

The Stanford Prison Experiment: Still failing the political test

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Abstract

The Stanford Prison Experiment is one of the most famous studies in social psychology and psychology in general. It has been told and retold in classrooms across the world to illustrate the power of social psychology (and psychology in general) in explaining human behavior. Fifty years later, the Stanford Prison Experiment continues to attract considerable scholarly attention. While mainstream psychology still prides itself in the main findings, various scholars claim to have “debunked” them. There has also been discussion regarding the ethical issues involved. This paper offers a critical assessment of the Stanford Prison Experiment with a focus on the historical and political context. When placed in its historical and political context, the Stanford Prison Experiment exemplifies the persistent political shortcomings of mainstream psychology; its critical assessment thus offers lessons for those who are seeking alternatives to mainstream psychology.

Keywords

militarism, colonialism, veterans, Vietnam, Ukraine, War on Terror

The Stanford Prison Experiment [TSPE] is one of the most famous studies in social psychology and psychology in general. It has been cited again and again as evidence for the power of social settings on social behavior. The study has been told and retold in classrooms across the world to illustrate the power of social psychology (and psychology in general) in explaining human behavior. The study was conducted by Philip G. Zimbardo at Stanford University in August 1971 and funded by the U.S. Office of Naval Research. TSPE simulated a prison environment, where university students were assigned the role of either a prisoner or a prison guard. It was intended to assess the power of a prison environment on behavior over a period of two weeks. However, mistreatment of prisoners escalated and Zimbardo terminated the experiment in one week.¹

Fifty years later, Philip G. Zimbardo continues to be treated as a scientific genius and is sought-after as a speaker. He has been invited to deliver keynote speeches at international conferences and congresses again and again. Following

¹ Further information can be found on a website dedicated to the study.

the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the revelations in 2004 about human rights violations and war crimes against detainees in the Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad, Zimbardo became popular once again. His opinion was sought out to explain the war crimes in Iraq, particularly in Abu Ghraib. Today, TSPE continues to attract considerable scholarly attention: While mainstream psychology still prides itself in SPE's main findings (Griggs, & Bartels, 2019), some scholars are interested in "debunking" them (e.g., Le Texier, 2019), while others are busy finding ways to resolve the ethical issues (e.g., Perlstadt, 2018).

The goal of this paper is to offer a critical assessment of TSPE with a focus on the historical and political context. Mainstream psychology, with its diversity of branches and shades, is decidedly ahistorical and claims to be a politically neutral discipline. The goal here is to place TSPE in its historical and political context to demonstrate how it exemplifies the persistent political shortcomings of mainstream psychology. Putting TSPE in its socio-historical context requires an examination of how it related to the war on Vietnam, a defining event in the history of the United States of America. Finally, this paper aims to draw lessons for those who are seeking alternatives to mainstream approaches.

The war on Vietnam

The war on Vietnam was a very prolonged campaign and proved to be a very brutal one. The war started in the second half of the 1950s and officially ended in 1975. Many scholars and observers (e.g. Hess, 1994) have characterized the war as a defining event in U.S. history. The number of publications on the war on Vietnam grew in the decades following the war and continues to expand today, almost 50 years after the war officially ended. The number of publications dedicated to the war on Vietnam indicates that this particular war has occupied a central place in the intellectual domain. No other war since World War II has received so much attention. Today, there are thousands of books on the war on Vietnam. They are so numerous that one can find websites offering rankings under titles like "*The best 20 books*," "*Top 30 books*" and so on. What is perhaps even more interesting is that the trend continues year after year. Most of these books about the war on Vietnam are non-fiction, many produced by journalists. More personal books were written by soldiers who wanted to tell their own stories and experiences during the war (Rollins, 1984). Many of these books are hardly known because they were published by small publishers or by the authors themselves and not distributed widely. There are also numerous works of fiction. The earliest is a novel by Graham Greene, titled *The Quiet American*. As early as 1955, Greene was able to expect the consequences of a war on Vietnam: failure, defeat, and withdrawal (Whitfield, 1996).

Silence in psychology

Almost 50 years later after the end of the war, new books on the war on Vietnam are still being published. The fact that some of these books are 400 pages long and very detailed (e.g., Appy, 2016) indicates a rather strange and yet persistent preoccupation with this particular war. It would be hard not to conclude that there is an obsession in the U.S. with the war on Vietnam. This obsession appears to be a consequence of an imperial mentality and a belief in militarism: The U.S. is a modern superpower and therefore it must be invincible. The defeat in Vietnam can only be a result of a major miscalculation somewhere, a strategic failure by the military or a lack of political will. The defeat must be explained away and the belief in the invincibility of the superpower must be restored.

In contrast, there are surprisingly few publications in psychology focusing on the war on Vietnam. Scholarly books and articles are very rare. Even though the war on Vietnam was clearly a burning public issue in the U.S. in the 70s (Rollins, 1984), very few psychologists in the U.S. focused their scholarship on the ongoing war and its consequences. The vast majority of psychologists in the U.S. remained silent as the U.S. government continued a horrific war of attrition (Değirmencioglu, 2010).

The historical context

In 1971, the war on Vietnam was clearly a salient issue in the U.S. The war was on the front pages. In April, U.S. Army First Lieutenant William L. Calley, Jr. was found guilty of murdering 22 civilians in the My Lai massacre and sentenced to life in prison.² In May, thousands of anti-war activists were arrested in Washington, D.C. by the police and military. In June, the New York Times began to publish the Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force, which came to be known as the “Pentagon Papers.” The Pentagon Papers showed that the U.S. government lied systematically to the public and to the U.S. Congress about the war on Vietnam. Philip Zimbardo conducted TSPE in the same year, in August 1971; yet, the experiment was rarely discussed in relation to the war on Vietnam. Even today, students rarely, if ever, hear a discussion of TSPE in its socio-historical context. Consequently, five decades later, a serious political analysis of TSPE is still sorely needed.

The militarism problem

A rarely discussed problem with TSPE is that the study was funded by the Naval Research Office, or the Navy. The fact that the US military was interested in the

² Convicted of murdering twenty-two villagers at My Lai on 16 March 1968, Calley was sentenced in March 1971 to life imprisonment. That sentence was quickly reduced to 20, then to 10 years. In November 1974, Calley became eligible for parole and was set free. In 1976, he married and took over the management of his father-in-law's business in Columbus, Georgia (Oliver, 2003).

behaviors that TSPE reported has rarely attracted attention from TSPE's critics. This is not surprising given the long-standing alliance of US mainstream psychology with the military. For many mainstream psychologists, an alliance with the military is not a political or an ethical problem (Değirmencioğlu, 2010; 2021). The long-standing alliance with the military is not a matter of individual psychologists working for the military. The alliance is institutionalized and has been promoted as "public service" by the American Psychological Association (APA). As the largest professional organization representing psychology in the U.S. and with a membership above one hundred and fifty thousand, APA plays a central role in mainstream psychology. APA openly and continuously lobbies on behalf of the Department of Veterans Affairs (formerly Veterans Administration), which provides medical care, benefits, and other services to veterans. The Department of Veterans Affairs is the largest employer of psychologists in the U.S.: it employs about 6000 psychologists. It is followed by the U.S. Army, which employs about 800 to 900 psychologists.

Following the September 11 attacks in the U.S., the Bush administration sought to employ psychologists in its "War on Terror." It did not take a long time for the APA administration to cooperate with the U.S. Department of Defense to provide ethical cover for an "interrogation" program and for psychologists working in the program. About a decade later, an independent review was conducted by attorney David Hoffman. Hoffman was hired by APA in November 2014 to investigate whether APA engaged in activity that would constitute collusion with the Bush administration to promote, support or facilitate the use of "enhanced" interrogation techniques by the U.S. in the war on terror (Değirmencioğlu, 2021). The Hoffman Report, which was released in July 2015, provided clear evidence of collusion. The report shook APA and mainstream psychology like an earthquake. Some characterized the collusion as one of the greatest ethical breaches in the history of psychology. The APA administration quickly apologized for "deeply disturbing findings and organizational failures," and announced "policy and procedural actions to correct shortcomings." (Değirmencioğlu, 2021).

The earthquake following the Hoffman Report was but a glitch for the long-standing alliance. It did not take long for the APA administration to engage in damage control. In 2017, APA President Antonio E. Puente released a statement in honor of Veterans Day that confirmed APA's commitment to serving the military and the veterans it produces:

Veterans Day is an opportunity to honor those individuals who have selflessly served to protect our country. APA works throughout the year to acknowledge that spirit, supporting military personnel and veterans, their families and their communities and the psychologists who conduct research for and provide direct services to these military-connected populations. APA strongly advocates for funding and support for veterans' health research and clinical services, including therapies to address post-traumatic stress disorder and depression and more effective suicide prevention efforts in military and veteran populations.

One of the best ways for psychologists to serve our veterans is to better understand their psychological needs. I encourage our members to visit the VA

community provider toolkit, which provides free training modules to better understand military culture and how psychologists can help serve military personnel, veterans, families and communities. I also encourage members of the public to honor our military today in whatever way they can, whether by attending a local Veterans Day celebration or just reaching out to a nearby member of the military and expressing gratitude for his or her service.³

The statement illustrates the problem. Only two years after the Hoffman Report, Puente emphasizes how dedicated APA is to the military personnel, past and present, and how deserving the military personnel was. He also underscores APA's continuing lobbying efforts. What follows is particularly interesting. In the second paragraph, Puente changes his audience and starts speaking as if he were a military spokesperson: He encourages psychologists to learn about the military culture and how they can serve military personnel and veterans, and people around them. Finally, he invites APA members to express their gratitude to members of the military.

A number of prominent psychologists, whose names were associated with the collusion, disputed the findings of the Hoffman Report and some openly attacked those involved in the independent review process. Martin Seligman, for instance, portrayed the criticisms as attempts to "discourage young psychologists from working with the Department of Defense" and he urged APA "not to waver in its long-standing commitment to serve the nation," (Seligman, 2018). Prominent supporters of militarism in psychology continue to equate serving the military with serving the nation (Değirmencioğlu, 2022).

It is clear that mainstream psychology is yet to distance itself from militarism. It is also clear that the move away from militarism toward a focus on preventing injustice will not originate from APA's corporate apparatus or mainstream psychology. APA has not abandoned its long-standing alliance with the military establishment even after the Hoffman Report. The Association continues to promote military psychology, to highlight psychologists working in the military, to present itself as the advocate for the well-being of veterans, and so on (Değirmencioğlu, 2022).

The complicity problem

A second problem with TSPE and the studies following it is that they were disconnected from contemporary wars and from glaring examples of the social-psychological madness these wars created. In typical mainstream fashion, TSPE and other "ground-breaking" work remained politically silent or complicit as far as addressing ongoing wars and imperial, colonial, and racist policies of their times.

A case in point is the slur "gook." Anyone who has some familiarity with the war on Vietnam knows about the wide-spread use of this slur. It is an ethnic

³ The statement was distributed via email on Thursday, 9 November 2017 with the title APA News: "APA Honors Military for Their Service: Association works to support veterans."

slur for a person of Southeast Asian descent, especially a Vietnamese, Filipino, Chinese, Japanese or Korean person. The term is similar to the N-word used in the U.S. for African-American people. In this paper, it will be referred to as the “G-word.” The exact origin of the G-word is not clear. However, it is clear that it is a derogatory term used primarily, but not exclusively, for people who live in South Asian lands. The G-word owes its staying power to the U.S. military: It was primarily and consistently used by the U.S. forces in various wars across time. U.S. military personnel used the G-word to refer to indigenous peoples in the Philippines and in Korea, but the G-word became well-known only during the war on Vietnam as a racial slur.

There has been very little interest in mainstream psychology in the G-word and how this term was employed consistently across decades. A notable exception can be found in a chapter by Leventman and Camacho (1980). They noted the use of the G-word for the Vietnamese as a racial slur. Next, they noted that race, racism and race consciousness were critical in understanding the dynamics of war. Today the G-word rarely, if ever, appears in mainstream psychology. Its staying power is not mentioned or explored in social psychology textbooks. The war on Vietnam, the great suffering that was inflicted on the local population, the intentional environmental destruction, the use of Napalm or Agent Orange are all missing from psychology textbooks. Mainstream psychology rarely disturbs militarism.

The G-word was not unknown to Zimbardo. He did write about it some 25 years after TSPE, in “The Lucifer Effect” (Zimbardo, 2007). The section titled “Dehumanization: The Other as Nothing Worthwhile” opens with a quote: “*Kill a Gook for God* – Penned on helmet of a U.S. soldier in Vietnam” (p.222). In another section of book, Zimbardo examines the G-word to discuss dehumanization and moral disengagement:

Behind the My Lai massacre of hundreds of innocent Vietnamese civilians by American soldiers was the dehumanizing “gooks” label that GIs had for all of those different-looking Asian people. Yesterday's “gooks” have become today's “hajjis” and “towel heads” in the Iraq War as a new corps of soldiers derogates these different-looking citizens and soldiers. “You just sort of try to block out the fact that they're human beings and see them as enemies,” said Sergeant Mejia, who refused to return to action in what he considered an abominable war. “You call them ‘hajjis’, you know? You do all the things that make it easier to deal with killing them and mistreating them.” (pp. 307-308)

Zimbardo himself recognizes part of the problem. In a talk titled “The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil,” at the 18th APS Annual Convention, he offered this striking assessment, “Psychologists rarely ask the big questions.” As usual, Zimbardo was addressing a roomful of psychologists and students eager to hear him talk (Wargo, 2006). He concluded, “*We have all kinds of great techniques for answering small questions. We've never bothered to ask the big questions. It's time we asked the big questions like the nature of evil.*”

The import-export problem

Another glaring problem with the criticisms of TSPE and similar studies is the fact that most of the critics refrained from addressing the political biases exported to the Global South as part of mainstream psychology (Değirmencioğlu, 2021). The way mainstream psychology has been operating across the world can best be described as an “import-export” business (Değirmencioğlu, 2021). The vast number of psychology publications are produced in the Global North. Psychology was born and then institutionalized as a profession in the Global North. The products of mainstream psychology are distributed around the world as knowledge, practice, or models. Journals, books, instruments, software, workshops, and speakers are all marketed globally and often aggressively. Exports always need local importers; they bring the products in and distribute them to the local market. In the past, importers were predominantly academic psychologists. Today, many professional organizations and private firms are also engaged in the import business. The import-export business continues to flourish with diverse products.

Academic psychology is well-organized particularly in the US and in the UK; university degrees have also become big business. Students from the Global South often receive their advanced degrees in the Global North and unknowingly facilitate the import-export business. Graduate students are often exposed to a narrative that sounds a lot like a fairy tale: Objective and hard-working psychologists in the Global North produce theoretical and methodological tools for psychologists around the world. These products are made available to psychologists in the Global South, who adopt them for the benefit of society. Little is mentioned regarding the import-export process and the biases that go along with the imports. When TSPE and other studies in the literature are imported, biases and silences are also imported. Imported textbooks, instructional materials, including videos on popular video platforms such as TED Talks on psychology all bring in persistent biases and silences. The import-export business, thus, serves the spread of persistent biases, such as militarism.

What about critical psychology?

Critical psychology is not necessarily immune to problems and biases that plague mainstream psychology. One such bias appears to be a lack of focus on militarism. Given the centrality of militarism for understanding injustice and suffering across the world (Değirmencioğlu, 2020b), one would expect a strong and sustained critical focus on militarism. One would also expect at least a sizable body of literature in critical psychology focusing on major imperial wars, such as the war on Vietnam and the war on Iraq. For decades, these two wars were, without a doubt, defining influences for millions of people.

In order to make a quick assessment regarding a discipline (or a sub-discipline or a school of thought), one can carry out an analysis of major handbooks that are considered milestones in this discipline’s literature. The

Handbook of Environmental Psychology (Bechtel & Churchman, 2002), for instance, was considered an important milestone in environmental psychology. If this 736-page handbook does not contain any mention of militarism and the devastating environmental impact of military activities, it is fair to make a general statement about the state of environmental psychology at that time (Değirmencioğlu, 2022).

A similar assessment can be carried out for critical psychology on the basis of a recent handbook. The Handbook of Critical Psychology (Parker, 2015) is an important contribution to critical psychology. The 477-page long handbook contains many well-written and informative contributions from a long list of critical psychologists. When examined carefully, however, this volume has little to offer regarding the relationship between mainstream psychology and wars across the world. The handbook does not contain a single analysis of how mainstream psychology responded to the war on Vietnam. There is also no analysis of how mainstream psychology contributed to the war on Iraq, before and after 2003.

Thus, it is fair to conclude that critical psychologists paid very little attention to the war on Vietnam and the prevalence of militarism in mainstream psychology. Perhaps because of this negligent attitude, critical psychologists failed to pay attention to the war on Iraq, a politically decisive imperial campaign that clearly led to very serious consequences for Iraq, for the Middle East and the entire world. This general assessment holds even though there have been a few notable exceptions (e.g., Duckett, 2005).

Conclusion

The never-ending debate in the USA about the war on Vietnam seems to have had very little influence on mainstream psychology. The horrific and prolonged mass suffering inflicted on the people of Vietnam and in neighboring countries seems to have had very little significance for mainstream psychologists. In contrast, TSPE has had enormous recognition in social psychology and mainstream psychology across the world. Philip Zimbardo continues to be treated as a scientific genius in mainstream psychology and enjoys the status of a guru in human behavior some fifty years later. He continues to receive awards from professional organizations for his distinguished contributions to psychology.

This paper places TSPE in its historical context and casts a new and critical light on the study. TSPE was conducted in August 1971, at a time when the war on Vietnam was raging. By August 1971, the atrocities in Vietnam – including the My Lai massacre – were no secret. The Pentagon Papers had already been published. By August 1971, the king was very much naked. TSPE should be assessed in this context. First, it was funded by an institution that was clearly associated with wars and in particular with the ongoing horrific war in Vietnam. Second, Zimbardo seems to have made no effort at that time to link his scholarship and his work on the power of social settings to the atrocities

committed in Vietnam. Just as with many other exports, TSPE and its biases were exported as sound psychology to the Global South.

As a seasoned scholar, Zimbardo himself is aware of some of the lingering problems in mainstream psychology. He has pointed out the discrepancy between the greatness of common methodological tools and the smallness of the questions they are able to answer (Wargo, 2006). He has also urged psychologists to ask big questions, which is in line with the points laid out in this paper. It might indeed be appropriate to pose a few big questions that critical psychologists may hopefully follow up in the near future. Why is mainstream psychology still very silent about wars that lasted for decades, such as the war on Vietnam? Why has mainstream psychology been extremely negligent with regard to the immense suffering associated with the atomic massacres in Japan, or Napalm and Agent Orange? Why do psychologists in the Global South remain silent, when mainstream psychology in the Global North promotes militarism?

It might be appropriate to end this paper with a set of big questions brought up by the invasion of Ukraine. The invasion officially began on 24 February 2022 and has turned into a war with bitter consequences. Professional psychology organizations in the Global North, the very organizations that kept silent about the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, rushed to condemn the invasion of Ukraine. The British Psychological Society (BPS), for instance, released the following statement:

The developing conflict in Ukraine is deeply concerning for all, not least for those directly affected and who will feel the brunt of the psychological impact of the crisis and potential human rights violations.

We stand shoulder to shoulder with our colleagues in Ukraine in the face of aggression, and we are ready to draw on the collective expertise of our membership to provide any necessary psychological aid and human rights support during the crisis.

We believe in the values of freedom and democracy, and the role of psychology and psychologists in uniting and finding shared beliefs, over those that try to divide us.⁴

European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA), the body that represents the national organization of psychologists in Europe, also condemned the invasion and released a longer statement, which deserves quoting in full:

EFPA and its member associations strongly condemn the war started by the Russian government on the Ukrainian people. As the days pass the evidence mounts that this war causes unspeakable and intolerable human suffering.

EFPA views the war as a blatant violation of international law and human rights. It is against our core mission as enshrined in our statutes of shaping a humane society, building a European identity based on common values and goals, mutual respect and collaboration. It flies in the face of EFPA's goals to contribute to the quality of life of people living in Europe and to a democratic and prosperous

⁴ BPS responds to current conflict in Ukraine, <https://www.bps.org.uk/news/bps-responds-current-conflict-ukraine>, 25 February 2022. BPS also voted to support the rapid expulsion of the Russian Psychological Society from EFPA.

society. It contravenes the ethical principles in our meta code of respecting the fundamental rights, dignity and worth of all people; professional and scientific responsibilities to society; and maintaining the integrity that is the basis of psychology as a science and a helping profession. Peaceful collaboration on this basis is at the heart of the mission and vision of EFPA, and in turn the basis of membership of EFPA.⁵

The statement specifically described war as a blatant violation of international law and human rights, and also announced concrete action. The Russian Psychological Society was quickly expelled from EFPA on 3 March:

In the last few days, we have received many letters and statements from our member associations. This included a request from the National Psychological Association of Ukraine for the Russian Psychological Society to be excluded from EFPA. We have also received communications to EFPA from the Russian Psychological Society. As a result, an extra-ordinary Presidents' Council Meeting was held on Thursday, March 3, 2022.

Statements condemning the invasion were also released by various national organizations (e.g., Psychological Society of Ireland, Belgian Association of Psychological Science), international organizations (e.g., International Council of Psychologists) and various groups of mainstream psychologists. Most of these statements correctly identified war as a cause of immense suffering and also as a context where human rights were bound to be systematically violated. It is particularly noteworthy that these statements were released almost immediately: The BPS statement was released only a day after the invasion. The Belgian Association of Psychological Science released a statement on 28 February. The Psychological Society of Ireland followed on 4 March. Action was also very swift: The EFPA decision of expulsion was taken on 3 March.

Not surprisingly, APA also released a statement, immediately after the start of the invasion, and expressed solidarity with Ukraine. Even state associations, which are expected to remain silent on important issues, such as the Ohio Psychological Association, released statements.⁶ Just as with many of the statements mentioned above, these statements praised human rights, well-being, dignity and freedom. The short statement by APA also specifically mentioned that the military invasion of Ukraine threatened the people in surrounding nations.

None of these statements mentioned militarism as a threat to peace across the world. Nor did any of these statements mention other invasions, such as the invasion of Afghanistan. The statements by BPS and APA did not explain why the invasion of Ukraine deserved attention and concern, while the invasion of Iraq never did. In fact, none of the other statements contained a single hint

⁵ Statement from EFPA concerning the war in Ukraine and action in relation to the EFPA membership of the Russian Psychological Society, <https://www.efpa.eu/statement-efpa-concerning-war-ukraine-and-action-relation-efpa-membership-russian-psychological>, 3 March 2022.

⁶ OPA statement on the conflict in Ukraine, <https://ohpsych.org/news/597529/OPA-Statement-on-the-Conflict-in-Ukraine.htm>, 2 March 2022.

regarding concern with the invasion of Iraq or any hint of an explanation why other ongoing invasions around the world did not matter.

Only a few statements cared to distinguish between Putin's dictatorship and the people of the Russian Federation. Only a few statements mentioned the fact that war was detrimental for the millions living in the Russian Federation or expressed concern about their welfare. None of these statements included demands regarding the elimination of militarism and the structures that make wars inevitable. None included a demand for peace at all costs. It was very clear that organizations representing mainstream psychology had little understanding of politics and of peace-building.

Thus, mainstream psychology in the Global North missed a historic opportunity in 2022 to change course. Once again, it proved itself to be ahistorical. One after another, mainstream psychology organizations acted as if the invasion of Afghanistan had never happened, or as if the invasion had taken place in distant history. The truth is that the invasion of Afghanistan had officially ended only very recently, on 30 August 2021, less than six months before the invasion of Ukraine. The U.S. Armed Forces completed their withdrawal from Afghanistan and the withdrawal was in the media all across the world. The invasion was not a brief affair either: The occupation had lasted for 20 years.

Just like TSPE, mainstream psychology in the Global North has failed the political test. It appears important, at this juncture, for critical psychologists to press with a set of big questions: Why is the invasion of Ukraine more important than the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq? Why is human suffering in Ukraine unacceptable, but suffering in Afghanistan or Iraq is perfectly negligible? If the Russian Psychological Society is complicit and therefore should be expelled from EFPA, why was BPS not expelled in 2003 after the invasion of Iraq? Why were other member organizations not expelled, when they did not object to their governments' decisions to send military personnel to join the occupation of Iraq?

This paper is a modest attempt to highlight an important and persistent political shortcoming of mainstream psychology. It has placed TSPE in its historical and political context, and provided a critical assessment of TSPE. However, TSPE is only one example of a persistent problem. The problem is obviously not unique to a single person's work or career, or to a single country or continent. The point is that mainstream psychology has a militarism problem.

This paper is also an invitation to psychologists, both mainstream and critical, to seriously consider wars and militarism in their work. In this vein, it might be a good idea to end this paper with a provocative question. Why did EFPA hold its 16th European Congress of Psychology in Moscow in July 2019 in collaboration with the Russian Psychological Society? At the time, the Russian Federation was under full control of the Putin regime, just as it was in 2022 and still is today. Why was this congress not boycotted by member organizations? If professional psychology organizations in the Global North and mainstream psychology as a whole want to be credible, they need to be able to offer credible explanations to their political failures in 1975, in 2015, in 2019, or in 2022.

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