

## Psychological Operations and Their Ethical Implications in Phil Klay's *Redeployment*

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### Abstract

The aim of this article is twofold: to examine how psychological operations function in Phil Klay's *Redeployment* (2015), namely, the ninth story, "Psychological Operations", and to uncover the moral dimension of these practices in the context of the 2003 Iraq War. Psychological Operations are primarily concerned with influencing target audiences' emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behaviour of adversaries to achieve military goals. Nevertheless, these psychological practices may violate some ethical and moral codes and endanger the well-being of their assumed patients, their enemies. The study makes the argument in two constructs, namely, 'Ethical Implications in "Psychological Operations"', which addresses the ethical dimensions of the psychological operations, and 'Accountability in "Psychological Operations"', which investigates culpability for these unethical practices. It contends that the immoral practices committed by American soldiers are presented as a reaction to the cruelty of the enemy rather than unscrupulous procedures *per se*.

**Keywords:** Psychological Operations; Ethical Codes; Phil Klay; *Redeployment*; War Fiction.

### Introduction

"all military action is intertwined with psychological forces and effects"

Carl von Clausewitz (1976, 136)

Words have eternal power; they can change the course of events, generate new realities on the ground, and affect outcomes. Words can be more crucial and consequential than traditional weapons or even modern physical warfare in war. They can be employed to achieve peace and prevent conflicts, but sometimes, they can deceive and destroy a foe. The psychology of words can be used to facilitate operational and strategic endeavours in wars and make them more cost-effective in terms of lives and money.

Propaganda and deception were executed throughout history to influence opponents in wars. Psychology was used both as a method for nations to take on their enemies, and to motivate and impact their populations (Soffer et al. 2020). It aided countries to gain an advantage over enemies since the beginning of warfare itself as military leaders sought to understand their enemies and influence their

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behaviour (Soffer et al. 2020). It was also employed as a weapon to motivate people against one another (Matherly 2020). Nations could leverage their power without the need for a physical presence or kinetic munitions (Matherly 2020). Sun Tzu, the historical Chinese general and strategist, realized that breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting was what defined outstanding military leadership before more than two thousand years (Bates and Mooney 2014). There is no need to destroy one's enemy; one only needs to beat his willingness to engage (Tzu 2020). Genghis Khan also employed psychological tactics to gain an advantage over his adversaries. If enemies refused to surrender, Khan's armies would slaughter most people in those cities and leave behind a few survivors who would narrate the atrocities they witnessed to the neighbouring cities (Al-Khatib 2015). The Greeks used the Trojan Horse to deceive foes and force capitulation upon them (Soffer et al. 2020). Psychological warfare was implemented in conflicts and wars long before its current name was created in the United States in 1941 (Wall 2010). Even though many terms were used, the foremost objective of psychological operations was to influence populations and armies' mindsets and affect their behaviour before, during, and after wars.

During World War I, people became more aware of the utility of the psychological domain; nations were involved in wars to shape peoples' opinions about and around the war behind the scenes of conventional warfare (Soffer et al. 2020). The goals of American war propaganda were to propagate support for the war, enhance military conscription, and lead (Soffer et al. 2020). Psychological theories assisted those in charge to use emotionally based techniques that made the most of patriotism, nationalism, and fear (Chambers 1983). And since American propaganda implemented in World War I proved effective, many of these techniques were employed once more in World War II (Kaminski 2014). The U.S. propaganda elevated the national spirit of its citizens while dehumanizing the German enemy (Soffer et al. 2020). Leaflets, broadcasts, and other means served to decrease the morale of enemy troops and instigate their fear and uncertainty.

Advances in technology facilitated communications with adversary audiences. In the Vietnam War, the United States amplified the effectiveness of their military endeavour through psychological means by using audio to exploit cultural "beliefs that the dead will wander the world looking for their bodies unless properly buried" (Soffer et al. 2020, 31). More developed psychological techniques and methods were implemented in the American cold war with the Soviet Union between 1947 and 1991 (Soffer et al. 2020). Organized military psychological operations in the U.S. Army continued to be an essential component of recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (Clow 2008, 24). In the modern age, electronic warfare, cyber operations, and the third industrial revolution are employed to achieve by far the most effective and influential warfare (Soffer et al. 2020). Advances in psychology are still being intertwined with present-day innovations in technology to render enemies less efficient and more submissive.

After the beginning of one of the most controversial wars in the twenty-first century, it took American authors several years to publish their literary works on the Iraq War. Many of these works were written by American veterans who served in the 2003 Iraq War, such as *Fobbit* (2012) by David Abrams, *The Yellow Birds* (2012) by Kevin Powers, and *War Porn* (2016) by Roy Scranton. After his service in Iraq in the U.S. Army between 2007-2008, Phil Klay published his debut story collection, *Redeployment*,

in 2014. Klay's work received the 2014 National Book Award along with several recognitions. It was labelled as the best literary work written by veterans in recent years (Packer 2014), "the best thing written so far on what the war did to people's souls" (Filkins, 2014, para. 4), and "a must-read for anyone with the slightest interest in the actuality of the wars that have been fought in our names" (Docx, 2014, para. 9). The author tried to present the Iraq War from a more realistic and less appealing angle in the twelve stories.

Tyrell Mayfield (2016) described Klay's approach to the Iraq War and his representation of the essentially traumatized and injured soldiers as unrealistic since many American soldiers come back intact. Soldiers were the passive victims of war; they were powerless about their conditions on the battlefield. Klay's soldiers were primarily concerned with their survival rather than any grandeur of heroism (Alosman 2020). They were war victims whose agonies were intended to stimulate empathy and absolve them from accountability for the large scale of death and destruction inflicted on local peoples and lands (Alosman 2021). Roy Scranton (2015) denounced the impunity of soldiers who take part in war atrocities; he considered Klay's work an extension of a tradition in war literature that amplifies the anguishes of soldiers. However, *Redeployment* was labelled as an anti-war work; it asked Americans to heed the appalling stories of American soldiers in order to reassess their involvement in America's recent wars (Kunsa 2017). It enhanced readers' understanding of what takes place on the battlefield without imposing particular perceptions regarding soldiers' acts (Booth 2019). Still, the psychological mechanisms executed by American Psychological Operations (PsyOps) and their ethical implications in Klay's "Psychological Operations" need to be addressed to comprehend their moral position and ramifications on the battlefield.

"Psychological Operations" is the ninth story in Phil Klay's collection, *Redeployment*. Waguih, an Army veteran who served as a specialist in Psychological Operations of the U.S. army, recounts some war experiences in Iraq. This article uncovers the moral dimension of the psychological operations and how they function in Klay's "Psychological Operations". It provides more insight into the implications of these operations and helps understand the consequences of such practices on local people in Iraq. It investigates the psychological techniques in the story by explaining their mechanisms, efficacy, and ethical implications.

### **Psychological operations**

Psychological Operations are primarily concerned with influencing audiences' emotions, motives, objective reasoning and ultimately, the behaviour of adversaries (Rouse, 2012). All psychological operations have at least one of three common goals,

- Weaken the will of the adversary by lowering morale and reducing the efficiency of his force by creating doubt, dissonance, and disaffection.
- Reinforce feelings of friendly target audiences.
- Gain the support of uncommitted or undecided audiences (Clow 2008, 25).

Psychological operations can use direct communication, audio and/or visual means, visual media or the digital domain to convey a predesigned set of messages to affect a target audience (Rouse 2012). They are divided into three types, tactical, strategic and consolidation activities. Tactical operations target specific enemy combat groups to provoke them to execute a particular action that will affect the present or short-range combat situation. Strategic operations aim at larger audiences and involve a carefully planned campaign against a larger target audience. The task of consolidation operations is to assist the civil and military establishments in solidifying their gains by creating and preserving law and order and rebuilding civil administration in a liberated area (Bates and Mooney 2014).

Propaganda, “the spreading of ideas, information, or rumor to help or injure an institution, a cause, or a person” (Merriam-Webster), is a crucial element of any psychological operations campaign that is utilized to manipulate a variety of targeted people (Bates and Mooney 2014). There are three types of propaganda: white, black and grey (Gray and Martin 2007). While white propaganda is overt, its resource is recognized directly and considered truthful, black propaganda is covert, untruthful, and the foundation of the activities is fabricated. Grey propaganda is set between white and black propaganda, where there is no clear indication of the source, or the origin is attributed to an ally, and where the truth of the information is uncertain. These types are implemented in psychological operations using various techniques to form and impact the mindsets and performances of the target audiences (Bates and Mooney 2014). Some of the methods used are assertion, i.e., an announcement of a fact that is not necessarily true but is presented as truth without authentication, the band-wagon effect, i.e., persuading people that everyone is on their side, glittering generalities, i.e., tempting to the sentiments of target people through reference to universally pleasing concepts, name-calling, i.e., stereotyping, and card-stacking, i.e., presenting only one side of a disputed subject (Bates and Mooney 2014).

To change attitudes and behaviours, psychological operations specialists try to understand the opinion of the target audience (Clow 2008). They seek to comprehend the factors that impact how an individual forms an idea and, hence, how one acts in a particular situation to shape attitudes and behaviour. They analyze the social norms of the target people and try to understand their behaviour and perspectives. People from different cultures do not think and act essentially like Westerners. Peoples who differ in culture, codes, norms, language, and history have different behaviours, actions and reactions to similar situations that vary as well. In contrast, people from similar social backgrounds will share the same fundamental opinion as a basis for collective action (Clow 2008). Therefore, to understand target people, one should think like them and make conclusions based on the way of thinking.

Target audiences are carefully delineated concerning the objectives and/or the desired effects of the mission (Clow 2008). The conditions of those people, i.e., those influences forced upon a target audience over which they have no control, like poverty, climate, or location, are examined, and the impact of these conditions on those people’s attitudes and behaviours is defined. Accordingly, a carefully designed line of persuasion is articulated to “inspire action by identifying a condition of a particular target audience, and then setting about to affect – whether to alleviate, to improve, or simply to exploit – the condition in a way that the target audience cannot do” (Clow 2008, 26). The Communist movement exploited the

poverty of Vietnamese people to expand the appeal of their ideology. They addressed the issue of rice fields and could motivate farmers and workers to join and fight for their cause against colonial rule in Vietnam (Clow 2008).

Psychological operations specialists must understand how people receive information (Clow 2008). The message to the target audience is designed and conducted considering various factors on the targeted situation that affect attitudes and behaviour, varying from culture to language to history (Clow 2008). The message is devised with "an inherent appreciation for how the reader thinks, and for how he or she will react, based upon the influences exerted" (Clow 2008, 27). During the Second World War, the U.S. psychological operations specialists used the phrase "I cease resistance" instead of "I Surrender," to convince Japanese soldiers to surrender (Clow 2008, 27). Their understanding of the concept of "saving face" in the Japanese culture appealed to these soldiers (Clow 2008, 27). Psychological operations also exploit the vulnerabilities of the target audience to achieve their objectives. Leaders' vices, sexual liaisons, unaccepted cultural and social behaviours are incorporated as themes or messages to elicit a desired response from the target audience.

For more than a century, American psychologists have used psychological principles and skills to enhance the efficacy of military and intelligence operations (Arrigo et al. 2012, 387). According to the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff [JCS] (2010), psychological operations (PSYOP) are primarily focused on influencing foreign people's perceptions and ensuing behaviour in support of the U.S. policy and military objectives (JCS 2010). PSYOP specialists analyze the environment, select audiences, develop focused, culturally, and environmentally regulated messages and actions, employ sophisticated media delivery means and produce observable, measurable behavioural responses.

In conflicts, PSYOP work as a force multiplier that can disintegrate the enemy's relative combat power, decrease civilian intervention, reduce collateral damage, and boost the local people's support for U.S. operations (JCS 2010). PSYOP activities span all levels of war, from strategic to tactical levels. At the operational level, PSYOP undertakings essentially help realize provincial policies and military plans while, at the tactical level, they usually support the local military or civil authorities (JCS 2010). PSYOP deliberately mislead adversary military decision-makers about armed forces capacities, plans, and operations.

PSYOP fortify U.S. policies that centre on averting hostilities and promoting nonviolent decisions when possible (JCS 2010). When diplomatic procedures fall short of putting off conflicts, PSYOP set conditions for including combat forces, counterbalancing threats, assisting endeavours to limit conflict, stabilizing the operational area, and enhancing efforts to implement settings that enable a return to steady-state operations. "PSYOP can inform, direct, educate, and influence targets to increase U.S. combat power, and decrease enemy hostile aggression" (JCS 2010, 2). These operations can leverage the efficacy of military and non-military endeavours and reduce the human and financial cost by influencing the mindset and behaviour of the enemy. Yet, the implementation of these operations and their repercussions have some profound ethical and moral implications that must be addressed.

## **Ethics and psychological operations**

Psychological operations are the subject of continuous debate concerning the techniques used to implement these practices and their short-term/long-term consequences on the psychological well-being of their targets. The principles of psychological ethics seek to “protect the weaker from the stronger. They are designed to protect the patient-client or research subject, as the relatively unknowledgeable, vulnerable, and exposed party, from the psychologist, as the relatively knowledgeable, authoritative, and unexposed party” (Arrigo et al. 2012, 389). The American Psychological Association (APA) Ethics Code essentially requires the psychologist’s accountability to the individual patient–client and that psychologists should not harm those being questioned (APA 2010). It clearly states that “[p]sychologists do not exploit persons over whom they have supervisory, evaluative, or other authority such as clients/patients, students, supervisees, research participants, and employees” (APA 2010).

After the 9/11 attacks, Arrigo et al. (2012) argue that the U.S. psychological operations gained new prominence because of the distinct nature of the terrorist threat. These operations also became the source of intense controversy following media reports that psychologists were actively involved in the military’s abusive interrogations of the detainees in Guantanamo Bay and Afghanistan. American operational physicians were also engaged in torture interrogations in the Iraq War (Arrigo et al. 2012). Psychologists directly backed deception, coercion, assault in military and intelligence operations and covert operations research. They identified and manipulated adversaries in counterterrorism operations, and the targets of their intervention opposed the psychologist’s mission and/or were subject to no-stipulated harms (Arrigo et al. 2012). They clinically evaluated convicts to expose their psychological liabilities that will consequently be misused in interrogating the prisoner for intelligence gathering purposes (Frakt 2009). The vulnerabilities of psychology patients were exploited to achieve military goals.

Arrigo et al (2012) argue that psychological operations conducted by the U.S. army posed irresolvable ethical conflicts for the psychologists involved. They insist that it is essential to realize that all active-duty military psychologists are soldiers first and psychologists second; U.S. military laws outweigh the APA Ethics Code. The U.S. Army regulations involving detention and interrogation operations, directed by state-licensed clinical psychologists, foreground the APA Ethics Code yet ultimately disregard it (Arrigo et al. 2012). There is no official line where national security missions yield to psychological ethics for operational psychologists; the mission comes first. Additionally, there is no requirement in the military to conduct independent monitoring of psychologists concerning psychological ethics.

This study examines how psychological operations function in Phil Klay’s story, “Psychological Operations”, and uncover the ethical dimension of these practices in the 2003 Iraq War. It investigates the psychological techniques in two constructs, namely, “Ethical Implications” which addresses the ethical dimensions of the psychological operations implemented in the Iraq War, and “Accountability” which investigates culpability of both Iraqis and Americans for unethical practices and their consequences.

### **Ethical implications**

“Psychological Operations” approaches a rarely visited area in war fiction and enables readers to comprehend the implementation of psychology in warfare and its problematic circumstances and consequences. War propaganda predates any war; it aggregates public support and entices more young people to join the military. Part of the propaganda is financial as it attracts those young people who cannot afford university fees. Waguih, the narrator, is an Army veteran of Egyptian Copt origins. He served as a specialist in the Psychological Operations of the U.S. Army in Iraq and now is a student at Amherst College in Massachusetts. One of the reasons he joins the U.S. Army is to help him obtain a degree as if the advertisements of the U.S. Army say “You Can’t Afford College Without Us” (Klay 2015, 192). Pre-war propaganda also invests in people’s feelings of patriotism. Waguih’s father takes part in war propaganda by forwarding some “patriotic e-mails” to his son, “[h]e’d send me PowerPoints with pictures of soldiers, or jokes and speeches about ‘the troops’ that talked about them like they shat gold. I was eighteen, I ate it up” (199). However, Waguih himself is learning about “how to do propaganda in [his] classes, and it felt pretty fucking weird” (199). PsyOps, short for psychological operations specialists, are trained to recognize “the propaganda in civilian life so [they] could use the same techniques in war” (199). As he is learning to utilize propaganda to influence target people’s perceptions and behaviours, war propaganda is being played on American people to support and join the military.

Psychological operations sometimes rely on misleading information to achieve some goals. One of Waguih’s instructors tells his trainees, “[r]eal life does not fit on bumper stickers, so remember: If you tell too much truth, nobody will believe you” (Klay 2015, 199). And Waguih agrees with him, “[i]n Iraq, we told a lot of truth and a lot of bullshit to the Iraqis. Some of the bullshit worked really well” (199). However, Zara inspects the ethical aspect of this approach; “[i]t’s strange to think of somebody doing that for a living” (199). Still, American soldiers are presented as the susceptible victims of war who are being acted upon by superior orders.

The outcomes of the techniques utilized by psychological operations are sometimes lethal, as they manipulate truths, deceive enemies and facilitate their destruction. “As a PsyOps specialist, as anything in the Army, you’re part of a weapons system. Language is a technology. They trained me to use it to increase my unit’s lethality. After all, the Army’s an organization built around killing people” (Klay 2015, 199). PsyOps in the U.S. Army are trained to support other units in the military even if that means aiding the killing of an enemy. Yet, their weapons are not traditional or physical, PsyOps “get inside their [enemies’] heads” (200). Thus, through means of their psychological expertise, PsyOps violate basic ethical principles declared by American Psychological Association (2010) and exploit people’s psychological weaknesses to take advantage of them and, sometimes, be part of their death.

Civilians, including children, are also exposed to a language loaded with violence and profanity broadcasted via speakers “all the time” (Klay 2015, 201). Both Iraqis and Americans are part of this speakers’ war. Messages like “[w]e fight under the slogan Allahu Akbar. We have a date with death, and we’re going to get our heads chopped off” (201), broadcasted by Iraqis access every household in Fallujah, while Americans are “blaring Drowning Pool and Eminem [. . .] A music festival from hell”

(201). All these loudspeakers' battles occur inside the populated city of Fallujah, "[i]n a city [. . .] filled with people" (201), where civilians have to suffer from their tormenting noise, insults and violence. The well-being of civilians is not considered, and the psychological harm inflicted on their everyday life is ignored. What matters for these operations is to achieve advances, even if that means violating the fundamental rights of civilians.

Psychological warfare plays a significant role in Iraq War, where both Americans and Iraqis try to utilize their techniques to influence the outcomes on the battlefield. While most Iraqi psychological operations depend on religious and patriotic discourse to encourage Iraqis to resist American presence in their country, American operations are more sophisticated and mainly target Iraqis. American PsyOps try to enrage Iraqi insurgents and entice them to act angrily and get carried away. "Real loud Eminem and AC/DC and Metallica" (Klay 2015, 200-201). They try to disturb the insurgents' coordination via loudspeakers; they would "play shit to drown them out, hurt their command and control. Sometimes we'd roll up to a position and play the Predator chuckle, [. . . a] deep, creepy, evil laugh. Even the Marines didn't like it" (201). The Marines also would "compete to find the dirtiest insults they could think of. And then [they would] go scream over the loudspeakers, taunting holed-up insurgents until they'd come running out of the mosques, all mad, and [they would] mow them down" (201). Americans play on Iraqis' sensitivities to sexually abusive language to trigger their fury, act irrationally, and expose themselves to American gunners who are ready to shoot. Iraqis' psychological vulnerabilities are unethically taken advantage of to accomplish some gains on the battlefield.

Though unethical, the techniques used by American PsyOps prove to be efficient. "The insults [. . .] And of everything we did, that got the most satisfying feedback. I mean, the muj [Iraqi insurgents] would charge and we'd listen as the Marines mowed them down" (Klay 2015, 202). Still, Waguih thinks that what they have done "with insurgents saved lives at Fallujah. And then I probably saved lives afterwards, telling the truth about what would happen if you fucked with us" (202). The psychological consequences of the profanity used inside a populated city are justified to extinguish insurgents. What seems to be of prior significance for Americans is killing insurgents regardless of these practices' means, circumstances, or moral implications.

### **Accountability**

Klay begins "Psychological Operations" with Iraqis' use of propaganda to spread their messages to incite locals' actions against Americans; Iraqis initiate the acts of psychological warfare. Iraqi insurgents in Fallujah utilize the speakers of the mosques to spread their messages to Iraqis; "the mosques would blast the same messages over the adhan speakers. 'America is bringing in the Jews of Israel to steal Iraq's wealth and oil. Aid the holy warriors. Do not fear death. Protect Islam'" (Klay 2015, 184). The insurgents target locals, not Americans, to raise their religious, political, economic and patriotic reaction against the presence of Americans. Iraqis are urged to take patriot action against these non-Muslim foes.

American psychological operations are introduced as a reaction, rather than an action, against antagonistic messages spread by Iraqis; "[a]s PsyOps [. . .] part of our job was to counter those messages.



Or at least to fuck with the insurgents and make them scared” (Klay 2015, 184). And as if to discredit Muslims’ perception of Islam as a ‘religion of war’, Waguih adds, “[e]xplaining that Islam was a religion of peace wasn’t likely to work, but explaining that we would definitely kill you if you fucked with us might convince a few folks to chill out” (184). While Iraqis are shown to be the initiators of this psychological game to gain the hearts and support of locals, Americans are primarily preoccupied with thwarting such propaganda.

Klay elaborates on the techniques employed by American operations to influence Iraqis’ attitudes and behaviour. To produce counter-effect messages that defuse the Iraqis’, Americans “used to go out in a Humvee strapped with speakers so [they] could spew [their] own propaganda. [They] dispense threats, promises, and a phone number for locals to call and report insurgent activity.” (Klay 2015, 184). However, Waguih tells Zara, his colleague at Amherst College, that he “hate[s] those missions” (184). After labelling the Americans’ operations as a reaction to the Iraqis’, Waguih invokes empathy by claiming his dislike for what he does. Roy Scranton (2015) decries what he calls ‘a politics of forgetting’ prevalent in war novels that showcase soldiers’ innocence and irresponsibility for war atrocities.

One of the stated purposes of psychological operations in the U.S. army is to decrease civilian casualties (JCS 2010). Yet, Marines kill a “kid [ . . . ] A stupid death. That’s what we were out there to prevent” (Klay 2015, 190). As a PsyOps (psychological operations specialist), Waguih explains how he “was supposed to tell the Iraqis how to not get themselves killed. And I actually spoke the language, so it was me on those loudspeakers, not a translator” (190). What Klay tries to convey is not only the gruesome episode of child-killing but rather its intense impact on Waguih, who feels obliged to prevent such deaths; “I always think, That was one I was supposed to save” (191). Readers are brought to empathise with American soldiers who are doing their ‘best’ to avoid such a death scenario.

The story tries to assign ethical liability to Iraqis for their role in recruiting children through propaganda. They are held accountable for the deaths among those untrained children.

These imams were up there getting everybody excited, telling them to fight us [Americans]. And the teenagers ate that shit up. You’d have a bunch of kids with no military training who’d seen too many American action movies try to go Rambo. It was crazy. An untrained kid against a Marine squad in camouflaged positions with marked fields of fire? (Klay 2015, 190).

The story ascribes a religious impetus to Iraqis’ resistance to the American presence in their land to rebuke Iraqi propaganda. Ironically, by attempting to revoke the Iraqi propaganda, the narrative reiterates American propaganda regarding anti-American presence in Iraq as a form of religious fanaticism. Though Zara tries to accentuate that these deaths are a consequence of American forces’ presence inside a populated city like Fallujah, Waguih insists that Americans “tried to limit the damage. The generals had a bunch of meetings with the imams and sheikhs to tell them, ‘Stop sending your stupid fucking kids against us, we’re just going to kill them.’ But it wouldn’t change anything” (191). American efforts to counter what Klay describes as Iraqi propaganda seem to produce much effect on the ground regarding reducing the number of non-combatant fatalities, and Iraqis are made in charge of these deaths.

Through the character of Zara, a new convert to Islam who is obsessed with a supra-nationalist notion of Ummah, Klay presents anti-war perspectives in “Psychological Operations”. She is primarily against the war because it is waged against what she perceives as a collective Islamic Ummah and because the victims are primarily Muslims. As she tells Waguih, “I’ve read there were hundreds, maybe thousands of civilians killed” (Klay 2015, 191), he retorts, “[t]here was propaganda on both sides. But I was trying to help people avoid getting killed. And not everybody was kids” (191). Even Though he acknowledges civilians' death and claims responsibility for failing to prevent these deaths, he stresses a shared responsibility between Americans and insurgents. By claiming that the number of civilian casualties in Iraq is part of the Iraqi propaganda, he exercises American propaganda that tries to mitigate the gruesome consequences of the war on the lives of Iraqis.

There seems to be a contradiction between the mission of American PsyOps as per their mission to lessen the number of civilian casualties and the task of other military units which are primarily trained to kill, not save, people. Zara mocks the work of American psychological operations as they try to save the lives of civilians there; “Save? [. . .] By convincing [Iraqis] not to fight the soldiers invading [their] home?” (Klay 2015, 191). Waguih laughs; he adds,

“The Marines would be sitting there waiting, hoping some dumb muj [Iraqi insurgent] would make a suicide assault. Nobody wants to be the guy in the squad who hasn’t killed anybody, and nobody joins the Marine Corps to avoid pulling triggers” (191).

Waguih’s laughter agrees with Zara’s mocking remarks; while soldiers are required to kill to impress their colleagues and leaders, PsyOps are meant to reduce the number of casualties and help achieve goals with the least number of deaths. Klay seems to denounce such a contradiction, yet, soldiers are almost absolved from such responsibility since they do not take the big decisions that lead to such conclusions.

The readers are brought to sympathize with Waguih who is encumbered with his guilt by taking part in the killing of an Iraqi insurgent; he wants to “unload” the burden of the war experience (203). He risks his “life for something bigger than [himself]” (203). He chooses to serve in the U.S. Army without properly understanding “American foreign policy or why we were at war [. . .] You held up your hand and said, “I’m willing to die for these worthless civilians” (203). As he struggles with his guilt, he reminds his readership that they are “fighting very bad people. But it was an ugly thing” (203). He feels “sad and lost [. . .] thinking about what [he had] been through and how much [he] would never tell [his mother] because it would only break her heart” (204). Readers are frequently exposed to Waguih’s anguishes because of his traumatizing war experience in Iraq to escape the moral burden. They are brought to relate to his suffering, understand how difficult it is to be there, and how their enemy, Iraqi insurgents, forced them to use such mean methods.

Though not a traditional soldier, Waguih acknowledges his responsibility for killing an Iraqi man. He “didn’t shoot anybody, but [he] was definitely responsible” (Klay 2015, 200). He manipulates his knowledge of tribal culture and sensitivities in Iraq to entrap Laith al-Tawhid, the leader of the al-Tawhid Martyrs Brigade. The technique used by PsyOps to ensnare him is to use his name and call him while all

his men would listen. As PsyOps have information about him and his women who live outside Fallujah, Waguih would speak through the speakers; "Laith al-Tawhid, we have your women [. . .] your wife and your daughters [. . .] we found them whoring themselves out to American soldiers, and we were bringing them to the office building" (209). He uses the Iraqi Arabic, "we'd fuck [your] daughters on the roof and put their mouths to the loudspeaker so [you] could hear their screams" (209). Waguih spends an hour on the speakers using highly foul language (we could not cite this because of the extreme level of sexual profanity); "I'd cursed for him and at him in English, in Egyptian, in Iraqi, in MSA, in Koranic Arabic, in Bedouin slang" (210). Laith al-Tawhid's men hear their leader,

being disrespected. Humiliated. For an hour [. . .] There were a hundred little insurgent groups, a hundred little local chiefs trying to grab power. And I was shaming him in front of everybody. I told him, 'You think fighting us will win you honor, but we have your daughters. You've fucked with us, so you've fucked your children. There is no honor.' He didn't have a choice [. . .] I just heard the Marines shooting him down. They told me he led his little suicide charge. (210)

Iraqi insurgents get enraged, uncover their hideouts, assault, and finally, "got mowed down" (210). Both Waguih's father, a pro-war enthusiast, and his friend Zara get disgusted by the extensively vulgar language and immoral means used to entrap insurgents. His father seems somewhat ashamed of his son's behaviour as he comprehends the details and specifics of his job. Still, readers are expected to emphasize with him since the enemies are villains, "guys like Laith al-Tawhid [who] treat women like dogs. Like dogs who can destroy all your family's honor if they act up or show an ounce of free will" (208). Such immoral means employed to hunt these insurgents are understandably deplorable, yet accountability is shifted to those insurgents due to their cruelty; they are women abusers whose women may get relieved by their death. Thus, Americans are made the liberators of these oppressed women, even through immoral practices.

## Conclusion

The American moral philosopher, Jeff McMahan (2004), contends that the deep morality of war demands of "military personnel that they consider with the utmost seriousness whether any war in which they might fight is just and refuse to fight unless they can be confident that it is" (McMahan 2004, 733). Nonetheless, just wars can have immoral practices that violate basic ethical codes. Phil Klay's "Psychological Operations" illustrates how psychology can play a significant role in achieving military gains on the ground and in what manner warring entities can slip into unimagined means that violate ethical standards. The psychological techniques applied by both Americans and Iraqis seem to disregard civilians' psychological security. They are principally concerned with the military outcomes in a rather Machiavellian manner. Nevertheless, Klay posits most of the blame on the Iraqi insurgents by accentuating their cruelty and Americans' relatively more cautioned behaviour.

All that surrounds wars seem ugly despite all the attempts to make it sound less destructive and more 'just'. Though psychological operations are thought to reduce the amount of death and anguish inflicted

on civilians, results on the ground prove their immorality and opportunism. These unethical practices should be probed, exposed, and challenged to curb their negative and prolonged repercussions of the lives of all those involved. The moral factor should be given the utmost priority over all military achievements. More studies should be conducted on war literature to address ethical issues and help showcase the real face of war.

### العمليات النفسية وانعكاساتها الأخلاقية في مجموعة فيل كلاي القصصية (إعادة الانتشار)

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#### الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تسليط الضوء على العمليات النفسية في قصة فيل كلاي التاسعة، "العمليات النفسية"، وكشف البعد الأخلاقي لهذه الممارسات في سياق حرب العراق عام 2003م، وتهتم العمليات النفسية، في المقام الأول، بالتأثير في عواطف الجماهير المستهدفة ودوافعها وتفكيرها الموضوعي، علاوة على سلوك الأعداء لتحقيق الأهداف العسكرية. ومع ذلك، فإن هذه الممارسات النفسية قد تنتهك بعض القواعد الأخلاقية وتعرض صحة مرضاهم المفترضين (أعداءهم) للخطر، وتبحث الدراسة في التقنيات النفسية في بنيتين، وهما "الأثار الأخلاقية في" العمليات النفسية"، و"المساءلة في" العمليات النفسية"، قدّمت الأبعاد غير الأخلاقية للممارسات التي يرتكبها الجنود الأمريكيون في قصة كلاي على أنها ردود أفعال على قسوة العدو ووحشيته، المتمردون العراقيون، بدلاً من كونها إجراءات غير أخلاقية في حد ذاتها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العمليات النفسية، القواعد الأخلاقية، فيل كلاي، إعادة الانتشار، قصص الحرب.

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