*, 75.

anger, resentment and frustration. (4) In another scenario, however, the farmer may be fearful of foreign fighters and too distrustful of Western soldiers' staying power to take their side in the ongoing hearts and minds campaign. (5) The farmer may be confused by the geopolitical consequences of a sharp delineation with neighbouring Pakistan, an area as much Pashtu as his own, and for that reason meaninglessly divorced for purposes of trade or family relations. Finally, (6) he can be equally confused about infrastructure projects like well-building, or medical care provided on the one hand by military personnel (American), with plenty of resources but less care for his future than for his contribution to stability by not joining the Taliban. Aid can also come from civilian agencies who do not wear uniforms and carry guns, and perhaps have less money, but whose programmes are more invasive to his social and family structure (gender relations, potential missionary activity, and calls for reform of local decision making into more democratic forms). The whole presence of foreigners has an unmistakable military headline, which suggests that some kind of coercion is taking place.

The question then is: who is the Western warrior in Afghanistan who says "I am"? What being reveals itself at war in Afghanistan? A cynic might argue that Afghanistan is a frontier space constituting a free-for-all for anyone with an adventurous spirit and a predisposition for exporting their skills and resources; whether violence or development. Perhaps this is what the specializing vector identified in chapter two spawns; foreign and security policy by subculture. If such is the case, the outcome is almost inevitably a societal inward turn for warriors into isolation. There is a parallel to both the knights of the Middle Ages and to Jünger in that warriors must find meaning for themselves. If they can find meaning in the war itself, then it is still a way to assert being, or thymos as Plato called it. Yet this thymotic element is threatening to become so privatized and isolated as to not being so much a part of the social fabric as a tolerated nuisance. This means that clarity of purpose is more than a strategic property, it also helps to define who and what Western warriors are when they represent their countries in combat.

Western warriors at the domestic level – thymos and recognition today

Does the distinction between warriors and soldiers have any meaning in Western domestic society? Francis Fukuyama is one of few people who have addressed this. He revokes Plato's concept 'thymos'⁸⁰⁴ and Alexandre Kojève's reading of Hegel on recognition and the master-slave relationship. For Kojève, man is distinct from animals because of our

⁸⁰⁴ See chapter five.

sociability, which sometimes lead us to violent conflict over objects that have no practical value, but social value, such as flags. Other human beings desire these objects; to fight for them and win leads to recognition by the contenders. Furthermore, man is different from animals in a more profound respect as well: he is able to overcome his fear of death and risk life. In battle, this logic leads either to death for one party or both, or for a power relationship of lordship and bondage, where one party has submitted his will to the victor for fear of his life.⁸⁰⁵

By risking his life, man proves that he can act contrary to his most powerful and basic instinct, the instinct for self-preservation... And that is why it is important that the primeval battle at the beginning of history be over prestige alone, or an apparent trifle like a medal or a flag that signifies recognition. The reason that I fight is to get another human being to recognize the fact that I am willing to risk my life, and that I am therefore free and authentically human.⁸⁰⁶

This dynamic, repeated in countless varieties, leads to the master-slave relationship, which in some respects has historical precedent in pre-modernity where warrior leaders by necessity were society's leaders.

For Fukuyama, the desire for recognition is the political part of our personality because it drives men to assert themselves over others. He sees *thymos* – or the confidence to *be*⁸⁰⁷ – as central to recognition, since it asserts itself when recognition is not granted. “*Thymos* is something like an innate human sense of justice: people believe that they have a certain worth, and when other people act as though they are worth less – when they do not *recognize* their worth at its correct value – then they become angry.”⁸⁰⁸ Thymotic assertions of self worth exists in the West today as well, most visibly in criminal gangs who fight over colours and turfs, like the Crips or the Bloods.⁸⁰⁹ These gangs apparently fight to assert courage and manliness, but what about the rest of us? Or as Fukuyama asks, does liberal democracy satisfy thymos?⁸¹⁰

Fukuyama argues that one of the first principles of liberal democracy is the idea of equality; an idea less at home in the communitarian social imaginary than the liberal and cosmopolitan ones. Nietzsche had asked whether recognition that can be universalised is

⁸⁰⁵ Fukuyama, *End of History*, 147.

⁸⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁸⁰⁷ I am indebted to Rt. Hon. Dr. Richard Chartres for this understanding of thymos, personal conversation.

⁸⁰⁸ Fukuyama, *End of History*, 165. original italics.

⁸⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁸¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 289.

worth having in the first place.⁸¹¹ Self-confidence is important in this sense, because it comes from reaching a certain standard. For warriors, such a standard is often selection initially and combat eventually, and comparison happens automatically between peers, and between recruits and veterans. Performing well repeatedly in combat is a standard unto its own as recognized as other universal signifiers: decapitation of enemies to demonstrate victory, say, or the universal taboo against not showing hospitality that all cultures share. A central feature of this issue is the question of who esteems.⁸¹² In the military world, the individuals who are already experienced are those whose esteem is most coveted. Gaining respect from proven combat warriors ranks very high. To some extent, this also repeats itself at the national level, where the British are often held in very high esteem for their military professionalism.⁸¹³

Recognition is central to the social dynamics in warrior cultures, because physical – and increasingly also intellectual – performance, is central to operational success.⁸¹⁴ Individuals tend to be competitive, seeking achievement relative to the peer group. In modern psychological parlance; this is an environment full of A-type personalities. One of the reasons for some military units' relative isolation from society is precisely that they cultivate such a culture, whereas the idea that some individuals perform better than other, is increasingly unpopular in a civil society that is sceptical of hierarchical ranking of people's qualities or contributions. As Fukuyama argues, a civilization where nobody has a desire to be better than others is ill equipped to meet challengers who have a strong faith in their own relative cosmic position, particularly if it comes with unwillingness to risk lives.⁸¹⁵

And if men are unable to affirm that any particular way of life is superior to another, then they will fall back on the affirmation of life itself, that is, the body, its needs, and fears. While not all souls may be equally virtuous or talented, all bodies can suffer; hence democratic societies tend to be compassionate and raise to the first order of concern the question of preventing the body from suffering. It is not an accident that people in the democratic societies are preoccupied with material gain and live in an economic world devoted to the satisfaction of the myriad small needs of the body.⁸¹⁶

This sentiment exactly is sarcastically expressed in the movie *Black Hawk Down* when captured businessman Abdullah 'Firimbi' Hassan castigates General Garrison; "You

⁸¹¹ Ibid., 301.

⁸¹² Ibid., 303.

⁸¹³ Interview Norwegian Marinejeger, [anonymous].

⁸¹⁴ Kiszely, 'Post-modern challenges'.

⁸¹⁵ Fukuyama, *End of History*, 315.

⁸¹⁶ Ibid., 305.

Americans don't smoke anymore. You live long, dull and uninteresting lives."⁸¹⁷ If warriors were to be thus concerned with long lives and the myriad small needs of the body, very few would volunteer for combat. However, if these are the concerns of "most people," the notion that volunteering for combat and risking life is worthy of esteem will be increasingly challenged. Why not enjoy life's luxuries instead; become a business consultant and travel to five star hotels making business deals, enjoy an expensive life style and retire early? The financial world is, after all, a world full of A-type personalities as well.

Weber's iron cage juxtaposed with Hegel's understanding of the reciprocity between recognition and courage in the warrior type helps to explain this. Weber argued that as instrumental rationality came to govern increasingly more and larger spheres of the lifeworld, the other action types became relatively more important. Yet for Hegel the warrior is a human type, which will not go away, however society is organised. "The military exists because the warrior is a human type, and the warrior is a human type because the act of self-sacrifice, of meeting force with force on behalf of an idea, is one of the ways men apprehend themselves as free agents... Wars are the result of the frustrations that peace brings to the warrior in his drive to act out the freedom of his being."⁸¹⁸ Sensing that the public is less and less understanding of warriors' seemingly irrational desire to risk life for recognition and excitement, these individuals need the recognition from their peers even more. Nevertheless, is this degree of self-referential cultivation of the warrior ethos sustainable? There are three ways of seeing this.

Warriors among sleepwalkers

One way of ascertaining this situation is to argue that the public's lack of understanding is exaggerated. This can be called the 'warriors among sleepwalkers' or 'wake-me-when-the-war-comes' public. Despite a vocal minority who are hostile to the idea that armed force can be a force for good, the majority of the public supports the armed forces, albeit in a relatively modest, even latent, way. In this reasoning the public does not feel war looming, despite the expeditionary campaigns being waged, and feel they can largely afford to withdraw their attention from military affairs. This is not out of hostility to the military, but rather follows from the military's standing as corresponding to its perceived utility in meeting a perceptible threat. Some flashes of action, like the SAS' liberation of the Iranian Embassy in London, function more as a reassuring reminder (or realisation) that the appropriate capabilities are sustained by the authorities.

⁸¹⁷ Scott, 'Black Hawk Down'.

⁸¹⁸ Verene, 'Hegel's Account of war', 151.

Conversely, when the sleepwalkers themselves are called to the fight, the whole military profession may be called into question by those who are unwilling to fight. This was Ed Cobleigh's experience as a combat pilot in Vietnam. Assessing his own motivation, Cobleigh noted that he went through three stages: the first was about the cause, preventing communist takeover of the south. The second was fighting to avenge killed friends and colleagues; after six months, he judged that it was not worth fighting for the south. In the final analysis, however, Cobleigh decided that he was there because he liked it; strapping up in his F-4 Phantom to "volunteer for personal intimate combat."⁸¹⁹ Flying in combat was highly emotionally rewarding for him.⁸²⁰ What particularly galled Cobleigh, however, were the anti-war demonstrations in the United States: "the war was publicly supported when only three demographic groups were fighting in it; professional soldiers like fighter pilots and the U.S. Army's Green Berets, white southerners, and urban blacks... College freshmen suddenly had to contemplate the awful possibility of giving up their surfboards for M-16 rifles. Night jungle patrols are not nearly as much fun as rock concerts."⁸²¹ Warriors like Cobleigh became immersed in a passionate cultural struggle. If the majority of the American public had supported their warriors more vocally, the implication would have been that those who refused to fight were cowards. Today the pendulum has swung back to strong support of the military, but given all-volunteer militaries there is still a sense in which the public can be uninterested.

Would-be warriors without war

Another reading of the relationship between warriors and the public is that the desire for adventure and recognition is more or less constant, and that rather than doing without recognition people have found other ways of channelling it, in the absence of war. Karl Jasper's reading of Hegel is consistent with Kojève: Focusing on the warrior rather than war, where peace is only achievable if the warrior has other outlets:

Fighting – risking one's life so as either to meet force with force or else to use force to win power and booty – is a primordial phenomenon of human life. The primordial element is the fierce fighting spirit. Unleashed, it engenders the self-transcending lust of flinging one's life away and the savagery that rates other lives no higher, vents itself in pillage and rape after victory, and finally abates in the climactic feeling of power: to spare the conquered and let him serve as a slave. This abatement led Hegel to interpret

⁸¹⁹ Ed Cobleigh, *War for the Hell of it: A fighter pilot's view of Vietnam* (New York: Berkley Caliber, 2005), 55.

⁸²⁰ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁸²¹ *Ibid.*, 179.

the productive meaning of life-and-death struggles. The warrior is a human type, but not everyone is a warrior.⁸²²

Financial trading and extreme or competitive sports are alternative avenues that lead to social status, without (comparable) risks. This interpretation suits the 1980s and 1990s when the limited operations in Latin America, the First Gulf War, the Balkans and Africa did not quite add up to war in the conventional sense. Another distraction became widespread during this time, as Private Military Companies (PMCs) expanded dramatically. PMCs became a platform where adventurous people and ex-soldiers could find opportunities for combat operations in the absence of war. Just as many left the US Army Special Forces in the 1970s because of their relative change of focus from combat to development programmes, so have many well-trained soldiers in the West left their state-based positions to go over to the private sector. This happens a lot today with the increasing market opportunities in Iraq in particular. Many private actors have undisputed warrior credentials and cannot be discredited simply as profit hungry adventurers. Instead, they have found an arena, which provides the same risks and danger, but they trade some of the recognition that follows from dangerous public service for financial returns. Given the salaries enjoyed by the average infantry soldier in Western militaries this is hardly surprising, from an individual point of view, particularly if the recognition was not very strong in the first place. This situation is one where the human material for warriors as well as the thymotic desire for recognition remains constant, but where the absence of war leads them to seek other outlets for action.

Warriors and society in successful symbiosis

A third interpretation of the relationship between warriors and society is that things are not particularly unsatisfactory for either warriors or society, but this does not mean there is no tension between the two lifeworlds. Western militaries today welcome anyone with a desire to serve, as they are overstretched and see some of their best soldiers retire or move into the private sector. Thus, there is no shortage of opportunities for those who want to serve their country. Some military units are indeed secluded from the civilian world, but this is the most meaningful way of cultivating their warrior ethos where willingness to kill and sacrifice life are essential. Such lifeworlds should not admit members uncritically, as was

⁸²² Karl Jaspers, *The Future of Mankind* (Chicago: 1951), 45. Quoted in Jon Stewart, *The Hegel myths and legends* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern UP, 1996), 150-51.

exemplified by Timothy McVeigh's rejection from US Army Special Forces during selection, when some features of his psychological profile caused alarm on tests.⁸²³

The question of where recognition comes from – who esteems – remains an issue in this interpretation. Western warriors are more like the Japanese Ninjas than the Samurai in respect of recognition. The Samurai bushido honour code required honourable behaviour in all aspects of their craft, including that which reflected on their employer. The Samurai were required to present their intentions and mission publicly. The Ninja, by contrast, operated completely in secrecy, using any necessary means to accomplish their mission; lying, cheating and stealing if necessary, as well as running away to fight another day. The mission came before anything else, and this required strict anonymity and invisibility in public. Because of these different warrior codes, Samurai sometimes found it necessary to hire the services of Ninjas to accomplish their goals.⁸²⁴

Western SOF today adhere to an honour code somewhere between the Samurai and the Ninjas, when it comes to the laws of war. These laws are respected, for the most part, albeit not necessarily in all covert missions, where the mission is held to be more important than the mode of operation. In recognition terms, SOF are nearer to Ninjas than Samurai, because they must maintain an anonymous and invisible profile. In some cases, their deeds are acknowledged; for example, when they received the highest awards for bravery, or when they retire or get killed. Unfortunately, the fact that some warriors have been on deniable missions in, for example, Laos and Cambodia, has led to downgrading of awards to shield the existence of the missions.⁸²⁵ This is particularly unfortunate since receipt of the very highest awards leads to a great deal of esteem from the general public and fellow warriors alike.

All three interpretations resonate in part in the sense that a large segment of the public is relatively uninterested in the military. Nonetheless, there are warriors in Western militaries who remain satisfied with a half-anonymous existence, conducting missions, which may not become public for a long time. To ascertain if this is indeed a happy relationship between warriors and society, we must address the degree to which formerly martial values are still held in esteem. Courage and manliness are two such values, and as it follows from the warrior definition, they have not lost their currency among warriors.

⁸²³ Couch, *Chosen Soldier*, 135.

⁸²⁴ French, *Code of the Warrior*, 224-25.

⁸²⁵ Plaster, *SOG*, 54.

Warrior values in society

British gender researcher David Morgan has argued that despite far reaching social developments throughout the West, where values like heroic masculinity and courage have eroded and military institutions are adopting some civilian values (e.g. gender equality and tolerance of gays, privatisation⁸²⁶) the image of the warrior is still a key symbol of masculinity.⁸²⁷

Courage

Courage, argued Lord Moran in his book *Anatomy of Courage*, is neither a quality possessed by some and not by others, nor is it a constant. Instead, it is akin to a capital sum of which each man possesses a variable amount.⁸²⁸ William Ian Miller seems to read Lord Moran's bank metaphor only to imply depletion,⁸²⁹ but courage can also be replenished through inspiration, leadership or even despair, boosting the holdings. Courage is elusive to define but it appears to be long since associated with acts in war, as is elegantly captured by Samuel Johnson:

We talked of war. JOHNSON. "Every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier, or not having been at sea." BOSWELL. "Lord Mansfield does not." JOHNSON. "Sir, if Lord Mansfield were in the company of General Officers and Admirals who have been in service, he would shrink; he'd wish to creep under the table... No, Sir; were Socrates and Charles the Twelfth of Sweden both present in any company, and Socrates to say, 'follow me, and hear a lecture on philosophy; and Charles, laying his hand on his sword, to say, 'follow me, and dethrone the Czar;' a man would be ashamed to follow Socrates. Sir, the impression is universal; yet it is strange."⁸³⁰

Nonetheless, this is only partially helpful to ascertain what courage is about, because courage in war is a great many things. As Miller says, "fear of death is a large house with many rooms."⁸³¹ These rooms include the courage of aggression and initiative like a charge; enduring the destructiveness and noise of artillery in a trench; and to knowing that any approaching civilian may be a suicide bomber; every piece of road hiding an improvised explosive device. At sea, the terror can be equally forceful as many sailors, whether in the

⁸²⁶ Gerald Frost, ed., *Not Fit to Fight: The cultural subversion of the armed forces in Britain and America* (London: The Social Affairs Unit, 1999).

⁸²⁷ David H J Morgan, *Discovering Men* (London: Routledge, 1992), 165, 72.

⁸²⁸ Lord Moran, *The Anatomy of Courage* (London: Constable, 1946), x.

⁸²⁹ William Ian Miller, *The mystery of courage* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 62,64.

⁸³⁰ George Birkbeck Hill, *Boswell's Life of Johnson* (Bigelow: Brown, 1799), 10 april 1778 pp 926-927.

⁸³¹ Miller, *The mystery of courage*, 206.

Allied navies or in the merchant marines, during World War II suffered from the knowledge that their ship could become torpedoed by submarines at any moment, for years.

Then there is the distinction between moral and physical courage. Physical courage can get depleted by repetition, as military psychologists and psychiatrists are increasingly appreciating, all individuals have a limit to their psychological endurance of combat, and as Montgomery pointed out, nobody is strong in all conceivable combat situations requiring courage.⁸³² Moral courage, by comparison, can increase with repetition.⁸³³ Indeed, to take stock of courage in a precise definition proves futile for Miller, because like novelist and Vietnam veteran Tim O'Brien, he finds that "to determine these attributes is to get a bead on something that tends to fade to black in the defining; the fear is that courage partakes too much of circumstance and contingency ever to be fixable."⁸³⁴

O'Brien also grapples with the concept of courage, especially in his autobiographical novel *If I Die in a Combat Zone*.⁸³⁵ Captain Johansen, a firm believer in the virtue of courage, and an undisputed bearer of those qualities, intrigues him. For Johansen, the degree to which he possesses courage is something that occupies his attention greatly ("I'd rather be brave than almost anything") even after he singlehandedly charges across a rice paddy to shoot an entrenched Viet Cong in a ditch at point blank range.⁸³⁶ The charge is the archetypical military courageous action. It naturally leads people to ask whether they would have what it takes to do something similar:

Would you have cracked before going over the top on 1 July 1916 or before the landing craft disgorged you onto an atoll in the Pacific or a Normandy beach? Would you have been able to suppress the knowledge that at least a good portion of your job was to take up some pathetically small amount of an enemy machine-gunner's time and capital so that the chances that some of your comrades would make it to that gun would improve by .01 percent? If you had seen it that way could you have done it at all? And what if, instead of being the first wave into no-man's land on July 1, you had been in the second or the third, that is, you had known exactly what awaited you? Yet, those who were given these orders and duties, with very few exceptions did not refuse them.⁸³⁷

⁸³² Ibid., 54, 60, 65.

⁸³³ Ibid., 65.

⁸³⁴ Ibid., 31.

⁸³⁵ Tim O'Brien, *If I die in a combat zone, box me up and ship me home* (London: Marion Boyars, 1988).

⁸³⁶ Miller, *The mystery of courage*, 32.

⁸³⁷ Ibid., 74.

Another character O'Brien encounters is the platoon leader, a Green Beret called Mad Mark, whose bearing is very much that of a warrior who embodies both the style issues associated with some special forces operators⁸³⁸ and the 'natural soldier' qualities discussed by Dyer.⁸³⁹ His characterisation by nickname as mad was;

not hysterical, crazy, into-the-brink, to-the-fore madness. Rather, he was insanely calm. He never showed fear. He was a professional soldier, an ideal leader of men in the field. It was that kind of madness, the perfect guardian for the Platonic Republic... it was his manner, and he cultivated it. He walked with a lanky, easy, silent, fearless stride. He wore tiger fatigues, not for their camouflage but for their look. He carried a shotgun... itself a measure of his professionalism, for to use it effectively requires an exact blend of courage and skill and self-confidence... a man must work his way close enough to the prey to make a shot, close enough to see the enemy's retina and the tone of his skin... You must hit at once, on the first shot, and the hit must kill. Mad Mark once said that after the war and in the absence of other US wars he might try the mercenary's life in Africa.⁸⁴⁰

Mad Mark is someone who has the thymotic confidence to be, who walks around with a confidence other soldiers cannot fail to notice and which inspires emulation in some. Yet he is not doing it for the sake of vanity or a desire to kill in itself. "He did not yearn for battle. Yet neither was he concerned about the prospect... he did precisely what the mission called for: a few patrols, a few ambushes...he did not take the mission to excess. Mad Mark was not a fanatic. He was not gung-ho, not a man in search of a fight."⁸⁴¹ To be perceived as courageous is essential to such a bearing. As O'Brien puts it, going to war "makes a fellow think about courage, makes a man wonder what it is and if he has it."⁸⁴²

Manliness

The notion of manliness is intimately tied to the martial form of courage. Miller argues a theory of courage comes embedded with a theory of manhood.⁸⁴³ The Greek word 'andreia' means courage, or literally 'manliness'. Courage, manliness and manly virtue are all defined in opposition to the womanish and effeminate.⁸⁴⁴ An example of this is found in the Icelandic 13th century *Njal's saga*, where the wise elder Njal, despite wisdom, is

⁸³⁸ See p. 197

⁸³⁹ See p. 13

⁸⁴⁰ O'Brien, *If I die in a combat zone*, 86.

⁸⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁸⁴² *Ibid.*, 140. in Miller, *The mystery of courage*.

⁸⁴³ Miller, *The mystery of courage*, 13.

⁸⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 233.

slandered as “old beardless”, which separates him from the bearded majority of men.⁸⁴⁵ A similar nexus exists between manhood and beards in Afghanistan today, inspiring Western Special Forces and intelligence operators to grow a beard while on deployment.

Van Creveld argues that the existence of war is closely related to gender relations. At a deep and basic level, wars happen because “men like to fight, and women like those men who are prepared to fight on their behalf.”⁸⁴⁶ The reason this is so, Van Creveld continues, is because men are left in an existential void by not having a clear reason to exist in the same way women do by giving birth. War is a way for men to sublimate this inability, or indeed the absence of anything comparable, and it becomes the exclusive preserve of men. As Margaret Mead has argued, in most societies, things are considered important insofar and to the extent, they are the providence of men. War is the chief providence of men, certainly as far as displays, construction and reproduction of manliness are concerned. War is a realm where manliness and courage are desirable and necessary, and where such displays know no normative or material constraints.⁸⁴⁷

The poet Robert Bly implicitly acknowledges Van Creveld’s point, saying that the default position among Western women used to be to hate war but love warriors. However, following Vietnam that is no longer true, as most women in the West “see no reason to distinguish the warrior from the soldier or the soldier from the murderer. It was a madness associated with the warrior that – during the [Vietnam] war – destroyed the very fabric of culture which it was once the job of the warrior to preserve.”⁸⁴⁸ In this, Bly may have had many supporters in the anti-war crowd; however, he goes on to argue:

Women in other countries may see that differently. A Russian woman from Kiev, whose generation of women have lived for many years without men their own age, said to me, “All the young men who were left after the battle for Kiev went to Moscow to defend it. Not one came back.” She went on, “I know that women in the United States are angry with the men because they are too aggressive, and so on. We don’t feel that way. If the Russian men had not had great aggression in them, the Germans would be in Moscow right now. The matter of aggression looks differently when you have been invaded.”⁸⁴⁹

⁸⁴⁵ Anonymous, *Njal's Saga*, ed. Robert Cook (London: Penguin, 2002), 57, 69, 74, 156, 210.

⁸⁴⁶ Van Creveld, *The transformation of war*, 221. see also Martin L. Van Creveld, *The Culture of war* (forthcoming: Presidio 2008).

⁸⁴⁷ Van Creveld, *The transformation of war*, 181-83.

⁸⁴⁸ Robert Bly, *Iron John: Men and Masculinity* (London: Rider, 2001), 158.

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid.

As this example shows, the currency and esteem warriors are held with, fluctuates in society and through history. Max Hastings argues, as does Kipling, that warriors are “unfashionable people in democratic societies during periods of peace.”⁸⁵⁰ Today, he continues, martial courage is becoming less esteemed in the West in parallel with a welcome decline in large-scale war. “Less happily, however, it is because some people in the twenty-first century recoil from any celebration of military achievement.”⁸⁵¹ Indeed as British military psychologist Norman Dixon has observed: warriors and their achievements can be admired or despised, not necessarily coherently, in both conscious and unconscious ways.⁸⁵² These fluctuations can stem from the proximity of war, the social attitude towards war and warriors, and to economic or technological development.

Bly has complained that the advent of technologically dominated militaries has facilitated another subversion of warrior qualities. His point explicitly addresses questions of masculinity: “The disciplined warrior, made irrelevant by mechanized war, disdained and abandoned by the high-tech culture, is fading in American men. The fading of the warrior contributes to the collapse of civilized society.”⁸⁵³ A similar point was expressed at length from perhaps the most self-conscious warrior culture, the U.S. Marines. Marine Brigadier General Victor H. Krulak wrote in a 1957 letter to the Corps’ Commandant that the people of the United States needed the Marine Corps to produce warriors in an age where war planning was very focused on airpower, missiles and nuclear weaponry:

First, they believe that when trouble comes to our country there will be Marines – somewhere – who, through hard work, have made and kept themselves ready to do something useful about it, and do it at once. They picture these Marines as men – individual components of a lean, serious, professional outfit... Second, they believe that when the Marines go to war they invariably turn in a performance that is dramatically and decisively successful – not most of the time, but always. Their faith and their convictions in this regard are almost mystical. The mere association of the word “Marines” with a crisis is an automatic source of encouragement and confidence everywhere... The third thing they believe about the Marines is that our Corps is downright good for the manhood of our country; that the Marines are masters of a form of unfailing alchemy which converts unoriented youths into proud, self-reliant stable citizens, - citizens into whose hands the nation’s affairs may be safely entrusted... throughout our country the word “Marine” is synonymous with

⁸⁵⁰ Hastings, *Warriors*, xi.

⁸⁵¹ *Ibid.*, xviii.

⁸⁵² Norman Dixon, *On the psychology of military incompetence* (London: Pimlico, 1994), 202.

⁸⁵³ Bly, *Iron John*, 158.

manhood, character, pride and resolution – characteristics which every father and mother want to associate with their son. The people believe these three things. They believe them deeply and honestly – to the extent that they want the Marines around – in either peace or war. They want them so much that they are ready to pay for them – and to fight for them too, if need be.⁸⁵⁴

For Krulak, the Marines are the vanguard of martial masculinity; its realisation, embodiment and regeneration. But much has happened to masculinity ideals since the 1950s, and Krulak's description resonates with far fewer today. Still, for some Marine recruits, Krulak's statement rings true at the moment of decision to join up. Nathaniel Fick, a 21-year old Dartmouth classics graduate, wanted "to go on a great adventure, to prove myself, to serve my country. I wanted to do something so hard that no one could ever talk shit to me." The Peace Corps, preferred by some of his friends, was not what he had in mind. Instead he "wanted something more transformative. Something that might kill me – or leave me better, stronger, more capable. I wanted to be a warrior."⁸⁵⁵ Whereas the other services offered benefits, the Marines offered nothing. Instead, they asked, "Do you have what it takes?"⁸⁵⁶ What it takes, according to the Marines, are values which are not often spoken out loud in the civilian world; "honour, courage, commitment."⁸⁵⁷

The Marines do deliver on their promise of challenges and a test of manhood. Marine Captain Rodney Chastant, who was killed in action in Vietnam at the age of 25, replied to a letter from his mother who had tried to convince him not to sign up for another six month in country:

Try to understand that you raised a son who likes the excitement and challenge he finds here... It is not easy to say I opt for six more months of heat, sand, and shooting. I know there will [be] the nights that I suffer the loss of another friend. And nothing can make a man feel so alien or alone as [a] walk by the seashore as he tries to adjust to the loss of another friend in this godforsaken country. But that is part of the draw, the attraction, the challenge. Here there is a job to be done. There are moral decisions made almost every day. My experience is invaluable. This job requires a man of conscience... I am needed here Mom... The young men coming in need the leadership of an older hand. I am that hand. I relish the opportunity.⁸⁵⁸

⁸⁵⁴ Letter of Victor H. Krulak, November 14, 1957, in Krulak papers Personal Papers Collection (PPC)#486, Box 1B33, USMC Historical Centre, Washington D.C.(MCHC) in Resic, *American Warriors*, 174.

⁸⁵⁵ Fick, *One bullet away* 4.

⁸⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸⁵⁸ Letter of Rodney R Chastant (June 29, 1968), in Edelman, ed., *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam*, 136. quoted in Resic, *American Warriors*, 185.

Chastant's letter reveals some of the ambivalent attraction to the supreme challenges that arise in war, and particularly leading men in war. They are such that recognition of manliness increase the more difficult and dangerous the circumstances.

Field Marshall William Slim said; "I don't believe there is any man who, in his heart of hearts, wouldn't rather be called brave than have any other virtue attributed to him."⁸⁵⁹ If this is true then martial courage and its embedded view of masculinity is still alive in society, albeit perhaps in the same sort of hibernation as interstate war is.⁸⁶⁰ The preceding discussion shows how contextual martial values are, which suggests that warrior admiration or suspicion is equally contextual. In this sense, the existence of warriors, although specialised and somewhat isolated, represents a reservoir of continuity in a certain image of masculinity which some sections of society may challenge at times, but none seems willing to eradicate.⁸⁶¹ These values do not need translation because they both resonate with new generations, whether raised on films or oral stories, or Homer even, because they are continuous with the past and with other cultures in the present.

The warrior journey from society to anti-community⁸⁶² and (sometimes) back: Hero or victim?

The warrior role involves two unique challenges identified in the warrior definition: killing and risking death. The legitimate purposeful killing of another human being, or many, is unique to the military profession, and for warriors, the voluntary repetition of this act makes them particularly exposed to the social and psychological consequences of violating a basic human taboo. Similarly, in contrast to virtually all other people, the risk of death looms large in warriors' lifeworlds, which also instigates trauma.

Joseph C. Campbell has charted the mythic journey of 'the hero' in his *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. He argues the prime function of mythology and rite is to carry the human spirit forward, and that the hero is "a man of self-achieved submission. But submission to what? That is precisely the riddle we have to ask ourselves today and that it is everywhere the primary virtue and historic deed of the hero to have solved."⁸⁶³ As the warrior definition in chapter one made clear, the warrior's lifeworld is a constant struggle between submission (to restraint, to rules of engagement, to orders) and aggressive initiative (to kill and destroy, to overcome fear and inhibition). Outside the soul, but inside the body politic,

⁸⁵⁹ Quoted Holmes, *Acts of War*, 306.

⁸⁶⁰ Kiszely, 'Post-modern challenges': 21.

⁸⁶¹ See discussion p. 27

⁸⁶² 'Anti-community' is Redfield's expression for the realm of combat and death. See p. 118

⁸⁶³ Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973), 16.

the cycle between death and birth is equally important. Only birth can conquer death, through continuous recurrence.⁸⁶⁴ Not only must warriors overcome their inhibitions; society must also reproduce warriors.

For individual warriors Campbell portrays a journey that has an inherent capacity to construct meaning, as it goes through several stages from innocence through challenge to homecoming: amounting to a whole that regenerates the individual as someone who has changed, and hopefully survived the trials. Campbell's entire spiritual journey will not be covered here; instead, some relevant points to the warrior's lifeworld are selected. The journey has a narrative structure from society (stages one and two) to war (stages three to five) and back to society (stage six). A modern example of this narrative structure applied to war and warriors can be found in the movie *The Deer Hunter*.⁸⁶⁵ As the movie and any number of memoirs illustrate, for all the developments in the character of warfare this existential journey remains constant.

The first stage is *the call to adventure*. For Western warriors, this call has frequently taken place sub-consciously well before adolescence through exposure to films in particular, but also through war stories told by older generations. James Webb describes how this kind of storytelling has animated many young Scots Irish to follow the example of their fathers and grandfathers to answer the call.⁸⁶⁶ Later, these stories were disembedded from the particulars of family stories to the universal of films. In 20th century memoirs, particularly by Americans, war movies from previous wars feature very often. Warriors in World War II saw the movies from World War I, such as *Alvin York*. The warriors in Vietnam were very often inspired by John Wayne movies: *The Sands of Iwo Jima* is mentioned very often, despite the ridicule it received from actual Iwo Jima combat veterans.⁸⁶⁷ Today, Vietnam era films, such as *Apocalypse Now*, *Deer Hunter*, *Platoon* and *Full Metal Jacket*, inspire warriors. As Anthony Swofford puts it:

Vietnam war films are all pro-war, no matter what the supposed message, what Kubrick or Coppola or Stone intended. Mr. and Mrs. Johnson in Omaha or San Francisco or Manhattan will watch the films and weep and decide once and for all that war is inhumane and terrible, and they will tell their friends at church and their family this, but Corporal Johnson at Camp Pendleton and Sergeant Johnson at Travis Air

⁸⁶⁴ Ibid, Lawrence J. Hatab, *Nietzsche's Life Sentence: Coming to Terms with Eternal Recurrence* (London: Routledge, 2005).

⁸⁶⁵ Michael Cimino, 'The Deer Hunter', (United States: EMI Films, 1978).

⁸⁶⁶ James H. Webb, *Born fighting: how the Scots-Irish shaped America* (New York: Broadway Books, 2004).

⁸⁶⁷ Linderman, *World Within War*, 312-15.

Force Base and Seaman Johnson at Coronado Naval Station and Spec 4 Johnson at Fort Bragg and Lance Corporal Swofford at Twentynine Palms Marine Corps Base watch the same films and are excited by them, because the magic brutality of the films celebrates the terrible and despicable beauty of their fighting skills.⁸⁶⁸

In itself, the emulation urge has not changed qualitatively since Alexander the Great sought to emulate Achilles. At least since Achilles, there has always been a greater warrior to emulate, someone to measure one's manliness, courage and gravitas against. The call to adventure disrupts the possibility to clearly distinguish between combat motivation derived from the social world or from individual inspiration long before the young man is mature enough for war.

The second stage is *the refusal of the call*. It should be commonplace to acknowledge that few young men leave the comfort of their community unreservedly without feeling fear, reluctance or doubt. Achilles, the greatest warrior of all, did not want to heed to the call, but was outsmarted by Odysseus. Odysseus himself had been prophesized not to return home to Ithaca for twenty years, and he was loath to leave his wife and child behind to go to war. Instead, when an embassy came to pick him up, he faked madness, dressing up in rags and ploughing the same furrow repeatedly. However, he had to give this up when the suspicious and cunning Palamedes threw Odysseus' son in front of the plough.⁸⁶⁹ Later, having failed to avoid war himself, Odysseus went to seek out Achilles, believing that his assistance might shorten the war. Achilles' mother disguised him as a girl and placed him in hiding, among his female cousins, on the island of Skyros. Odysseus cunningly brought them gifts: including beautiful garments, a spear and a shield. When they started opening them he hid nearby and suddenly cried out that the palace was under attack. At that point the girls shrieked and escaped. Achilles, however, picked up the spear and shield; and went to the gate to defend the grounds. Odysseus met him there and led him off to war.⁸⁷⁰

There is a conflict between the urge to prove oneself on the one hand, and the obvious danger this involves on the other. Coming home from war an undisputed hero is an over-rated and troubled experience for many warriors,⁸⁷¹ but it is not over-rated in the eyes of the innocent, foolhardy and admiring young, who feel unproven. For this reason, the elders cannot, for all their experience, succeed to counsel the younger not to go; the

⁸⁶⁸ Anthony Swofford, *Jarhead* (London: Scribner, 2004), 7.

⁸⁶⁹ French, *Code of the Warrior*, 35.

⁸⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁸⁷¹ Linderman, *World Within War*, chapter 8.

terrible destructiveness, the suffering and grotesqueness of it all merely increases the romanticism by raising the threshold of the test of combat, making it more unique and exclusive, and, thus, more romantic. Rolf Ivar Jordbruen, a Norwegian 18-year-old, volunteered to fight for the Germans on the Eastern Front, despite having received a letter from his brother who was already fighting there, saying: “Don’t ever conceive of signing up. The Front is hell on earth and you will never come back from it alive.”⁸⁷² On the other hand, many do heed the warning, calculate rationally about the prospects of death and mutilation and choose not to go. For any individual it is a personal choice whether to turn one’s gaze away from the burn wards of a military hospital, and towards medal ceremonies and stories of close combat survived and recognized.

Another issue relating to answering the call is what Redfield (chapter 5) calls leaving the community and entering the “anti-community” of death. Hector did this, leaving his family behind to defend them from the frontier of the community rather than standing directly by their side. This is also what warriors do when they leave behind their immediate family to represent the larger community, trusting that the latter take care of the former in their absence. Such a decision is not easy, as the biblical Latin quote tells us: “Time Jesum transeuntem et non revertentem”: “Dread the passage of Jesus, for he does not return.”⁸⁷³ In many cases, this prophecy comes true when warriors do not return from the battlefield, or when they metaphorically do not return as the same person who left; emotionally scarred, physically disfigured, or socially dysfunctional for life.

The third stage is that of *supernatural aid*: an encounter with a protective figure. In the modern military, the aid of a protective figure takes the shape of a mentor rather than that of a supernatural figure, although the awe in which senior battle hardened veterans are held by their younger protégés is not far from Campbell’s meaning. O’Brien’s admiring gaze at Johansen and Mad Mark is one example, and there are many others.⁸⁷⁴ This mentor guides the young warrior by preparing him for combat, the better to master it himself and to be able to help others in turn, so that later he too achieves mentor status. In turn, the mentors are no less shy of displaying their warrior credentials, whether in the form of decorations, a particularly confident gait, or a manner of wearing uniform and hairstyles outside regulations. As Hastings puts it: “A cynic might suggest that some eager warriors

⁸⁷² Jordbruen, *Helvete på Jord – en norsk frontkjempers historie*, 16. My translation from the Norwegian.

⁸⁷³ Ernest Dimnet, *The Art of Thinking* (New York: Simon and Schuster Inc. , 1929), 203,04. quoted in Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 59.

⁸⁷⁴ See for example Harry Constance, *Good to go* (New York: Avon, 1997), Hackworth, *About face*, James Watson and Kevin Dockery, *Point Man* (New York: Avon Books, 1993).

are exhibitionists of an extreme kind. A cynic would be right. This does not diminish warriors' claim upon our regard, but may make us a trifle more sceptical about their motives."⁸⁷⁵ Such motives are not morally reproachable as far as an individual or country never goes to war for only one reason. Fighting for oneself is perfectly compatible with a role as mentor to budding soldiers and warriors.

The fourth stage is the *crossing of the first threshold*. This is the experience of combat, analysed in chapter four. Combat is the unique qualifier, that 'badges', 'rates', or, in the language of modern bureaucracy, 'certifies' a warrior as a warrior in his own eyes and those of others. It is the climax of the existential journey towards becoming a warrior, and repeated confrontation with this threshold is the essence of what being a warrior is about. It is at the same time the principal facilitator *and* opponent of the journey towards the conclusion of their meaning. Overcoming the combat experience is a necessary enabler; its failure, either in withdrawal or in injury or death, finalises the quest by obliterating it.

The fifth stage is *apotheosis*, the climax of the war experience. Symbolically, society marks this occasion by bestowing medals. Whereas the medal and awards system is notoriously prone to inflation, quotas and corruption, the very highest awards are still widely considered well deserved. The British Victoria Cross and the US Medal of Honor and Distinguished Service Cross, or Navy Cross, are among these. As one Major put it; "The only medals I admire are the Distinguished Service Cross and the Medal of Honor. All others are tainted by too often being awarded to people who do not deserve them."⁸⁷⁶ Very often, these medals are awarded posthumously. The stipulations behind these medals go right to the heart of the warrior definition. As sociologists Joseph Blake and Suellen Butler have argued, these medals are intended to reinforce "a latent role structure among combat soldiers".⁸⁷⁷ For anyone familiar with the esteem the winners are held in military circles, it could be claimed that the role structure they inspire is rather overt. Instead, it might be considered whether they convey a latent role structure to the rest of society. Blake and Butler divided the medals into "war-winning" and "soldier-saving" awards, which highlight the willingness to kill and willingness to sacrifice life aspects of the warrior definition. Often, however, the costs to the spirit of experiencing such actions are very high. Concluding his book on warriors, Hastings makes the melancholic observation that

⁸⁷⁵ Hastings, *Warriors*, xxi.

⁸⁷⁶ Quoted Holmes, *Acts of War*, 357.

⁸⁷⁷ Joseph Blake; Suellen Butler, 'The Medal of Honor, Combat Orientations and Latent Role Structure in the United States Military', *The Sociological Quarterly* 17 (Autumn) (1976). Quoted in Resic, *American Warriors*, 67.

for some, such as Audie Murphy and Guy Gibson, their achievements brought them little happiness.⁸⁷⁸

The warrior's reintegration into society

The sixth stage is 'return and reintegration into society'. This stage is particularly important in this respect and deserves extensive discussion because it very clearly reveals the dialectic between warrior and society in the relationship between sacrifice and recognition. In some cases, the reintegration into society is unproblematic. However, both military psychiatry and the public are becoming increasingly aware that high numbers of veterans return with serious psychological trauma, which in many cases leads to social dysfunction, homicide and suicide.

The summer of 2002 was very bloody at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, which is home of the 82nd Airborne division, the Army Special Forces and Delta Force. Three soldiers returning from Afghanistan killed their wives; two of them also killed themselves. Several theories were offered, such as the police's claim that a certain frequency of spouse killings is statistically to be expected. Others claimed side effects from the anti-Malaria drug Laram was to blame. What all three killings had in common, however, was that the husbands had recently returned from combat in Afghanistan, which at the time was the first sustained action since Vietnam.⁸⁷⁹

Studies lend support to suspicions that combat trauma can lead to both killing and suicide. Hastings observes that seven out of 111 Victoria Cross winners in the 19th century committed suicide, almost a hundred times the rate in the rest of society.⁸⁸⁰ One study found that veterans from wars between 1917 and 1994 are about 2.17 times more prone to suicide than other citizens.⁸⁸¹ Figures from the current ongoing wars are similar where male veterans aged 20 through to 24 are between twice and four times more likely to commit suicide compared to their civilian peers.⁸⁸²

Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM III) finally recognised post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in 1980. The complex diagnose called PTSD today has historically been attributed to the soldier's weak "nerves" or character, or to group properties like

⁸⁷⁸ Hastings, *Warriors*, 368. See also Michael Evans, 'On Military Courage: Lessons from Albert Jacka and Audie Murphy', *Quadrant* XLV, no. 10 (2001).

⁸⁷⁹ Maureen Orth, 'Fort Bragg's Bloody Summer', *Vanity Fair*, December 2002.

⁸⁸⁰ Hastings, *Warriors*, 367.

⁸⁸¹ Nathalie Huguette Mark S Kaplan, Bentson H McFarland, Jason T Newsom, 'Suicide among male veterans: a prospective population-based study', *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 61 (2007).

⁸⁸² Armen Keteyian, 'Suicide epidemic among veterans', *CBS News*, November 13 2007.

dysfunctional unit cohesion.⁸⁸³ DSM III, however, refers to PTSD as “the experience of an event that is outside the range of usual human experience.”⁸⁸⁴ This is a commendable development in relation to treatment and recognition of trauma by veterans. However, there seems to be an under-appreciation of the emotional and symbolic significance of the homecoming and reintegration process in both the military and society. After all, society, whether as government or as an aggregate of its communities, organises militaries to send soldiers and warriors to war and is ultimately responsible socially, symbolically and existentially for the baggage they bring back.

There are some indications that problems for veterans become really serious only after they return home. While militaries have long recognised the temporary disabling effects of the shock of combat, the idea that some suffer long-term – even permanent – damage is relatively new, and still controversial. More veterans from the Falklands have died from suicide than died in combat during the war. One of these, SAS veteran skydiver Charles Bruce, was the first operator to parachute into the Falklands where he saw some terrible things, including wounded young men who had been so badly burnt that they tried to cut their own throats. Bruce remained haunted by his experiences and committed suicide in 2002 by diving out of a plane at 6,000 feet without a parachute.⁸⁸⁵

Figures from the Vietnam War, however, are controversial. One study by the Centre for Disease Control concluded in 1990 that fewer than 9,000 Vietnam veterans had committed suicide throughout the early 1980s, implying that their suicide rates were similar to those of civilians.⁸⁸⁶ Other studies, however, show that the prevalence of PTSD among combat veterans has been very high. For example, one twin study showed that for twins where one served and the other did not, the PTSD frequencies were 16.8% and 5% respectively, in a population of 2,042 pairs of twins.⁸⁸⁷ It would be bizarre if such traumas did not translate into suicides beyond average rates. Indeed, subsequent studies have shown suicide rates among Vietnam veterans to be much higher among *combat* veterans, and higher still among those combat veterans who were diagnosed with PTSD.⁸⁸⁸

⁸⁸³ Simon Wessely Edgar Jones, 'A paradigm shift in the conceptualization of psychological trauma in the 20th century', *Journal of Anxiety Disorders* 21 (2007).

⁸⁸⁴ Quoted in Hillman, *A Terrible Love of War*, 65.

⁸⁸⁵ BBC, 'Falkland veterans claim suicide toll', 13 January 2002, Kim Sengupta, 'Falklands ceremony is too late for 'abandoned' veterans', *The Independent*, June 18 2007.

⁸⁸⁶ P Rhodes DA Pollock, CA Boyle, P Decoufle and DL McGee 'Estimating the number of suicides among Vietnam veterans', *American Journal of Psychiatry* 147 (1990).

⁸⁸⁷ J. R. Goldberg and W. R. True, 'A twin study of the effects of the Vietnam war on post-traumatic stress disorder', *Journal of the American Medical Association* 263, no. 9 (1991).

⁸⁸⁸ H. & Haas Hendin, A. , 'Suicide and guilt as manifestations of PTSD in Vietnam combat veterans', *American Journal of Psychiatry* 148 (1991), T. Kramer, Lindy, J., Green, B., Grace, M., & Leonard, A., 'The

Interestingly, the higher incidences of PTSD among combat veterans do not contradict the distinction between warriors and soldiers, but instead confirms the argument that combat is a qualitatively unique experience. In one group of veterans interviewed, a sub-group who coped well was identified; its members shared certain characteristics: They were typically able to control their emotions in combat and remain calm; they did not dehumanize the enemy through hatred or rage. This meant they committed fewer transgressions, resulting in less guilt issues.⁸⁸⁹ These individuals exhibited emotional maturity and “experienced combat in Vietnam as a dangerous challenge to be met effectively while attempting to stay alive.”⁸⁹⁰

For many veterans, the homecoming from Vietnam was particularly difficult, as they experienced a society where a very vocal minority subjected them to anger and abuse, including spitting.⁸⁹¹ This reality affected those who did not suffer from PTSD as well as those who did. Several factors compounded such experiences. Firstly, the transition from a high intensity combat environment to normal peacetime life was for many difficult in terms of “throttling down”⁸⁹² in general, irrespective of trauma. Secondly, leaving behind the intensive unit cohesion, which safeguarded the individual’s life, was in itself difficult. Despite knowing rationally that the other veterans were no longer necessary for protection, the social and emotional attachment remained strong. When combat veterans tried to replace the combat primary group with family life at home, they often experienced withdrawal from the latter.⁸⁹³ One of Jonathan Shay’s patients related a typical experience:

I had just come back, and my first wife’s parents gave a dinner for me and my parents and her brothers and their wives. And after dinner we were all sitting in the living room and her father said, “So, tell us what it was like.” And I started to tell them, and I told them. And do you know within five minutes the room was empty. They was (sic.) all gone, except my wife. After that I didn’t tell anybody I had been in Vietnam.⁸⁹⁴

At the very least, family members would find it difficult or impossible to appreciate and relate to the experiences of the returnee, even with a sympathetic attitude. The individual replacement system compounded all these factors; soldiers experienced the transition to

comorbidity of post-traumatic stress disorder and suicidality in Vietnam veterans', *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior* 24 (1994).

⁸⁸⁹ Herbert Hending and Ann Polinger Haas, 'The Aftermath of Combat in Vietnam', in *Living With Terror, Working With Trauma: A Clinician's Handbook*, ed. Danielle Knafo (Rowman & Littlefield 2004), 162-4.

⁸⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁸⁹¹ Robert Greene, *The Homecoming* Mass Market Paperback ed. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1990).

⁸⁹² Miller, *Reflections of a Warrior*, 237.

⁸⁹³ Haas, 'The Aftermath of Combat in Vietnam', 165.

⁸⁹⁴ Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam* xxii.

civil society – and in many cases alienation – alone rather than with their unit. The reintroduction to society is, as this indicates, a social process, which is difficult to isolate with psychological diagnoses. The latter can be helpful in giving the individual a medical and official recognition of the trauma. In general, however, psychologists cannot facilitate reintroduction into society; it is a social process, which, throughout history, has been arranged with some degree of ceremony, even cleansing, to symbolise repatriation, and a shift in lifeworlds as dramatic as the outbound journey was.

What happens when the warrior refuses to fight?

It is imperative to recognise not only human potential, but also the limitations of the human element in war, even in the case of warriors whose allegiance to war is stronger than most, yet also limited and fallible. The case of warriors refusing to fight is sometimes a consequence of combat trauma as discussed above, but it is not necessarily the case. In Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, there is a chilling moment when Special Forces Captain Willard is briefed about his upcoming mission to kill the rampant Special Forces Colonel Kurtz. While listening to a tape where Kurtz is raving, Willard is told by the mission commanding General that "Sometimes the dark side overcomes what Lincoln called the better angels of our nature. Every man has got a breaking point. You and I have. Walter Kurtz has reached his."⁸⁹⁵ The breaking point is the point where a soldier or a warrior breaks down to such an extent that he cannot function in combat, or the opposite; that he sheds all restraints, and wages war in a personal unrestricted manner, as Kurtz does. Some refuse to fight because of disillusionment with the cause⁸⁹⁶, or because they have strong reservations with the particular way, in which the campaign is waged.⁸⁹⁷ Others still refuse to fight because they feel the public is not supportive and that their sacrifices are not recognized.⁸⁹⁸

Whatever the reason, warriors have throughout history laid down their arms and said "enough." There are both intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions that influence the circumstances wherein warriors lay down their arms. It is very important that the warrior's

⁸⁹⁵ Francis Ford Coppola, 'Apocalypse Now', (United States: Zoetrope Studios, 1979). Script available at <http://corky.net/scripts/apocalypseNow.html>

⁸⁹⁶ This was particularly widespread in Vietnam. Famous examples are 2004 presidential candidate John Kerry and Ron Kovic, from Oliver Stone's film *Born on the Fourth of July*, based on Ron Kovic, *Born on the Fourth of July* (1976, New York; McGraw-Hill); Samuel Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale* (1997, London; Penguin), 178

⁸⁹⁷ British SAS soldier Ben Griffin, who quit over legality and tactics concerns in Iraq, particularly with respect to co-operating with Americans. He is the first SAS operator ever to quit on moral grounds. Sean Rayment, "SAS soldier quits Army in disgust at 'illegal' American tactics in Iraq," *Daily Telegraph* 11 March 2006.

⁸⁹⁸ Again this was widespread in Vietnam. Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale*, chapter 5; Grossman, *On Killing*, 271-80.

inner world (intrinsic) and outer world (extrinsic) remain largely in sync, because when that balance is disturbed, it becomes very difficult to maintain the motivation: not only to fight, but also to fight according to one's warrior ethos.⁸⁹⁹ The intrinsic dimensions are those that follow directly from the warrior definition, i.e. the warrior's personal and existential commitment to master warfare and be willing and able to kill and sacrifice his life in combat, within the institutional confinements all soldiers are responsible. These intrinsic dimensions are largely individually conceived but they are strongly influenced by the social surroundings and composition of the unit one is a member of, and the cause that unit is ultimately serving. In other words, even though a warrior's commitment to fight is not equal to a commitment to the cause,⁹⁰⁰ the individual motivation is significantly bolstered by belonging to an elite unit where recognition comes from peers rather than from the public. If, on the other hand, the public frowns upon the contributions of the fighting men, *and* the unit the soldier belongs to is socially or tactically dysfunctional⁹⁰¹, there is a much higher chance that the warrior wants to quit. All of this is compounded by the not unusual experience of extreme cruelty, which for example in Vietnam was a common tactic with the Vietcong.⁹⁰² Multi-tour veteran Nelson found that "[t]he war tore me up because I tried to apply the professional concept to Vietnam... Vietnam dealt the death blow to the concept of the warrior. In Vietnam – their concept of war goes back for centuries... in their concept, booby-trapping little kids is part of war."⁹⁰³ Countering the consequences of such multi-dimensional compounding effects on individuals is of course extremely difficult to do from a military organisation point of view.

Extrinsically, the formation and maintenance of unit coherence is important to keep the motivation up in general, and assuaging combat trauma in particular. According to Jonathan Shay, "[d]estruction of unit cohesion by the individual-rotation policy in Vietnam cannot be overemphasized as a reason why so many psychological injuries that might have been healed spontaneously instead became chronic."⁹⁰⁴ The SOF approach to selection focuses very strongly on social skills because it is an imperative that the individual operator

⁸⁹⁹ Coker, *Warrior Ethos*, 61

⁹⁰⁰ Examples are Americans fighting in Vietnam to the very end, or Germans in World War 2, even though the wars were clearly un-winnable.

⁹⁰¹ The military psychiatrist Jonathan Shay quotes one of his patients, a Vietnam veteran who initially identified with the whole battalion. But after failing to be saved by the neighbouring Bravo Company, the social horizon shrunk to only a few men: "It was constant now. I was watching the other five guys like they was (sic.) my children... It wasn't seventy-two guys [in the company] I was worried about. It was five guys." Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam* 24. These five men became the entire social world for the combat soldier.

⁹⁰² See for examples; Hansen, Owen and Madden, *Parallels*, 26-27, Robert Mason, *Chickenhawk* (London: Corgi Books, 1984), 183, Plaster, *SOG*, 89, Al Santoli, *To Bear any Burden* (London: Abacus, 1986), 109-10.

⁹⁰³ Hanson et al., *Parallels*, 28

⁹⁰⁴ Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 198

is a strong team player. The units typically train together and the operators get to know each other well long before they fight. They go to war together and leave the theatre together, as a unit. This was the Australian SAS' approach in Vietnam, which worked far better than the American approach with individual replacements to units.⁹⁰⁵ This lesson has been learned however, and has been practiced both by the British after the Falklands War and the American units fighting in the first Persian Gulf War.⁹⁰⁶

Having now discussed the existential role of warriors in society, we must turn to the instrumental need for warriors at the macro level.

The instrumental role of Warriors at the macro level; warriors in security paradigms

The question of warriors' instrumental utility at the political and strategic levels relates closely to the social imaginaries and the security paradigms in chapter two, specifically how ambitious these paradigms are, and on behalf of whom.

Can warriors exist in a cosmopolitan security paradigm?

The cosmopolitan security paradigm establishes a vast agenda for warriors while subverting their existential lifeworld. The concept of human security and the increasing altruism in global affairs conspires to define an imperative to intervene in human suffering, most notably in cases of genocide, but also in cases of natural disasters, and even alleviating poverty. This is in practice very difficult, as the problems with agreeing on a course of action against the ongoing genocidal activities in Darfur exemplify. Another example is the recent cyclone in Burma, where the dictatorship did not allow aid nor emergency agencies to support the hundreds of thousands of suffering civilians. Intervention in such cases can amount to what Alex de Waal and Ohnmar Kin reject as “gunboat philanthropy,” using force to protect.⁹⁰⁷

The cosmopolitan security agenda easily presents issues that necessitate intervention, but struggles to define the political and operational details of how to do it. Philip Allott's definition of politics captures this very well. He defines politics as “the more or less organised social struggle to translate private interest into public interest.”⁹⁰⁸ While the cosmopolitan security paradigm easily identifies tasks that ought to be in the public (or

⁹⁰⁵ Holmes, *Acts of War*, 264, Terry O'Farrell, *Behind Enemy Lines – An Australian SAS Soldier in Vietnam* (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2001), 168.

⁹⁰⁶ Grossman, *On Killing*, 273

⁹⁰⁷ Alex de Waal and Ohnmar Kin, 'Against gunboat philanthropy', *Prospect*, May 29 2008.

⁹⁰⁸ Lecture Cumberland Lodge to members of Department of International Relations

global) interest to solve, it struggles with translating the particulars of how private efforts will contribute to this.

This is where the warriors enter the picture: It might seem obvious what military power can do to alleviate suffering in the immediate term. However, it is not obvious who has ownership of the situation when an international armed response deteriorates into taking part in an ongoing civil war in Darfur; or how much war fighting is legitimate and necessary to force a dictatorial regime to yield control over the civilians over whom they rule. Further compounding this problem is the question of sacrifice. While governments of a human security persuasion may be happy to provide funding and material resources in pursuit of the causes, it is an entirely different question as to whether they are willing to risk – or absorb – losses of soldiers by the dozens, or hundreds, or in the end even thousands. The Battle of Mogadishu in 1993 raised awareness of a series of issues: even aid work requires military power; the application of that power is prone to mission creep from relief aid to repairing the failed state. This may require protracted fighting, using elite warriors with attendant sacrifices, without necessarily solving the issue; and it may involve using more destruction than is compatible with the political and moral superstructure of the mission.

Another thing Mogadishu established was a more existential point: even the United States could not stomach significant losses in such a cause, and the American military is still living with the spectre of casualty aversion even for issues that have a clear national security heading. There is a parallel to the British wars in the Punjab in the Imperial days. The British too used force as a means towards a moral goal. Severe retaliatory punishment for raids would lessen the need for excessive use of force in the future; it would educate the natives. As Kathryn Tidrick summarises: “to be cruel in order to be kind, is to inflict legitimate punishment rather than to practice illegitimate oppression.”⁹⁰⁹ The difference today, however, is that the West is unwilling to be cruel to be kind, because there is no imperial metaphysical world-view to sustain the convictions and confidence that underwrites cultural ruthlessness. This can involve views that the West should not dictate terms to local people (often expressed about the Iraq War); or that the natives are undeserving of the sacrifices involved in helping them (Somalia); or some hesitant combination of the two (Afghanistan today). Coker observes that an implication of such a

⁹⁰⁹ Kathryn Tidrick, *Empire and the English National Character* (London: I. B. Tauris 1990), 11-12.

metaphysical immanence is a preoccupation with the present; ‘restoring’ order and to ‘keeping’ the peace where there was none.⁹¹⁰

The question is whether the sheer enthusiasm of warrior types can compensate from the lacking convictions in society. The challenge is not to find warriors willing to volunteer – that was not a problem in Mogadishu or any subsequent military operation known in the public record. Risk aversion has often affected the top political and military leadership, and it is implicitly inspiring the Powell-doctrine which itself was conceived as a reaction to the seemingly wasteful expenditure of soldiers in Vietnam. Instead, the challenge is to find a way of circumventing the communitarian nexus composed of sacrifice, recognition and ownership. Sacrifice depends on recognition of the sacrifices and their relation to the polis, and ultimately acceptance of their necessity. A clear ownership of the political costs and benefits of the operation, and its attendant sacrifices ties the nexus together.

The political and military leadership of states are less willing to risk its military forces in pursuit of a cause clearly for the *common* good, rather than for (state) self-interest. Aside from the free-rider problematique this inevitably creates, another issue is how global problems are translated into local solutions, which they must be, somehow. One would perhaps think that the citizen warrior ideal type would be the best suited to resolve issues that have to do with public interest. However, I argue that this is not the case, precisely because of the communitarian nexus mentioned above, which the citizen warrior ideal type depended on.

In practice, this means that the warriors who are willing to take the risks of intervention must receive more of an ownership of the situation than they do in the normal civil military relationship between soldier and state. Achilles is an example of a warrior who fights for himself, and so is Ernst Jünger. They find meaning in the war itself and do not ask that the cause meet a specific threshold of legitimacy or political expediency. The same can be said of the knights of the Middle Ages. Yet, one can obviously not write blanket checks to warriors to set about resolving complex international emergencies free of direction and control. This would amount to sheer buccaneering. Two potential solutions present themselves: one to use private military companies (PMCs) contracted by the cosmopolitan employer, for example the UN or the International Criminal Court, to enforce human security. This is a classical Adam Smith approach to the issue of translating private interest into public interest. While private actors necessarily have private agendas,

⁹¹⁰ Coker, *Humane warfare*, 130.

and perhaps rightly so, such challenges should be compared with the consequences of inaction (the present day situation) rather than a theoretical assessment of the inherent problems of capitalist enterprise. While there are obvious challenges with profit seeking actors establishing long-term prospects of any resolution, issues of genocide are extremely pressing and their solutions cannot be reasonably subject to comprehensive long-term review. The strength of this option is that it retains the voluntarism of Achilles, Jünger and the knights, but it may be suffering from the absence of a strong honour code, or warrior ethos, which all three exhibited. The existence of a warrior ethos, or, at the minimum a strong sense of professionalism, becomes the challenge associated with this option in the absence of fully fledged, state based command and control infrastructure.

Another option, which has been relatively successful in counterinsurgency operations, is the Special Forces option of decentralised camps: they rely mostly on local forces as security and enforcement personnel led by highly professional Special Forces. The precondition for this to work is a high degree of decentralisation and trust by the employers, because a sense of ownership is critical to balance the sacrifices and to avoid micro-management. To some degree, such an option involves states since the SOF in question would still be under state based command, and for this reason, such a scenario will be discussed under the heading of the liberal security paradigm.

Warriors in the communitarian security paradigm

Warriors have represented their community in warfare throughout the ages. In a fairly straightforward model, a community basically maintains warriors as protectors of itself as a community and its interests beyond security. This periodically involves war; the risk of death, mutilation and trauma. The warriors are willing to suffer this risk because of the transparency of the social setup. In return for their risks they receive recognition from their community for their courage if they live, and for their sacrifice if they are wounded or killed. This recognition enhances their social status, legitimises their killing, and softens the suffering by attributing qualities that are deemed of a higher order, like courage.

The challenges to this basic framework come from several sides, today most clearly from the cosmopolitan social imaginary. Cosmopolitans are typically more averse to the application of military power, which inevitably threatens *someone's* human security, and a cosmopolitan social imaginary does not deem one life more or less worth than another. Also, the cosmopolitan social imaginary uproots the reciprocity between the protectors and the protected, which in turn subverts the dynamics of sacrifice and recognition. However,

cosmopolitans often accept that military power is sometimes necessary to protect the common good, again, as in the cases of Sudan and Burma. Whether the immediate problem at hand (genocide and natural disaster) is mitigated, there always remains the larger question of making the community sustainable by nation building in such a way it can self-repair such issues in the future, usually through the promotion of democracy as a basic condition for success. Western forces are in Afghanistan and Iraq today not because there is an imminent threat there, but because they are investing in what is hoped to become sustainable societies, which should be notionally democratic. The transition from immediate problem solving to large scale political change is known as ‘mission creep’, and the cosmopolitan security paradigm naturally leads to it, because it ambitiously aims for human security, for all. The hostile actors are usually a regime or an insurgent group, and the logic is that the other surrounding peoples are disinterested and ought to be protected from the hostiles first, and from indirect effects of fighting second. As Coker has demonstrated, this inevitably leads to expectations that all of our warfare should be pursued in a more or less humane fashion,⁹¹¹ whether it is inspired by the communitarian or cosmopolitan security framework. However, where does this leave us in respect of warriors?

We still retain the old fashioned communitarian security paradigm’s insistence on protecting the state. 9/11 evidences there are still threats to national security. The invasion of Afghanistan was a communitarian operation initially, headed by the United States in pursuit of its national security, an interpretation sanctioned by NATO, but where the United States rejected the latter’s initial involvement. As the campaign in Afghanistan shifted over to a multilateral nation-building focus, many warriors were transferred to fight in Iraq. However, warriors are still needed for the same type of mission in the future, because of Colin Gray’s point about the future being the past; i.e. interstate war is not dead.⁹¹² Nevertheless, this does not mean that the communitarian security paradigm is unchanged, and has simply added some cosmopolitan features. The humane logic, which Coker describes, completely penetrates the communitarian security paradigm now, to such an extent that ruthlessness is no longer a part of Western warfare as it was during World War II, for example. For this reason, the communitarian security paradigm must reinvent itself, and with it the use of warriors in pursuit of national security.

⁹¹¹ Ibid.

⁹¹²Colin S. Gray, 'Clausewitz rules, OK? The future is the past—with GPS', *Review of International Studies* 25 (1999): 167.

Yet, the threats are proliferating. Whereas Afghanistan was yesterday's safe haven for terrorists, such a role can be undertaken by any number of ungoverned places throughout the global south, simply because of lacking state security infrastructure. Philip Bobbitt has argued Al Qaeda is an early embodiment of a new strand of terrorists, who have few (realistic) territorial ambitions, and whose field of operations is the entire world.⁹¹³ Western warriors must nonetheless intervene periodically, wherever terrorists achieve critical mass in terms of resources, camps and other support structures, in short, whenever they get a postal address, like in October 2001. What is equally clear is that the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan have shown that the West does not have the political will; the financial; nor manpower resources; the patience; or strategic vision to do nation building in all places that require intervention. This is true even if only by the relatively narrow agendas defined by the communitarian security paradigm; much less the human security doctrine espoused by cosmopolitans. What role will there be for warriors then?

The combat phase of the Afghanistan operation represents a model for the future, certainly for communitarian security. This model will entail strategic raids. They are strategic in the sense that the whole campaign is sought concluded by a single large-scale raid. Such a raid is not a tactical raid like Operation Eagle Claw, but a campaign that can last for a few weeks or months with potentially very large military commitments. This is a destructive and disruptive model rather than a constructive one. Such raids only aim to neutralise the threat that is brewing, like invading a country to demolish the immediate and medium term critical mass assumed by terrorists for example. Crucially, however, it does not attempt to go on to the bigger issue of long-term nation building.

While this recipe is hard to accept for cosmopolitans in that it is essentially selfishly oriented towards national security, it also has major political advantages. Firstly, it is compatible with the Powell doctrine: by using overwhelming force to achieve tangible objectives. It is less costly in casualties and resources, as evidenced by the two current wars where most of resources spent and casualties suffered happened after the end of major combat operations. Secondly, it does not promise an end state that it cannot achieve (democracy), which reduces allegations of hypocrisy so widespread today among critics of (and within) the West. Thirdly, while innocent people are inevitably killed in such a raid, the long term destruction indirectly inflicted on civilians is vastly reduced because of the short duration of the mission. A further consequence is that it sends a message that Westerners will not, for good or ill, resolve other peoples' problems of political power and

⁹¹³Bobbitt, *Terror and consent*, chapter 1.

organisation. Fourthly, a clearly defined operation like this shows resolve and can potentially work as a deterrent for this reason, if not against the terrorists, then more plausibly against regimes. If, conversely, a terrorist group realises that for them to be comprehensively attacked, the West will also need to mobilise for nation building as a continuation of the mission, they will know the threshold for intervention is very high indeed. For all these reasons, the concept is politically sellable, but inevitably it will be more happily received by those of a communitarian persuasion.

This option is, admittedly, isolationism in the twenty first century. It is an approach nobody will be inclined to be passionate about, but the alternative ambitious idealism which has been attempted for the last decade seems increasingly discredited in the public realm. Yet the public will not cease in demanding action against brewing or realised threats. For warriors, this new isolationism does not leave them with less of a role, but rather of two more defined ones. Firstly, the direct action of strategic raids will require warriors of all three modern types: citizen warriors fighting for their country; stormtroopers charging into hostile territory to potentially be surrounded; and special operations forces who rely on flexibility and independence to reinforce local resources. Secondly, and much more challenging for warriors is that they will carry the burden of finding out where threats are fermenting, which requires long term undercover human intelligence gathering of an essentially diagnostic character,⁹¹⁴ perhaps the most dangerous work done by warriors today. Without airpower, extraction possibilities and friendly military infrastructure, courage and ingenuity buttress this work alone. The latter type of operation is extremely difficult to maintain, but there is a dramatically increased interest in the viability of such operations after shortages of human intelligence from Afghanistan led to a failure to forestall the threat emanating there during the late 1990s.

Warriors in the liberal security paradigm

For warriors, a future in the liberal security paradigm is at the same time both the most likely and in some respects the least desirable option. The liberal security paradigm has been the umbrella under which both the recent wars were fought: they included a mixture of communitarian threats (WMDs, terrorist sanctuaries with risk of repetition, anti-drug enforcement) and cosmopolitan agendas (end of sanctions regime in Iraq, nation building, anti-drug enforcement) and liberal agendas (regime change). Western leaders espoused neither a clearly articulated communitarian security strategy, nor a commitment to human

⁹¹⁴ See p. 190

security. Rather, they articulated a liberal internationalism, which rests somewhere between the two.

While the liberal security paradigm is politically and morally easier to live with than either the communitarian (too selfish) or the cosmopolitan (too ambitious and intangible) for politicians, the operationalization of it is very difficult. This is because it invites an expanded security agenda (cosmopolitan light), but remains state centric. It provides state military resources, but not enough. Indeed Western postmodern militaries are trying to adapt from their Cold War mode to a new focus on creating and maintaining *conditions*, that are if not sufficient then at least favourable for the wellsprings of peace. According to Swiss Major General Gustav Däniker, this involves a paradigmatic shift from warfighting to policing where the strategic condition is a product of accumulated tactical victories, or rather stabilities, from which to establish longer-term political settlements. This is a European model suited to European preferences for less kinetic operations and more use of Gendarmerie and Carabinieri type forces, hence Däniker's moniker 'guardian soldiers' for the type of troops needed. The strategic aspirations for such conditions give warriors plenty of missions but do not define them clearly. Afghanistan is a good example of the latter. A host of parallel operations are going on there without a clearly articulated strategy to prioritise between them, and these include major combat operations in the south. More concretely, the operations going on in Afghanistan now include the following non-exhaustive list of projects:

1. Counterinsurgency against Taliban, primarily in the south and east. The Taliban have access to sanctuaries in north-western Pakistan. Counterinsurgency against an enemy that has access to sanctuaries is notoriously difficult to win, and extremely demanding of manpower. The campaign involves intense warfighting, and warriors are committed in infantry, intelligence and Special Forces roles. Counterinsurgency-like operations are also waged in the north; however, the insurgent groups there are less consolidated than Taliban in the south. ISAF coordinates all these operations.
2. Counterterrorism campaign throughout Afghanistan against Al Qaeda, including prevention of terrorism (conducted by anyone) inside Afghanistan and export of operatives. This campaign also includes retributive action against the top leadership of Al Qaeda, including Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. This operation involves first tier Special Operations warriors in Afghanistan under the banner of Operation Enduring Freedom. Focus was later shifted to Iraq.

3. Counter-drugs and organised crime campaign throughout the country, since 90% of hard opiates reaching Europe come from Afghanistan. This operation conflicts with the counter-insurgency campaign because it antagonises farmers who have no other source of income. This campaign involves infantry warriors and soldiers, albeit in an ill-defined way, leaving it to the troops themselves to decide how to prioritise between poppy eradication and winning hearts-and-minds.
4. Nation-building pursued by Western governments in concert with NGOs, where the relationship between military forces and NGOs is conflicted. The United States uses the military in development projects, while the Europeans tend to separate development and military forces to avoid a conflation of roles and identities to protect the former. US Army Special Forces are involved in hearts and minds campaigns where development is a means rather than an end. Most of this work is also owned by the international community through ISAF.
5. A counter-proliferation mission where the fear is that terrorists will get hold of WMD from nuclear Pakistan. This is a relatively tangible mission, but it suffers from a shortage of intelligence following from the inaccessibility of Pakistan's northwestern Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA).

It is hard to argue that any of these operations are superfluous, given a liberal outlook and a precautionary attitude towards proliferation of terrorism. Nonetheless, greater strategic clarity would be advantageous for the soldiers and warriors who are left to resolve the contradictions between campaigns and missions on the ground. Meanwhile, the higher military and political leadership speak in vague terms of effects based operations, where desired effect is defined as reaching some acceptable 'condition' rather than a tangible objective. This is largely a pragmatic admission that constructing a fully-fledged democracy supported by civil society is outside reach in Afghanistan. The liberal security paradigm as practiced today is very much a 'muddling through' model, where the strategic planning is relatively short term, which is a weakness compounded – perhaps even caused – by the relatively short election cycles in Western democracies.

The liberal security paradigm tries to have it both ways, and it is for that reason necessarily pragmatic and utilitarian, which corresponds well to the ideational heritage of the liberal social imaginary. The liberal inspired militaries of the West are today overstretched, with more campaigns than men available to do sustainable rotations. Ultimately this means that even warriors are not barred from cost benefit analyses.

Selecting them for special units and thus robbing line units of their best soldiers has been contentious at least since World War II.⁹¹⁵ Critics ask whether the loss of valuable manpower coupled with the high costs in training and materiel are worth the benefits that the special units offer. Are the warriors put to better use in specialized units than if they are dispersed around line units where they can help normal soldiers contribute more? This was the reasoning behind Pentagon's decision to deactivate the Ranger companies in Korea. They stated that the 'fighter' ought to be distributed around with the men, not bunched together leaving line units "bare of inspiration". The continued need for such units, however, led to establishment of more ad hoc Raider companies, one of which was led by the 20-year-old Hackworth.⁹¹⁶

Another potential consequence is that the unit dense with warriors becomes such a valuable commodity that they are very reluctantly risked, even for the type of missions that they are organised and trained for. Explaining why he aborted the Iranian hostage rescue mission when they were down to five helicopters on Desert One, Colonel Charlie Beckwith said to the press "I have been there before. I was not about to be a party to half-assed loading on a bunch of aircraft and going up and murdering a bunch of the finest soldiers in the world."⁹¹⁷ A similar line of thinking is applied to Medal of Honour winners, who – sometimes against their will as in Franklin Miller's case – become more valuable for PR purposes than in combat and find themselves unwillingly evacuated from the combat zone.⁹¹⁸ This is in one sense another variety of risk aversion, so common in the West today. It illustrates a paradox: we organise warriors into specialised and prioritized units that recognise their qualities and utilise their potential, and these units are to be sent into harm's way, precisely because it is expected that the individual operators – all multiple volunteers – be up for both the job and the risks, yet they are often not used. I will use a mini-case to illustrate the problems of risk aversion and the hesitancy with which warriors are deployed today through three lessons coming out of the fight against Al Qaeda.

Contemporary mini-case; warriors in counter-terrorism

The remarkable success of American Special Forces, CIA operatives with large amounts of cash, and American airpower in defeating Taliban in Afghanistan surprised most

⁹¹⁵ Horn et al., *Force of Choice*, 11; Colin Gray, *Explorations in Strategy*, (1996, London; Greenwood Press), 155-56

⁹¹⁶ Hackworth, *About face*, 148, Robert Leckie, *Conflict; The History of the Korean War, 1950-1953* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1996), 239,40.

⁹¹⁷ Charlie A. Beckwith, *Delta Force* (1985, Glasgow; Fontana), 290.

⁹¹⁸ Miller, *Reflections of a Warrior*, 231-235

commentators. The A-teams from the 5th Special Forces Group of the US Army Special Forces led the Northern Alliance to oust Taliban from their city strongholds in Afghanistan in the autumn of 2001. Before this campaign, the early years of the Vietnam War is probably the nearest to a directly identifiable strategic impact from such forces successfully working virtually alone. Forty years later, the rapid takedown of Taliban took place in a climate of almost unlimited political capital and support for Special Forces, and is illustrative of the success possible if they are given relatively free reign. Nonetheless, despite the success in toppling Taliban, the hunt for Al Qaeda was largely unsuccessful. The operation as a whole has illustrated three fundamental lessons that go to the core of special operations today. Firstly, time is of the essence, acting sooner is better than later. Secondly, with operational freedom and logistical support special operations forces and intelligence operators can achieve very substantial strategic results in very low numbers. Thirdly, whatever the skills of the operators on the ground, they are only as good as their leadership and organisation allows. In the case of Afghanistan earlier trends of flawed leadership and overly complex organisation have repeated themselves.

Lesson One: sooner rather than later; the hunt for Bin Laden before September 11

Osama bin Laden received a great deal of attention during the Clinton administration. Clinton issued a series of directives sanctioning CIA and Special Operations Command to use lethal force to take out bin Laden during the 1990s. The military was instructed to develop proposals for how this was to be done, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff produced thirteen specific plans, but failed to recommend any of them.

One example was a proposal by the top-secret unit Intelligence Support Activity (ISA), to kill Bin Laden in Khartoum in the mid 1990s. However, at this early time, executing him was vetoed.⁹¹⁹ Attempts at snatching bin Laden to take him to trial began in 1997 and was to be conducted by the CIA. The plan was to assault the Tarnak training camps just south of Kandahar. Full scale rehearsals took place in the United States between 20 and 24 May 1998. However, the operation was deemed as too risky since bin Laden would most likely be killed, leading public opinion to see it as an illegal assassination.⁹²⁰

Following the 7 August 1998 Al Qaeda embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, Clinton publicly responded with cruise missiles, but behind the scenes signed Presidential Findings authorising the assassination of bin Laden and his main lieutenants. Clinton

⁹¹⁹ Smith, *Killer Elite*, 207.

⁹²⁰ Ibid., 208-09.

ordered several missions at this time, planned by ISA and other SOF. Between fifteen and thirty SOF were killed or injured in rehearsals. Richard Clarke has argued that the Joint Chiefs failed to recommend any of the proposals. The Special Forces community misinterpreted the Chiefs' unwillingness as inability on the part of the White House to stomach the ruthlessness and risk necessary.⁹²¹

On two other occasions, snatch teams were prepared to fly into Afghanistan to get Bin Laden, but Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Henry Hugh Shelton – himself a Special Forces soldier and former SOCOM commander – refused to back them on the grounds that women and children could get killed in the operation. Another explanation was that there was a lack of “actionable intelligence”. One senior special operations officer rejected this reasoning, and told the 9/11 Commission; “if you give me the action, I will give you the intelligence.”⁹²² Similar reluctance was displayed by the CIA, who, on legal grounds, were unwilling to use lethal force before 9/11. Smith outlines what is essentially a catch-22 situation; “The Joint Chiefs were tasked to set up operations that needed ‘actionable intelligence’ but were not prepared to put [ISA] or any other special operations forces on the ground to collect it unless it somehow already existed.”⁹²³ General Pete Schoomaker, who had been called out of retirement following 9/11 to become army chief of staff, said “Special Operations was never given the mission. It was very, very frustrating. It was like having a brand-new Ferrari in the garage, and nobody wants to race it because you might dent the fender.”⁹²⁴

Lesson two: a lot can be done with only a few

The take-down of Taliban controlled Afghanistan took only 45 days for Northern Alliance troops supported by some 316 US Special Forces, and an unknown number of 1st-tier SOF, who used airpower as a decisive force multiplier.⁹²⁵ A number of intelligence layers and operatives spearheaded the insertion and main operation. The plan was heavily influenced by MI6 and Director of Special Forces UK, Brigadier General Greame Lamb, who persuaded CIA that the British operations in Oman in the 1970s would constitute a good model for the assault on Afghanistan. Initial contacts with the Northern Alliance harked

⁹²¹ Ibid., 210,11.

⁹²² Quoted Ibid., 210.

⁹²³ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States., Thomas H. Kean and Lee Hamilton, *The 9/11 Commission report: final report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States*, Official government ed. (Washington, DC: 2004), Smith, *Killer Elite*, 212, Bob Woodward, *Bush at war* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002).

⁹²⁴ Richard H. Shultz, 'Showstoppers: Nine reasons why we never sent our Special Operations Forces after al Qaeda before 9/11', *The Weekly Standard* 9, no. 19 (2004).

⁹²⁵ Sean Naylor, *Not a good day to die - the untold story of operation Anaconda* (London: Penguin, 2005), 19.

back to MI6's good relations with their leader Ahmad Shah Massoud since 1981. Massoud, nicknamed the "Lion of Panjshir," had been assassinated by Al Qaeda two days before 9/11.⁹²⁶ CIA exploited this connection to go into Afghanistan almost a week after 9/11 with a team called Jawbreaker, composed of ten CIA operatives where some were ex-SOF personnel. At the same time, MI6/SIS also went in with a team, which was called "the Increment," composed of ex-SAS and ex-SBS personnel who worked directly for MI6/SIS.⁹²⁷ Once these teams had established relations with the Northern Alliance, ISA was infiltrated. ISA in turn prepared for the arrival of components which were split by CENTCOM's Rear Admiral Albert M. Calland III into two commands: Task Force Dagger in the North, composed largely of personnel from US Army's 5th Special Forces Group; and Task Force K-Bar in the South, composed of ISA and Allied 1st Tier Special Operations Forces.

Liaising and leading the Northern Alliance, Task Force Dagger's Special Forces teams effectively rolled south using airpower, bribes and cavalry charges to secure Mazar-i-Sharif (November 9), Kabul (November 13), Herat and Jalalabad (November 14), Kunduz (November 25), and Kandahar (December 6). The operation was a textbook executed unconventional warfare campaign, using the best of Western forces (airpower, communications, and leadership), with local forces doing most of the fighting.

The subsequent counter-insurgency campaign to pacify the country has been infinitely more difficult and is still going on. Another difficult mission was the strategic ambush of Al Qaeda forces who, ousted from their strongholds, were on the move towards other safe havens, principally inside Pakistan's FATA. This mission was largely unsuccessful, despite heavy reliance on 1st tier SOF.

Lesson three: SOF are only as effective as their leadership and organization allow

Among publicly known special operations executed by American conventional and SOF, leadership and coordination issues have plagued operations at all levels. In contrast to the unified commands and direct access to government decision makers of British and German SOF, for example, American units are still suffering from convoluted chains of command, and command structures that occasionally allow conventionally minded leaders to

⁹²⁶Smith, *Killer Elite*, 217.

⁹²⁷ David M. Last and Bernd Horn, *Choice of force : special operations for Canada* (Montreal McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 166,67, Gary C. Schroen, *First in* (New York: Presidio Press, 2007), Smith, *Killer Elite*, 216-17, Michael Smith, *The spying game : the secret history of British espionage*, Rev. ed. (London: Politico's, 2003).

command these forces. Two occasions in the Afghanistan campaign illustrated this particularly clearly.

The first was the hunt for bin Laden in the Tora Bora cave complex on Afghanistan's eastern border. British forces were reportedly twenty minutes behind bin Laden when senior leaders called them off to let American forces go in for the kill. Unfortunately, the American SOF components were several hours away, letting bin Laden slip into Pakistan.⁹²⁸ Another critical mistake was not to use conventional allied forces to block the exit routes to Pakistan, because of risk aversion among the generals.⁹²⁹ The Afghan forces that were used fought half-heartedly and appeared to have mixed loyalties as well.⁹³⁰ Sometimes the weaknesses of SOF, as compared with conventional forces, are very plain: covering a lot of ground whether in ambush or raid mode is something they cannot do without reliable larger forces.

The second occasion involved the more carefully prepared Operation Anaconda. Conventional forces were brought in to work as blocking forces in the Shah-i-Kot valley on the border with Pakistan in early 2002 when several hundred Al Qaeda, including Ayman al-Zawahiri, were holed up there. SOF reconnaissance teams on the mountain peaks provided intelligence and directed air strikes killing several hundred, but the exit routes to the south, southeast and southwest remained open and eventually allowed many to escape.⁹³¹

This chapter has pulled together the topics from the previous chapters to discuss the West's need for warriors both existentially and instrumentally. The following conclusion will address the research question directly, and argue that we do indeed need warriors.

Conclusion

Standing at the dawn of Western theorizing, perhaps Achilles was privileged. His arête, as Auden explained, was confined to the here-and-now.⁹³² Subsequent warriors have been backward looking, conscious of Achilles' immortal legacy, while at the same time adjusting from the role of defining society to "merely" defending it. Yet, today we must ask ourselves if we are theorising Achilles away, while the rest of the world still nurtures warriors of a less self-conscious and more committed kind. Nothing like Achilles' lifeworld

⁹²⁸ Smith, *Killer Elite*, 226.

⁹²⁹ Derek Leebaert, *To dare and to conquer : special operations and the destiny of nations, from Achilles to Al Qaeda*, 1st ed. (New York: Little, Brown, 2006), 20, Naylor, *Not a good day to die*, 14,47, Smith, *Killer Elite*, 226.

⁹³⁰ Fick, *One bullet away* 138, Robinson, *Masters of Chaos*, 172.

⁹³¹Naylor, *Not a good day to die*, 491.

⁹³² See p.172

will ever materialize again, so warriors must resign themselves to a complex relationship with civil society, often characterised by friction. Indeed, warriors have become gradually de-naturalised through social developments over the last three thousand years. While Western society has succeeded to engineer warriors into instruments, it has not rendered their task any less useful. As a result the personal and existential commitment to combat is more socially fragile today than in the past, since it is more voluntary (and thus retractable) than ever before.

If society shuns warriors and their deeds too much, recruitment will drop and resentment will increase. Reintegration of combat veterans into society will also become more difficult. Yet, in equal measure, civil society cannot shamelessly celebrate the warrior ethos, given the principal role it ascribes to killing. Uncritical celebration of warriors leads to hero worship that undercuts civilian leadership, and can even promote fascist values, as Germany of the 1930s illustrates.

The West has an overwhelming need for warriors, in some ways more than ever. Combat, undercover, and human intelligence work presently are the most dangerous assignments where warriors are needed. Such missions support campaigns across the range of foreign policy: from development; diplomacy; peacekeeping and peace building; counterinsurgency, counter-terrorism; and full intensity war fighting. Relief workers, diplomats (irrespective of employer), commercial entrepreneurs, tourists and adventurers have one thing in common: If captured, abducted or illegitimately arrested, they need help. They need warriors who are able to succeed in complex insertions to the operational area; can fight themselves into range; if necessary shoot free hostages; and safely escort them out of jungle sanctuaries, inner city hideaways or mountain redoubts. This is just one example of an instrumental role for warriors, which will never go away.

To say that the West needs warriors thus involves both the instrumental and the existential side of the question, because the West needs them in both realms. Instrumentally the West needs warriors in fighting regiments and brigades where warriors represent talent and initiative as well as restraint, essentially the critical members of the human element in the fight. The instrumental side is about the direct benefit such individuals bring to the tangible tactical and strategic objectives defined by military and political leaders.

More generally, in respect of the West, the question of whether the West still needs warriors existentially is much less straightforward to answer. Chapter four defined combat

as composed of an essentially timeless nature. The existential need for warriors in the contemporary West springs in part from their resonance with qualities like manliness and courage, which, while underplayed in contemporary Western civil society, are as relevant in other parts of the world as they have been in the premodern West. These values are forged in combat now as in the past. Like all values, they take a long time to disintegrate, but a longer time still to cultivate again if they are not nurtured. As personifications of manliness and courage Western warriors are less representative but more pronounced as role bearers at the social level than their historic predecessors, who practiced in societies that largely expected and respected their manifestation, both instrumentally and existentially.

Another feature of the existential role of warriors relates directly to who 'we' are. Do 'we' include the global 'we', or does the 'we' necessarily relate to citizenship? The different social imaginaries provide different answers to this question. A further dimension of this question is that warriors largely work for themselves. This is both strength and a liability for them and for Western societies. The strength relates to their independence of motivation. Since warriors fight at least in part for themselves, their existential character is particularly suited for the postmodern age, which is characterised by not only economic and technological specialisation; but ideological and social fragmentation as well. A more self-centred and atomised self, disembedded and unburdened by most social constraints, seems to have replaced the days of coherent national and international worldviews. In this independence, there also lies liability. How independent warriors' motivation really is will only become clear when they are asked to sacrifice themselves explicitly for the good of human kind, without reference to a particular polis. The academic combat motivation literature, and the extremely rich literature of personal experiences of war and combat, is both contradictory and inconsistent on this issue. Little wonder it is, because so was Homer, with Achilles' and Hector displaying very different combat motivations. This is what Spiller refers to as the hidden side of combat.

Combat motivation is notoriously difficult to pinpoint, and its attachment to political causes and communities more difficult still. In addition to individual motivations the different political and military cultures approach the issue of combat differently too. The American Way of War, for example, is not the same as a wider Western Way of War, even though the American trends are the most dominating ones in the Western strategic landscape because of their overwhelming technological and manpower dominance. An American warrior ethos shaped by an American culture of war, is thus not identical to

those found in the rest of the West either. Indeed identifying the existence and properties of national warrior ethos adds further subjective complexity to the warrior concept.⁹³³

A major reason why we cannot penetrate the hidden side of combat from a social perspective – bearing in mind that the naming and shaming of warriors as warriors happens at the social level - is that soldiers and warriors tend to downplay the political and instrumental cause for which they are fighting when they think and talk about their experiences. This is certainly no mystery. The cause does not feature in any tangible way on the ground level; bullets, grenades, roadside bombs, fear, sweat, grit, noise and deprivations do. As Sergeant Hoot puts it in the movie version of *Black Hawk Down*; “Once that first bullet goes past your head, politics and all that shit just goes right out the window.”⁹³⁴

Warrior social imaginaries: Marines vs. SOF

Military units, like all societies, have social imaginaries, which P.J. O’Rourke observed when he joined U.S. Marines on a trip to Iwo Jima in July 2003 to make a television documentary. On the island, he had a chance to eavesdrop on a warrior culture reproducing its own social imaginary. The main purpose of the trip was a morale booster for young Marines recognized for stellar performance and attitude. Going to Iwo Jima “is a way for new Marines to imbue themselves with the spirit of the Corps.”⁹³⁵ O’Rourke realised that the battle for the island defines the Marine social imaginary. Iwo Jima has replaced Montezuma in their imagination. The battle cost 6,281 American and some 20,000 Japanese lives. The largest force of Marines ever put together fought it; 27 out of 353 Medals of Honor won by Marines during World War II were earned during the battle of the island.⁹³⁶

The Marine social imaginary defines a warrior culture, but even more so it is like a family. One drill instructor summed up his work at boot camp thus: “The Marine Corps is like a family, and we teach family values.”⁹³⁷ In an age of widespread casualty aversion and instrumental warfare, the Marines are atypical in their strong focus on their past, comparable in some ways to the British regimental system. David Hackworth, who was not a Marine, learnt in his first year in Korea that “in war a soldier or a leader is about as

⁹³³ To identify these would require a great deal of further empirical research, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

⁹³⁴ Scott, 'Black Hawk Down'.

⁹³⁵ P. J. O'Rourke, *Peace Kills* (London: Atlantic Books, 2004), 189.

⁹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 188-89.

⁹³⁷ Ricks, *Making the Corps*, 38.

indispensable as the hole left by a finger in a glass of water.”⁹³⁸ The Marine celebration of the memory of Iwo Jima counteracts this feeling and ensures a dominant place for past sacrifices in their social imaginary, because they happened to the family. This strong communitarianism turns meaning inward, a logical reaction to the erosion of patriotism as a source of meaning in America and even more so in the rest of the West.

Marine basic training remains a harrowing experience; a shock to teenagers who are used to control their lives. “I was born down there,” observed Brigadier General Randy West to Thomas Ricks, as they looked down at Parris Island from a Marine jet. Indeed, most Marines can remember the name of their drill sergeant from 40 years ago.⁹³⁹ However today’s recruits are spared some of the abuse endured by some in the Vietnam generation who were; “ordered to insert their penises into the breeches of their weapons, close the bolt, and run the length of the squad bay singing “The Marine Corps Hymn.””⁹⁴⁰

Basic training illustrates both instrumental and existential features of the relationship between warriors and society, because this is where the Marines begin to make warriors out of young civilians. Instrumentally, the instructors teach the recruits basics to prepare them for the harshness of combat. Existentially, boot camp turns civilians into Marines, socializing them away from their various civilian social imaginaries into the reigning Marine imaginary. The recruits arrive with widely different backgrounds. Some give up privileges to become Marines while others, like recruit Winston, who claimed he had shot ten people before joining at age 19, said: “Ain’t nothing the Marine Corps could put in front of me that could scare me more than my neighbourhood.”⁹⁴¹ While there are many civilian social imaginaries, there can only be one *Marine* imaginary, and part of the boot camp experience is to make this social imaginary part of their blood; lived and not merely thought. At the same time, the Marine Corps is constantly questioning itself about what this social imaginary should entail in relation to the social world that owns and controls them.

A legendary Marine with strong opinions on these issues was Lt. Gen Lewis “Chesty” Puller (1898-1971). Puller fought in the Banana wars and some of the bloodiest fighting of World War II and Korea to become the most highly decorated Marine in history, with five Navy Crosses and one Distinguished Service Cross. Retiring in 1955 Puller requested reinstatement in 1965 for Vietnam, but his request was denied due to his

⁹³⁸ Hackworth, *About face*, 274.

⁹³⁹ Ricks, *Making the Corps*, 44.

⁹⁴⁰ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 90.

⁹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

age. Perhaps because he was a warrior defined by combat, Puller was not well equipped to show compassion to Marines with less ability to endure it. Recovering from wounds in a Guadalcanal field hospital Puller advised a shivering, babbling and whimpering enlisted man: “There’s no such thing as shell shock or battle fatigue. All in the mind. Until I got in this war, I never saw a bit of it. We fought up and down Haiti and Nicaragua without it. You’ll be okay.” Rather than recovering, however, Puller later found the man crying over a photograph of his girlfriend. This made Puller threaten that the Marines would put up pictures of shirkers in post offices, and the girlfriend would surely know, and never speak to him again, which made the man return to combat.⁹⁴²

Later Puller witnessed for the Marines court-martialled in the Ribbon Creek incident in 1956, where a drunken drill instructor in the middle of the night marched a platoon into a creek at Parris Island, where six drowned.⁹⁴³ Espousing both the instrumental needs of combat and the social imaginary of his generation of Marines, Puller argued rough training was justified because “the definition of military training is success in training... without discipline an army becomes a mob. In my opinion the reason American troops made out so poorly in Korea was mostly due to lack of night training.”⁹⁴⁴ However, the Marines have since changed a lot, and drill instructors today hold the view that the drill instructor had both failed and betrayed his responsibility towards his men.⁹⁴⁵ David Hackworth, a warrior very much of Puller’s calibre, served as a young man at the time this cultural shift was taking place. Yet, even after Vietnam, Hackworth maintained that 2 % casualties in training was a defensible insurance policy against underperformance in combat.⁹⁴⁶

These incidents reflect the moulding of the warrior ethos. It is cross-pressured between the values of civil society and the instrumental needs of the job warriors perform. These stories do not just reflect debates about training, but an evolving discourse on how to form warriors, and with which means. These means are commensurable with the degree to which society feels in need of warriors.

The Special Operations community has perhaps better defined a social imaginary that fits the spirit of the age. More in tune with the increasing individualization and fragmentation of society, they select for types who are, in their view, already constituted as

⁹⁴² Linderman, *World Within War*, 355.

⁹⁴³ Ricks, *Making the Corps*, 48.

⁹⁴⁴ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 52.

⁹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁹⁴⁶ Hackworth, *About face*, 308.

warriors through their given character. The candidates have only to be tested to prove this, and subsequently trained. Such an approach to warriors is more market oriented: offering an attractive life style with high membership fees, but with less unit responsibility to shape and mould warriors from the start. The basic formation is outsourced to the regular army, who grudgingly have to give up their best when they most need them.

When SOF were more focused on hostage rescue missions they were more of a “boutique.” However, this is changing and now they have to be a “market stall,” more outward reaching both to recruit and to integrate ever more competence from the civilian world, given the complexity of wars among the people.⁹⁴⁷ It is in this sense, rather than in the technocratic sense, that information warfare is so important today. Western warriors cannot be specialised away from this reality, they have to be generalised into it. For this reason, the increasing openness about all things special forces related is a welcome development. The British, for example, recently decided to de-classify unit membership when SOF are killed in action. This reduces the isolation of SOF and allows them to celebrate their social imaginary in public to achieve not just the standing Marines have in the United States, but also to represent warrior values like courage and sacrifice publicly.

Warriors in Western society

Western societies need warriors, but it is not immediately clear that they want them. Only if the civilian world and the military can appreciate each other's social imaginaries can warriors kill with a good conscience and feel that their sacrifice is for some larger meaning, as the word sacrifice implies. The liberal and to a greater extent the cosmopolitan social imaginaries tend to be either implicitly or explicitly sceptical of the utility and legitimacy of military force, and this is a worldview which is bound to sit uncomfortably with the lifeworld of warriors. Warriors in this sense are “high maintenance.” Despite their instrumental and seemingly existential independence, the sacrifices called for in combat, and the confidence needed to kill all require strength of character. This is especially the case when such sacrifices are unfashionable, or the campaign they take part in is unpopular. It would be tempting, but unadvisable, for society simply to let warriors be warriors; give up trying to recognise the values gap between these two worlds; forget about society's responsibility to the existential side of the equation; use them instrumentally when that is necessary; and leave them to cultivate such ideals as are commensurate with their trade in a detached subculture. The formation and maintenance of such character is a social process,

⁹⁴⁷ Kiszely, 'Post-modern challenges', Smith, *The utility of force*

however, both in the macro sense of overall society and in the micro sense of warrior peer groups. This means that completely self-contained cultures cannot conserve and cultivate warrior ethos.

Because Western societies have been subject to dramatic social change over the last few centuries, they are well advised to maintain the warrior ethos in military institutions, and provide a home for warriors in more concrete terms; whether it is units like the Marines or ones that are more specialized. The security paradigms that policy makers espouse ensure that there will be no mission drought in the near future. There is also nothing to suggest that war in its different manifestations is disappearing, nor that less dangerous forms of war will replace the current form of combat, which requires warriors. Western societies are fortunate to still produce individuals who are willing to submit to the will of the public and accept the risks and hardships to play an existential as much as an instrumental role. We must conclude that if anything the West has too few warriors, not too many, and that those who commit to war and combat are needed more than ever, precisely because they are so rare.

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