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THE BUDDHIST SOLDIER: A MADHYAMAKA INQUIRY

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ABSTRACT

Dialogue between international humanitarian law (IHL) and Buddhism draws attention to the challenging question of the nature and identity of the Buddhist soldier. Here, the Buddhist soldier is considered not as a simple binary contradiction but as a complex dynamic paradox that can be unfolded, explored and understood through the use of Buddhist philosophy. The dialectical logic of Madhyamaka is harnessed through dialectical process analysis (DPA), a method that shows complex dynamic relationships in relatively accessible and legible spatial form, as maps. DPA maps are used to analyse the complex, dynamic nature of military duty, the soldier as responsible individual, and the soldier in socio-political context. Connections between the Mahāyāna Buddhist ideal of the bodhisattva and the Jungian Warrior Hero archetype are explored. A model is proposed for the ethical conduct of military operations in accordance with IHL, which includes the failure of ethics and law in the case of military atrocity. Ethics are discussed in both Buddhist and more general terms as 'natural ethics', for the critical test is not some parochial religious orthodoxy, but practical compliance with IHL in the field of conflict. Difficulties that the practice of ethical soldiering faces are noted. These will not be overcome without significant change, so implications are noted for management education, cultural change and organisational development in military training.

KEYWORDS Buddhist soldier; military Buddhism; military ethics; Buddhist ethics; Madhyamaka philosophy; international humanitarian law (IHL); complex problems; Dialectical Process Analysis (DPA); Polarity Management; Carl Jung; Warrior Hero archetype; Bodhisattva path; shadow; military atrocity; legitimacy of military duty; politics of soldiering; organisational development

Introduction and overview

In recent years, a global resurgence of traditional religion has led the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to examine the alignment of international humanitarian law (IHL) with world religions. In Buddhism, it finds a particularly promising partner. Both are concerned with the maintenance of human dignity and the minimisation of suffering in a world marked by violent conflict. Whilst Buddhism has both humanistic and transcendental dimensions, its humanistic dimension aligns closely with the strategic mission of the ICRC, and Buddhist ethics fit well with the standards of IHL.

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This article has been corrected with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.

Dialogue between Buddhism and IHL focuses attention upon the concept of the Buddhist soldier, for the entire enterprise depends upon the Buddhist soldier being a robust and coherent idea. This is a problem because whilst on the one hand Buddhist soldiers clearly exist, on the other the Buddhist soldier appears to be a contradiction. Here is a thorny issue. Are we to conclude that the Buddhist soldier – whether ethnic or convert – takes an inherently false position? If not, how then is Buddhist non-violence to be reconciled with the soldier's professional engagement with violence? Rather than look to examples of how Buddhist principles might apply within the military context – which, apparent contradiction notwithstanding, is one potentially constructive approach to the reduction of suffering – this article seeks to disentangle, open and unfold the question of the Buddhist soldier itself. It takes a Buddhist approach to a Buddhist issue, pursuing an inquiry rooted in Madhyamaka to seek an understanding of the Buddhist soldier.

Madhyamaka is the earliest school of Buddhist philosophy to develop within Mahāyāna Buddhism. Founded by around the second century CE, it places great emphasis on epistemology, and methods for challenging received and fixed views.¹ The inquiry in this article makes selective and original use of core ideas from within the Madhyamaka tradition. It hinges upon a key feature of Madhyamaka logic: its capacity to disentangle, resolve and transcend paradox by revealing the interconnection of apparent opposites.² This interconnection is explored using a method for mapping complex dialectics that I have developed from Barry Johnson's (1996) polarity management, a method he advanced for modelling and managing complex dilemmas within organisations. I developed dialectical process analysis (DPA) to harness Madhyamaka as a way of opening and unfolding apparent contradictions to understand them better. DPA provides a form of mapping which, for our purposes here, tackles the problem of the nature of the Buddhist soldier. It does so by demonstrating that the Buddhist soldier is not a binary contradiction, but rather a complex relational paradox whose dialectics merit and require exploration. I shall illustrate how DPA works below. In applying it to our present conundrum, the soldier in general and the Buddhist soldier in particular are viewed from three angles: as an ideal, as an individual and in social context. The ideal soldier as archetypal Warrior Hero is compared with the ideal Buddhist as bodhisattva, one whose being and action are characterised by the qualities perfected, the 'perfections' (*pāramitā*), on the Bodhisattva Path. The duty of the soldier as responsible individual is mapped in terms of dialectical interplay between *Active* and *Receptive* poles. Duty in social context is mapped as dialectical interplay between poles of *Support* and *Challenge*. These poles will be

explained below. These dialectical dynamics are presented in the form of maps, which provide a visual aid to improve the legibility of complex processes.

My intention is that the tone of this inquiry should be transparent, curious and exploratory: it aims to ask good questions, to see what emerges from them and where they lead. In keeping with Buddhist tradition, it strives to ensure that abstract ideas are anchored in concrete practical illustration.

The ideal soldier

The ICRC and the Buddhist tradition have in common a commitment to the definition and pursuit of high ideals. Are these ideals mutually consistent? How does the ideal soldier compare to the ideal Buddhist?

The ideal soldier can be modelled in terms of the Warrior Hero archetype as originally defined by Carl Jung (1991, [1933] 2001) and subsequently developed by Jungians including Joseph Campbell ([1949] 2012), and Moore and Gillette (1990). In Jung's analysis, archetypes are deep transpersonal dynamics that may find expression at the personal level, within the thought and action of the individual. From the emergence of the Mahāyāna onwards, the ideal Buddhist is defined as the bodhisattva, the archetypal hero of the Buddhist life, whose way involves the cultivation of the *pāramitās* of the Bodhisattva Path.³ Are these ideals compatible?

Indeed they are, for it is clear that, from the earliest origins of the tradition, Buddhism and soldiering are comrades-in-arms. The Buddha came to be seen as an ex-warrior prince, and was given to the use of military metaphor to emphasise key points in his teaching. Perhaps the best-known example of this narrative habit is the celebrated Parable of the Arrow,⁴ in which the human predicament is presented as that of a soldier wounded on the field of battle, in mortal danger and in urgent need of skilled assistance. Military symbolism remains prominent and purposeful throughout subsequent Buddhist history. Prominent examples within Tibetan iconography include the flaming diamond sword of Mañjuśrī⁵ and the *vajra* thunderbolt, which Padmasambhava⁶ and Vajrapāṇi⁷ wield and with which Vajrasattva⁸ plays.

Table 1 juxtaposes the qualities of the Jungian Warrior Hero archetype (Moore and Gillette 1990) against the *pāramitās* of the Bodhisattva Path, to reveal some close and suggestive correspondence. This correspondence indicates that the Warrior Hero archetype and the Bodhisattva draw upon a common underlying human potential.

Table 1. Eight qualities of the Warrior Hero in relation to the six parāmitās.

Warrior Hero quality	Parāmitā
Destroyer	<p>Dāna parāmitā Perfection of generosity Leads to ↓</p> <p>Śīla parāmitā Perfection of ethics Leads to ↓</p>
Self-controlled	<p>Capable of abandoning that which limits or blocks potential. Breaks unhelpful boundaries, taboos and group norms.</p> <p>Engages fully in training to develop vision, skill and integration of knowledge. Takes responsibility for own actions.</p> <p>Evaluates what is happening. Able to develop strategies to achieve aims.</p>
Tactician	<p>Has the mental strength to bear trials and adversity. Able to bear the unbearable and the unknown.</p>
Unconquerable	<p>Kṣānti parāmitā Perfection of patience (patient endurance) Leads to ↓</p> <p>Virya parāmitā Perfection of energy Leads to ↓</p>
Aggressive	<p>Engages fully in training to develop vision, skill and integration of knowledge. Takes responsibility for own actions.</p> <p>Evaluates what is happening. Able to develop strategies to achieve aims.</p>
Self-aware	<p>Has energy that rouses, energises, motivates. Always appropriate to the situation.</p> <p>Knows own capacities and limitations. Motivated by awareness of the proximity of death and fragility of life.</p>
Alert	<p>Samādhi parāmitā Perfection of meditative absorption Leads to ↓</p> <p>Uses clarity and discernment through thinking, observing and wakefulness.</p>
Loyal to the transpersonal	<p>Prajñā parāmitā Perfection of wisdom ↑ Leads 'back' to Dāna</p>

Able to offer appropriate and unconditional gifts (sustenance, time, attention, money and – most importantly – The Dharma) with the intention to alleviate suffering and spiritual ignorance. Includes *abhaya*, the gift of fearlessness, and *tyāga*, as the supreme generosity of self-sacrifice.

Activity that arises out of deepening awareness and faith in conditionality and the wisdom of *sūnyatā*.

Skillful and appropriate activity encouraged by the Wise for the benefit of all.

Ability to tolerate and not abandon the truth/reality, including suffering (*duḥkha*). Ability to stay in relation to difficulty and difference.

Directed and appropriate use of energy. Harnessed and used skillfully for the benefit of the many.

Skill in focus, concentration, mindfulness. Ability to direct thought and generate clarity and conditions for reflection.

Seeing things as they really are. Vision of the conventionally true yet fundamentally illusory nature of self and other. Knowing interconnectedness. Embodied knowing of universal conditionality.

The dark side

These standards of being and conduct represent a sublime and demanding ideal. They represent a route to perfection only if all aspects are integrated and connected in dynamic equilibrium, understood with due insight, within a robust ethical context. However, the ideal casts a shadow. It is sobering to reflect that the Buddhist analysis of the *prthagjana* (worldly) state indicates that we are likely not starting from a promising place. The Warrior archetype is rather easy to grasp wrongly. Its Destroyer and Aggressive aspects, especially, can be stripped of their ethical context and used to rationalise and glorify violence, not unusually through an ideology of 'holy war'.⁹ The Jungian analysis proposes that, awareness notwithstanding, transpersonal archetypal energies are always at work, and will surely find expression through the individual psyche. Failure to engage with Warrior Hero energy in a conscious, healthy and integrated way results in a repression that drives energy into manifestation in 'shadow' forms. Shadow manifestation is essentially unbalanced, a disequilibrium. It occurs primarily because energy has become detached or alienated from the tempering and balancing influence of the other archetypes, particularly King and Lover (Moore and Gillette 1990), which are equally bases of a healthy and relational life. Energy that is repressed will seep out, semiconsciously, subconsciously and/or unconsciously shaping attitudes and behaviour.

Table 2. Shadow aspects of the Warrior Hero (derived from Moore and Gillette 1990).

Masochistic manifestation	Sadistic manifestation
Workaholic, stemming from isolation and sense of deep anxiety, absence or lack. Unable to delegate or work collectively/co-operatively. Has difficulty in simply being.	Perceived humiliation feeding imagined grievance. Avenging spirit that wants to punish the source of rage or fear.
Inability to generate self-care for mental and physical well-being.	Relishes carnage and cruelty.
Crushingly low self-esteem. Self-loathing. Inability to acknowledge value of personal qualities and simple presence.	Hatred of the weak and the vulnerable.
Insecure inner personality structure relies on outer activity and external affirmation to bolster chronic inner sense of lack and intrinsic worth. Rooted in deprivation of unconditional love: must perform in order to assert existence and worth. <i>'I work therefore I am'.</i>	Polarisation and antagonism towards what is described as the feminine due to fear of intimacy and the relational life.
Self-punishing behaviour due to falling short of deluded fantasies of perfection or inflated capability. <i>'Those obsessed with success have already failed'.</i>	Disruptive and confrontational when uncertain, and threatened around personal power and authority.

Table 2 summarises the most visible forms of the shadow aspect of the Warrior Hero archetype, in its masochistic (inflicted on self) and sadistic (inflicted on other) forms. Here is a portrait of the psychopathology of military atrocity; fundamental disequilibrium in profoundly negative form. Madhyamaka dialectic can be used to predict and model both the loss of equilibrium and its recovery. Whilst the healthy expression of archetypal energy initially transforms into its opposite when blocked, this dynamic is part of a larger process that subsequently leads to the eventual recovery of equilibrium. Staying in balance involves lurches, wobbles and recovery. Jung called this *enantiodromia*, the tendency of a complex system to lose balance, restore balance and maintain its dynamic equilibrium through the assertion of counterposed forces.¹⁰

Is the Buddhist soldier a problem?

The argument up to this point has demonstrated multiple connections between Buddhism and the military in terms of history, symbolism and the construction of ideal type. There is clear evidence of a relationship. However, that relationship has so far been shown to be no more than one of positive correlation, a description of parallels. It remains to move beyond description into analysis, to further investigate those parallels and to explore what might lie within them. The Buddhist soldier is not a flat contradiction, yet it remains problematic. So what sort of problem is it?

Answering this question starts with recognising that problems differ in nature. A key distinction is that between the binary and the complex problem. Binary problems are essentially simple in form, genuinely 'black and white'. They can be solved, closed and brought to rest because their exclusive either/or logical structure leads to win–lose outcomes and closure. With a genuine binary, every win brings with it a loss: there is no Middle Way between dead and alive. Complex problems are of a higher order. They involve 'shades of grey'. You know you have run into one of these when 'there is something to be said for both sides', but yet the sides prove difficult to reconcile. Complex problems cannot be finally solved, closed and brought to rest. Their inclusive, both/and logical structure offers the opportunity to achieve win–win outcomes, but also the risk of a disastrous lose–lose. Because they are by nature open, dynamic and relational, resolving them involves managing paradoxically opposed yet connected poles by keeping them in balance. Staying on your bike means following The Middle Way: leaning to both right and left, sometimes lurching, wobbling and recovering, to maintain the dynamic equilibrium of balance. Polarise exclusively in favour of right or left, and you fall off your bike.

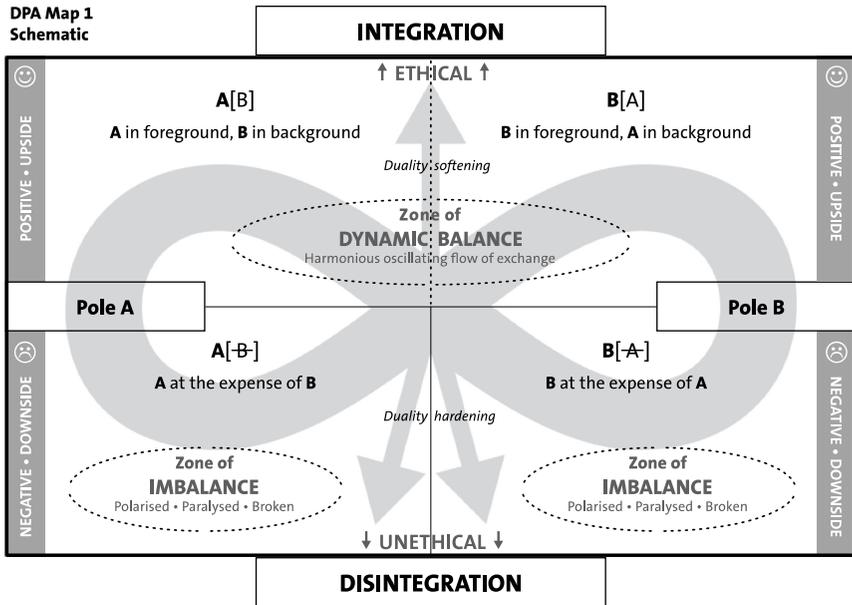


Figure 1. DPA Map 1: Schematic.

If the Buddhist soldier is not a binary contradiction, is it a complex paradox? To bring the method of Madhyamaka to bear upon this question is to investigate the possibility that 'Buddhist' versus 'soldier' is not an irreconcilable opposition, but a dialectical polarity. That is, each term is a pole that is *both* opposed *and* connected to the other. If evidence of both opposition and connection can be found in the relationship between the poles, then that relationship is dialectical and the problem is a complex paradox.

DPA¹¹ is a method for investigating complex paradox through mapping. How does a dialectical polarity map work? Figure 1 is a general dialectical polarity map in schematic form. This is a complex diagram because it represents complex processes. The first main point to grasp is that all the positive conditions lie in the upper quadrants. They remain positive because in the healthy, skilful (*kuśala*) state of the system, there is a continuous oscillating flow of harmonious dynamic balance between them. The lower quadrants contain all the negative conditions. These are negative because they arise out of polarised imbalance. To bring this down to earth, consider Figure 2, which translates abstract into concrete terms through an analysis of the dialectical nature of duty. The schematic will make increased sense as its specific concrete forms are considered in Figures 2–4. Duty is a useful example, because it is self-evidently not a simple binary but complex, relational and interactive by nature. Its logic is both/and: the soldier operating under IHL is simultaneously both an individual responsible under law and an actor within a social context.

DPA Map 2
Duty as dialectic

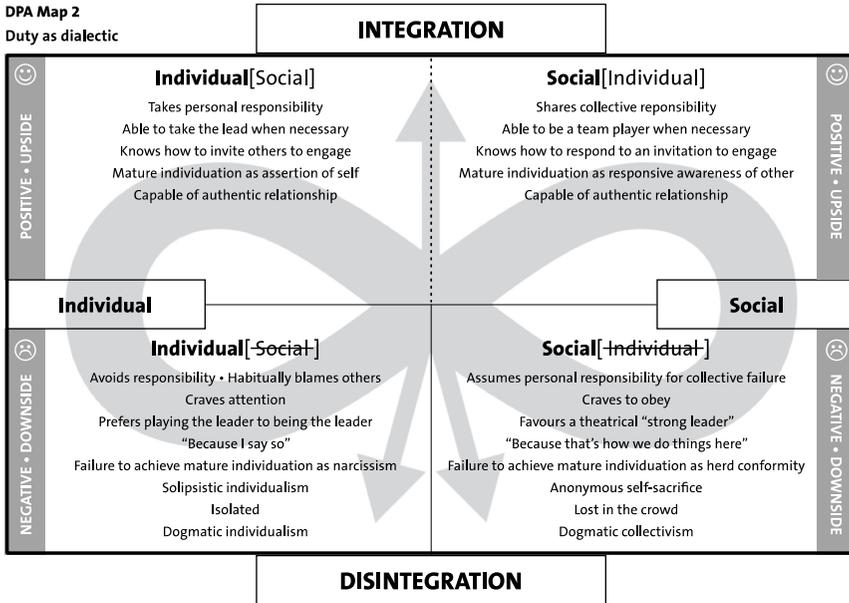


Figure 2. DPA Map 2: Duty as dialectic.

DPA Map 3
The soldier as responsible individual

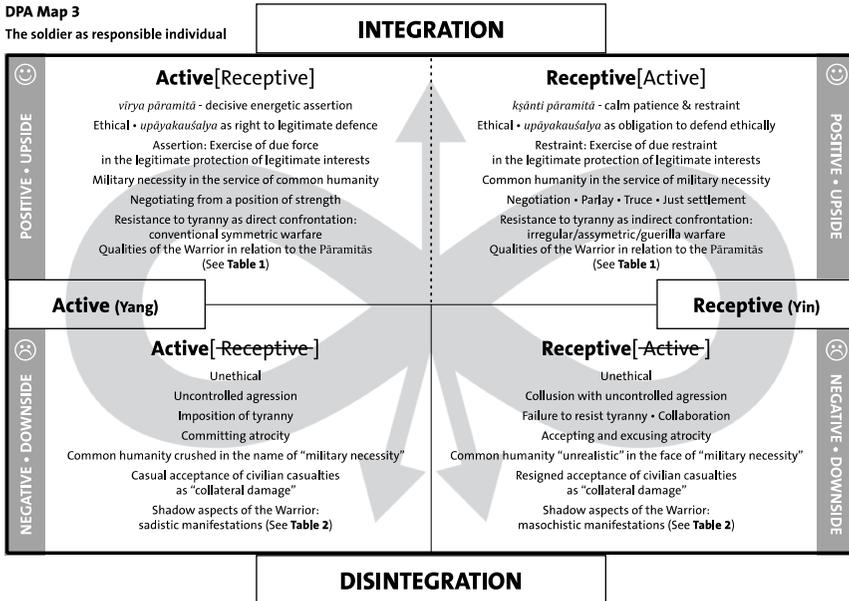


Figure 3. DPA Map 3: The soldier as responsible individual.

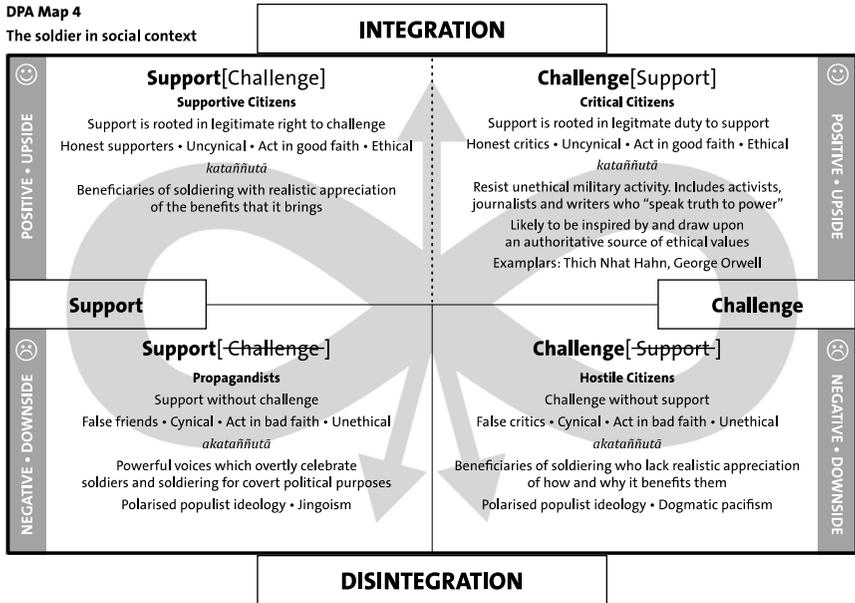


Figure 4. DPA Map 4: The soldier in social context.

Figure 2 explores the dialectics of the soldier’s duty as a dynamic balance between *Individual* and *Social* poles. Each of these poles in turn is further unfolded and analysed: Figure 3 unfolds the soldier as responsible individual, and Figure 4 unfolds the soldier in social context.

The soldier as responsible individual

Figure 3 identifies the exemplary Buddhist soldier as an individual whose activity, like that of any ideal Buddhist, is entirely skilful (*kuśala*): a practitioner of skill in means (*upāya-kauśalya*), integrating and balancing Active and Receptive modes. The practice of *upāya-kauśalya* involves bringing the most imaginative and appropriate creative response to any situation. Whilst cognisant and respectful of relevant external schemata – such as the principles of IHL – it never involves mere rigid adherence to external codes. *Upāya-kauśalya* is never unthinking obedience, nor is it ever wilful disobedience. It perfectly integrates effectiveness and efficiency, consistently doing the right things and doing them well. Maximising effectiveness and efficiency bring consistency, for example, with the principles expounded by the influential ancient (sixth century BCE) Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu: ‘Win all without fighting’ and ‘Avoid strength, attack weakness’ (McNeilly 2003, vii).

Taking a dialectical stance within a system of ethics tends to resolve otherwise thorny problems around contested questions of chivalry, honour and Warrior Code. Whilst Rain Liivoja (2012) demonstrates the persistence of certain chivalric concepts within contemporary IHL, jurist and soldier VanLandingham (2015) attacks and dismisses the concept of chivalry in favour of an IHL based on a 'shared sense of humanity'. To the extent that both positions rely upon common ethical principles, they can be reconciled.

Particularly in the Mahāyāna, *upāya-kauśalya* underpins the Buddhist stance on the use of force. Buddhist ethics are unequivocally non-violent in principle. The First Ethical Precept – *pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi* – affirms the intention to 'undertake the training principle of abstention from harming living beings'. However, this is not a rigid, dogmatic pacifism. Buddhist ethical precepts are not absolute binary commandments, nor indeed are they any kind of commandment. They are pragmatic training principles to be applied in good faith within the demanding complexity of everyday life,¹² and military situations are apt to be complex and demanding. *Upāya-kauśalya* is the skilful management of these demands in a quest for the best outcomes available. Accordingly, *faute de mieux*, minimally violent action may possibly involve the pursuit of peace through the conscious and skilful exercise of force. The stance is realistic: a complex and nuanced dynamic response to a complex and nuanced dynamic reality. Rights and obligations are dialectically balanced: the right to act is always connected to the duty of restraint. Proceeding from the skilful reading of conditions, *upāya-kauśalya* may manifest as an exercise of the legitimate right to defence or as legitimate obligation to defend ethically. Legitimate protection of legitimate interests may involve the exercise of due force, or due restraint, which to be legitimate must also meet or exceed the standards set by IHL. Resistance to tyranny may involve the direct symmetrical confrontation of conventional warfare, or the indirect asymmetrical confrontation of guerrilla resistance. The Buddhist soldier knows how and when to negotiate from a position of strength, how and when to negotiate, to call truce and parlay to attain just settlement. This strength as dynamic fluidity is succinct in Churchill's rhetoric: 'In war: resolution. In defeat: defiance. In victory: magnanimity. In peace: good will'. When considering the Buddhist soldier in relation to IHL, especially on the question of individual responsibility under the law, it should be noted that Buddhist ethics place great emphasis upon individual responsibility, for it is a principal purpose of the Buddhist life to become a genuinely responsible person. This is not a mere politicised and polarised individualism which evades, whenever convenient, the reality of social context, but a dialectical vision of true individuality as a simultaneously personal and social actualisation of human potential.

The dialectical interplay of the individual and social aspects of the soldier is evident in ethicist Shannon French's (2017) analysis of Warrior Code. French's analysis is implicitly dialectical, modelling the ethics of soldiering as an effort

to resolve the tension between the abhorrence of murder and the violence of armed conflict. French notes that the exercise of ethical restraint during armed conflict tends to catalyse and expedite peaceful resolution. Whilst it is axiomatic that compliance with IHL serves to protect the innocent, French sees further than this, to the insight that the soldier faces distinctive moral peril and risk of psychological trauma: 'The most compelling reason for warriors to accept restraint may be the internal moral damage they risk if they fail to do so, and the serious psychological damage they may suffer' (67). French cites Shay's (1994) work on post-traumatic stress disorder among Vietnam veterans, which highlights the heavy impacts of moral, as well as physical, violence.

The power of dialectical analysis in this area can be illustrated by examining one of Rain Liivoja's arguments around chivalry. Liivoja (2012) seeks 'to call into question the popular idea that the entire law of armed conflict reflects a delicate balance between the fundamentally conflicting notions of military necessity and humanity'. Against Dinstein's (2004, 16) claim that the law of armed conflict 'in its entirety is predicated on a subtle equilibrium between two diametrically opposite impulses: military necessity and humanitarian considerations', Liivoja argues that these forces are not necessarily opposed, as it is well known that the exercise of humanitarian restraint may serve the strategic purpose of winning 'hearts and minds' among a civilian population. But Liivoja stops there. Having scored a hit on the 'diametric opposition' in Dinstein's argument, he misses the 'subtle equilibrium'. He does not interrogate the logic further.

But what might be revealed if the logic is interrogated further? As stated above, dialectical analysis proposes: *if evidence of both opposition and connection can be found in the relationship between the poles, then that relationship is dialectical and the problem is a complex paradox*. Military necessity sometimes threatens common humanity; sometimes it co-operates with common humanity. The key point is that *both* outcomes can arise. Once this is understood, Dinstein's 'subtle equilibrium' looks very much like a dialectical process.

The soldier in social context

Figure 4 models legitimate soldiering as the free interplay of *Support* and *Challenge*. 'Legitimate soldiering' is here defined as military activity conducted in accordance with IHL. All soldiering involves individuals acting within a social context. Here, legitimate soldiering is understood in terms of the maintenance of authentic ethical relations with the citizenry whom the soldier serves and protects. Ethical authenticity requires that there exists a dialectical balance between rights and duties. Where this is so, citizens are ready, willing and able – on the basis of informed judgement and according

to circumstance – to exercise, collectively or individually, the duty to support or the right to challenge the actions of their armed forces. It is also necessary that competent independent external bodies (e.g. International Criminal Court, ICRC) are similarly free to exercise judgement in support or challenge, on behalf of all persons affected by military activity. Such action may be that of the armed forces of affected citizens' own state, or of another, such as multinational or occupying forces. The key test of the validity of all support or challenge is adherence to the requirements of IHL. The effective operation of IHL depends upon this freedom and opportunity to engage.

The Supportive Citizen acts ethically and in good faith, a beneficiary of soldiering with a realistic appreciation of the benefits that it brings. In Buddhist terms, they are *kataññutā*: mindful and appreciative of what has been done for and to them. Their support is authentic and robust because it is rooted in a right to challenge when necessary. This right is not exercised lightly and when it is, the Supportive Citizen becomes a Critical Citizen, one whose challenge proceeds from concomitant duty to support, expressed through loyalty to, and appeal to, legitimate standards such as the standards of IHL. Critical Citizens provide an essential balancing counterweight to those wielding dangerous weapons and draconian powers of enforcement. They include activists, journalists and writers, often inspired by an authoritative source of ethics (possibly Buddhist), who critically analyse military activity. Giants among them include Thich Nhat Hanh and George Orwell.

Dialectical balance may be broken in two ways. Polarisation as Support without Challenge is the work of Propagandists, the stuff of populist rhetoric, the voice of those who cheer from a safe distance whilst others do the fighting. On the other side, polarisation as Challenge without Support manifests as the Hostile Citizen, a beneficiary of soldiering who fails to appreciate how it benefits them. The Hostile Citizen acts unethically and in bad faith. In Buddhist terms, this is *akataññutā*: failure to be mindful and appreciative of what has been done for and to one. The Hostile Citizen breaks the balance of rights and duties, exercising the right to challenge whilst neglecting the duty to support. Distinguishing between the Critical Citizen and the Hostile Citizen may prove difficult, but the hallmark of the Hostile Citizen is polarised thinking: rigid adherence to an ideology which denies legitimacy to the soldier under all circumstances. Dogmatic pacifism may be found here.

The balanced healthy state of the system is a dynamic within which the military and the society that it serves and protects are in adult dialogue. Soldiers do their duty in dialogue with their citizenry, aware that the legitimacy of that duty depends upon the maintenance of due regard to its social context and impact. Citizens remain in dialogue with their soldiery, aware of the benefits conferred, supporting whilst feeling free to question and challenge when necessary. This is the consensual basis of military activity in a functioning democracy. The system is unbalanced and unhealthy to the

extent that polarisation breaks adult dialogue and the mutual trust upon which it depends into a regressed adversarial exchange of slogans. Soldiers are all too aware that it falls to them to step in when civilian politics fail. For all their rhetoric of 'patriotism', politicians who exploit the processes of democratic governance to profit from populist polarisation threaten their military, their citizenry and the very basis of democracy.

Conclusions

The overall aim of this inquiry is to contribute to dialogue with Buddhism in the service of IHL, for the benefit of all, by subjecting the concept of the Buddhist soldier to rigorous investigation. This is hardly the last word on the Buddhist soldier, but it does offer some indication of the results that can be obtained when an enigmatic problem is examined from a Buddhist perspective. Buddhist thinking has a way of opening up the seemingly closed. Here, that attempt to open up and unfold the enigmatic has made original use of Buddhist Madhyamaka philosophy to penetrate some way beyond the commonplace view that the Buddhist soldier is a mere contradiction. It has demonstrated, through the use of dialectical analysis, that the forbidding initial appearance of the Buddhist soldier construct can be opened and unfolded to reveal a phenomenon of complexity, richness and significance.

Close parallels between Buddhism and the military in terms of key aspects of Buddhist doctrine and iconography have been pointed out. Buddhism and the military have been shown to hold mutually consistent, even synonymous, visions of the archetypal ideal. Unfolding through dialectical analysis has explored the nature of duty as dynamic balance between Individual and Social poles. Each of these poles has been further unfolded to explore the dialectics of the soldier as an ethically responsible individual acting within a context of social responsibility. The positive consequences of achieving balance and the negative consequences of falling into imbalance have been indicated.

For the ICRC project on Buddhism and IHL, this modelling is surely significant. The soldier operating in dialectical balance between energy (*vīrya*) and patience (*kṣānti*), authentically actualising the Warrior Hero archetype in a social context of legitimate support open to legitimate challenge, offers ideal prospects for the observance of IHL. By the same token, the prospects for IHL are bleak where these balances are not understood, valued, cultivated and maintained.

Does this mean that the Buddhist soldier is the ideal soldier? Consistency between the ideals of Buddhism and the military at the archetypal level leans towards this conclusion. Whilst there is scant originality in seeing the ideal Buddhist as a Warrior Hero, to see the ideal Warrior Hero as a Buddhist is more

original, and has significant implications for the ICRC Buddhism and IHL project. But to privilege the Buddhist soldier over the soldier of other faiths (or none) is clearly a gross and dangerous error. That error can be avoided by distinguishing between a Buddhist and one who embodies values shared with Buddhists, with due regard to the transcendental and humanistic dimensions of Buddhism. This inquiry opened by distinguishing between these dimensions and proposing that dialogue between Buddhism and IHL focus on the humanistic dimension, leaving it free to focus on questions of ethical conduct in the world. This hardly dilutes the Buddhism, as ethical conduct is essential to Buddhist identity: it is axiomatic within the tradition that one is only truly a Buddhist to the extent that one acts like a Buddhist. Similarly, one can act in congruence with Buddhist ethical principles without identifying as a Buddhist. Ethical conduct is what matters. The nature of Buddhist ethics is helpful here. Buddhist ethics are held to be natural, in accordance with the true nature of reality. This is why, on a DPA map, the positive upper regions converge and point towards an integration which is ethical, whilst the negative lower regions split into a disintegration which is unethical. It may be concluded, therefore, that the ideal soldier is one who acts in accordance with Buddhist principles, consciously and deliberately or not, whatever faith (or none) they may profess, for acting in accordance with Buddhist principles means acting in consistency with IHL.

This suggests that the Buddhism and IHL project might consider setting itself two related long-term objectives. A minimum objective could be the *Compliant Soldier*: a soldier whose action complies with IHL as a professional requirement. A maximum objective could be the *Ethical Soldier*: a soldier whose action complies with IHL not only as a professional requirement, but as a minimum standard of ethical conduct. Those ethics derive from an authoritative source, which may or not be Buddhist: compatibility with IHL is the test.

The Ethical Soldier may not face promising circumstances. As things currently stand, it is surely the case that, whilst life for the Critical Citizen may turn rough, the situation of the Ethical Soldier may well be riskier still. The most basic element in the politics of soldiering is the hierarchy of command. It would be naïve to assume that politics and ethics sit easily together in that hierarchy. The history of the 'superior orders' defence (Dinstein 2012), from the execution of Peter von Hagenbach (1474) through the Nuremberg Trials (1945), the massacres at Kafr Qassim (1956) and My Lai (1968), to the Iraq War (2003), is one of logical inconsistency and political expediency.¹³ Even though obeying illegal orders is itself an IHL violation, the soldier who faces a conflict between acting legally or ethically on the one hand and obedience to command on the other is likely to be in serious difficulty. The Ethical Soldier will not develop, let alone thrive, in such an environment.

The Ethical Soldier's action is rooted in a full understanding of their identity, duty and potential. The impact of that understanding depends upon it being robustly established and active across several distinct but related spheres: in the mind of the individual soldier, at all levels of the armed forces within which they serve, in the wider cultural context within which they operate, within civic and governmental bodies, and among independent external bodies, such as the ICRC. In response to a mindset that rejects dialectical thinking, it can be pointed out that prime examples of competent dialectical thought and action in complex, demanding and fast-changing conditions include the Prussian Field Marshall Helmuth von Moltke's insistence upon agile flexibility in response to the dynamic flow of emergent circumstance on the field of battle: 'No plan of action survives first contact with the enemy' (Hughes 1993, 92). Similar understanding is evident among such celebrated military strategists as Sun Tzu, Napoleon Bonaparte ('I have never had a plan of operations')¹⁴ and Carl von Clausewitz ([1832] 1989).

An agenda for action

Developing the Ethical Soldier means cultivating potential. This analysis will be of little real use unless it leads to action and change. Here is an agenda for original, imaginative and creative action on organisational development and management learning among military leaders and political decision-makers, as well as within engaged civilian organisations such as the ICRC. Key competences requiring further development include capacity around the identification, analysis and resolution of complex problems, including the modelling of key dialectics through DPA analysis, and the development of knowledge, skill and attitude in working with the archetypal dimension of mind. Nothing less will give the Ethical Soldier and the rule of IHL a fighting chance.

Notes

1. The founder of Madhyamaka is Nāgārjuna, supported by Āryadeva, conventionally dated 150–250 CE. Nāgārjuna's importance within the Buddhist tradition is such that he is sometimes known as a 'Second Buddha'. However, Nāgārjuna insists that his work is entirely consistent with the original Buddhist tradition, which it seeks to reinstate. This is a core theme of the Mahāyāna. Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, the foundational text of Madhyamaka, cites the Buddha's Discourse with Kaccayāna from the Pali Canon (*Kaccayānagotta Sutta*, *Samyutta Nikāya* 12.15; for a translation see Thanissaro Bhikkhu 1997). Nāgārjuna's consistency with other original Pali sources, such as the *Attthakavagga* and *Pārāyanavagga* of the *Sutta-Nipāta*, is emphasised by e.g.

- Kalupahana (1994). For authoritative contemporary commentary on Nāgārjuna and *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*, see e.g. Garfield (1995), and Siderits and Katsura (2013).
2. Capacity to explore the interconnection between apparent opposites is not unique to Madhyamaka, for it is common to any philosophical method based on dialectical logic. What is unique to Madhyamaka is that its dialectics are rooted in insight into the empty nature of phenomena (*Śūnyatā*), which is why it is preferred here.
 3. Buddhist tradition enumerates the *pāramitās* in various ways. In the Pali Canon, the *Buddhavaṃsa* (*Khuddaka Nikāya* 14) lists 10 perfections. In the Mahāyāna tradition, the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* list six, whilst amongst them the *Saddharmapundarīka* (White Lotus) *Sūtra* adds a seventh: *upāya aramita*, Perfection of (Skillful) Means. The Theravādin commentator Dhammapāla (identity and dates uncertain, but pre-twelfth century CE) equates the sets of 10 and six. The lists of Buddhist doctrine are no more (and no less) than analytic schemata, mnemonic devices that evolved during the early oral tradition of Buddhism. Content matters more than number. For a contemporary discussion, see e.g. Wright (2009).
 4. Cula-Malunkyovada Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya 63. For a translation see Thanissaro Bhikkhu (1998).
 5. Examples of the iconography of Mañjuśrī: <https://www.google.co.uk/search?source=univ&tbm=isch&q=manjushri+images&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjZkJv8vLLtAhVDc-wKHVGaCK0QjKJkEegQIAxAB&biw=2560&bih=1329>.
 6. Examples of the iconography of Padmasambhava: <https://www.google.co.uk/search?source=univ&tbm=isch&q=padmasambhava+images&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjG-oS4qd3tAhXHVSAKHSNIABUQJkEegQIBRAB&biw=2560&bih=1329&dpr=2>.
 7. Examples of the iconography of Vajrapāni: <https://www.google.co.uk/search?source=univ&tbm=isch&q=vajrapani+images&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiY7YGzvrLtAhXKvKQKHLqAQkQjKJkEegQIAxAB&biw=2560&bih=1329>.
 8. Examples of the iconography of Vajrasattva: https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=vajrasattva+images&tbm=isch&ved=2ahUKEwjyirQ0vrLtAhWJiqQKHfKEDRAQ2-cCeGQIABA&oq=vajrasattva+images&gs_lcp=CgNpbWcQAZICCAA6BAGAEEM6BggAEAcQHICV3QRY5ewEYljwBGgAcAB4AIBdlgB1wWSAQQxMC4xmAEAoAEBqgELZ3dzLXdpei1pbWfAAQE&scIent=img&ei=IDTJX_LwHImVkgXyibaAAQ&bih=1329&biw=2560.
 9. The ideology of 'holy war' is all too familiar within the major world religions. Buddhism is sometimes considered to be an exception, but for an analysis of the perversion of Buddhist doctrine in the service of Japanese militarism, see Victoria (2006).
 10. Jung (1990, para. 709) defines *enantiodromia* as 'the emergence of the unconscious opposite in the course of time. This characteristic phenomenon practically always occurs when an extreme, one-sided tendency dominates conscious life; in time an equally powerful counterposition is built up which first inhibits the conscious performance and subsequently breaks through the conscious control'. As Jung (2014) notes, this thinking is found in the Western tradition as far back as Heraclitus. It is evident in Plato's *Phaedo* and the dialectics of Socrates, as well as being fundamental within the Buddhist and Taoist traditions.

11. See note 2.
12. See e.g. Sangharakshita (1986).
13. For details of these events, and a history of the Superior Orders defence, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Superior_orders.
14. Quoted by von Moltke (Hughes 1993, 92).

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