COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY AGAINST MILITARISM

Jim Orford[*]

The full costs of armed conflict are enormous and total world military expenditure is huge. Psychological theories and concepts to explain support for war and militarism at individual and group levels include: warfare as a masculine institution; social identity theory; nationalist versus internationalist attitudes; and the contact hypothesis. At a collective level militarism is legitimised. War and deadly weapons are portrayed in positive and unrealistic ways. Support for militarism permeates civic society and citizens are 'cognitively disarmed' about it and the role they play in supporting it. Psychologists have promoting militarism by working for the military and the changing nature of war and armaments, such as the use of drones, is providing further temptations to do so. Psychology has at best been ambivalent about militarism. Peace psychology has not taken an unambiguous position on it, often speaking of the absence of war in the absence of social justice as 'negative peace'. The British Psychological Society is failing to recognise and oppose militarism. Community psychology should take a lead in arguing for a more clearly identified Psychology Against Militarism (PAM).

Keywords: militarism, war, psychology

1.   The costs of war and militarisation

The full costs of armed conflict are enormous and not always easy to estimate. They include not only deaths and injuries to combatants, and increasingly to civilians, but also the full range of forms of psychological distress, not limited to post-traumatic stress disorder (Fazel, 2015), plus multiple other impacts on health and well-being. Recently the cholera epidemic in Yemen became the largest and fastest-spreading outbreak of the disease in modern history, with a million cases expected and at least half a million children likely to be affected (Guardian Weekly 20 October, 2017). Health impacts include the reduced availability of vaccination for children in conflict conditions and the failure of support for those with disabilities and long-term health

[*] School of Psychology, University of Birmingham, England ✉

conditions (Kett, 2015). Damage and destruction of people's homes and the displacement of civilian populations is a frequent effect of war: Seguin et al. (2016) used Hobfoll's (1998) conservation of resources theory to understand loss of resources experienced by women internally displaced in Georgia. There is also environmental destruction, either deliberate, for example due to defoliation and the release of chemical toxins (Weir, 2015), or associated with military facilities due to nuclear tests, chemicals, fuels, radioactivity and high explosives.

The special issue of child soldiers continues to be important in various parts of the world. It was reported (Guardian Weekly 27 October, 2017) that the youth minister in Yemen's Huthi rebel government had proposed suspending school classes for a year and sending pupils and teachers to the front. A recent Medact (2016) report has drawn attention to under-age recruitment to the armed forces in the UK: 22 of every 100 UK army recruits are under 18 and, although they are not deployed on frontline activity at that age, they are more vulnerable to being casualties later – for example being twice as likely to have been killed or injured in Afghanistan than those recruited at an older age.

According to the Global Peace Index produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace, in 2014 the estimated total cost of violent conflict, including providing services for refugees and internally displaced people, was \$14.3 trillion, equivalent to 13.4% of total gross domestic product (Guardian Weekly, June 26, 2015). These costs and the more direct costs of war generally bear more heavily on the poor and disproportionately on women and children (Shaw, 2005). The database kept by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) showed total world military expenditure rising to \$1.69tn in 2016 with spending continuing to grow in Asia and Oceania, Central and Eastern Europe and North Africa (CAAT, 2017). Russia has just announced testing of a new line of strategic, nuclear-capable weapons and Britain's defence chief of general staff has called for increased military spending, warning that the UK is falling behind Russia in terms of defence spending and capability (Guardian Weekly 26 January & 9 March, 2018).

In *The Shadow World: Inside the Global Arms Trade,* Feinstein (2012) describes the bribery and corruption that characterise the arms trade, involving even the most officially respected arms companies, the shadowy relationships with governments, and the 'revolving door' through which people move between government, the military and the arms industry. Formal weapons cooperation agreements (WCAs) which regulate areas such as procurement and contracting, defense-based research and development, and defense industrial cooperation, have proliferated since the mid-1990s and according to Kinne's (2016) analysis have significantly increased weapons flows.

The nature of armed conflict has been changing and, some argue, is becoming more dangerous and costly. In *The New Western Way of War*, Shaw (2005) referred to the industrialised total warfare of the second world war, which including deliberate targeting of civilian populations, as 'degenerate war'. Although more recently weapons are described as 'precise', civilian targets as systematically 'avoided', and deaths as 'accidental' (p. 67), he points out that bombing is not precise and in practice minimising civilian risks is not given such high priority as minimising those of Western personnel. As Bourke (2014) puts it, 'the illusion of precision allows American and British authorities to portray 'collateral damage' as the result of inadvertent mistakes rather than as inherent aspects of the targeting process' (Bourke, 2014, p. 125).

Even more recently, targeted bombing is being delivered by unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs or 'drones'), raising many issues, discussed for example by Chamayou (2015). Drones, he suggests, have created a crisis in military ethics. Willingness to die is at the heart of traditional

military morality with its central virtues of courage, sacrifice and heroism. Killing by drones without risking one's own life might be seen in those terms as cowardly and dishonourable: 'moral injury' has been described as a new military syndrome. Bandura (2017) is one who has argued that drone operators face a further 'discordant moral predicament', since not acting to defend their soldiers on the ground violates the army ethos of supporting comrades while protective action violates the just war rule about civilian casualties.

Psychologist Steven Pinker (2012) is prominent amongst those who argue that war is on the decline. He acknowledges that in absolute numbers twentieth century wars were unmatched in their destructiveness, but in terms of death toll as a proportion of the population, earlier wars were more deadly and attitudes towards violence were far more accepting. What he refers to as an unwarranted 'new pessimism' about war, he believes has been stoked by three kinds of organised violence: the 'new wars' or 'low-intensity conflicts' in the developing world, thought to be especially destructive because of the hunger and disease they cause; genocide; and terrorism. However, only recently have political scientists tried to measure these and all, he says, are in decline. Inglehart, Puranen, and Welzel (2015) are others who have concluded, on the basis of analysing public opinion data from many countries over three decades, that rising life opportunities have made peace generally more desirable and have reduced people's willingness to sacrifice lives in war.

Although they do not take such a sanguine view, international law experts Hathaway & Shapiro (2017) do describe the end of the 'old world order' that occurred with the signing in 1928 of the General Treaty for the Renunciation of War, later known as the Paris Peace Pact, and the settlement after the second world war: in the 'new world order' inter-state war, other than in self-defence, is prohibited by international law.

2.   Understanding Individual Support for War and Militarism

A range of different theories and concepts have been proposed to try and explain support for war and militarism at an individual level (Cottam, Dietz-Uhler, Mastors & Preston, 2010). They include a shared human instinct for war (now largely dismissed as useful), authoritarian personality, religious fundamentalism (Beller, 2017), and the need to control, dominate or exert authority (Finley, 2003). As feminists and others have often pointed out, warfare is a masculine institution with the military characterised by masculine values and metaphors, and fighting, as well as strategy, coordination and support, dominated by men (Caspary, 1993; Holmes, 1985/2003). Arms designers, producers and dealers and the staff of military establishments and state defence departments are overwhelmingly male, operating in 'highly masculinist institutions that glorify and promote the traditional male values of strength, power, and competitive advantage' (Du Nann Winter, Pilisuk, Houck & Lee, 2001, p. 144). It is a common finding that women hold more negative attitudes towards war than men (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2017; Van der Linden, Bizumic, Stubager & Mellon, 2011).

But there are individual differences in militaristic attitudes. Studies of public attitudes towards state foreign policy in the USA have generally supported a two-dimensional attitude structure. That was confirmed in a study using five British national surveys conducted in 2008 which found two dimensions labelled liberal internationalism and British militarism (Reifler, Scotto & Clarke, 2011). Those relatively high on the second dimension tended to agree with statements

such as: Britain needs to spend more money on its armed forces, and Britain should maintain its overseas military bases. Van der Linden et al. (2011) considered social representations of war, citing for example Herrera and Reicher (1998) who found differing social representations of war following the first Gulf War: anti-war respondents more often recalled images of destruction and suffering whereas pro-war participants more often recalled images about the technical aspects of war such as images of soldiers, the firing of cruise missiles and the dropping of bombs. Bliss, Oh, and Williams (2007) found nationalism (belief that one's nation is superior) and patriotism (love and pride for nation) positively related, and internationalism (concern for other nations and global welfare) negatively related, to militarism. Although attitudes in favour of peace and war are often conceptualised as polar opposites, the two sets of values may be distinct constructs (Bizumic et al., 2013).

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) continues to have great relevance for understanding hostile attitudes of those who self-identify as members of one group towards those who are, in contrast, seen as being members of other groups. Accentuating the in-group's positive attributes and the negative attributes of out-group members is strengthened and rendered more dangerous if the perception of the 'other' is a stereotyped one and particularly if it corresponds to a threatening 'enemy' image (Cottam et al., 2010). Nationalism can be seen as a particular case of social identity. Citizens' nationalistic sentiments can be manipulated by leaders using the promotion of positive images of one's own culture: 'National flags, heroes, myths, and anthems all have a remarkable hold over most people, and almost all nations seek to inculcate recognition and respect for such symbols, typically requiring oaths, pledges, or other specific acts of allegiance' (Druckman, 2001, p. 128). Nationalism can also confer heightened sensitivity to threats or insults, and openness to manipulation by leaders' suggestions about the need for national sacrifices such as greater spending on defence and the value of serving in the military. A related feature is inability to look critically at one's own group or country and refusal to look at one's own country's role in contributing to inter-group tensions (Cottam et al., 2010). Violence is further legitimated by a process of dehumanising the enemy (Barash & Webel, 2009), or what post-Freudians might refer to as 'splitting and projecting demonised images onto the enemy' (Caspary, 1993). Group loyalty, obedience and conformity are prized at times of inter-group tension; citizens experience great pressure to conform when nationalism is aroused and can face ostracism and condemnation by others if one does not conform, as for example in Britain during the first world war and in the USA after 9/11 (Cottam et al., 2010).

Another highly relevant theory is the contact hypothesis – that intergroup contact reduces prejudice and that positive contact can increase trust and improve attitudes between groups in conflict. McKeown and Psaltis (2017) refer to it as one of the most successful theories in social psychology. A recent special edition of *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* (Wright, Tropp & Mazziotta, 2017) includes a collection of such contact research from a wide range of contexts. They included a study among Bosnian adults of how pre-war cross-group contact and experience of war affected post-war cross-group contact and its relation to measures of intergroup relations and mental health (Voci, Hadziosmanovic, Cakal, Veneziani & Hewstone, 2017); and an analysis of representative national surveys in the UK one month before and after the July 7, 2005, terror attacks in London, which showed that while the terror attacks generally heightened feelings of psychological threat, contact still predicted lower prejudice toward Muslims through lowering perceptions of psychological threat (Abrams, Van de Vyver & Vasiljevic, 2017).

3. Understanding Collective Support for War and Militarism: The Militarisation of Culture and Civic Society

Militarism is deeply socially rooted and perhaps increasingly so. Chamayou (2015) talks of the rapid expansion in the use of drones being accompanied by a 'theoretical offensive' justifying them, including the declaration that drones are humanitarian weapons because of their supposed superior precision. A further part of the discursive strategy used to support drone warfare is the use of historical examples to argue that there is nothing new about preferring to take out one's enemies from a safe distance wherever possible. More generally, Solomon (2003) has argued that, despite the popular 'democratic peace' thesis suggesting that democracies do not fight each other, citizens of democratic states are just as complicit as others in the continual replenishment of state militarisation. His thesis is that citizens of democracies become integral participants in supporting the competitive arming of states, whilst themselves being 'cognitively disarmed' because they are provided by their leaders with only a limited and highly prejudiced understanding of the moral implications of their supportive roles.

Referring specifically to the US, several scholars have attributed the perpetuation of the country as a military-industrial complex to the conservative political culture of US society, whilst others attribute it to the military superiority of the USA and militarised worldview (Van den Linden et al., 2011, p. 223). Others have noted the prominence of wars in people's representations of history in different countries; for example, the much greater weight given to war compared to peace in US history textbooks (Finley, 2003). In his book, *Acts of War: The Behaviour of Men in Battle*, Holmes (1985/2003) refers to the popularity of military history and of books and films dealing with war, and their polemical purposes, justifying armed conflict with scant regard for the facts of war. And in her more recent book, historian Joanna Bourke (2014) documents how the armed forces have used cinema very effectively, as for example in films about the Vietnam war, which spread a strong anti-communist message and helped US citizens see the war as one of liberation and freedom.

There are numerous ways in which militarism permeates civic society. For example, Feinstein (2012) refers to the militarisation of the University and the school: in Britain the first secondary school 'military academy' has recently opened and there are reports of the international arms company BAE Systems offering postgraduate apprenticeships and a Masters programme and collaboration on drone development at British Universities (CAAT, 2018). As Bourke (2014) puts it, deadly weapons are routinely aestheticised as objects of beauty, even charm. We need, she suggests, 'to come to terms with the over-blown, breathless, vivid and carnivalesque language associated with violence' (p. 17). Positive and sporting images are used to describe armaments, and weapons are given comforting names including ones from nature such as the Falcon, Hummingbird Warrior, Panda and Walrus. Even the cluster bombs that caused appalling wounds in Vietnam were given nicknames such as 'pineapples' and 'guavas'. In September 2017 it was reported that a statue of Mikhail Kalashnikov, the inventor of the AK-47 assault rifle, had been unveiled in central Moscow. The nine-metre monument depicts Kalashnikov clutching his automatic weapon. The event was attended by high-ranking officials and religious leaders. The collusion of formal religion in militarism is illustrated by the blessing of the statue by a Russian Orthodox priest who shrugged off suggestions that it was inappropriate to sprinkle holy water on

a statue of a weapons designer. Another religious leader wrote on Facebook, 'Our weapon is a holy weapon' (Guardian Weekly 20 September, 2017).

War games now illustrate the deep rootedness of militarisation in the starkest possible way. War toys, mass produced since the second half of the 18th century, amongst which tin soldiers used to be the most popular, were, according to Mosse (1990, p. 141) 'an education in warfare' and important in the process of trivialising war. Bourke (2014) brings this part of the militarisation of culture – the 'military-industrial-entertainment-complex' (Der Derian, 2001, cited by Bourke, 2014) – up to date with some alarming facts. By the 1980s 10% of toys for sale in the US were war toys. By 1997 over 30 million toy guns were being sold annually in the USA. According to Bourke, 'gamers are required to digest vast amount of technical knowledge about weapons and ballistics' (p. 196) and recent games include short documentaries about real-life happenings, interviews with veterans and online visits to battle sites. There are now military training applications for commercial game consoles. War games also, Bourke suggests, teach real soldiers how to make war more game-like, attempting to make their combat experiences resemble those in the games and vice versa. For example, one 20-year-old serving in Iraq recalled the first time he shot someone: 'You just try to block it out... see what you need to do, fire what you need to fire. Think to yourself, this is a game, *just do it, just do it...*' (interviewed for the Washington Post, 14 February, 2006, cited by Bourke, 2014, p. 215). He and his mates would often play war games until the early hours of the morning and then go on patrol.

Optimists such as Pinker dismiss such comments as overly pessimistic punditry. He believes there has been a 'decline of martial culture' (2012, p. 28), thanks to a long-term civilising process, starting in the middle ages and given a huge boost by the enlightenment. The First World War, he argues, put an end to romantic militarism in the Western mainstream and the whole idea that war was in any way desirable or inevitable, glorious or heroic; 'in the West today public places are no longer named after military victories. Our war memorials depict not proud commanders on horseback but weeping mothers, weary soldiers, or exhaustive lists of names of the dead. Military men are inconspicuous in public life, with drab uniforms and little prestige' (pp. 28-29).

4.   Psychologists Working for the Military: Professional Co-option

In his book, *War on the Mind: The Military Uses and Abuses of Psychology* (1980), Watson, who obtained access to a large amount of classified information, exposed 'the extent to which the military potential of psychology had been ruthlessly exploited' (p. 22). The use of psychology covered a range of subjects including selection and training of personnel, improving the efficiency with which soldiers used armaments, the effectiveness of military leadership, improving military performance under stress, understanding the enemy, and torture and other interrogation techniques, including techniques used during internment in Northern Ireland. Bourke (2014) points out that academic researchers may not even be aware of the military applications of their findings. In 1971 students published a two-volume report listing over 100 research contracts, held by academics at Stanford University, which were fully or partially funded by the US Department of Defense. While the academics described their research as aimed at such outcomes as improving traffic or reducing pollution, the Defense Documentation Center (DDC) gave very different accounts. The famous prison study contract carried out by

psychologist Zimbardo, for example, was described as being about 'Individual and group variables influencing emotional arousal, violence, and behavior', but the DDC title referred to, 'Personnel technology factors influencing disruptive behavior among military trainees' (cited by Bourke, p. 148).

The ethical conflict for psychologists working for the military in one way or another is well pointed up by Arrigo, Eidelson, and Bennett (2012) and Arrigo, Eidelson, and Rockwood (2015), writing about 'operational psychology' (OP) in the USA. They distinguished between 'collaborative operational psychology' (COP) concerned with such things as the selection of service personnel, health assessments and trauma therapy, and 'adversarial operational psychology' (AOP) which 'engages psychologists in direct support of deception, coercion, and assault in military and intelligence operations and in covert operations research' (Arrigo et al., 2012, p. 386). They argue that AOP is not subject to ethical oversight by anybody outside the national security establishment, and the targets of AOP interventions are unable to provide informed consent, may be harmed in stipulated ways and have little or no recourse to complaint or redress. Crucially, 'the psychologist engaged in AOP activities is a fully deployable soldier, typically a member of a highly coordinated and interdependent team, obligated to put the operational mission first, under national security criteria that supersede the APA Ethics Code... The moral autonomy of the military psychologist is quite limited' (Arrigo et al., 2015, p. 271) (incidentally, doctors and other health workers, lawyers and chaplains working for the military share some of the same ethical dilemmas: Nathanson, 2015; Bourke, 2014; Virden, 2003). Staal and Greene (2015), operational psychologists at US Special Operations Command, and each a current or retired Colonel in the United States Air Force, objected, arguing that OP was not alone in posing such dilemmas and requiring ultimate loyalty to the institutions for which psychologists work.

The changing nature of war and armaments is providing further temptations for psychologists to contribute to militarisation. Chamayou (2015) provides several examples of how psychological knowledge and expertise has been drawn on to help justify drone warfare. One involves the use of social network analysis and cognitive science in the panoptican-like surveillance systems used to identify, study, follow, and in some cases ultimately target, suspected individuals. The March 2015 edition of *The Psychologist* reported the formation by the British Army of a new 2000-strong Brigade 77. Its members, we are told, will focus on information, media and psychological operations, including, according to an Army spokesperson, 'traditional and unconventional means of shaping behaviours'.

Is British psychology becoming more overtly militarised? One of the themes of the 2015 annual conference of the British Psychological Society was *War and Psychology*. That subject was addressed in keynote talks by three prominent speakers, psychiatrist, historian, and news correspondent respectively, plus three symposia. The main focus was psychological harm for combatants, and its treatment, plus psychology applied to recruitment and training. Only BBC correspondent Kate Adie – at least according to the summaries in *The Psychologist* – referred to 'the abnormality, the violence and unfairness of war'. Nowhere else could I find even a hint of British psychology taking as its starting point the idea that war and militarisation are themselves problems, things to be understood and avoided. Nor was there any sign of critical reflection on, 'the obedience of the discipline [psychology] to the mores of... militarism. Psychology's contribution to the security state (Roberts et al., 2014).

A proposal to the British Psychological Society was made in 2016 for a new Section of the Society on Psychology in Defence and Security. In response to a letter and an article in the

December 2016 *Psychologist* supporting that proposal, a letter I wrote was published in the February 2017 issue. Like Arrigo et al. (2012), I questioned the scope of Defence and Security psychology and whether it would extend to such topics as weapons research, understanding the enemy, and interrogation techniques. I suggested Military Psychology as a more straightforward name for any new Section; 'Defence and Security' might sound too much like Government propaganda. Another letter, critical of mine, appeared in a subsequent issue, from a veteran and psychologist working within the Ministry of Defence, arguing that it is mistaken to reduce the work of the military to war-fighting: 'War is the last resort, and … it is the last thing that most of the military want to do'. The reference to Last Resort is highly significant because it is one of the necessary conditions for going to war in Just War Theory (Frowe, 2011) and one which it is always difficult to be clear about (Hoffman, 2015).

5. Towards a Psychology Against Militarism

Psychology has not spoken out unequivocally against militarism. Peace psychology, which is a well-established sub-discipline, largely concerned with conflict resolution, peace-making interventions, peace education and peace movements (Blumberg, Hare & Costin, 2006), has not taken an unambiguous position on militarism, often speaking of the absence of war in the absence of social justice as 'negative peace', implying that armed conflict may sometimes be justified. Mere peace in the face of political or economic oppression is downplayed as a relatively conservative goal, even a passive state. As Barash and Webel (2009, p. 91-92) say, 'For too long, students of peace – in their legitimate eagerness to embrace a new and more peaceful world – have abandoned the understanding of war and other forms of violent human conflict to.... [the] disciplines of political science, security studies, and international relations. As a result... many people in peace and conflict studies and in peace movements spend much time trying to conceptualize peace while avoiding the very real problems of war and violence'.

It might be expected that feminist psychology would be a locus of anti-militarism. Indeed feminists, whose perspective shares much with peace psychology, have often been very clear in their opposition to militarism (Costin, 2006), and women have taken a courageous lead in opposing militarism, as at the famous camps at Greenham Common in the UK and at Seneca Falls in the USA. However, at other times feminist groups have appeared to condone warfare, for example advocating for women to have greater acceptance in the armed forces, including acceptance in combat roles.

Voices are increasingly being raised against militarism. Solomon (2003) calls for an organised, grassroots campaign that would, 'call for the formation of a new, global political constituency dedicated to the twin aims of demilitarization and nonviolent conflict resolution' (p. 117). The demilitarising of schools and counter-recruitment movements in the USA, aiming both to protect children and to transform US military culture (Harding & Kershner, 2015), are examples. Particularly telling may be organised resistance amongst veterans such as Vietnam Veterans against the War and Iraq Veterans Against the War. Scientists and health workers are other groups with a long history of opposition to war: MedAct, currently active in the UK, is an example.

I have argued elsewhere (Orford, 2017) that we need a more clearly identified *Psychology Against Militarism* (PAM). It should provide a full account of the psychological and other costs

of war, how those costs bear differentially upon different social and socio-economic groups, how militarism and violent solutions to conflict are justified and promoted, including the militarism of childhood, of educational establishments, of games, of masculinity, of history, and of economic life, enjoyment of and vested interests in war, and support for armaments and the arms trade. I also argue that it is appropriate for community psychology (CP) to take a lead in advocating for PAM. Militarism is a good example of how the beliefs and actions of individuals are embedded in and inseparable from the wider social context of collective beliefs and actions at community, national and international levels, and hence how it is legitimised, and how in the process we become complicit in supporting it. PAM is also consistent with CP ethics and values because militarism represents an exercise of power, which wreaks untold and widespread harm which falls on all of us, but especially on those who are already relatively powerless. Power is a central concept for CP (Orford, 2008) and militarism in its modern form might be said to constitute the largest concentration of power the world has ever seen.

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