

From my lai to abu ghraib: the moral psychology of atrocity by john m. doris and d...

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The article, ' From my Lai to Abu Ghraib: The moral psychology of atrocities' by John Doris and Dominic Murphy abdicates wartime crimes by claiming cognitively degrading circumstances. The authors have proposed two premises for their conclusion that individuals in combat create situations where they are not morally responsible for their behavior. They assert that when people are cognitively degraded they are not morally responsible for their acts and in combat situation, individuals are cognitively degraded. Soldiers were cognitive degrading position in My Lai in Vietnam and as in prison in Abu Ghraib. In combat situation, individuals are required to follow orders and therefore are in cognitively degrading circumstances. They are expected to behavior in manner that is totally different to peacetime. In cases like Abu Ghraib, the reforms in laws regarding treatment of prisoners and ' terrorists' had also widened the scope of torture such that the criminal acts were believed to be within the law by the perpetrators. Thus, laws and combat circumstances produce help create environment where individuals are not morally responsible for their behavior.

Yes, I do believe that individuals in combat are not morally responsible for their acts because combat situations necessitate following order from their superiors. At the same time, the soldiers and volunteers in wartime are expected to behavior in typical ways that is very different to their normal behavior. Killing enemies is not wrong even though they are human being like them. In such situations, individuals cannot act as they want but as their combat circumstance dictate. Hence, they are termed as cognitively degrading circumstance, where they are not morally responsible for their actions and behavior.

(words: 272)

Reference

Doris, John M., and Murphy, Dominic. ' From My Lai to Abu Ghraib: The moral psychology of atrocities'. *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* XXXI (2007): 25-55.