

## THE PHENOMENON OF WAR AS THE BOOSTER OF THE VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR

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**Problem statement and its relation to important scientific or practical tasks.** Since the beginning of the full-scale war on 24 February 2022 Russia has been torturing Ukrainian people physically and mentally; it has been devastating, crashing, raping, murdering, burgling, kidnapping, bombing and mining. The cruelty of the Russian invaders has shocked the civilized world. The targets of the enemies are not only the warriors but female and male civilians of any age, maternity homes, hospitals, farms, churches, theatres, zoos, petroleum bases, stores, residential buildings and whatnot. According to the information on the site of the Office of General Prosecutor<sup>1</sup> 219 children have been killed and 405 have been injured (by 2 May, 2022) in Ukraine during the war. The lives and health of millions of people have been affected by forced displacement, economic hardship and psychological violence.

The importance of a better understanding of the psychosocial foundations of war and other forms of violence in world culture has never been more important in the world as it is today. Certain modern conflicts do not conform to the rule that wars must be waged by organized entities that have some form of hierarchy and are pursuing identifiable objectives<sup>2</sup>.

It's argued that war is conducive to criminal behaviour. "By its very nature, the phenomenon of war entails excesses, blunders and acts of violence going beyond "military necessity". There is no such thing as a "clean" war, and even a war waged in accordance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) involves an unleashing of violence against persons and property with all the attendant suffering and destruction"<sup>3</sup>.

War by definition consists of killing. IHL is violated more and more frequently, civilians are increasingly bearing the brunt of armed conflicts. "The new wars can be contrasted with earlier wars in terms of their goals, the methods of warfare and how they are financed. The goals of the new wars are about identity politics in contrast to the geopolitical or ideological goals of earlier wars. (...) In the context of globalization, ideological or territorial cleavages of an earlier era have increasingly been supplanted by an emerging political cleavage between what I call cosmopolitanism, based on inclusive, universalist, multicultural values, and the politics of particularist identities. By identity politics, I mean the

claim to power on the basis of a particular identity – be it national, clan, religious or linguistic. But my point is that these earlier identities were either linked to a notion of state interest or to some forward-looking project – ideas about how society should be organized"<sup>4</sup>. How the author describes the specifics of the warfare gives us an understanding of what is happening in Ukraine as well: "The new warfare also tends to avoid battle and to control territory through political control of the population. The aim is to control the population by getting rid of everyone with a different identity (and indeed of a different opinion). Hence the strategic goal of these wars is population expulsion through various means such as mass killing, forcible resettlement, as well as a range of political, psychological and economic techniques of intimidation. This is why, in all these wars, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of refugees and displaced persons, and why most violence is directed against civilians. (...) Behaviour that was proscribed according to the classical rules of warfare and codified in the laws of war in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, such as atrocities against non-combatants, sieges, destruction of historic monuments, etc., now constitutes an essential component of the strategies of the new mode of warfare"<sup>5</sup>.

Jean-Jacques Frésard provides the following vision "War is in no way a relationship of man with man but a relationship between States, in which individuals are enemies only by accident; not as men, nor even as citizens, but as soldiers (...). Since the object of war is to destroy the enemy State, it is legitimate to kill the latter's defenders as long as they are carrying arms; but as soon as they lay them down and surrender, they cease to be enemies or agents of the enemy and again become mere men, and it is no longer legitimate to take their lives"<sup>6</sup>.

**Identification of previously unresolved matters of the generic problem the article deals with.** There is a lack of scientific literature on the psychology of war. More recently, however, behavioral scientists have developed a greater involvement in this area, which was most recently the province of academic political science and public policy studies.

The majority of the publications on Google Scholar for the period of 2014-2021 mainly cover the following themes: information war, hybrid Russian-Ukrainian

<sup>1</sup> The Office of General Prosecutor. URL: <https://www.gp.gov.ua/>

<sup>2</sup> Frésard Jean-Jacques. The roots of behaviour in war. Geneva, 2004. 120 p.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. P. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Kaldor M. New and Old Wars. Stanford University Press, 1999. P. 35-36.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. P. 36

<sup>6</sup> Frésard Jean-Jacques. The roots of behaviour in war. Geneva, 2004. P.37.

war, undeclared Russian-Ukrainian war in Donbas. But limited research has been done by Ukrainian scholars to represent socio-psychological and behavioural issues of the war, the causes of the violence and the cruelty toward the civilians.

**Goal statement.** The article aims to illustrate the types and the roots of behaviour that were prevalent in the past and are common in the Russian-Ukrainian war at present.

Research question – What is the relationship between human aggressiveness, cruel behaviour and the phenomenon of war?

This research is based on readings, interviews, documents, personal accounts, videos, academic articles, and statistics released by the Office of General Prosecutor and the Security Department of Ukraine.

**Analysis of recent research and publications, which have initiated problem solution, the author relies on.** The cruelty of crimes in Ukraine, especially after the Russian troops left such towns as Bucha, Borodyanka, and Irpin, brought up the question: Does the essence of war generate atrocity and brutality? The answers can be found by researching the appropriate literature. Vincent Desportes states that war is conducive to criminal behaviour: “Violence is consubstantial with war, which is a legitimate way of expressing violence. The primary instrument of war is the use of force in the form of organized violence, whether real or virtual. It is through violence, or the threat of violence, that the will of the adversary is subdued”<sup>7</sup>.

“Machiavelli observed the behaviour of men in war and concluded that this was the primary explanation of the difficulty in controlling the phenomenon; violence, the basic expression of war, has an effect on human psychology, and hence on the course of conflicts. He, therefore, stresses, in both *The Prince* and the *Discourses*, the importance of the instruction and the discipline which make it easier to maintain control over events (...). These measures are, however, not sufficient and have to be backed up by the fear of punishment. He commends Hannibal, whose inhuman cruelty, together with his infinite other virtues enabled him to exert permanent authority over a very great army, made up of men of many different nations”<sup>8</sup>.

The author of “The Roots of behaviour in war” reports: “Dehumanization of the enemy often takes a particular form among the military. The extent to which armed groups make a cult of virility is well known. Military vocabulary is full of derogatory expressions used to designate young recruits and the nervous or cowardly. Quite naturally, the enemy comes in for even worse treatment. Not only his humanity but also his virility

is denied. This is doubtless an explanation for the fact that combatants often emasculate or otherwise sexually mutilate enemy soldiers, and even dead bodies”<sup>9</sup>.

Rape is an inherent part of any war. Most of the victims of the Russian-Ukrainian war were first brutally raped and then killed. They were girls and boys the age as young as 5-10 years old and males, females up to the age of 70 and even older. “Rape, when used as a weapon of war, can probably also be attributed, at least in part, to this type of behaviour. In this culture of contempt, military training frequently “creates a link between sexuality and violence. Very consciously, the association between sexual potency, the penis and the gun is encouraged. It is well known that in dictatorships the idea is systematically propagated that women belong to one of two groups: on the one hand, mothers of the homeland who must be respected, and on the other, whores”<sup>10</sup>.

“The soldier-warrior could kill his collective enemy, which now included women and children, without ever seeing them. The cries of the wounded and dying went unheard by those who inflicted the pain. A man might slay hundreds and never see their blood flow... The combatants in modern warfare pitch bombs from 20,000 feet in the morning, causing untold suffering to a civilian population, and then eat hamburgers for dinner hundreds of miles away from the drop zone”<sup>11</sup>.

Many tortured people whose corpses were found in Bucha were blindfolded, with tied hands and shot on their heads from behind. Here is what we can find in the literature:

“The essence of the whole physical distance spectrum may simply revolve around the degree to which the killer can see the face of the victim. There appears to be a kind of intuitive understanding of this process in our cultural image of back shooting and backstabbing as cowardly acts, and it seems that soldiers intuitively understand that when they turn their backs, they are more apt to be killed by the enemy. This same enabling process explains why Nazi, Communist, and gangland executions are traditionally conducted with a bullet in the back of the head, and why individuals being executed by hanging or firing squad are blindfolded or hooded”<sup>12</sup>.

“We know from Miron and Goldstein’s research that the risk of death for a kidnap victim is much greater if the victim is hooded. In each of these instances, the presence of the hood or blindfold ensures that the execution is completed and serves to protect the mental health of the executioners. Not having to look at the face of the victim provides a form of psychological distance that

<sup>7</sup> Desportes V. *Comprendre la guerre*. Economica, Paris, 2001. 416 p.

<sup>8</sup> Frésard Jean-Jacques. *The roots of behaviour in war*. Geneva, 2004. P.109.

<sup>9</sup> Frésard Jean-Jacques. *The roots of behaviour in war*. Geneva, 2004. P.48.

<sup>10</sup> Boppel, *Pourquoi les hommes torturent*, Amnesty International, May 1993, quoted by Eric David.

<sup>11</sup> Grossman D. *On killing*. Little, Brown & Co., New York, Toronto, London, 1996. 366 p.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

enables the execution party and assists in their subsequent denial and the rationalization and acceptance of having killed a fellow human being. The eyes are the window of the soul, and if one does not have to look into the eyes when killing, it is much easier to deny the humanity of the victim. The eyes bulging out “like prawns” and blood shooting out of the mouth are not seen. The victim remains faceless, and one never needs to know one’s victim as a person. And the price most killers have to pay for a close-range kill – the memory of the “face terrible, twisted in pain and hate, yes such hate” – this price need never be paid if we can simply avoid looking at our victim’s face”<sup>13</sup>.

The author of the book “On killing” Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman provides examples of some associations and connections between sex and killing. “The linkage between sex and killing becomes unpleasantly apparent when we enter the realm of warfare. Many societies have long recognized the existence of this twisted region in which battle, like sex, is a milestone in adolescent masculinity. Yet the sexual aspects of killing continue beyond the region in which both are thought to be rites of manhood and into the area in which killing becomes like sex and sex like killing”<sup>14</sup>. He tells about “one American soldier compared the killings to the closely linked guilt and satisfaction that accompany masturbation. The Israeli military psychologist Ben Shalit touched on this relationship when he described some of his observations of combat: releasing a hail of bullets gives enormous pleasure and satisfaction. These are the pleasures of combat, not in terms of the intellectual planning, but of the primal aggression, the release, and the orgasmic discharge”.

“The concept of sex as a process of domination and defeat is closely related to the lust for rape and the trauma associated with the rape victim. Thrusting the sexual appendage (the penis) deep into the body of the victim can be perversely linked to thrusting the killing appendage (a bayonet or knife) deep into the body of the victim”<sup>15</sup>.

“The demoralization is characterized by a violent invasion of the interior of the victim’s body, which thereby constitutes an attack upon the intimate self and dignity of the individual human being”<sup>16</sup>.

“War and rape, and rape in war, are concepts strongly interconnected historically, mythologically and culturally. War is a setting in which looting and rape are two sides of the same coin. Rape in war is a metaphor for the barbarism of war, and a direct manifestation of the misuse of power and violence unleashed by war. Rape is

a metaphor for political acts”<sup>17</sup>. Georges Vigarello wrote that there are certain contexts, such as wars and revolutions, where rape and sexual violence against women and girls were seen as so inherent that these acts did not seem worthy of criminal prosecution<sup>18</sup>.

Sexual torture is intended to instil fear and humiliation. Joni Seager (1997) reports the systematic rape of women and children by soldiers in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burma, Cambodia, India, Iraq, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines during the 1980s and 1990s.

Another example of how rape has been employed as a strategic weapon in making people flee their homes can be found in two reports focusing on the situation in Kashmir in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Asia Watch 1993<sup>19</sup>, 1994<sup>20</sup>). This territory, which covers the northern part of India and Pakistan, is inhabited by a predominantly Muslim population and has been the site of Indian/Pakistan controversy ever since Pakistan’s independence. According to an Asia Watch report from 1993, rape by the Indian security forces has been used as a tactical weapon to humiliate and punish the entire community to which the individual woman belongs (Asia Watch 1993:1). In addition to identifying in detail where most rape has taken place since 1990, the report includes several personal testimonies from victims. The recommendations of the report strongly urge that the pattern of impunity be stopped; even though rape is punishable under Indian law, no police officers or members of the security forces have been convicted of rape (Asia Watch 1993: 5–6).

Systematic rape occurred in the conflicts in Angola, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda in the 1980s and 1990s as well. The widespread practice of genital mutilation in Somali culture adds to the physical injuries caused by the rape. For many of these women, being raped has destroyed the possibility of having children.

“The Political Psychology of War Rape: Studies from Bosnia and Herzegovina” by Inger Skjelsbæk provides a conceptual framework for understanding war rape and its impact, through empirical examination of the case of Bosnia. Providing a contextual understanding of sexual violence in war and situating Bosnian war rape concerning subsequent conflicts, the book offers a methodological outline of how sexual violence in war can be studied from a political-psychological perspective. It presents empirical findings from the field that

<sup>13</sup> Grossman D. *On killing*. Little, Brown & Co., New York, Toronto, London, 1996. p.128.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* P. 136.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* P. 137.

<sup>16</sup> Goldstein, Joshua S. *War and Gender*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. P. 362-363.

<sup>17</sup> Skjelsbæk I. *The Political Psychology of War Rape: Studies from Bosnia and Herzegovina*. London & New York, 2012. P. 48.

<sup>18</sup> Vigarello G. *A History of Rape: Sexual Violence in France from the 16th to the 20th Century*. Cambridge: Polity, 2001. 320 p.

<sup>19</sup> Asia Watch. *Rape in Kashmir: A Crime of War*. New York and Boston: Asia Watch and Physicians for Human Rights. 1993:1.

<sup>20</sup> Asia Watch. *The Human Rights Crisis in Kashmir: A Pattern of Impunity*. New York and Boston: Asia Watch and Physicians for Human Rights. 1994:5-6.

show what war rape can entail in the aftermath of armed conflict for victims and their community<sup>21</sup>.

**Presentation of research material with full justification of findings.** The behaviour of human beings is a very complex phenomenon. Various studies suggest that in general combatants are unwilling to kill, and have to be prepared, conditioned and drilled to overcome the neuropsychological mechanisms that make the act so difficult. It should not be assumed that those who commit acts of cruelty in wartime are all monsters and psychopaths. Such “animals” exist but it seems obvious that the great majority of those who commit acts contrary to International Humanitarian Law are quite ordinary people.

Philippe Masson writes: “Contrary to an opinion too often held, the fighting spirit is not innate. It does not appear to be inherent to men. Experience shows that only a minority is capable of fighting in all or certain circumstances. Most men prove to be incapable of using a weapon and remain totally passive in a combat situation”<sup>22</sup>. On this point Dave Grossman’s book *On Killing*<sup>23</sup> is already a classic and is riveting from beginning to end. It offers replies to the countless questions that arise as to the circumstances that can prompt a human individual to take the life of another, the conditions necessary for such an act to become possible, and the consequences for the killer, even when the act is socially legitimate.

As Van Creveld says: “Most soldiers are not criminals, and criminals have never made good soldiers”<sup>24</sup>. Claude Barrois points out that two aspects of a warrior’s honour are peculiar to him. “The first concerns the obligation to fight only an armed adversary, on an equal footing. A victory over an enemy who has been disarmed or is in an inferior position would be dishonourable...The point of honour forbids a warrior from taking any action not only against disarmed adversaries, prisoners and the wounded but also against the civilian population and its most vulnerable members: children, the elderly and women”<sup>25</sup>.

The Russian army fought women, children, and the elderly in the Chechen Republic. The story is repeated now in Ukraine. They torture the captives. They attack by fire humanitarian corridors. They are breaking all rules of war. 9247 war crimes are reported by the Office of the General Prosecutor of Ukraine.

What are the roots of this behaviour? We have been analyzing the reports from the Security Department of Ukraine, interviews with the witnesses, videos shot at the place of fighting, intercepted conversations between

Russian combatants and their families and the following causes were identified.

1. Consuming of drugs and alcohol by Russian soldiers was reported by Ukrainian civilians and warriors, which can cause aggressive, distorted behaviour. The used syringes, stolen alcohol from the shops and from people’s homes were mentioned.

2. The cruel behaviour can be generated by extremely violent emotions such as fear or the thirst for revenge. Some captive Russians report that they didn’t know the truth about the essence of the “military operation” when they were sent to fight in Ukraine. They are stunned by the losses of their troops. “The deaths of friends and comrades can stun, paralyze, and emotionally defeat soldiers. But in many circumstances, soldiers react with anger (which is one of the well-known response stages to death and dying), and then the loss of comrades can enable killing”<sup>26</sup>. It seems that when a man has killed once, killing becomes easier. The pain of losing a comrade turns into hatred, and the combatant can develop a sort of indifference to the death of an enemy. Some may find satisfaction, or even pleasure, in the killing. But combatants who do have these feelings run the risk of mental collapse, often after the end of hostilities.

3. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish civilians from combatants, so it is seen as preferable to attack the civilian population of the adverse party as this is the most effective way of getting rid of the enemy, and it is less dangerous than attacking the enemy combatants. “Being able to identify your victim as a combatant is important to the rationalization that occurs after the kill. If a soldier kills a child, a woman, or anyone who does not represent a potential threat, then he has entered the realm of murder (as opposed to a legitimate, sanctioned combat kill), and the rationalization process becomes quite difficult. Even if he kills in self-defense, there is enormous resistance associated with killing an individual who is not normally associated with relevance or a payoff”<sup>27</sup>.

4. Ideological reasons. In war, combatants must be convinced that their cause is just, that the enemy is horrible and that the truth is on their side. If they decide to use means that go beyond those authorized by the law of armed conflict, they often have to attribute their behaviour to ideologies that provide them with justifications. The ideological reasons are based on the conviction that the nation is fighting for its very survival (V. Putin repeatedly reported that Ukraine threatens Russian security). The destruction of fascism and nationalism were mentioned as the reasons for this war. Hatred, accompanied by demonization, of the enemy was drawn up.

5. This image of Nazis and Banderivtsi in Ukraine has been created for decades in the Russian federation. In the result, we see that 70-80% of the population approve

<sup>21</sup> Skjelsbæk I. *The Political Psychology of War Rape: Studies from Bosnia and Herzegovina*. London & New York, 2012. 172 p.

<sup>22</sup> Masson Ph. *L’homme en guerre*, Ed. du Rocher, Paris, 1997. 383 p.

<sup>23</sup> Grossman D. *On killing*. Little, Brown & Co., New York, Toronto, London, 1996. 366 p.

<sup>24</sup> Van Creveld M. *Men, Women and War*. Cassell PLC, London, 2002. 288 p.

<sup>25</sup> Barrois C. *Psychanalyse du Guerrier*. Hachette, Paris, 1993. 322 p.

<sup>26</sup> Grossman D. *On killing*. Little, Brown & Co., New York, Toronto, London, 1996. 366 p.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* P. 174.

of Putin's actions. In the article "Russia's propaganda machine is so powerful that many Russians don't even realize they're in a disinformation bubble"<sup>28</sup>, the authors state that "Western leaders are urging Russian citizens to access independent and verified news about the ongoing war in Ukraine as Russia ramps up its invasion and corresponding disinformation campaign. On April 6, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson called on Russians to obtain VPNs to access international media outlet. Russia shuttered independent news outlets at the start of the war and imposed new, stricter censorship laws that have restricted the Russian public's already-limited access to verified outside information".

"If your propaganda machine can convince your soldiers that their opponents are not really human but are "inferior forms of life", then their natural resistance to killing their own species will be reduced"<sup>29</sup>. The adolescent soldier against whom such propaganda is directed is desperately trying to rationalize what he is being forced to do, and he is, therefore, predisposed to believe this nonsense.

What a hypocrisy and lie from Putin and Lavrov to report that the massacre in Bucha and Irpin are just staged footage, a fake, or that it was done by Ukrainian troops. And the majority of Russians would rather believe that untruth than think out of the TV box.

Those not numerous independent TV channels which broadcasted true factual information (such as "Dozhd" – rain) were closed long ago. Russians who oppose the government and dare to protest against the war in Ukraine are caught and imprisoned.

6. Psychosociological reasons should also be considered while trying to figure out the causes of the violence in this meaningless war. Some which are regularly encountered in times of armed conflict can be identified: obedience to orders; group influence; deliberately maintained vagueness as to the line between what is permitted and what is prohibited; permissiveness: leaders tolerate or even encourage unlawful conduct, giving the impression that the enemy must be beaten by all possible means. According to Grossman<sup>30</sup>, many studies have shown that men in combat situations are not usually motivated by ideology or hatred, or even fear, but by group pressure: regard for their comrades, respect for their leaders, concern to preserve their own reputation and to contribute to the successes of the group. Konrad Lorenz<sup>31</sup> sums up this in one sentence: "man is not a killer, but the group is". Grossman supports the view:

<sup>28</sup> Snodgrass E., Al-Arshani S. Russia's propaganda machine is so powerful that many Russians don't even realize they're in a disinformation bubble. Business insider India. 20 April, 2022. URL: <https://www.msn.com/en-in/news/world/russia-s-propaganda-machine-is-so-powerful-that-many-russians-don-t-even-realize-they-re-in-a-disinformation-bubble/ar-AAWn4q6?ocid>

<sup>29</sup> Grossman D. On killing. Little, Brown & Co., New York, Toronto, London, 1996. P. 161.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 366 p.

<sup>31</sup> Lorenz K. On Aggression. MJF Books, New York, 1997.

"Among groups in combat, this accountability (to one's friend) and anonymity (to reduce one's sense of personal responsibility for killing) combine to play a significant role in enabling killing". Transforming a civilian into a combatant means inducing him as quickly as possible to adopt the rules and values of the group to which he will be attached, to suppress a part of his individuality, and to ensure his submission to authority.

The French sociologist Gustave Le Bon<sup>32</sup> noted that the group acquires several characteristics: it has a feeling of power connected with its number; its members lose their sense of individual responsibility; and sentiments can be communicated within the group through an almost hypnotic form of "contagion". Groups like to adopt extreme attitudes: suspicions become certainties, and antipathy easily turns into hatred. Finally, groups respect force, want their leaders to be strong, are resistant to innovation and are often respectful of tradition.

In addition to creating a sense of accountability, groups also enable killing through developing in their members a sense of anonymity that contributes further to violence. All crowding has an intensifying effect. If aggression exists, it will become more so as a result of crowding. It has been shown by some studies that a mirror in front of an aggressor tends to increase his aggression if he was disposed to be aggressive.

7. Particular armies are prone to extreme violence. According to an article in Le Monde, Russian army officers sometimes commit extremely violent acts against their own men. "Ragging or hazing results in about 3,000 deaths (murders and suicides) per year among young soldiers, and some 40,000 servicemen desert from the Russian army every year, partly because of the ill-treatment to which they are reportedly subjected. There are many reasons for this state of affairs, but certain analysts believe that the behaviour of the army in Chechnya and before that in Afghanistan is not unconnected with these occurrences. As far as we are concerned, one thing is obvious: how can combatants who undergo hazing, humiliation and brutality at the hands of their own superiors be expected to show respect for IHL in their behaviour towards their enemies"<sup>33</sup>?

8. Two classic experiments in social psychology should be mentioned as they will help to identify more roots of violent behaviour. Stanley Milgram's research and experiments are fundamental<sup>34</sup>. Milgram's work was an attempt to understand how an individual behaves when a legitimate authority asks him to take action against a third party. The Milgram obedience study showed that ordinary people if encouraged by an authority figure were willing to shock their fellow citizens with what they believed to be painful and poten-

<sup>32</sup> Le Bon G. Psychologie des foules, PUF, Paris, 2002. 132 p.

<sup>33</sup> Natalie Nougayrède, 8 January 2003. Le Monde.

<sup>34</sup> Baron R., Misra G. Psychology. 5 th edition. Pearson. 2016, P. 578-579.

tially lethal levels of electricity. A decade later Stanford Prison Experiment by Philip Zimbardo revealed the ease with which regular people if given too much power, could transform into ruthless oppressors, how readily they conform to the social roles they are expected to play.

Soldiers have to obey the orders they are given. They know that they are liable to severe punishment if they fail to obey those orders. This suggests that their submission to authority will be much stronger than that seen in Milgram's experiments. "Obedience and conformity both refer to the abdication of the initiative to an external source. But they differ in the following important ways:

- Hierarchy. Obedience to authority occurs within a hierarchical structure in which the actor feels that the person above has the right to prescribe behavior. Conformity regulates the behavior among those of equal status; obedience links one status to another.

- Imitation. Conformity leads to homogenization of behaviour, as the influenced person comes to adopt the behaviour of peers. In obedience, there is compliance without imitation of the influencing source. A soldier does not simply repeat an order given to him but carries it out.

- Explicitness. In obedience, the prescription for action is explicit, taking the form of an order or command. In conformity, the requirement of going along with the group often remains implicit. Indeed, many subjects would resist an explicit demand by group members to conform, for the situation is defined as one consisting of equals who have no right to order each other about.

- Voluntarism. The clearest distinction between obedience and conformity, however, occurs after the fact – that is, in the manner in which subjects explain their behavior. Subjects embrace obedience as the explanation of their actions"<sup>35</sup>.

The fundamental point in Milgram's findings is the change that occurs in the individual when he enters what Milgram calls the "agentic state". When the individual becomes part of a system of authority, he no longer sees himself as responsible for his acts, but rather as an agent executing the wishes of someone else.

The power of the military authority is stronger, there is less margin for disobedience, and the institutional constraints are greater. At the same time, the combatant's motivation is also stronger, because "punishing" an enemy is regarded as a worthy and legitimate act, especially as the enemy has usually been designated as responsible for the violence inflicted on him. Moreover, the enemy is a source of danger for the combatant.

"In killing circumstances, we can see that it was the demand for killing actions from a leader that was the decisive factor. Never underestimate the power of the need to obey. Some leaders choose to fight to their deaths, taking their men with them in a blaze of glory. In many ways, it is easier for the leader if he can die quickly

and cleanly with his men and need never live with what he has done. A tremendous volume of research indicates that the primary factor that motivates a soldier to do the things that no sane man wants to do in combat (that is, killing and dying) is not the force of self-preservation but a powerful sense of accountability to his comrades on the battlefield"<sup>36</sup>.

9. To continue with the causes of the cruel behaviour of the Russian invaders one more psychological phenomenon should be mentioned. Psychologists point out that diffusion of responsibility can be caused by the anonymity created in a crowd. It has been demonstrated in dozens of studies that bystanders will be less likely to interfere. In large crowds, horrendous crimes can occur, but the likelihood of a bystander interfering is very low. In the same way, groups can provide a diffusion of responsibility that will enable soldiers in military units to commit acts that they would never do as individuals, acts such as lynching or shooting someone.

If a soldier feels he shares in the killing process diffusing his personal responsibility by giving each individual a part of the guilt, then killing can be easier. In general, the more members in the group, the more psychologically bonded the group, and the more the group is in close proximity, the more powerful the enabling can be.

10. Reasons relating to the individual should be considered as well. As it was noticed in the book "The roots of behaviour in war"<sup>37</sup>, there are some people, who take pleasure in the suffering of others. "Such sadistic tendencies do exist, and they find expression more freely in conflict situations. But war can also give free rein to the impulses that many people harbour, such as the wish to feel powerful or to act out certain fantasies. The individuals concerned are not necessarily psychopaths, but more often very ordinary men whom the circumstances turn into oppressors. This capacity that men have to be transformed from decent citizens into despicable villains is an oft-cited mystery of human nature. Should this be termed sadism, or perhaps cruelty? Should we focus our attention on cruelty, rather than on certain violations of IHL that are of lesser gravity? But how can cruelty be defined?"

Véronique Nahoum-Grappe, who has written about the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, offers some pertinent thoughts on the subject. "Unlike the victim of a merely violent act, the victim of cruelty is always innocent and helpless. Cruelty has an aesthetic that allows its meaning to be erased, and the content of its programme of action holds no surprises: the body of the innocent victim, honour and modesty, and finally the inner, sacred light which shines from deep in the eyes of any individual and which is his most precious possession, that is the target of cruelty. Death is too easy a fate

<sup>35</sup> Milgram S. *Obedience to Authority*. Harper & Row, New York, 1974. P.114-115.

<sup>36</sup> Grossman D. *On killing*. Little, Brown & Co., New York, Toronto, London, 1996. P. 146.

<sup>37</sup> Frésard Jean-Jacques. *The roots of behaviour in war*. Geneva, 2004. 120 p.

for the victim, who has to endure whatever may come. What the tormentor seeks is to witness pain, the pain that consumes body and soul when the victim's child, loved one, or carefully cherished home is desecrated. Cruelty is therefore a technique specifically intended to cause mental suffering in the victim. The aim of violence is destruction or the acknowledgment of defeat, while the aim of cruelty is the annihilation which is the reverse of death, a dismantling of the personality whose vector goes back to the primal seed, the very root deep in a mother's breast, the mother whose sexuality is also a traditional target for the crime of desecration, at least by word. Rape, like all other forms of sexual torture, is the prime example of the crime of desecration, which seeks to pervert the bond of filiation and thus to harm even those as yet unborn. The resulting pain and humiliation, worse than death, are wounds which pierce the very depths of the human psyche"<sup>38</sup>. Some intercepted mobile conversations between Russian invaders and their relatives prove that there are mentally ill people among those fighting Ukrainian civilians.

11. Exhumation of those who perished in Bucha, Irpin, Borodyanka and other cities of Ukraine revealed the horrible truth: the innocent civilians among whom there were a lot of small children were tortured and raped before the deadly shot. The use of sexual violence in the war zone is too widespread, too frequent.

The research literature on these crimes emphasizes that sexual violence is carried out to humiliate or destroy the identity of the victim and that this is how the violence constituted a weapon of war the female body constitutes another battlefield where ethnic conflict can be fought, where a woman's sexual identity – in conjunction with her political and religious national identity – is the main target for the actions being carried out<sup>39</sup>. The war rapes happen under extraordinary violent and potentially fatal circumstances.

"The war zone, in general, is a place of increased gender polarization. Women represent stability, future prospects and peace. The image of women taking care of the home and family while men are called to fight serves to legitimize the war as such: he is fighting to protect his family and to secure the (peaceful) future for his children. Rape against women in the war zone can therefore be regarded as an attack on current, and future, family formations – in other words, rape can be seen as an attack on the mere legitimization of the male fight because it demonstrates the man's inability to protect his family and home"<sup>40</sup>.

In her book "Men, Women and Rape" Brownmiller writes that rape has always accompanied wars of religion and revolution; it has been a weapon of terror and revenge, as well as a way of relieving boredom. Her analysis shows that the function of rape in war is multifaceted, but in all its forms a definitive characteristic is that it generally takes place unanswered: war creates opportunities for rape to be carried out with impunity by the majority of its perpetrators<sup>41</sup>.

Seifert formulated five hypotheses about sexual violence in war.<sup>42</sup> First, she argues that sexual violence can be seen as an integral part of warfare. Throughout history, Seifert says, there has always been violence against women in the conquered territory. Sexual violence becomes part of a repertoire of actions and behaviours that male soldiers are socialized to perform. It does not mean that all male soldiers will do this, but it is part of a general conceptualization of warfare. Second, sexual violence can be seen as an element of male communication, as the symbolic humiliation of a male opponent. This is based on the understanding that men protect women and that a woman is a man's possession. When, in a conflict situation, a man rapes a woman of the "other side", this act communicates that the husband/father of the woman is unable to protect not only the individual woman but also his property, his country, his nation, etc. Third, sexual violence can be seen as a way of reaffirming masculinity. One way of ensuring masculine solidarity among soldiers is to exclude women and homosexuals from the military. Militaries need "real" men and being a real man in this context means being able to suppress feelings of insecurity, gentleness and other characteristics commonly considered feminine. A combination of these processes of masculinization might make it easier for men to commit sexual violence in war situations. As an example, the majority of testimonies of raped women in Bosnia reveal that they were subjected to gang rape (Bennett et al.)<sup>43</sup>. Group pressure makes it difficult for an individual soldier to refuse to rape because this reveals "weakness". He would deviate from the militaristic heterosexual norm.

Fourth, sexual violence can be seen as a way of destroying the culture of the opponent. Women are often seen as the biological bearers of a given culture or ethnic group. When their procreative abilities have been manipulated, either by forced pregnancy or by making it impossible for girls to have children in the future, the biological basis for a given nation is destroyed.

<sup>38</sup> Véronique Nahoum-Grappe: "Violence politique et cruauté: Réflexion sur un écart" in Cahiers de la Villa Gillet, No. 16, 2002.

<sup>39</sup> Skjelsbæk I. *The Political Psychology of War Rape: Studies from Bosnia and Herzegovina*. London & New York, 2012. 172 p.

<sup>40</sup> Skjelsbæk I. *The Political Psychology of War Rape: Studies from Bosnia and Herzegovina*. London & New York, 2012. P. 36-37

<sup>41</sup> Brownmiller S. *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*. London: Penguin., 1991. 480 p.

<sup>42</sup> Seifert R. 'War and Rape: A Preliminary Analysis', in Alexandra Stiglmayer (ed.) *Mass Rape: The War Against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1994. Pp. 54-72.

<sup>43</sup> Bennett O., Bexley J., and Warnock K. *Arms To Fight, Arms To Protect: Women Speak Out about Conflict*. London: Panos., 1995.

Beverly<sup>44</sup> characterizes this as genocidal rape. She says that the identity of the individual woman is reduced to her procreative abilities; the cultural identity of the woman is ignored. While some authors argue that sexual violence in times of war should be seen as a gender or sex crime, others say that it should be regarded as a crime of ethnicity, women targeted because they belong to specific ethnic groups.

Cheryl<sup>45</sup> outlined different political purposes that sexual violence can have: first, it facilitates ethnic cleansing by increasing the incentive to flee; second, it demoralizes the opponent; third, it signals an intention to break up society; fourth, it inflicts trauma and contributes to psychological damage by the opposing side; fifth, it gives psychological benefits to the perpetrators; and finally sixth, it inflicts a blow against the collective enemy by striking at a group with high symbolic value.

The role of masculinity and men requires further study. This is important concerning two themes: male victims and male perpetrators. Obtaining more data on men's experiences with sexual violence in armed conflict encounters many of the same challenges as general data collection. There might be a greater need to involve more men in research on this theme if we are to get better access to data because it might be easier for male victims to talk to male researchers. Today it is predominantly women who study sexual violence in war, but this might well change in the coming years as international attention, as well as research prestige linked to these themes, increases. There is also clearly a need to have psychosocial and medical help organized in a way that caters to male needs for support.

One major conclusion that emerges is the finding that war rape must be understood as a violent relationship in which the offender is masculinized and the victim feminized. In this process, other identities linked to the masculinized perpetrators and the feminized victims are sexualized in a hierarchical fashion, where power follows masculinization and powerlessness follows feminization. This means that the use of rape in war not only represents a violent hierarchical relationship between the male perpetrator and the female victim but also situates other identities in the political power struggle in a similar way.

The process of masculinization and feminization on which war rapes are based confirms the claim made by feminist scholars within peace and conflict studies that war polarizes gender relations in hierarchical and patriarchal ways, but takes the argument one step further. How masculinization and feminization polarize other identities are intimately linked to the overall conflict

structure, and it is this mechanism that can make rape a powerful weapon of war.

12. There is such a thing as a "natural soldier": the kind who derives his greatest satisfaction from male companionship, excitement, and the conquering of physical obstacles<sup>46</sup>. "He doesn't want to kill people as such, but he will have no objections if it occurs within a moral framework that justifies him, like war, and if it is the price of gaining admission to the kind of environment he craves. Most of such men end up in armies (and many move on again to become mercenaries, because regular army life in peacetime is too routine and boring)... there is 2 percent of the male population that, if pushed or if given a legitimate reason, will kill without regret or remorse".

A famous scientist Konrad Lorenz<sup>47</sup> who studied not only the animal world but the humans' behaviour too, wrote that aggression is a natural feeling for people. What are the conditions that enable combatants to kill the enemy with ease and hatred? The first and most obvious is the physical distance between the combatant and his target. It is easier to kill someone from a distance and it is easier to drop bombs on a town from an aircraft than to take part in a firing squad. As Lorenz remarked, because of this physical distance, which is becoming greater with technological developments, the safety mechanism that exists in the animal world no longer comes into play. Men kill with relative ease at a distance because that distance blinds them to the humanity of their target. Emotional distance is just as important as physical distance.

There is no war in which the enemy is not demonized in every imaginable way: by casting doubt on his membership of the human race; by accusing him of committing the most heinous atrocities; and by giving him degrading nicknames. Unless the humanity of the enemy is denied, unless he is portrayed as part of a faceless mass war becomes more difficult. This emotional distance is created by exaggerating the differences that exist between various human groupings and by multiplying chains of command to reduce individual responsibility.

Another way of creating a distance between the enemy and oneself is to legalize and legitimize the reasons prompting one's own side to go to war (wars are always declared to be defensive and merely a response to enemy aggression).

"The soldier who does kill must overcome that part of him that says that he is a murderer of women and children, a foul beast who has done the unforgivable. He must deny the guilt within him, and he must assure himself that the world is not mad, that his victims are less than animals, that they are evil vermin, and that what his nation and his leaders have told him to do is right. He

<sup>44</sup> Beverly A. *Rape Warfare: The Hidden Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia*. Minneapolis, MI: University of Minnesota Press., 1996.

<sup>45</sup> Cheryl B. 'Rape as Terror: The Case of Bosnia', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 1994, 6(1): 29-43.

<sup>46</sup> Grossman D. *On killing*. Little, Brown & Co., New York, Toronto, London, 1996. 366 p.

<sup>47</sup> Lorenz K. *On Aggression*. MJF Books, New York, 1997.



must believe that not only is this atrocity right, but it is proof that he is morally, socially, and culturally superior to those whom he has killed. It is the ultimate act of denial of their humanity. It is the ultimate act of affirmation of his superiority. And the killer must violently suppress any dissonant thought that he has done anything wrong. Further, he must violently attack anyone or anything that would threaten his beliefs. His mental health is totally invested in believing that what he has done is good and right<sup>48</sup>.

War makes it possible for the individual to act out all his fantasies. By definition, it removes all obstacles, all restraints, all taboos, all the laws that restrict action. During a war, all impulses can be given free rein. Everyone can indulge his own form of “madness” without risking any punishment, whether penal or moral. It is not a matter of justifying a course of conduct but of explaining it. Why, in this context of total impunity and legalization of criminal behaviour, should anyone feel guilty? Depression and mental disorders derive from the impossibility of acting out our fantasies, which are repressed by civilization. We are talking here about primal desires or instincts that have been contained for millennia<sup>49</sup>.

In “Unspeakable Acts, Ordinary People”, John Conroy<sup>50</sup> looks at the phenomenon of torture in various societies. He lists the successive stages through which a society that has known and tolerated acts of torture committed in its name passes. These stages are universal.

1st stage: denial. Nothing has happened; it is all lies (it has been repeated a hundred of times by Putin and his people).

2nd stage: abuses are minimized. There is no talk of torture, only of thorough interrogation (remember the denial of all their crimes committed in Ukraine).

3rd stage: the denigration of the victims. They are terrorists, criminals who themselves do not hesitate to resort to the most reprehensible practices.

4th stage: recourse to exceptional methods is justified by asserting that they are effective and appropriate in the circumstances.

5th stage: society turns on those who criticize the use of torture, describing them as enemies of the State.

6th stage: a halt to the use of torture is declared.

7th stage: the blame is shifted to certain individuals, who are said to have exceeded their orders (it will be done soon as predicted by the analysts).

8th stage: it is pointed out that others, elsewhere, have used or are still using even more brutal methods.

This enumeration is of particular interest because the same justification systems are used, on both individual and collective levels, to “explain” other atrocities com-

mitted in wartime. The gravity of the facts is denied or minimized. Those who denounce them are traitors or are naïve enough to be manipulated by the enemy. It is the enemy himself who is responsible for the treatment inflicted on him.

Barrois depicts the portrait of the warrior: “Being a warrior means agreeing to give up the rights and prerogatives that a civilian sees as essential for his freedom as a citizen. This means: absolute obedience to the orders issued by his superiors, with the corresponding loss of freedom, in the name of honour; the possible exercise of authority, as soon as he rises in the ranks; unconditional acceptance of combat missions which often involve the need to eliminate physically, that is, to kill, the enemy, the possibility of being killed himself, and the avoidance of unnecessary loss of life, be it of friends or foes, by seeking to demoralize rather than to destroy the enemy”<sup>51</sup>.

When all is said and done, if weapons-bearers commit abuses, in most cases it is not because they have lost all moral sense. It must be understood that the nature of an individual in an “agentic state” has changed. Appealing to his conscience or his moral values in an effort to influence him will have very little effect because his own values are not involved. His behaviour will depend first and foremost on what is dictated by the authority which he perceives as legitimate.

There is strong evidence that there exists a genetic predisposition for aggression. There are also environmental processes that can fully develop this predisposition toward aggression; when we combine this genetic predisposition with environmental development we get a killer. But there is another factor: the presence or absence of empathy for others. Again, there may be biological and environmental causes for this empathic process, but, whatever its origin, there is undoubtedly a division in humanity between those who can feel and understand the pain and suffering of others and those who cannot. The presence of aggression, combined with the absence of empathy, results in sociopathy. The presence of aggression, combined with the presence of empathy, results in a completely different kind of individual from the sociopath.

“When people become angry, or frightened, they stop thinking with their forebrain (the mind of a human being) and start thinking with their midbrain (which is indistinguishable from the mind of an animal). They are literally “scared out of their wits”<sup>52</sup>. When soldiers kill the enemy they appear to go through a series of emotional stages. The actual kill is usually described as being reflexive or automatic. Immediately after the kill, the soldier goes through a period of euphoria and elation, which is usually followed by a period of guilt and remorse.

<sup>48</sup> Grossman D. *On killing*. Little, Brown & Co., New York, Toronto, London, 1996. 366 p.

<sup>49</sup> Meney P. *Même les tueurs ont une mère*. La Table Ronde, Paris, 1986. 252 p.

<sup>50</sup> Conroy J. *Unspeakable Acts, Ordinary People*. New York, 2000. 315 p.

<sup>51</sup> Barrois C. *Psychanalyse du Guerrier*. Hachette, Paris, 1993. 322 p.

<sup>52</sup> Grossman D. *On killing*. Little, Brown & Co., New York, Toronto, London, 1996. 366 p.

So, as we see there are plenty of reasons which cause violent behaviour and turn an individual into a wild animal. The combatant's behaviour is not determined only by the parameters outlined above. His emotions, his personality and his cultural background will all have an influence on the behaviour, as they do for any individual in any circumstances.

With the relatively free access to the information on the Russian combatants, we know their places of birth, their social background, interests, families, way of life and much more. Some came from the poorest towns and villages where they didn't have the basic conveniences such as a washroom or central heating in a house. They are amazed by what they see in the homes of the average Ukrainian people. They burgle, steal and rob. Witnesses saw household items piled onto military vehicles as Russian forces left. Afterward, they send those gadgets, jewelry, clothes, and children's toys to their wives and mothers who approve not only this action but even killing and raping of the innocent civilians.

More than 5.1 million refugees had fled Ukraine, around half of them children. Millions more people have been internally displaced. Children in Ukraine are also at risk of human trafficking, they continue to be killed, wounded and deeply traumatized by the violence all around them. UNICEF is working to help vulnerable children and families with essentials.

As Russia continues its war against Ukraine, Amnesty International<sup>53</sup> is exposing violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, and gathering evidence on the ground from the devastation of Izium to the siege of Mariupol, from shelling in Kyiv to displaced people in Lviv. Russian President Vladimir Putin, his government and the Russian armed forces are desperate to hide the truth about the war, including the war crimes they are committing in Ukraine.

The laws of war prohibit wilful killing, torture and inhumane treatment of captured combatants and civilians in custody. Pillage or looting is also prohibited. Anyone who orders or deliberately commits such acts, or aids and abets them, is responsible for war crimes.

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/03/latest-news-on-russias-war-on-ukraine/>

Commanders of forces who knew or had reason to know about such crimes but did not attempt to stop them or punish those responsible are criminally liable for war crimes. More than 1100 bodies of killed civilians have been found in the Kyiv region alone. It is even impossible to calculate the quantity of perished in Mariupol and other cities of Ukraine and unfortunately, it's not the end of this war.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has called on all the organisation's member and observer states to urgently set up an ad hoc international criminal tribunal, with a mandate to "investigate and prosecute the crime of aggression allegedly committed by the political and military leadership of the Russian Federation". Hopefully, all these criminals with their leaders will get a fair sentence in the nearest future.

### Conclusions

To sum up, the study presented the direct relationship between human aggressiveness, cruel behaviour and the phenomenon of war, which was illustrated by the examples from different international conflicts including the Russian-Ukrainian war. The roots of violence were analyzed. The combatant's behaviour is determined by various reasons: violent emotions, such as fear or the thirst for revenge; consumption of drugs and alcohol; ideological reasons (combatants must be convinced that their cause is just, that the enemy is horrible and that the truth is on their side); disinformation campaign, propaganda machine, convincing soldiers that their opponents are not humans, but Banderivtsi; obedience to orders; group influence; permissiveness: leaders tolerate or even encourage unlawful conduct, giving the impression that the enemy must be beaten by all possible means. Particular armies are prone to extreme violence. Emotions, personality and cultural background have an influence on the behaviour of any individual in any circumstances.

The war crimes committed by the Russian army were discussed in this paper. The support of Ukraine by international organizations is observed, and hopes for the nearest fair punishment of the criminals have been expressed.

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