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# Moral Disengagement in “War Fever”: How Can We Resist?

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Alfred L. McAlister and Brittanie Wilczak

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## Introduction

War and other forms of collective violence are major causes of death, illness, and suffering worldwide (Ghobarah et al. 2004; Li and Wen 2005). An estimated 191 million people died as a result of military violence in the twentieth century, and the myriad public health costs of war continue to mount largely uncounted (WHO 2002; Sidel 2008). Notably, the consequences of military actions and war spread far beyond the suffering of soldiers and affected noncombatants. Excess military spending associated with making war and establishing a high level of military preparedness for war exert the highest toll on public health by taking funds that could be used for public health programs and social actions to alleviate or overcome poverty as diminishment in funds for those purposes stem from high levels of military spending (Hunt 2008; Zwi et al. 2008). In the USA, during the past decade, national resources

for public health action and research have been sharply curtailed, largely because of accrued debt related to this nation’s wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Stiglitz 2008), and many thousands of soldiers and noncombatants, and dependent family members, have died or have been given to lives of suffering because of these potentially avoidable military actions.

Theoretical explanations of the causes and prevention of military violence have been provided from economic, political, religious, and psychological disciplines (Sidel 2008; WHO 2002; McAlister and Vélez 1999). Disparate streams of research in media studies (Kellner 2002) and the politics of international negotiation (Hoffman et al. 2013) show the different ways in which societies can be enticed into support for military action. However, no coherent model has been articulated to explain the complex social psychological processes, acting at the collective level, that lead populations professing love for peace to provide popular support for military actions.

In this chapter, we review selected research on social psychological factors underlying the phenomenon of “war fever,” which we define here as *dangerous ways of thinking that justify the unnecessary use of military force, evade responsibility, minimize perceived consequences, and dehumanize enemies, leading to popular support for national actions that are later regretted*. There are many examples of largely regretted wars, ranging from the American war in Vietnam to the

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A.L. McAlister, Ph.D. (✉)  
Professor of Behavioral Sciences, University of Texas  
School of Public Health  
e-mail: [alfred.l.mcalister@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:alfred.l.mcalister@uth.tmc.edu)

B. Wilczak, M.P.H.  
Doctoral Student, University of Pittsburgh,  
School of Public Health  
e-mail: [Wilczak.b.m@gmail.com](mailto:Wilczak.b.m@gmail.com)

invasion of Iraq and, currently, the US-sponsored military actions in Afghanistan. In each of these conflicts, many look back and realize that the participating nations chose to go to war because of both deliberately misleading information from national leaders and dysfunctional thoughts about enemies and the consequences of using military force against them that, at the time, convinced a majority of their population that military action was preferable to diplomatic negotiation, economic sanctions, or other measures that do not require the use of lethal weapons on a mass scale. What exactly are the social psychological processes that engender public support for military actions that are later regretted? How can they be studied and acted on to make populations more resistant to leadership rhetoric and pressures from elite media sources that seek to build strong and emotional popular support for military attacks on another nation? Some answers may come from theorization and research that are here summarized.

### **Moral Disengagement and Support for Military Aggression**

The eminent psychologist Albert Bandura, as part of his “social cognitive theory” (Bandura 2001), provides a detailed articulation of the psychology behind guilt-free support for injurious aggression. According to his theory, in the development of moral agency, individuals construct standards of right and wrong that serve as guides for pro-social actions and deterrents for aggressive conduct. Individuals judge their conduct against these personal and collective standards and take perceived situational circumstances into account when they react to their own actions with “affective self-sanctions” (emotionally evaluative feelings and thoughts that correspond to what might be called *pride* or *guilt*) or the anticipation of these self-evaluative reactions (Bandura 1986, 1991). Thus, people do things that give them satisfaction, and a sense of self-worth, and refrain from behaving in ways that violate their moral standards, because such conduct will bring self-condemnation. It is through the ongoing exercise of these evaluative self-sanctions that moral conduct is regulated, including conduct that con-

forms to common social proscription of injurious aggression toward others.

However, the development of self-regulatory capabilities that restrain violence does not create an inflexible moral self-control system. Self-regulation of moral conduct does not operate unless pro-social self-evaluative standards are activated, and there are several psychological maneuvers through which moral self-sanctions can be selectively disengaged from inhumane conduct. Bandura (1999) refers to these as *mechanisms of moral disengagement* with four loci of action: At the (1) *behavior locus*, people transform lethal actions into praiseworthy ones through moral justification, advantageous comparison, and sanitizing language. At the (2) *agency locus*, they are relieved of a sense of personal accountability by displacement and diffusion of responsibility. At the (3) *outcome locus*, the injurious effects of aggressive actions are disregarded, minimized, or disputed. At the (4) *recipient locus*, foes are dehumanized and blamed for bringing the suffering onto themselves.

Violent military actions pose grave moral predicaments not only because they require killing combatants but also because modern warfare inevitably takes a heavy toll of civilian casualties. When a nation goes to war, it must create conditions that enable soldiers to inflict death without exacting heavy personal costs of chronic stress, guilt, and anguish. But in societies where warfare requires public support, the nation must also create conditions that enable a majority of the populace to allow suffering to be caused without collective recrimination, anguish, or guilt. According to Bandura’s (1999) conceptualization, this can be achieved by suspending moral self-sanctions through psychological mechanisms of moral disengagement at four loci of action, described below.

### **Behavior**

*Moral justification* plays a key role in sanctifying violent behaviors (Kramer 1990; Rapoport and Alexander 1982; Reich 1990). In this process, destructive conduct is made personally and socially acceptable by portraying it as serving worthy moral purposes. For example, moral

justification can be provided by applying the utilitarian standard that injurious actions will prevent more suffering than they cause. Moral justifications can be used in the service of just causes or wrongful ones. Evaluation of moral justifications involves judgments of how well the military interventions meet the standards for a justifiable war and how they are implemented militarily.

*Advantageous comparison*, in which one's injurious conduct is contrasted with more flagrant inhumanities, is another way of excusing aggressive actions. If individuals can say to themselves that what they are doing is not nearly as bad as what others have done, it can make their own actions seem less blameworthy. Advantageous comparison is also invoked when peaceful diplomatic or reasonably coercive economic sanctions are viewed exaggeratedly as vastly inferior to military aggression for achieving national aims.

*Euphemistic labeling* provides a convenient means for masking lethal activities or even conferring a respectable status upon them (Lutz 1987; Smith 2002). Activities can take on a markedly different character depending on what they are called. For example, in military euphemisms, bombings and drone attacks are labeled as "surgical strikes," in the likeness of a medical procedure, while the civilians who are killed are labeled "collateral damage." In interpersonal conflicts, people behave much more aggressively when assaulting a person is given a sanitized label (Diener et al. 1975).

## Agency

Moral control operates strongly when people acknowledge that they are active contributors to injurious outcomes and feel responsible for actions they perform or support. Two disengagement mechanisms permit irresponsibility by operating through disavowal of personal agency in actions that directly or indirectly injure others.

*Displacement of responsibility* occurs when people view their actions as stemming from the dictates of authorities rather than feeling that they are personally responsible for them (Kelman and Hamilton 1989; Milgram 1974). Because they do not see themselves as the actual agent of their actions, they are spared self-censuring reactions.

*Diffusion of responsibility* occurs when personal agency is obscured by disavowal of personal and individual responsibility for detrimental behavior (Bandura et al. 1975; Zimbardo 2004). Kelman (1973) designated several ways of diffusing personal accountability: group decision-making so that no one really feels personally responsible, division of labor that fractionates a destructive enterprise into seemingly harmless subtasks when viewed in isolation, and action that affords anonymity and minimization of personal contributions to harm caused collectively. Through these self-exonerative social arrangements, people need not view themselves as the agent of injurious actions and thus do not consider themselves personally accountable for what they do collectively or under chains of command.

## Outcome

*Minimization of perceived effects* of aggressive actions is another way of weakening moral self-sanctions. As long as harmful outcomes are unnoticed, minimized, or disputed, there is little reason for self-sanctions to be activated. In studies of obedient aggression, people are less compliant to the injurious commands of authorities as the victims' suffering becomes more evident or when its infliction is personalized (Milgram 1974). Even a high sense of personal responsibility for the harmful effects of one's actions is a weak restrainer of injurious conduct when aggressors do not see the harm they inflict on others (Tilker 1970).

## Recipient

*Dehumanization* is a moral disengagement mechanism that operates on the recipients of detrimental acts. To perceive another in terms of common humanity activates empathetic emotional reactions to the plight of others through perceived similarity and a sense of social obligation (Bandura 1992; McHugo et al. 1982). Self-censure for harmful conduct can be disengaged by stripping people of human qualities or attributing bestial qualities to them (Bandura et al. 1975; Haritos-Fatouros 2002). For example,

during wartime, nations cast their enemies in the most dehumanized, demonic, and bestial images to make it easier to kill them (Ivie 1980; Keen 1986). Humanization serves as a restraining influence. People refuse to behave cruelly, even under authoritarian pressure, toward humanized others (Bandura 2004; Bandura et al. 1975).

*Blaming the victims* for bringing the suffering on themselves is still another expedient that can serve self-exonerative purposes (Ferguson and Rule 1983; Suedfeld and Epstein 1973). People view themselves as faultless victims driven to injurious conduct by offensive provocation. Violent conduct then becomes a justifiable defensive reaction to belligerent actions. Victims get blamed for bringing suffering on themselves. Self-exoneration is also achievable by viewing one's harmful conduct as forced by compelling circumstances rather than as a personal decision. By fixing the blame on others, or on compelling circumstances, one's own injurious actions are not only excusable, but one can even feel self-righteous in the process.

Rapid radical shifts in lethal conduct through moral justification are most strikingly revealed in military action. According to social cognitive theory (e.g., McAlister et al. 2006), the conversion of peaceful people into combatants dedicated to killing foes is achieved not by altering their personality structures, aggressive drives, or moral standards. Rather, it is accomplished by restructuring the morality of lethal actions so they can be free from self-censure. In many societies, military strikes and longer term campaigns require initial ongoing public support for the use of force in international disputes. According to the theoretical concepts advanced here, that support depends upon collective moral disengagement within the war-making society.

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## Research on Moral Disengagement and Support for Military Action

The relationship between moral disengagement and support for war has been examined in cross-sectional, prospective, and experimental studies. This research is reviewed in the following sections.

## Cross-Sectional Studies

The first cross-sectional study of moral disengagement in support for military action was conducted by McAlister (2001). A 15-question scale was created to measure the four types of moral disengagement mechanisms on rating scales in which respondents agreed or disagreed with statements about the use of military force. The entire scale is provided in the cited publication. Excerpted examples of rated statements about conditional support for military force included situations when "use of force will prevent more suffering than it causes" (moral justification), "the United Nations asks for military help" (displacement of responsibility), "we join other nations to fight" (diffusion of responsibility), "killing of innocent people is avoided" (minimization), and "foreign groups must be punished for beastly acts" (dehumanization). In rural communities in both Virginia (USA) and Helsinki (Finland), secondary-school students completed this rating scale and rated their support for military action for two contemporary concerns at the time of this study (1998): military action by NATO against Yugoslavia and military action by the USA against Iraq. The results showed that those with higher scores on the moral disengagement scale were 3–4 times more likely to support military actions related to these concerns than those with lower scores. Additionally, female respondents were much less likely than male respondents to give favorable ratings to statements expressing moral disengagement. Overall, the Finnish students were less likely than the US to give favorable ratings or endorse military actions.

A subsequent and much more ambitious study was conducted by McAlister and colleagues, in cooperation with the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (a UN-chartered group composed of leaders of national medical students' associations worldwide), as part of a project labeled PeaceTest (Grussendorf et al. 2002). Paper surveys were completed among selected large groups of medical, university, and secondary students in 21 nations, using a moral disengagement rating scale very similar to the

one employed in the study described above, with questions rating support for their own nation's use of military force against others. As with the preceding study, in every nation, the rated level of moral disengagement was markedly higher among those who supported military actions than among those who did not. Again, males generally expressed higher levels of moral disengagement and support for military action than females. Notably, although this was not a random sampling study providing reliable estimates of national levels of moral disengagement, the mean levels in each nation were significantly associated with national levels of defense spending.

More recently, a team of peace psychologists based at Boston University, with many international colleagues, conducted surveys regarding justifications for invasion of one nation by another in all regions of the world (Malley-Morrison et al. 2013). Questions about these justifications were patterned largely after the items used to measure moral disengagement in the two studies described above. Findings showed that moral justifications for the use of military force were strongly related to support for invasion globally. Interestingly, examination of national differences found that the highest degrees of moral justification for military action were expressed by respondents from NATO nations, which were, at the time of these studies, heavily committed to military engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan (McAlister et al. 2013).

### **Prospective Research**

In 2001 a randomly sampled telephone survey designed to measure moral disengagement and support for military force was conducted in the USA (McAlister et al. 2006), with samples selected nationally, in Texas, and in the Texas counties containing Houston and Austin. Although the initial purpose of this study was to further validate the relationship between moral disengagement and support for military force and examine regional and local differences in these factors, the September 11, 2001, attacks on

New York and Washington, DC, occurred when the survey was only approximately two-thirds completed. The survey was halted immediately after this event and then restarted 2 weeks later, thus providing a potential prospective study of how that event influenced moral disengagement and support for military actions against both Afghanistan and Iraq by the USA. This study revealed interesting regional and local differences, with almost all Texans and respondents from Houston expressing more support for war than those in the nation as a whole, or in Austin, Texas. Moreover, the most notable finding concerned changes that occurred, evidently, as a result of the attacks on the USA. Levels of moral disengagement increased sharply after the attacks, as did support for bombing (which was ongoing against radar sites) of Iraq. For example, the proportion agreeing with the dehumanizing statement "in some countries the leaders and their followers are no better than animals" rose dramatically, as did support for the moral justifiability of attacking another nation before it attacks us. Support for the bombing of Iraq also increased significantly. Multivariate analyses found that moral justification, minimization, irresponsibility, and dehumanization were distinct factors. When structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to examine the effect of the attack on the USA (comparing responses before and after that event), results showed that the increase in support for bombing of Iraq was entirely mediated by increases in moral disengagement, particularly by the increased levels of moral justification and dehumanization after the attacks. Regarding strikes against Afghanistan, demographic differences in the degree of support for that action were entirely mediated by differences in levels of moral disengagement.

### **Experimental Studies**

A small experimental study was conducted as part of the research reported by McAlister (2001). A large class of introductory sociology students at the University of Texas at Austin completed

paper surveys measuring moral disengagement and support for US military actions against Yugoslavia and Iraq. Students were then divided into two groups and, in separate rooms, were read brief essays that were intended to either provide support for moral disengagement or urge students to resist these ways of thinking (complete text available in cited publication). Subsequently, both groups were asked to, again, provide answers to the survey and to sign letters to the congressman representing Austin, Texas, either supporting or opposing his vote in congress against a resolution calling for bombing of Serbian cities in Yugoslavia. The students exhibited changes in levels of moral disengagement between the first and the second survey (all done within a single long class session), and changes in support for these specific military actions, corresponding to the persuasive communications they received. Notably, students who were exposed to the communication favoring resistance to moral disengagement were significantly more likely to sign the letter of support to their congressional representative for his vote against the attack on Yugoslavia.

A larger and very public experimental study was conducted by McAlister and colleagues via the Internet during the summer of 2004, when the USA was thoroughly engaged in military actions in Iraq (Howard et al. 2007). With assistance from the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations, a website was created that was named "PeaceTest" and advertised as a place where one could test one's resistance to war fever and learn about what leads one to support military solutions to international conflicts. The website was designed to start with an online questionnaire patterned after those used in previous studies (see appendix). Afterward, depending on their answers, the screens either congratulated them on their ability to resist war fever through low levels of moral disengagement or warning them that they were susceptible to war fever due to high levels of moral disengagement. After that, the visitors were given the option to click on a link to "learn more" which led to international medical students' photographs and statements

about why they resist moral disengagement. For example, regarding a questionnaire item about support for military force when economic security was threatened, a medical student from Finland was depicted saying (abridged quotation), "Military force means killing people. Economic security means money. No I don't agree with killing people for money."

In the online "PeaceTest" study, approximately 6,000 website visitors completed the pre-test and more than 300 (6 %) completed the second questionnaire after viewing the persuasive online experience. These individuals exhibited statistically and practically significant increases in resistance to moral disengagement, with the greater change seen among women than men. However, the most notable result of this experiment was in the nature of responses among the vast majority who visited the site after secondary promotion via pro-war blogs and websites taking a critical view of the website. The responses among this group were overwhelmingly negative. Furthermore, the publicity generated by this project (Harkinson 2004) included highly negative reactions and was accompanied by an effort among supporters of the second Iraq invasion in Houston to have the primary author of this chapter fired from his university professorship for unsanctioned political speech. Although that did not occur, this incident led to deletion of the website from the university server and the conclusion that a state university, in an aggressor nation, during a time of war, was not an appropriate venue for such controversial research. Although some additional published international research and anti-war action were carried out by project participants from the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (Madžarac et al. 2003), without continuing leadership or financial support, very little of this work has been sustained.

Other relevant experimental research on inoculation against war fever has focused exclusively on dehumanization and the closely related phenomena of racism and of national, ethnic, and social class discrimination and prejudicial attitudes toward "out groups." Experimental research

on this topic has shown that the so-called extended contact—i.e., vicarious contact with “out groups” in the form of stories and media depictions of positive experiences and discarded prejudices—can help make others appear more human and thus restrain aggression against them (e.g., McAlister et al. 2000; Liebkind and McAlister 1999).

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### **Increasing Resistance to War Fever: Research, Training, and Public Education**

Based on the research and experiences reviewed here, it is reasonable to suppose that Bandura’s (1999) theoretical mechanisms of moral disengagement are a significant contributor to try to explain and prevent the arousal of war fever when nations enter wars that many later regret. There is no doubt that in the USA and elsewhere, rhetoric from national leaders who call for military action is often designed to engage these mechanisms by presenting moral justifications (Drury et al. 2010), e.g., arguing that military action will prevent more suffering than it causes or that diplomacy has failed (Hoffman et al. 2013). Moral disengagement is also encouraged by media coverage of supporters of military action who express opinions about the necessity of “preemptive war” and dehumanizing attitudes toward enemies that invoke conflicts between religions (Kellner 2002)—recognized since the writings of Erasmus as a pernicious source of “war fever” (Vance 2013). Further justification for unwise military actions is provided by those who claim that modern methods of warfare can achieve acceptably low levels of harm to innocent noncombatants (e.g., Ryan 2004). When the costs of a war exceeds its originally perceived value, it is notable that the perceived effects of ceasing hostility on national reputation provide moral justification for continuation of what may ultimately be fruitless military actions (Sullivan 2008).

It has been evident for many decades that military expenditures in the USA are influenced by the enormous fortunes to be made by purveyors

of war material (e.g., Adams 1982). Veiled private economic incentives undoubtedly played an important role in US leaders’ appeals for public support for the 2003 invasion of Iraq (Bonn 2010). Financial conflicts of interest in privately owned mass media in the USA appear to have led to slanted news coverage and biased analyses of the conflict with Iraq (Barstow 2008). This economic pressure has become stronger as military actions are increasingly privatized (Singer 2005). The geopolitical advantages of successful warfare, which can potentially confer riches on the elites in aggressor nations, provide powerful motivation for seeking public endorsement for military actions (Jhaveri 2004; Mouritzen 2006).

Looking toward the future, we can anticipate that the systemic socioeconomic pressure from the private interests who will profit from warfare will inevitably motivate national leaders to reject negotiation and mediation and instead seek support for military actions when international conflicts arise. These leaders, and allied mass media opinion makers with corresponding financial interests, can be expected to pose high-minded moral justifications for the use of force. They can also be expected to create the illusion of multilateralism to diffuse national responsibility and to minimize the perceived human and economic consequences of military actions. Most perniciously, war supporters can be expected to dehumanize enemies by exaggerating cultural differences between their own population and their intended victims’—and to demonize enemy leaders through rhetoric and imagery. These efforts to disengage moral standards that restrain violence are entirely predictable. How can we resist?

The experimental studies described here, though far from conclusive, strongly suggest that, before an unnecessary war begins, it may be possible to psychologically “inoculate” populations to resist support for war by educating them about the mechanisms of moral disengagement and how they can be resisted. Psychological inoculation (McGuire 1964) is a well-known and effective technique for preparing people to resist persuasion, e.g., for helping adolescents resist peer pressures to smoke cigarettes (McAlister

et al. 1979). It is also a demonstrably effective way to prepare individuals to respond functionally to stressful events, e.g., military casualties and extreme traumas associated with battlefield experiences (Rausch 2012). Although more research is needed to determine how this potential can be fully realized, research on this topic should be worthy of international investment. War is almost certainly one of the greatest threats to global public health. But, while public health agencies such as the US National Institutes of Health spend billions for research on the treatment and prevention of chronic and infectious diseases, only a tiny fraction of that amount is spent for research on how unnecessary wars can be prevented through public education and persuasive communication.

Very recent international events illustrate how resistance to moral disengagement in support for military actions can be engendered or averted by recollections of experience and enlightened journalism. When the British House of Commons rejected a resolution calling for military actions against Syria in September 2013, a widely cited reason was parliamentarian's increased resistance to calls for military action based on leaders' claims of intelligence about atrocities or potential atrocities, attributed to recollections during debate to the negative learning experience of having previously acted on similar claims in the invasion of Iraq 10 years earlier. Restraint may have also been strengthened by the work of investigative journalists questioning the factual basis for the proposed attack on Syria (Hersch 2013). Another notable event that restrained support for military action by the USA against Syria (beyond the lack of diffusible responsibility afforded by an international coalition of support) was US newsmaker Charlie Rose's extended interviews with Bashar al-Assad. The widely viewed interview is credited by many, both supporters and opponents of the attack, with "humanizing" the Syrian leader and thus reducing US support for aggression against his regime (Fung 2013).

These actions decreasing moral disengagement in collective national contemplations of military attacks against Syria in the autumn of 2013 were neither organized nor theoretically based. But they illustrate elements of a more

comprehensive approach to making national populations less willing to endorse warfare. Through vigorous professional training and public education in advance of or during early stages of future international crises and responses terrorizing attacks, it may be possible to avoid the preventable tragedies of unnecessary wars by using "psychological inoculation" to strengthen public resistance to mechanisms of moral disengagement in war fever.

We recommend training in the conceptual model of moral disengagement and in practical actions for inducing resistance for all professionals involved in international negotiation, mediation, and diplomatic efforts to avert war. By providing a common nomenclature for describing the discrete ways of thinking that make up this phenomenon, this would make it easier for professionals to communicate among themselves and with the public during times of crisis. The ability to anticipate and identify the specific mechanisms of moral disengagement detailed in this chapter can also enable negotiators to react to their deployment rapidly during dialogues between antagonistic and allied when conflicts threaten irrevocable escalation. But training for negotiators in the concepts advanced in this chapter can potentially do much more than increase their own competence in communication during crises.

Firstly, negotiators and related experts can be trained to educate journalists and others who shape the content of mass media about these concepts. Training of journalists and media professionals in topical material is a standard practice in the field of public health, as threats such as pandemic influenza are accurately explained in advance of their occurrence to prevent inaccurate or irresponsibly sensational reporting in the event—and to promote helpful reporting on things like hand washing, cough hygiene, etc. Similar training in the collective cognitive processes that are involved in moral disengagement and "war" fever could lead to more helpful and proactive reporting and editorializing in advance of pending military crises.

Secondly, negotiators and related experts can be trained to construct public education to make

populations more resistant to moral disengagement in support for war. Just as public health leaders are trained to work with media producers to inspire and guide productions of documentary and entertainment programming that deals with public health problems such as alcohol or contagious disease, leaders involved in negotiation and reconciliation can learn to work with media producers to inspire and guide production of media content that deals with how "war fever" can be avoided. In circumstances where resources are available for this purpose, experts engaged in this field can also be trained to organize public education activities themselves. The "PeaceTest" online war fever inoculation experiment described in this chapter can provide a useful reference point for future effort by peace promotion professionals to use new social media for this purpose.

Given the enormous economic and geopolitical motivations that influence nations toward warfare in the face of international conflict, it will not be easy for their populations to resist war fever and enlightened action is needed now. In this chapter we have presented empirically valid concepts and models of action that may underlie future efforts to avert futile and disastrous military actions.

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## Appendix: Measuring Moral Disengagement in Support of War

This illustrates how we assess individual and group differences in levels of concepts in the construct of moral disengagement with printed questionnaires, telephone interviews, and online surveys. Answers are scored from 2 (strongly agree) to -2 (strongly disagree) with a midpoint of 0 (not sure). These scores are then summed and divided by the number of statements rated for that concept.

Please rate your agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements about why or when you will accept the use of your nation's armed forces (Likert scale response set: strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree, strongly disagree).

### Moral Justification

- War is necessary to settle conflicts between nations.
- Military force is necessary when other nations threaten our economic security.
- If another nation threatens our military security, it is right to attack them before they attack us.

### Advantageous Comparison

- Military force should be used when diplomacy and negotiation drag on without resolving conflict.
- It is right to use military force because it can prevent more suffering than it causes.
- Military actions my nation may take are not as bad as the much worse actions of other nations.

### Minimization of Consequences with Euphemisms

- Precision missile attacks and surgical bombings rarely harm civilians.
- Those who sympathize with our enemies exaggerate the number of civilian casualties that result from military actions.
- Some collateral damage is an acceptable part of a military operation.

### Evasion of Responsibility

- Nations that join a multinational defense force are not responsible for the actions of other members of the force.
- When military decisions are made by a group, no single member should be held accountable for the group's decisions.
- Soldiers should not be held responsible for following their commanders' orders.

### Dehumanization

- Terrorists deserve to be treated like animals.
- In some nations, the leaders and their followers are no better than animals.

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