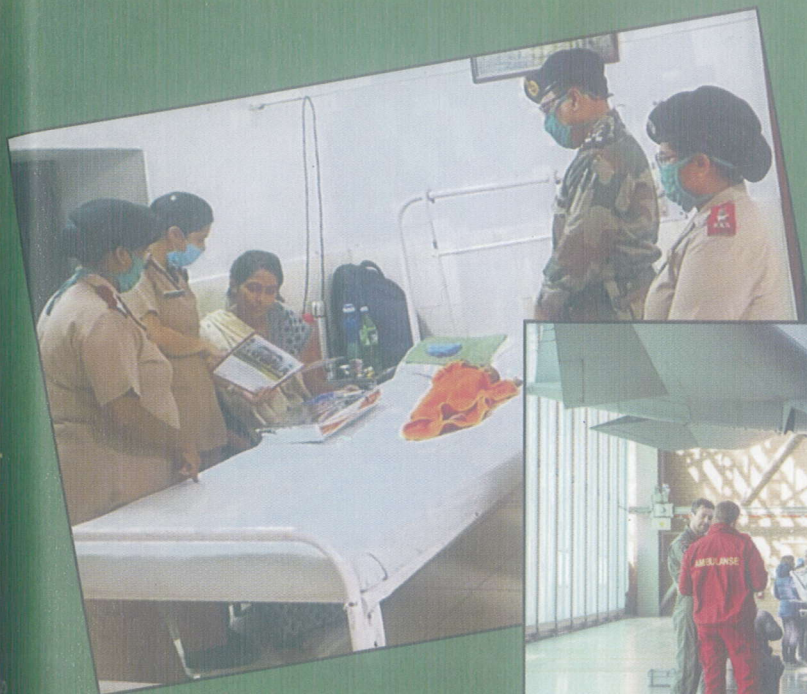




Military Psychology Response to Post-Pandemic Reconstruction

Volume 2



Edited by
Lt Col Dr Samir Rawat
Professor Ole Boe
Dr Andrzej Piotrowski



Military Psychology Response to



"While we are all enduring through not so good COVID-19 times, this intellectually stimulating book provides us with gems of insights that presents new ideas and approaches to better understanding the times in which we live and facilitating post-pandemic reconstruction and providing hope and succour that good will indeed emerge from the bad. I applaud the editors and authors of this book!"

Professor General Boguslaw Pacek
Former Rector of National Defence University of Poland
Advisor to Minister of Defence of Poland

"This book gathers latest global research in contributing to post-pandemic reconstruction and highlights critical issues related to psychological impact of COVID-19 and recovery, regulation of emotions, transformation of feelings, thoughts and behavior towards post-pandemic growth."

Professor Dr Romualdas Malinauskas
Department of Physical and Social Education, Lithuanian Sports University, Lithuania

"This book offers an extensive and fresh scientific insight in how to handle different challenges when pandemic strikes. Through the lenses of military psychology, the writers combine both theoretical perspectives and practical solutions that caters to a broad audience in international community, to include, among other, politicians, decision makers, as well as students within the field."

Dr Rino Bandlitz Johansen
PhD, Norwegian Defence University College, Norway

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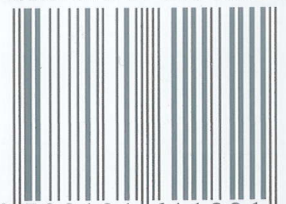
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Lest We Forget

Rudyard Kipling

God of our fathers, known of old,
Lord of our far-flung battle line,
Beneath whose awful hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine –
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget – lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies;
The Captains and the Kings depart:
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget – lest we forget!

Far-called our navies melt away;
On dune and headland sinks the fire:
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget – lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we lose
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,
Or lesser breeds without the Law –
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget – lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube and iron shard,
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
And guarding calls not Thee to guard,
For frantic boast and foolish word –
Thy Mercy on Thy People, Lord!

We would like to honour the brave COVID warriors from all over the world who laid down their lives in line of duty by putting themselves in harm's way to save precious human lives as also those emergency first responders and professionals in the field of medical and mental health who have been working diligently in the battle against COVID-19.

This poem by Rudyard Kipling is an ode to the valiant COVID-19 warriors and a reminder of untold sacrifices by unknown soldiers in and out of uniform fighting an enemy in a world without borders – against the dreaded virus. We salute you all for your moral courage, grit, resilience and fortitude to stand up and be counted when the chips are down for humanity as a race.

Lt Col Dr Samir Rawat
Professor Ole Boe
Dr Andrzej Piotrowski
(Editors)

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Knowledge About Psychological and Propaganda Activities, Fear and Sources of Psychological Strength for Coping and Overcoming Crisis Due to COVID-19 Pandemic

Anita Pešić and Milan Miljković

Numerous researches and military practice have shown that man was and remains a decisive factor in the outcome of a crisis or an emergency situation. Military psychology deals with research of men (and women) in the military environment, in specific circumstances during peace, state of emergency and war (Pajević & Kasagić, 2001). There are many topics in military psychology that can be helpful to the civilian population in specific and emergency situations such as earthquakes, floods, pandemics. Our current interest is what knowledge of military psychology can help the population in a global pandemic situation during and after the first wave of COVID-19 virus, especially at the time of the announcement of the second wave of COVID-19.

We consider our interests in applicable knowledge of military psychology in accordance with the characteristics of the COVID-19 virus in context of social and individual manifestations. Clearly, the framework of the chapter is the framework of previous knowledge of military psychology about people in emergency circumstances, with the aim to: improve mental and physical abilities for a more successful control of the situation, develop a sense of individual and collective activities in self-isolation with help of information environment, develop critical thinking which contributes to individual and collective motivation to overcome a crisis situation.

It stems from the above that the goal of the chapter is to help people in the comprehensive preparation for successful engagement and overcoming the crisis situation caused by COVID-19 pandemic in a rational way.

Mastering information and psychological techniques for dealing with a crisis situation is essentially a learning process understood in a broader sense as a change of an individual (Pajević & Kasagić, 2001). Various knowledge from textbooks, scientific journals and results of scientific projects through human learning, memory and thought, i.e. affective and motivational processes, finds application directly or indirectly in educating people and the population to face the unknown and existentially threatening situation. Through cognitive processes, a person understands better the circumstances in which s/he finds himself and adapts more easily to the requirements of the situation.

In order to achieve good health results in the sociological context of reducing the number of infected and creating opportunities for infected to receive adequate medical care, and in the psychological context of maintaining personal health and prevention of mental disorders, medical authorities require that during the COVID-19 pandemic people practice: self-isolation through subordination of individual needs to the needs and collective protection of other people from personal and social environment; strengthening of immunity as a health barrier to microorganisms through the creation of new or development of already acquired lifestyles that contribute to stronger immunity – through eating habits, adequate ratio of wakefulness and sleep, sports and hygiene habits; reduction of social activities and change of communication method that is now fully realized in the information environment, modern media, through mobile telephony and computer network (WhatsApp, Viber, Youtube), newspapers and magazines, radio and television.

The basic presupposition of education for the civilian population is that the acquired knowledge and skills during the crisis-free time can be successfully applied in crisis situations. Therefore, every educator should be familiar with the factors that enable maximum positive transfer in education, i.e. should know what prerequisites need to be provided in peacetime education so that the acquired knowledge, skills and habits, as well as personality traits of the population, are widely applicable in various crises situations (Pajević & Kasagić, 2001).

Humans are, by nature, active and constantly adapting to the changing and unchanging physical and social environment. Different people manage to adapt to the environment and get along with it in different ways. Some people succeed to a small extent and temporarily, while others are rather successful continuously, which depends on the mutual influences of personality and characteristics and the demands of the environment. Military psychology reveals laws that take place in relations between personal characteristics and environmental characteristics with all the increased and specific requirements, reveals the factors that facilitate or complicate the adjustment process and points out to ways to overcome the difficulties encountered in the process (Pajević & Kasagić, 2001).

Based on the knowledge of military psychology, the chapter points to psychological knowledge important for educating the population to prepare for crisis situations, i.e. the knowledge useful in the time before the crisis –

pandemic, in overcoming the crisis during the pandemic as prevention and reduction of activities during the society rehabilitation process after the pandemic. We believe that this is military psychology knowledge about the changing character of warfare in the 21st century, about normal human reactions to danger and uncertainty such as fear of disease and death, as well as knowledge about the necessity of hierarchical relationship between socio-medical authorities and population which we are informed about through modern media that are often used as means of psychological and informational operations, as well as knowledge about normal changes during and after a pandemic. These topics for the education of civilians represent a good foundation in preparation of population during crisis situations caused by microorganisms (COVID-19 and others) but also the crises caused by natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes.

The world is facing a new virus (COVID-19) and new ways of social behaviour. Residents of the country are in quarantine or self-isolation, employees are employed in organizations or work from home, students and students follow classes through the media. Mandatory measures are medical care. Media information and news became a major social event.

In a situation of self-isolation and physical distance, man is left alone with himself and his reflections on the present and the future. At the same time, his thinking directs and creates, his information environment – the mass media. Emotional conversations with friends, parents and relatives over coffee or tea with smile and touch exchanges have been replaced by passive word exchanges, most commonly learned about the virus and personal attitudes through communication applications (Skrip, Viber, Vocab).

In order to get timely information, man is looking for new information, compares different knowledge and experience of the situation. By following media, in addition to information about the virus, he learns various other information relevant to his life. All this often contradictory knowledge and information influence a person's psychological status and his situational psychological behaviour.

The character of information in times of social crises is a well-known fact to both academic and amateur public. However, rapid recognition of the character of information is a privilege for those familiar with the principles of propaganda or information action on the people of a country at a particular social moment.

The need for psychological connection with other people is often replaced by increased involvement in the life of the entire community at home and abroad, especially as the COVID-19 virus threatens the population of most continents.

Information from social inclusion in the mass media to different individuals acts differently.

The subject of this chapter will be to highlight knowledge in military psychology, as well as experience in crisis situations of society such as civil wars, emergencies that are in the function of preventing mental disorders and maintaining health in the population during and after a state of emergency. The importance will be emphasized of: knowledge of

psychological operations in times of crisis, critical and rational thinking, respect for socio-medical authorities, harmonization of personal needs and desires with the needs and wishes of other members from the primary environment – family and society; occupational engagement as a form of occupational crisis therapy, education and acquisition of information relevant to existential survival; healthy living habits as a basis for strong immunity and good physical fitness; knowledge of fear (irrational and rational – fear of illness and death), situational stress; panic; information – rumours, fake news, and self-protection measures. The chapter will also show the experiential indicators of an individual's normal behaviour after a state of emergency, ie the inevitability of a lifestyle change, revising social relationships and interpersonal relationships, changing life priorities and attitudes toward God and faith.

The aim of this chapter is to point out the necessity of educating the civilian population during regular education or voluntary military training in the knowledge and skills in military psychology.

Crises in themselves need not be a halt in social or psychological development. On the contrary, they can be the cause of all ways of overcoming frustrating events, developing new knowledge and skills, revising toxic interpersonal relationships, changing daily routines and habits, as well as meeting people in new circumstances, preparing for a new life and new social functioning in the function of personal protection of psychophysical health.

On Character of Modern Conflict

For the correct perception of increasing interest and significance of psychological protection of population during crisis situations, it is useful to consider the theoretical determinations on the change of conflict and warfare character in the modern information age of the 21st century. Even the ancient thinkers recognized and pointed out the importance of psychological combat and stability for success in conflicts.

Thus, the Chinese military strategist, Sun Tzu wrote about 'breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting'. German military theorist Carl von Clausewitz stated that 'the war is not over until the enemy's will is broken'. The English military writer Liddell Hart warned that 'the generals should consider paralyzing, not killing the enemy'. Military theorist John Boyd defines war as 'exhaustion on physical level, manoeuvre with mental level and conflict with moral level that aim to penetrate into the enemy's moral-mental-physical being in order to destroy the inner harmony, produce paralysis and break his will to resist'.

These classic theories on the goal of conflict have only become more valid in the modern information age, where the target of the enemy army oftentimes is not the opposing army, but the opposing population and its psychological, mental and moral strength. The principles of the "new generation of warfare", such as switching from the goal of (1) direct destruction to the goal of direct influence on the enemy, (2) from direct destruction of the enemy to his internal decline, (3) from warfare with weapons and technology to war with culture, (4) from warfare in the physical environment to warfare

in the human consciousness (5) point out to the increasing importance of information as a means of warfare, i.e. that human psychological and mental stability is often the target of modern conflict (Miljković, 2018).

The focus of modern conflict and geopolitical contest is moved from the purely military sphere to the field of information operations aimed at population through use of mass media and internet.

'The current global security scene can be described as complex, dynamic, multidimensional and "beyond" the conventional understanding of warfare. The diversity of forms of security threats, their mutual interaction and unconventionality contribute to the fact that most current security crises and conflicts can be marked as hybrid security threats or hybrid warfare' (Mitrović & Miljković, 2018: 1359).

Also, the fact that population is the most sensitive element of a society which is the least trained and protected and psychologically prepared to face with and protect from new threats such as biological and chemical threats, i.e. biological-medical operations using microorganisms as weapons of mass destruction.

Decisions on personal behaviour during a crisis situation caused by COVID-19 pandemics are made based on personal capabilities, primarily emotional stability and intellectual ability, i.e. the previously acquired abilities and through acquiring new knowledge by analysing available information from contemporary media. Besides their strong information role in crisis situations the modern media become the means of psychological propaganda operations targeted at the population through reporting (un)verified information.

Psychological propaganda activities, as the most prominent form of information operations against the population, represent the widest field of influence on conscious or subconscious behaviour of people for the purpose of weakening the motivation for defence and protection from the COVID-19 virus. Knowledge from various scientific fields are used for this purpose (informatics, medicine, biology, genetics, sociology, history, ethnology), and especially social psychology and personality psychology. Military psychology provides the theoretical and practical insights on methods and means used in an efficient psychological propaganda (Pajević & Kasagic, 2001).

The actual health, physical and psychological threat stemming from presence of COVID-19 in the environment, possibility of contracting it and specificity of treatment (being put on a mechanical ventilator) and potential threat of medical complications and contradictions in information from environment about consequences to health in the future, as well as the possible lethality, cause fear of the unknown provoked by the COVID-19 virus. The emotion of fear in a crisis situation is normal and expected and it is present in all people when they are found in a real or imagined danger for their own life or the lives of close relatives and friends (Pajević & Kasagic, 2001). Given that fear threatens rational behaviour, therefore the emotional stability and rational judgement as well, it is necessary to specifically point this psychological phenomenon out at psychology education classes. It is of interest to deduce how to educate and train citizens on systemic measures

during the crisis-free period so as to prevent, or at least mitigate the negative effect of fear and panic on the resilience and motivation of the citizens. Mental and physical burden in crisis situations can be borne only by psychologically stable personalities. Overcoming psychological stress as a defense mechanism and successful adaptation significantly depends on the extent to which citizens possess knowledge in personality psychology, behaviour laws, motivation, emotional responses, types of mental disorders and mental health protection principles and methods. By studying certain topics from military psychology, citizens should be trained to successfully deal with maladaptation issue, to mitigate or fully prevent mental disorders, i.e. become educated to implement primary prevention and improvement of citizens' mental health (Pajević & Kasagic, 2001). The complexity, rate of spreading, indirect management and the great potency of novel viruses, the so-called biological weapon elements – significantly change classic relations of citizens and the social-medical environment (authority). Regular warnings from doctors are not sufficient for an efficient fight against an 'invisible enemy' COVID-19. It is necessary that they are knowledgeable and capable to motivate citizens to adhere to the preventive protection measures on the one hand, while on the other it is necessary to have increased personal responsibility of citizens finding themselves in the specific crisis situation and in constant decision-making on personal behaviour.

Knowledge on normal changes in behaviour during and after a pandemic help people realize, understand and recognize that in the same social circumstance – “presence of the COVID-19 virus”, most other people experience the same emotions of fear, uncertainty, worry, and that they organize their lives in a similar way in accordance with recommendation of medical authorities, finding individual ways to fill the unexpected free time with activities and thoughts which will help them face and overcome the everyday stress. Although a person comes out of every crisis changed, a crisis might be and it is an opportunity and chance to learn something about oneself and others and a chance for inner psychological growth.

Information – Psychological Action Prevention and Psychological Protection of the Population During Crisis Situations and Pandemics

Information has always been the means to exercise influence on target groups, whether states or individuals. In modern society, modern information technology spreads information much wider and faster than ever before in history, which is why the importance of information as a factor of influence has increased. In modern society, a man is influenced by many more sources of information, a much greater amount of information, which makes him more vulnerable than the man of the 20th century. The information that reaches today's people is often the product of numerous media and organizations that are beyond the control and censorship of the official authorities and thus have not been checked and verified. The information sphere of a modern society is much more complex, chaotic and uncontrolled than in the societies of the 20th century. As such, this uncontrolled information content can have significant negative effects on the psychological and

mental stability of individuals, especially in times of crisis and conflict. As a reaction to the general situation, personality traits that are characteristic of addictive behaviour can be manifested. “The greatest influence on addictive behaviour is shown by the personality dimension of adventure (15%), followed by low self-control (6%), low cooperation (6%), low protection (5%), low research (5%), high orientation (4%), high aggression (4%) and high extroversion (4%)” (Djordjevic, Kostić & Milojević, 2011: 1641).

Psychological operations are used as basic conceptual models for psychological and mental influence on opponents, neutral and domestic public in the information age. In the Western theory, psychological operations (PSYOP) are defined as activities whose task is to convey selected information and clues to a foreign audience. “Their goal is to influence the emotions, motives, way of thinking and finally the behaviour of foreign governments, organizations, groups and individuals. Psychological operations are applied at the strategic, operational and tactical levels” (Miljković & Pešić, 2019: 1081).

The goals of psychological operations aimed at the population refer to the areas of human activities such as culture, tradition, morality, psychological stability, readiness to resist and fight in a war. The goal of operations against the population in crisis situations may be to provoke thinking and dilemmas among civilian structures and reduce the population's support for their own leadership, encourage passive resistance in terms of not fulfilling obligations and organize protests, as well as other forms of civil disobedience. Such goals are set during war operations, but can also be set during the creation and execution of crisis situations (Miljković, 2008: 100).

In crisis situations, such as the COVID-19 virus pandemic, suitable methods for the execution of psychological operations are spreading rumours and fake news through mass media and social networks. When it comes to rumours, taking into account their origin, two types of rumours can be distinguished: spontaneous and intentionally constituted. Experience so far indicates that rumours are one of the safest and most powerful means of psychological action. They work by being inserted simultaneously from multiple sources and through different channels (print, internet, TV). Rumours are actually a deliberate leak of various misinformation to the public, strictly dosed content about some events and people that under the influence of the emotions of those who receive them are most often accepted, subjectively interpreted and further transmitted as new facts, which, as they spread, have less and less connection with reality.

“Also, rumors can refer to certain events and situations concerning security of a large number of groups or individuals, such as suffering, wounding, capture, loss of equipment, hostile environment, use of new weapons by the enemy, etc.” (Miljković, 2020: 205).

For origin of rumours, most important are those motives that are related to some emotional and intellectual states, such as fear, hatred, hope, expectation, curiosity and the like.

Rumours find support in man's need to know and explain everything that is important for his existence. They occur out of curiosity, the need to

prove oneself and be respected as well as out of the emotions of fear, hope and hatred (Pajević & Kordić, 2007). Situational and personal factors support the emergence of rumours. Situational factors are social conditions in which there is not enough official information and news about current events (social crises, an emergency situation due to pandemics, floods or fires, war circumstances). In those moments, any news, even untrue, makes it easier and helps a person feel safe, but it also represents the moment that can lead to a situation of falling victim to the one spreading rumours.

“The current practice of information security seems to forget the important fact that man, in addition to information and means of transmitting information, is an important element of a society’s information system, and perhaps its most sensitive link”. (Miljković & Pešić, 2019: 1090)

According to experts’ opinion, fake news are defined as purposeful or conscious online publishing of false statements (Gelfert, 2018: 97). The goal of fake news, based on non-existent or distorted “facts”, is to deceive and manipulate public opinion. Crisis situations, such as natural disasters, but also pandemics, as we have been witnessing, are the situations of choice for fake news authors who use the emotions surrounding such events to try to give their actions the maximum effect.

The issue of fake news as an important challenge for maintaining mental stability of citizens during pandemics is tied to the fact that social media and online platforms, which represent a significant source of information today, play a pivotal role in speeding up the spread of fake news and enable them global reach, which might significantly spread the inner instability in a modern society and among its population. When we add the fact that the quick spread of large amount of fake information can have a notable negative influence and manipulate public opinion, than it really becomes a severe security problem of today (Lohr, 2018).

A key factor in spreading fake news and misinformation during crisis situations is human behaviour on social networks and the fact that social media has almost completely replaced traditional media. According to the results of one research, false information is shared more than the real one, false stories receive more attention and are therefore distributed at a higher speed. A recent study by the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology, published in the Science journal, states that fake news on social networks spreads much faster than the real news, regardless of their topic. According to the research conclusions, true news on Twitter very rarely spreads to more than 1,000 people. On the other hand, 1 per cent of the most popular fake news usually reaches between 1,000 and 1,00,000 people. Also, true information takes six times longer to reach 1,500 people than false information (Miljković, 2020).

Prevention and psychological protection of population during crisis situations and pandemics can be based on theoretical and practical experiences of protection of population from rumours, psychological operations and fake news in various crisis and war operations.

Taking appropriate measures and procedures to develop resilience and protect against the negative effects of rumours and negative psychological

action in crisis situations such as a pandemic must be understood as a strategic category of psychological and information protection of society and state. One of the important components of a country’s defense is an active psychological defense, which is the competence and activity of special professional bodies. The entire state system is involved in active psychological defense (Miljković, 2020). It consists of state and private bodies, institutions and organizations. One of the preconditions for psychological defense is quality information. Filling the information space with constant, extensive, true, timely, unambiguous and confidential information. The lack of information about the type, character and course of the pandemic causes a feeling of uncertainty, especially if the course of the pandemic is perceived as dangerous. In psychological operations, such situations are used to place deliberate misinformation and rumours. That is why it is especially dangerous to leave people in an informationally vague – empty space. Filling that space with constant, true and verifiable information, which reaches every person without delays and quickly, eliminates many dangers and becomes a shield from information manipulation and enemy psychological operations.

An important method of combating rumours during crisis situations such as pandemics is to recognize rumours, expose them and refute them with objective facts in a logical, consistent and convincing way. In the case of such rumours, their illogicality and contradiction should be especially noticed, and their unsustainability, contradiction and malice should be demonstrated to the population with obvious examples, pointing out the inhumane and immoral motives or goals for which such rumours are transmitted (Miljković, 2020).

Also, the defense of the moral and psychological consciousness of the target group from all types of rumours is based on strengthening the resilience of the target group’s consciousness and taking specific informational, educational, administrative and mental hygiene measures for the sake of parts of the group and individuals in the target group attacked by rumours (Ljubisavljević, 1998).

The COVID-19 pandemics, the uncertainty of virus formation, speed and ways of virus spread and virus information, (un)reliability of tests, symptomatic and asymptomatic clinical features of the infected, course of treatment, uncertainty of cure, unknown health consequences are all elements that lead to the psychological state of fear from disease and death. Fear of death negatively influences a person’s defensive capacities, motivation and activity of an individual, causes the occurrence of fear and panic, and if its duration is prolonged it can lead to bringing the defense mechanisms to the point of breaking.

Situational Response With Fear of Disease and Death, Factors That (Do Not) Help Facing Crisis Situation, Sources of Inner Strength for Facing Crises

The results of empirical research in the field of military psychology and military practice show that the fear of death or injury in war is a dynamic centre of mental disorders and mental breakdowns (Kostić, 2000: 121).

Numerous authors (for example, Sedgwick, according to Petković & Irida, 1994) claim that training in adequate response, opposing and overcoming a stressful situation is the best prevention of mental disorders and breakdowns. Richardson (1978) points that “all aspects of military training programmes that develop effective combat skills serve to reduce devastating effects of fear reactions in combat, insofar as they instill in soldiers a series of habitual responses that can adapt to situations of danger”. Combat training has two important aspects that are most directly related to overcoming fear in combat: preparing soldiers to behave effectively in times of danger and intensive exposure to means that realistically or faithfully reflect combat.

Following the analogy of Richardsons’ (1978) good aspects of military training, it is concluded that in responsible societies, it is necessary to educate the civilian population for effective behaviour in crisis situations when there is a real existential danger and cognitive and informational contradictions that lead to the psychological state of (ir)rational fears, social alienation and increased exposure to the modern information environment which is increasingly a means of psychological and propaganda action against the population in crisis situations.

As soldiers are trained to automatically perform actions that protect them from injury and death at the sign of danger, it is necessary to educate the population to automatically take actions of individual protection and protection of other people after declaring a state of emergency due to increased possibility of infection with an “unknown virus” through establishing daily routines according to the recommendations of health authorities. The base of population education is the accepted knowledge that the learned, automated reaction at the sign of danger suppresses and prevents the occurrence of instinctive reactions (running or petrification), that at the beginning of automatic actions a person establishes control over the situation he finds himself in, which helps him maintain emotional stability and sanity in his behaviour. The general goal of educating the civilian population is to build a repertoire of certain skills that a person will rely on whenever he needs it in a crisis situation. By using the acquired skills, i.e. performing planned activities, a person reduces the intensity of fear due to the acquired confidence in personal abilities and establishes control over fear (Richardson, 1978, according to Kostić, 2000). Many people do not feel fear but strong anxiety manifested by increased emotionality (irritability, clenched jaws, paleness, trembling of hands, wandering gaze, artificially forced laughter) and worry (thought flow about uncertainty, fear of the possibility of infection and disease, fear of ventilators, complications, existential threats).

In the subsequent part of the chapter, we will present the findings from personal experience and scientific research of Colonel and Professor of Military Psychology Petar Kostić *on factors that (do not) facilitate coping and (not) overcoming stress*, which are adapted for the needs of this chapter to the new crisis situation stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic putting the entire population of Earth into defense position. According to Kostić (2000), the factors are:

- **personal and social (un)preparedness** – a definite factor in not overcoming stress is weak, inadequate education of the population in the period without crisis events; in the psychological sense, the task of educating people and citizens is that people in a crisis-free period experience controlled crisis situations that cause fear, panic and stress before the real crisis situation caused by a pandemic, floods, earthquakes, etc. occurs;
- **previous experience in a crisis situation** – if a person has already survived a high level of fear and experienced a feeling of personal helplessness, even if he does not experience trauma in the current crisis situation and survives it all relatively painlessly, it is only a matter of time before he expresses some form of mental disorder;
- **long exposure to a crisis situation** – the vast majority of the population can survive some things painlessly in a crisis situation, but no one is capable, nor can they be prepared to survive and overcome all temptations of a crisis; it is considered that 72 hours of continuous exposure to a life-threatening situation is the norm of endurance for average soldiers; the proposal is to examine what is the number of hours in “civilian” crises that a person of good psychophysical health can endure without consequences to general health;
- **a strong traumatic event from the past** – regardless of mental, physical and health preparation for dealing with a crisis situation, it must be kept in mind that certain categories of civilians have already gone through trauma or are still traumatized: losses and activities in civil wars and during NATO aggression, human and material losses due to natural disasters (floods, earthquakes), various forms of violence (domestic and peer violence, mobbing at work), diagnosis of incurable or difficult to cure diseases, diagnosis of rare diseases, and that they are part of the “vulnerable” categories of the population. Prolonged exposure to a crisis situation in these individuals is more likely to cause mental health disorders;
- **weak connection between a man and society/state** – regardless of an individual’s readiness for a crisis situation and personal resilience to stress, a good connection between man and society/state is necessary, and it should be based on trust in social, political and health authorities. This trust can be disrupted by political processes and unrest as well as economic crises in a society;
- **wrong treatment of normal fear in a crisis situation** – an error in behaviour during a pandemic by family members, coworkers, health authorities as a response to the manifestations of fear from possible infection, can make a person more susceptible to increased fear, panic, anxiety and stress in response to the situation; although fear is a normal reaction in a crisis and unknown situation, as long as a person is able to continue with his daily activities, it is not necessary to take special health protection measures;

- **high individual sensitivity to stress** – it is necessary for a person to be aware that in a crisis situation he must and can reduce his personal sensitivity to stress and thus prevent mental disorders.

Every person should be educated on inner sources of strength for facing with and overcoming fear (Vlajković, 1992, according to Kostić, 2000) that, independently of all other circumstances, can make him more capable to resist and survive. These sources are: good general health and mental and physical fitness, a positive outlook, superpersonal values and ideals, self-confidence and a sense of being able to control the circumstances of the crisis, positive religious beliefs, developed social skills.

Good general health and mental and physical fitness are very important sources of strength that help resist and overcome stress. Physical fitness affects three aspects of human functioning which are, directly or indirectly, related to the general physical readiness of the individual: health condition – immune response, the onset of physical fatigue and the occurrence of situational crisis fatigue. It is generally known that physical condition is positively correlated both with the general health of an individual and with the incidence of many diseases, from common cold to cardiovascular diseases which are the most common cause of death in the modern world. On the other hand, physical fitness and general health are a very important source of strength to overcome all types of stress (Vlajković, 1992, according to Kostić, 2000). While getting into good physical shape, a person has the opportunity to face some psychological situations like overcoming the point of “I can’t do it anymore” or “pain threshold”, which are part of not only “ordinary” situational efforts, but also dealing with professional circumstances that cause stress. Physical fitness can be achieved in three ways: by exerting oneself in everyday life, by systematically engaging in individual and collective sports and by engaging in hobbies that involve physical exertion. The individual thus practices psychological mechanisms of coping and acquires personality traits useful in crisis situations. By playing team sports in time without crisis, he develops two more sources of strength: a sense of ability to independently control the circumstances that bring positive outcomes and acquisition of social communication skills. Physical activity, regardless of effects on physical fitness, therefore, in itself, has a beneficial effect on emotional stability, feelings of comfort, self-satisfaction, good mood, composure and alleviates neurotic reactions, especially fear and depression, or the resulting feeling of aggressiveness. Physical fitness increases tolerance to frustrations and reduces the intensity of physiological responses to stress factors (Ivanić, 1991, according to Kostić, 2000). Physically active people eat and sleep better, which increases the state of physical fitness and mental strength necessary to overcome efforts and strengthens the immunity necessary to defend the organism from microorganisms. The physical activity activates synergistic mechanisms (cardiovascular, digestive, respiratory, thermoregulatory and excretory) which bring the organism to an optimal psychophysical state to endure all efforts (Kostić, 2000).

A *positive outlook, superpersonal values and ideals* are important for both effectively coping with and overcoming stress. Religious/spiritual beliefs, a

sense of justice, destiny, truth, developed collective values of freedom and development of superpersonal and timeless ideals will enable a person to face problems in crisis and professional problems easier and faster, making him less frightened, which can sometimes be enough in itself.

Self-confidence and a sense of being able to control circumstances of the crisis indicates the importance of a positive opinion on the outcome of a crisis situation. It is harder for a man to be successful if he believes that he does not have any possibility, if he hopes for the worst and if he thinks that everything will inevitably end badly for him. Namely, the lack of faith in positive outcomes will cause that the best knowledge, skills and habits are not used. In other words, self-confidence must have a realistic basis in education with knowledge and skills, and in the acquired physical and working fitness.

Positive religious beliefs will help those who responsibly do everything they can to prevent a possible personal crisis – COVID-19 infection – and counteract information contradictions and social uncertainty by strengthening emotional stability and rationality in a crisis situation. Religious beliefs are counterproductive if a person passively, doing nothing, expects a “miracle” to happen (not to get infected and not to get sick).

Developed social skills make it easier for a person to build good relations with the social environment and individuals from which he can expect support and can use their mental and physical “strength”. Social skills mean the ability to support others, to influence them, to cooperate with, to express feelings constructively, etc. (Kostić, 2000).

There are various strategies to overcome anxiety and unrealistic fear before a person is faced with circumstances that cause real fear. One type of appropriate preparation is accepting the fact that fear is an inevitable experience in a crisis situation caused by an unknown virus COVID-19. Someone who has gone through a crisis situation in his life so far, e.g. civil war, NATO aggression, can adopt, as a means against fear, the view that nothing bad can happen to him, that he has already gone through the crisis using caution and reason which will help him to behave realistically and cautiously in the current crisis situation of a different type.

An example of a good strategy for overcoming fear and stress from the civil war in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) is the speech of captain Milivoje Ilović, the commander of a platoon of infantry combat vehicles (in Serbian, robov), when he was preparing his soldiers to face deadly danger completely rationally: “You can’t die in a smart way in a war, but you can die in a stupid way. In order not to lose your head stupidly, never unnecessarily challenge your destiny, never do what no one demands of you and do not go where no one sends you. Always do what the fighters around you do. If you respect this, your chances of surviving the war are incomparably greater than if you do the opposite”. In such a cognitive-rational strategy of fighting against future fear, it is important for the fighter to assess the degree of danger to himself. The assessment is based on two elements: the possibility of death or injury depending on the combat situation and the possibility that a person’s action reduces the likelihood of bad outcomes in a particular combat situation” (Kostić, 2000).

A very rational strategy of preparation for dealing with the fear in the crisis due to COVID-19 is statistical self-defense that is possible on the basis of realistic data on the number of patients, the number of patients on mechanical ventilators and the number of deaths from COVID-19.

The strategy of connecting with other people creates a sense of group belonging and camaraderie in crisis situations, which is a factor of not only successfully resisting fear, but also coping with stress and maintaining success in work activities. People who find it harder to connect with other people become individuals in a crisis situation and are more susceptible to fear and panic (Kostić, 2000).

Normal Behaviour During and After Crisis Situations

Possibility of self-help in stressful situations and post-crises period

In crisis situations, after sudden and radical severance of "civilian" social ties, relationships in the family and work environments are quickly formed: people focus on each other, strengthen camaraderie, a sense of community and common destiny grows, adaptive individuals stand out faster, but the opposite ones as well (which is a condition for undertaking measures to adapt them), public opinion of small and large groups (families, coworkers) is formed and mechanisms of functioning within the society are established (Kostić, 2000).

The views of most authors who have dealt with psychological changes in human behaviour after major social crises are that no man after the crisis remains completely the same. However, the psychological changes in most citizens are such that they do not necessarily require medical diagnosis and therapy (Kostić, 2000).

One of the founders of military psychology in our region, Colonel and Professor of Military Psychology Petar Kostić, who personally participated in the battlefield of the civil war on the territory of the former SFRY, noticed some changes in the behaviour of soldiers that were widespread and therefore became the subject of his scientific interest (Kostić, 1994). However, such changes did not require an expert intervention which makes them "normal". Changes in social behaviour, value system, moral behaviour, attitudes towards God and religion, fear of death, an optimal level of sensation seeking, circadian rhythms and changes in smoking and drinking habits were observed. Psychological mechanisms mediate most of the changes: external social pressure, external danger to the individual and the group in which he lives and fights, narrowing the time perspective, stronger engagement of emotions and a strong need for the individual to functionally adapt to environmental factors according to the circumplex model (Kostić, 2000).

In the following paragraphs, we will present a set of measures and procedures (for personal use) to make the process of adaptation during and readaptation after the crisis more expedient. The set of measures is the result of the scientific research of the already mentioned professor of military psychology, Petar Kostić, which was conducted after the civil wars on the territory of the former SFRY. Certainly, some measures have been refined and adapted to the crisis situation of the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus,

the "invisible" enemy of the planet's inhabitants. The proposed measures and procedures make sense during crises as procedures for the prevention of mental disorders and after crises in the reconstruction of man and society.

"The basic principle of self-help is: sooner or later one comes to the belief that everything (and everyone) can be survived and got over, that one can live without anything and anyone, the only thing one cannot do without is oneself. Human life is eternal, an individual is transient and unique" (Kostić, 2000). The time distance from the crisis event makes the intensity of emotions related to the event to change. The recommendation is that a person should establish a certain time distance, to personally free himself from his own problems and calmly wait for time to do its part. The second principle refers to the importance of not making important life decisions during and after crisis situations because the changed ratio of personal and social perspective hinders the rational perception of the circumstances necessary for making the right decisions. It is important to establish a certain order, some kind of discipline in one's own life, that is, one should make a plan and programme, determine the goals of one's personal life, "one day at the time" (Krizmanić, 1991, according to Kostić, 2000). It will be helpful in this task to see the real time dimension by looking at life until the moment of the crisis, re-examine the goals for the future and the current situation. The most important task in times of crisis is to organize the present with everyday activities, dealing with the current opportunities for the realization of goals in the future. It is necessary to maintain or return biological rhythms to one's daily routines: regularity in the diet (meals are regular, varied, at about the same time during the day), daily activities (proper schedule of activities in relation to the required mental attention and physical strength), the ratio of wakefulness and sleep (to go to sleep and wake up at about the same time). The use of everyday activities to work on the realization of goals for the future means engaging in long-term goals. Everyday work thus has realistic importance for future goals, but also the importance of psychological therapy in a crisis situation. Working in times of crisis will enable a person to be constantly present in space and time with the help of work obligations, connected to reality, with engaged intellectual, emotional and social capacities for the implementation of goals in the future. By establishing daily activities, inner harmony is achieved. Connecting with other people is useful because it creates psychological security through a sense of connection to other people from your "safe base," a sense of control of the situation, and exchange of motivation for daily activities. Special control in crisis situations is needed when alcohol and psychoactive substances are abused as a means of moving away from the current crisis situation and situational mental response. Doing hobbies provides people with their own space and time in crisis situations that require human self-isolation. Self-isolation leaves a person with a lot of free time, accumulated physical strength that a person can use in jobs that he has to realize on his own. Arranging the house, yard, garden, practicing useful "do it yourself" projects. Hobbies are useful in crisis situations because they cause physical and mental fatigue, distract thoughts from social or personal uncertainty, provide safe physical fatigue and sleep. Controlled physical effort increases self-confidence and willingness to expand the boundaries within which an individual controls the situation, and consequently his own

reactions. Sport has a beneficial effect on the mental and physical well-being of the organism: a person eats better, enjoys life more, sleeps better, drinks and smokes less. Outdoor activities, apart from moving which causes fatigue, have their advantages which are reflected in the adoption of natural rhythms and harmonizing them with personal rhythms. Communication with friends with whom trust, support, solidarity, encouragement and comfort have already been established in conversations about personal feelings and thoughts about the present and the future is effective during the crisis and after crisis situations. In a situation of self-isolation, a pet holds a special place in a person's life. Socializing with a pet takes up time that would be filled with information from media and compensates for socializing with other people who are unavailable due to the necessity for self-isolation. Animals bring dynamics, positivism and joy in times of crisis, while the feel of their fur is warming and soothing.

Conclusion

A crisis situation will be experienced and survived – (non)rationalized in different ways with different people. The state of mental and physical health after the crisis is influenced by many parameters of the “health” status held by a person prior to the crisis, many coping defense factors during the crisis. From the perspective of us authors who perform on daily basis the scientific and educational activities in a military organization and notice the characteristic communication of civilians, the intensity of emotional expression, the way of cognitive representation of the crisis in which we all find ourselves, the need for education of the civilian population in the topics of military psychology is recognized.

Military psychology that studies people in times of peace, state of emergency and war circumstances has a set of knowledge: about information-psychological operations which with their subtlety and systematicity in creation and placement are difficult to recognize to the average citizen, about subjective experiences in specific circumstances such as crisis situations, factors that (do not) help to deal with unknown and existentially dangerous situations, sources of strength for overcoming crises and a series of rational strategies. Normal behaviours of a person in a crisis situation receive the title of normalcy because they occur in a large number of citizens, i.e. en masse, they do not interfere with daily functioning and, with their intensity and quality of expression (occurrence), cannot receive diagnostic confirmation or medical therapy. We know that such “normalcy” is expected in a crisis and that in some way it represents an adaptation factor to the changed reality and environment, as well as a factor of emotion control and managing the situation in the immediate environment.

“On the other hand, practice indicates that in modern societies there is not a well-developed concept of psychological protection of individuals from fake news, misinformation and rumors at a lower level, nor a sufficiently developed concept of psychological protection of society from information and psychological operations at the social level. Therefore, it is necessary to improve and develop the concepts of psychological defense at the state, social, organizational and personal level, and at the same time to develop

the educational capacities and skills needed to respond to such contemporary security challenges”. (Miljković & Pešić, 2019: 1091)

Educating the civilian population about aspects of military psychology in time without crises as an important factor of health care would enable an adequate preparation and response of citizens during and after the crisis. Also, good education and preparation of civilians for crisis situations are helpful for the defense system factors of a country – military, medical, media – in acting during a real crisis situation.

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