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# Trauma, truth and reconciliation

## Healing damaged relationships

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## Chapter 4

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# **Political reconciliation, the rule of law, and post-traumatic stress disorder**

Colleen Murphy

### **4.1 Introduction**

Political reconciliation refers to the process of building healthier relationships among citizens formerly estranged as a result of civil conflict or repressive rule. It remains one of the most important, and most theoretically neglected, challenges facing such citizens when their society transitions to democracy. In this chapter, I discuss why one critical aspect of the process of building healthier political relationships involves the restoration of mutual respect for the rule of law. I then suggest that psychological research on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) provides valuable resources for understanding how successfully to restore such mutual respect. At the same time, knowledge about the impact of the rule of law on political relationships can potentially enrich the psychological research on PTSD.

### **Theoretical challenges**

Political reconciliation is theoretically challenging. In the literature on transitional justice, which discusses the moral challenges facing societies in transition to democracy, there is no consensus either on how civil conflict or repressive rule damages political relationships or on what the characteristics of healthy political relationships among democratic citizens are. For example, there is disagreement about whether it is necessary for citizens to overcome resentment in order to be reconciled. Advocates of restorative justice claim that to develop healthier political relationships is to overcome resentment. In their view, resentment damages political relationships. Critics of restorative justice claim that to build healthier political relationships is to reach consensus on the rules that will govern behavior. Lack of communal norms for behavior, not resentment, damages political relationships. It is difficult to

assess either view because authors rarely offer an argument for why we should think of reconciliation in the ways they suggest.

### Practical challenges

Political reconciliation is practically challenging partly because of such theoretical disputes. Disagreement about the characteristics of healthy political relationships makes it difficult for policy makers to assess the effectiveness and moral justifiability of processes designed to promote political reconciliation, like truth commissions and criminal trials. A process of reconciliation is effective if it contributes to the development of the core features of healthy political relationships. Gauging the effectiveness of such processes, then, depends on a prior understanding of the key features of healthy political relationships.

### Facing skepticism

Because it remains unclear precisely what the process of building healthier political relationships entails, it is also difficult for policy makers, politicians, or academics to respond to skepticism among citizens about reconciliation. Very often there is deep ambivalence among citizens about both the possibility and moral justifiability of reconciliation in the aftermath of institutionalized injustice or systematic violence. Given past violence as well as present anger and distrust, many are skeptical about whether it will be possible for citizens to learn to relate in healthier ways. Even if possible, citizens frequently are skeptical about the morality of reconciliation. For such skeptics, the appropriate moral response to certain egregious wrongs is to sever one's relationships with those responsible, whereas reconciliation entails the restoration of relationships. Without a clear notion of what political reconciliation entails, it is futile for policy makers and politicians to respond effectively to such skepticism by demonstrating the possibility and justifiability of reconciliation. This makes reconciliation even more practically challenging, because both kinds of skepticism undercut the willingness of at least some citizens to do the work required for reconciliation to be successful.

### Overview of the argument

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to develop a complete account of healthy political relationships and the criteria by which to evaluate the success of processes of reconciliation. In this chapter, I focus on one aspect of healthy political relationships: mutual respect for the rule of law. The rule of law establishes a stable framework for the interaction of citizens by specifying the expectations citizens and officials should make of each other. The breakdown of the rule of law, characteristic of civil conflict and repressive rule, damages

the relationships among citizens and officials, I claim, by violating these expectations. Such violations contribute to widespread distrust, resentment, fear, and a sense of betrayal among citizens.

I argue that there are similarities between the breakdown of the rule of law at the societal level and PTSD at the individual level, and that these similarities have important implications for our understanding of what makes processes of reconciliation effective. Systematic violations of the rule of law are consistent with the kinds of trauma that lead to PTSD in individuals. Like violations of the rule of law, traumatic events violate the expectations of individuals. Just as distrust, resentment, and fear are effects of the breakdown of the rule of law, rage and a deep, general distrust of the social world are symptoms of PTSD. This suggests, I claim, that important parallels exist between the processes that successfully enable individuals to cope with PTSD and the processes that successfully help a society in transition restore the rule of law and cope with the legacy of its breakdown. Consequently, to understand how to restore mutual respect for the rule of law and respond to the legacy of distrust, resentment, and fear, we can draw on the psychological research on PTSD.

There are five sections in this paper. In the first two sections I focus on the account of the rule of law developed by Lon Fuller. The first section discusses the requirements of the rule of law. The second section focuses on the breakdown of the rule of law. In the third section, I turn to the concept of PTSD and outline its central features. The fourth section examines two ways in which the concepts of PTSD and of the breakdown of the rule of law are analogous. I then discuss how this analogy sheds light on our understanding of how to promote political reconciliation by restoring the rule of law. The final section discusses the interaction in practice between PTSD and the breakdown of the rule of law.

## 4.2 The rule of law

### Healthy political relationships

Before discussing the rule of law, I first want to explain what I mean by 'healthy political relationships.' 'Healthy,' according to the Oxford English Dictionary, refers to 'possessing or enjoying good health; ... so as to be able to discharge all functions efficiently' and 'conducive to or promoting health or wholesomeness.' The definition of 'health' is 'spiritual, moral, or mental soundness or well-being' and 'well-being, welfare.' Using these definitions of 'healthy' as a guide, a relationship is healthy if it promotes the well-being of the participants in the relationship. A healthy relationship also enables each participant successfully to fulfill her role or function as required by the

particular relationship in question. For example, a healthy relationship between a parent and child is one in which both the parent and the child can fulfill the responsibilities that go along with each respective role. For healthy relationships both to contribute to the well-being of the participants and to enable each participant to fulfill her role, the roles defined by the particular relationship in question must themselves be conducive to the well-being of individuals. That is, the responsibilities and duties required by particular roles must not undermine the well-being or welfare of those who fulfill such duties successfully.

My particular interest in this paper is in healthy political relationships. In other words, I am concerned with the interactions among individuals in their capacity as citizens and, at times, as government officials. An account of healthy political relationships, then, provides an account of the rights, duties, and responsibilities attaching to the roles of citizen and official, making clear how occupying these roles contributes to the well-being, or health, of individuals.

In this section, I describe one important aspect of healthy political relationships among citizens in a democracy: mutual respect for the rule of law. I first define what respect for the rule of law requires and explain the general purpose facilitated by the rule of law. I then discuss the expectations that citizens and officials have of one another when a society rules by law and why the systematic fulfillment of these expectations is necessary for the rule of law to be maintained. Finally, I explain why respect for the rule of law is properly considered an aspect of healthy political relationships, by examining its moral value and its contribution to the well-being of citizens.

### **Eight requirements of the rule of law**

In the literature in legal philosophy, Lon Fuller's eight principles of legality represent the standard conception of the rule of law. In *The Morality of Law*, Fuller identifies eight requirements of the rule of law (1969, pp. 46–90). Laws must be general, specifying *rules* prohibiting or permitting behavior of certain kinds. Laws must also be broadly promulgated. Publicity of laws ensures that citizens know what the law requires. Laws must be prospective, specifying how individuals ought to behave in the future rather than prohibiting behavior that occurred in the past. Laws should be clear. Laws must be noncontradictory. One law cannot prohibit what another law permits. Laws must not ask the impossible. The demands laws make on citizens should remain relatively constant. Finally, there should be congruence between declared rules and their enforcement by officials. According to Fuller, congruence may be destroyed in a variety of ways, including 'bribery, prejudice . . . and the drive toward personal power' (Fuller, 1969, p. 81). Declared rules outline the standards for

acceptable and prohibited behavior. Conformity to or violation of those rules by citizens should dictate the official treatment citizens receive. So, for example, police should only arrest individuals they believe to have acted illegally.

The eight principles of the rule of law specify necessary conditions for legal rules to be able effectively to govern the conduct of citizens. According to Fuller, law is 'the enterprise of subjecting human conduct to the governance of rules' (Fuller, 1969, p. 105). In Fuller's view, a legal system performs a very particular function in society: it facilitates the ability of citizens to interact with one another successfully. In his words, law 'is basically a matter of providing the citizenry with a sound and stable framework for their interactions with one another' (Fuller, 1969, p. 210). The role of government is to protect and enforce this framework. When a society respects the rule of law, legal rules outline guidelines for the behavior of citizens. Government officials establish and enforce these standards. When the rule of law is upheld, citizens develop common expectations with respect to how they themselves and others should act and these expectations are regularly fulfilled.

### **Citizen expectations of officials and each other**

For Fuller, the claim that law shapes the particular expectations that citizens and officials make of each other is not simply a conceptual claim. Instead, Fuller asserts that citizens and officials who live in a society that purports to govern by law see legal rules in the way just described. That is, citizens and officials attach certain meaning to legal rules. Published laws become the particular standard by which citizens judge their own actions and the actions of others. Laws provide the substance of the general and specific expectations citizens have concerning the ways that they and others should behave.

If the law states that government buildings are supposed to remain closed on declared public holidays, then citizens expect government officials to abide by the law and keep government buildings closed on appointed holidays. This would be a specific expectation of citizens. The content of this expectation is shaped by particular rules. This specific expectation is also influenced by a general expectation citizens have of government officials, namely that officials will act in accordance with or on the basis of declared rules. According to Fuller, at the heart of the rule of law is the principle that 'in acting upon the citizen . . . a government will faithfully apply rules previously declared as those to be followed by the citizen and as being determinative of his rights and duties' (Fuller, 1969, p. 210). Fulfillment of this general principle becomes particularly important in the context of law enforcement. It implies that government officials should punish citizens only if they violate the public standard for behavior that published rules outline and should punish citizens *because* they

violated that standard. In a society that governs by law, this is what citizens expect and this expectation is regularly fulfilled by government officials.

In many contexts, neither citizens nor officials are aware of the meaning they attach to legal rules and of the particular expectations they have of other citizens and officials. In such contexts, officials assume that most citizens will obey the law and that disobedience will be the exception, not the rule. Citizens assume that officials will act in accordance with and will enforce only declared laws. The expectations we develop on the basis of these assumptions become part of the social background we can take for granted when deliberating about how to act. Fuller uses the example of the election to illustrate the many, often implicit, expectations citizens make of each other and of officials in a society that successfully governs by law. He writes,

Our institutions and our formalized interactions with one another are accompanied by certain interlocking expectations that may be called intendments, even though there is seldom occasion to bring these underlying expectations across the threshold of consciousness. In a very real sense when I cast my vote in an election my conduct is directed and conditioned by the anticipation that my ballot will be counted in favor of the candidate I actually vote for. This is true even though the possibility that my ballot will be thrown in the wastebasket, or counted for the wrong man, may never enter my mind as an object of conscious attention. In this sense the institutions of elections may be said to contain an intendment that the votes will be cast faithfully, tallied.

Fuller (1969, p. 217)

As noted above, the formulation of specific expectations is influenced by the general expectation that officials will obey the constraints imposed by the rule of law. Very often, the commitment such constraints impose are 'so taken for granted that, except when things go wrong, there is no occasion to talk or even to think about it' (Fuller, 1969, p. 218).

### Violations of expectation and citizen outcries

Evidence of the existence of these often implicit expectations surfaces when things go wrong and our expectations unfulfilled. Return to the example of an election. When a society purports to rule by law, then elections should not be rigged by ballots not being counted or ballots being counted in favor of a candidate different than the candidate for whom an individual voted. In a democracy, declared rules stipulate that government officials should assume office if chosen by the majority of citizens in an election. To fail to count ballots is to ignore the requirements imposed by officials implied by such declared rules. It violates the requirement that the preferences of the people, as expressed in ballots, should determine who becomes a government official. Citizens criticize officials who corrupt elections. Their reaction intuitively makes sense

against the background set of expectations they have of how citizens and officials ought to behave, as required by the rule of law.

### Successful legal systems and shared responsibility

The example of the fraudulent election highlights the fact that the success with which a legal system regulates behavior depends crucially upon the activities of officials. According to Fuller, every legal system is 'the product of a sustained purposive effort' (1969, p. 106) and 'maintaining a legal system in existence depends upon the discharge of interlocking responsibilities of government toward the citizen and of the citizen toward government' (p. 216). For a legal system effectively to regulate behavior in practice, officials must outline a standard of behavior that citizens are capable of following and that is actually enforced. The requirements of generality, publicity, and non-retroactivity ensure that citizens know about and are capable of following the law. Lawmakers must also enforce the declared rules. The requirement of congruence ensures that citizens are held accountable for following, or failing to follow, the standard articulated in law.

However, maintaining a legal system also depends upon the actions of citizens. Citizens have a responsibility to obey the rules that officials declare and enforce. For a legal system to function, citizens generally must obey the law. Disobedience must be the exception and not the norm. Where disobedience is widespread, it is futile for officials to declare rules to govern behavior. By hypothesis, such rules will be ignored by citizens and not be taken into account when they deliberate about how to act. After a certain point, disobedience can become too widespread for law enforcement officials to counter. Law enforcement efforts then become ineffective and legislative efforts futile.

### The place of justice in the rule of law

The continual existence of legal institutions depends upon a sustained commitment by both citizens and officials to fulfill the responsibilities outlined above. However, neither citizens nor officials are automatically willing to discharge their responsibilities. According to Fuller, citizens and officials maintain their support for a particular legal system so long as they continue to believe that the legal system is operating as it should. A legal system is operating as it should when citizens and officials systematically respect the requirements of the rule of law and when the legal system administers justice. The commitment of legal systems to the pursuit of justice is reflected in the oath of judges everywhere. As legal philosopher David Dyzenhaus notes, 'judges everywhere claim that their duty is . . . to administer justice' (Dyzenhaus, 1998, p. 34).

It may seem odd to include the administration of justice in the notion of how a legal system should operate, because the requirements of the rule of law are strictly formal. The requirements are silent about the content that particular laws must have. Why think, then, that there is a connection between governing by law and administering justice? Indeed, many legal philosophers question the moral value of the rule of law because of the formal nature of the requirements. Shouldn't citizens revise their criteria for judging when a legal system is operating so as to exclude the demand that it administer justice?

### Formal justice

In my view, there is in fact a connection between governing by law and administering both formal and substantive justice. The principle 'treat like cases alike' captures formal justice. Such justice requires that rules be applied fairly and impartially. The congruence requirement of the rule of law reflects this formal notion of justice. But in practice, respecting the requirements of the rule of law constrains the actions of officials, rendering unlikely the legislation and administration of substantively unjust laws. Thus, respect for the rule of law promotes more than formal justice. In Fuller's words, 'governmental respect for the internal morality of law [the requirements of the rule of law] will generally be conducive toward a respect for what may be called the substantive or external morality of law' (Fuller, 1969, pp. 223–4). Respecting the requirements of the rule of law encourages officials to pass laws whose content is also just. In another paper, I offer an extended argument to defend Fuller's claim that respect for the rule of law is conducive towards substantive justice (Murphy, 2005). Here I want to sketch the outline of that argument.

### Substantive justice

The key to understanding the connection between respecting the requirements of the rule of law and the pursuit of substantive justice lies in appreciating the kind of governance ruling by law mandates. The rule of law ensures that a government publicly pursues its policies and makes known its practices. The rule of law guarantees open governance. Consequently, when it governs by law, a government opens itself up to international and domestic scrutiny of its policies and practices.

The open endorsement and pursuit of unjust policies makes a government vulnerable. It risks being perceived internationally as a pariah, facing international isolation, sanctions, and military intervention. It also risks becoming illegitimate in the view of its own citizens. Thus, there are incentives for a government to avoid the open pursuit of injustice. As the rule of law guarantees

open governance, such governments have an incentive to violate the rule of law in order to avoid openly pursuing injustice.

At the same time, a government risks becoming an international pariah and losing its legitimacy among citizens if it violates the rule of law. Respect for the rule of law is increasingly becoming a criterion for legitimacy and good standing internationally and domestically. The only solution for governments that want to pursue injustice without alienating the international community or its own citizens is to maintain the façade of the rule of law but to not actually respect the requirements of the rule of law in practice.

When you carefully examine the practices of governments that have pursued or are pursuing gross injustice, you see that this is precisely what such governments do. Very often governments have seemed to respect the rule of law while pursuing injustice. This is often claimed of Nazi Germany, Argentina during the Dirty War, and South Africa under Apartheid. Despite appearances, however, none of these societies systematically respected the rule of law while pursuing injustice in fact. All three societies systematically violated the rule of law.<sup>1</sup> Consider South Africa under Apartheid and Argentina during the Dirty War. In both cases, there was frequent incongruence between declared rules and official practice. Torture was illegal in both Argentina and South Africa, yet torture against 'subversives' and anti-apartheid activists was systematic. Government officials in Argentina denied responsibility for the disappearances of citizens, which was illegal, and South African officials denied the existence of death squads, which were illegal. Both existed. In South Africa, there was also a fundamental contradiction between the principles of a common law legal order and apartheid. Common law heritage includes a commitment to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals (Dyzenhaus, 1998, p. 15). Consequently, judges were 'at one and the same time being asked to articulate and give effect to equitable common law principles, and to uphold and enforce discriminatory laws: at one and the same time to be an instrument of justice and at another to be an instrument of oppression' (Dyzenhaus, 1998, p. 15). As Dyzenhaus argues in his critique of judges under apartheid, respect for the rule of law required judges to make explicit this contradiction so that the government could recognize that a commitment to apartheid entailed a rejection of the common law legal order.

<sup>1</sup> Fuller discusses the systematic nature of violations of the rule of law in Nazi Germany in *The Morality of Law*. I discuss the cases of Argentina and South Africa in 'Lon Fuller and the Moral Value of the Rule of Law'.

### Rationalizing injustices

Sometimes government officials cynically manipulate citizens and the international community while privately acknowledging the unjust nature of their ends. However, often this is not the case. Instead, officials rationalize their participation in injustice or deny that what they are doing is unjust or unjustified. Such denial and rationalization is psychologically important because, as I will discuss in greater detail in Section 4.3, individuals have a fundamental need to believe that they are decent and moral. This belief is easier to maintain when one does not need to justify one's unjust actions to others.

An additional problem with the openness of governance required by the rule of law, then, is that it makes it more difficult for officials to deny, to themselves and to others, that they are acting unjustly. Openness establishes conditions for individuals and governments to be held accountable for their actions. Given how important it is for individuals to believe that they are decent and the very real risks the pursuit of injustice poses for governments, a government that in practice respects the rule of law will be unlikely to pursue unjust policies.<sup>2</sup> The content of the regulations legislated and enforced in a society that rules by law will be moral and the legal system be just when citizens and officials systematically fulfill the expectations required of them.

### Respect for the rule of law and healthy political relationships

I have been arguing that there is reason to think that Fuller was right when he claimed that respect for the rule of law promotes justice in practice. This link between the rule of law and justice also sheds some light on why mutual respect for the rule of law is a component of healthy political relationships. Healthy relationships contribute to the moral and mental well-being of individuals. Fulfillment of the responsibilities required by political relationships does not undermine individual well-being. That the rule of law constrains the pursuit of injustice shows one way that it contributes to healthy political relationships. It ensures that the duties demanded of citizens are fair and reasonable in their content. Thus, when a society governs by law, the content of the actions required or prohibited by law will not be incompatible with protecting the health of those who obey legal requirements.

<sup>2</sup> My argument defends the claim that there is an incompatibility of the pursuit of systematic injustice and the rule of law. It is possible that particular immoral or unjust laws be passed in accordance with the requirements of the rule of law. Respect for the rule of law does not guard against every injustice.

There are additional ways in which mutual respect for the rule of law contributes to the health of political relationships. Specifically, the rule of law structures relationships among citizens and officials that are reciprocal and respectful of agency. I end this section by describing first how the rule of law structures relationships in this way and then discussing why relationships structured in this fashion are healthy.

### Reciprocity and respect for agency

Mutual respect for the rule of law guarantees reciprocal fulfillment of responsibilities. For Fuller, the existence of moral duties depends partly on the behavior of others. In other words, it is fair to expect me to fulfill my duties only if those judging my behavior fulfill their reciprocal responsibilities. Fulfillment of one's own citizen responsibilities is a necessary condition for one to be able legitimately to demand actions from others. Reciprocity is realized through mutual respect for the rule of law. When a society governs by law, 'Government says to the citizen in effect, 'These are the rules we expect you to follow. If you follow them, you have the assurance that they are the rules that will be applied to your conduct' (Fuller, 1969, p. 40). In Fuller's view, government officials have the moral right to demand that citizens obey the law only if legal rules outline a standard that citizens acknowledge, are capable of following, and that is actually enforced. The requirements of the rule of law ensure that this is the case.

In addition, implicit in the rule of law is the view that an individual 'is or can become a responsible agent capable of understanding and following rules and answerable for his defaults' (Fuller, 1969, p. 162). When officials respect the rule of law, they treat citizens as responsible and self-directed agents. Citizens are judged based on standards of behavior that they had a real opportunity to follow. Officials assess the behavior of citizens based on a clear, publicly knowable standard. Thus, it is the decisions and actions of individuals, and not the whims of officials, which determine the legal treatment they receive.

Reciprocity and respect for agency are important because they embody two ways of recognizing the dignity of individuals. By treating individuals as agents and respecting reciprocity, we acknowledge through our actions that individuals have a value that constrains how we can legitimately treat one another. One constraint is that we cannot make demands on others regardless of what we do. Another constraint is that we cannot react to others in a way that disregards what they have done; other's actions or omissions necessarily affect our responses to them. Acknowledging and respecting such limitations reinforces that individuals are the source of moral claims and,



as agents, should not merely be acted upon. When officials and citizens mutually respect the limitations on their behavior set by the rule of law, they respect others and treat others as agents. This contributes the well-being of citizens by reinforcing their belief in their value and agency.

### 4.3 The breakdown of the rule of law

In the previous section, I examined the requirements of the rule of law and argued that mutual respect for the rule of law is a constitutive element of healthy political relationships between citizens and officials. In this section, I focus on the breakdown of the rule of law and discuss how systematic violations of the rule of law damage the political relationships among citizens and officials.

When violations of the rule of law are systematic, officials in practice no longer govern by law. Declared rules no longer guide the interactions among citizens or the actions of law enforcement officials. Consider a society in which police brutality against members of racial minorities is common, though illegal. In such a society, members of minority groups will develop expectations about how officials will respond to their actions based on the experiences of other minorities rather than on the basis of declared official rules. Such incongruence between declared rules and the actual practices of law enforcement officials undermines the meaningfulness of declared rules; such rules no longer provide a reliable basis for forming expectations about the behavior of officials.

#### Violations of the rule of law and substantive injustice

One consequence of systematic violations of the rule of law is an increased likelihood that substantive injustice will be pursued. When officials flout the congruence requirement, they act differently from the way that declared rules permit or prohibit. This means that citizens and the international community cannot look to the written law to determine what policies are being pursued or in which practices officials are engaging. As I discussed in the previous section, when officials do not have to account for or defend their actions, either to the international community or to themselves, they are more likely to engage in manifestly unjust forms of treatment.

#### Undermining of reciprocity and respect

Violations also weaken the reciprocity and respect for agency at the core of healthy political relationships. In repressive regimes, officials frequently violate the rule of law and yet continue to demand that citizens obey the law.

In such cases, political relationships are no longer reciprocal. Officials continue to expect obedience by citizens, despite the lack of fulfillment of their reciprocal responsibilities as government officials. Officials fail to recognize that their actions undermine the legitimacy with which they can demand such obedience.

Officials in such cases also fail to treat citizens as self-directed agents and to respect their autonomy. Recognition of the agency of others dictates that official treatment of citizens is determined on the basis of the actions of citizens. When the rule of law is systematically violated, then the whim of officials, rather than the actions of citizens, determines the official treatment that citizens are likely to receive. In such circumstances, the exercise of agency is frustrated. The life of citizens goes according to the caprice of officials rather than on the basis of their own actions.

Disrespect for agency and denial of reciprocity fail to recognize the dignity of individual citizens. Such actions send a message that citizens do not deserve better treatment and that citizens are not the authors of their own lives. This message can be damaging to the well-being of citizens in that it damages their self-respect, pride, and other self-regarding virtues. There are additional ways that violations of the rule of law damage relationships. Systematic violations of the rule of law by officials foster distrust, resentment, and a sense of betrayal among citizens. I want to end this section by examining these additional ways that violations of the rule of law impact political relationships.

#### Erosion of distrust and rise of alienation

Violations erode the trust of citizens in, and alienate them from, the judicial system and law-enforcement officials. When government officials violate the congruence requirement of the rule of law, it is unsurprising that distrust develops. It is difficult to trust politicians who lie or law enforcement officials who harm and brutalize citizens instead of protecting them from harm. Officials who violate the rule of law undermine the confidence with which citizens can look to the written law to determine what officials expect of them. Citizens who know about specific discrepancies between written law and official action have little reason to believe that other written or publicly espoused policies reflect the practices of state agents.

When lawmakers fall far short of the rule of law, citizens feel betrayed. As Fuller notes, a basic principle of the rule of law is 'that the acts of a legal authority toward the citizen must be legitimated by being brought within the terms of a previous declaration of general rules' (Fuller, 1969, p. 214). In cases of incongruence, officials betray this principle. The actions of law enforcement officials

are not authorized by previously declared rules. This betrays the expectations that citizens have of officials when they live in a society that purports to govern by law. The discovery that one has been betrayed is painful and disorienting. Being on the receiving end of betrayal can lead to existential despair and even madness.

### Resentment, rage, and increased violence

Systematic violations of the rule of law also cause citizens to feel resentment. Resentment builds when officials expect citizens to fulfill certain duties, like obedience to law, despite the failure of government officials to fulfill their reciprocal expectations or duties. Resentment among citizens increases when government officials punish those who disobey the law, yet similar violations by government officials go unpunished. This resentment is reasonable. It is also potentially a source of instability. The more citizens resent their leaders, the more likely they are to erupt in rage and violence and, consequently, the more difficult it is for officials to control them.

The breakdown of the rule of law damages political relationships in a myriad of ways. The rule of law characteristically breaks down in societies where there is repressive rule or civil conflict. For such societies, the restoration of the rule of law is part of the process of reconciliation, or of (re-)establishing healthier ways for citizens and officials to relate. Mutual respect for the rule of law is a key feature of healthy political relationships between citizens and officials.

Many politicians and human rights activists working in transitional societies try to facilitate the process of reconciliation. One objective of this paper is to highlight the role that research of psychologists and psychiatrists on PTSD can play in enriching our understanding of what kinds of processes in fact foster reconciliation. In the next two sections, I discuss what PTSD is and look at two significant parallels between the breakdown of the rule of law and PTSD. In the final two sections, I explore the implications of these similarities for our understanding of how to promote reconciliation.

## 4.4 Post-traumatic stress disorder

In what follows, I outline key characteristics of the events that are PTSD-inducing as well as the symptoms of PTSD. This information is important for understanding the parallels and interaction between PTSD and the breakdown of the rule of law, which is the topic of the next section.

### Traumatic events

One key to understanding PTSD is appreciating why certain events are traumatic. Such appreciation requires a grasp of the framework of beliefs and expectations that individuals rely upon to comprehend and act in society. Psychologist Janoff-Bulman (1985, 1989, 1992) has developed a particularly influential account of beliefs individuals commonly hold. For my purposes, it is necessary only to discuss two kinds of such beliefs. One concerns the nature of the self. The other has to do with the nature of the world.

#### Agency and the desire for safety

Janoff-Bulman claims that individuals typically believe that they can effectively exercise their agency and that they have value. An agent is someone who can pursue and realize her goals successfully. A belief in the effectiveness of agency entails a belief in the ability to predict the likely consequences of various actions. This ability is essential for agency because the successful pursuit of one's goals depends upon the capability to judge the appropriate action to take in specific situations. Such judgments and comparison of different courses of action are possible only if an individual can predict the probable results of different courses of action.

According to Janoff-Bulman, individuals care about their safety and want to ensure their safety through their actions. Because they believe in their agency, individuals also believe that they can, through their actions, reduce the risk of being harmed. This is what Janoff-Bulman labels the self-controllability belief (Dekel *et al.*, 2004, p. 409). The more an individual believes she is acting in safety-promoting ways, the greater she thinks she is reducing the likelihood of harm to herself. In Janoff-Bulman's words, '[T]he degree to which one views oneself as engaging in the right behaviors (e.g., precautionary, appropriate behaviors) minimizes one's vulnerability to negative outcomes' (Dekel *et al.*, 2004, p. 409).

#### Belief that the world is meaningful and good

Individuals also commonly believe certain things about the world. Specifically, most individuals believe that the world is meaningful and good. A belief that the principle of desert operates in the world or that the world is just connects these two beliefs. In other words, good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people. The operation of desert in the world confirms the agency of individuals because we can predict that if we act well, then good consequences will follow. Thus it is unsurprising that 'The belief in a just

world enables the individual to confront the physical and social environment as if it were stable and orderly. It is a belief that individuals are reluctant to give up, and evidence that the world is not really just can be extremely distressing' (Joseph *et al.* 1997, p. 79).

### Invulnerability

Individuals often develop a sense of invulnerability because of the conjunction of the beliefs in our agency and decency and in the justness of the world. If we are basically good people, then our actions are basically good (or at least well-intended) and so good consequences should follow from our actions. This is especially true when we take measures to ensure our safety. Thus, 'although we may recognize that crimes, accidents, and illnesses occur to a large portion of the population, it is also possible to believe simultaneously that these misfortunes will not happen to us' (Joseph *et al.*, 1997, p. 79).

### Traumatic stressors

It is against this background understanding of common beliefs that we can make sense of the nature of traumatic events. A traumatic stressor is an experience 'outside the range of usual human experience and that would be "markedly distressing" to anyone' (Shay, 1994, p. 5). There are two primary characteristics of traumatic events. First, typically there is a threat to or infliction of physical injury or death upon an individual (Joseph *et al.*, 1997, p. 51). Events of this kind that tend to be PTSD-inducing include natural disasters (such as tsunamis, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions), technological disasters, combat, being a victim of a crime (burglary, assault), sexual assault, childhood sexual abuse, political violence (Joseph *et al.*, 1997, p. 51). '[A]n event... that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others' (Joseph *et al.*, 1997, p. 13) can be traumatizing for individuals who experience, witness, or confront them.

The second aspect of a traumatic stressor is subjective in nature and centers on how an individual reacts to the traumatic event. An event that involves the threat or infliction of bodily harm is PTSD-inducing if individuals experience the threat or harm in a particular way. If an individual feels 'fear, helplessness, or horror' in the face of experiencing, witnessing, or confronting the threat or harm, then it is more likely she will have post-traumatic stress reactions (Joseph *et al.*, 1997, p. 13).

### Effects of trauma

Traumatic experiences call into question the validity of the fundamental beliefs of individuals described above. To illustrate, consider rape. For an

individual who has been raped, it is difficult to reconcile her experience with either her belief that she is a decent person or her belief that the world is meaningful and good. If she is a good person, then the rape might seem to provide evidence that the world is not always just and good things do not happen to good people. If the world is just and people do get what they deserve, then the rape might seem to provide evidence that she is not a decent person or has value.

The violation of these deeply held beliefs and expectations by traumatic events can have a profound effect on individuals. When an experience is traumatizing, individuals develop characteristic symptoms. The focus of the research and practice of psychologists and psychiatrists is upon understanding and treating the symptoms of PTSD. There are three general types of symptoms I want to mention.

The first general symptom is that an individual re-experiences the traumatic event. This re-experiencing may occur in dreams, vivid flashbacks where it feels like the event is 'recurring,' as well as 'intrusive' distressing recollections of the events. Individuals may also have a physical reaction or 'intense psychological distress' if exposed to something that to them symbolizes or resembles an aspect of the traumatic event. A related, second symptom is that individuals have extremely intense reactions to people or places associated in their mind with the traumatic event. Examples of such reactions would include outbursts of anger. Alternately, individuals may find it difficult to sleep or concentrate (Joseph *et al.*, 1997, p. 13).

The third general symptom of PTSD is the 'persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness (not present before the trauma)' (Joseph *et al.*, 1997, p. 13). Individuals may try to avoid thinking about or being around particular people or places associated with the event. They may try to suppress any emotional reactions to such people or places. In other words, individuals may try to cultivate a sense of detachment from particular people or places.

### Making 'sense' of trauma

According to the influential psychology theorist Mardi Jon Horowitz, these characteristic reactions reflect the difficulty individuals have making sense of their traumatic experiences. Individuals have an internal drive to make all of their beliefs consistent. Traumatic experiences provide information 'which is incompatible with existing [cognitive] schemas' of individuals (Joseph *et al.*, 1997, p. 73). This incongruity is distressing and requires an individual to reappraise and revise her view of the world. In the aftermath of trauma, individuals try to find a way to make their experience cohere with their beliefs

about the world and themselves. To prevent emotional exhaustion during this period of integration and revision, individuals react by detaching themselves from the event and the world. The vivid reactions that individuals have when not detached reflect their process of integration.

Sometimes, a traumatic event can undermine the world view of individuals, shattering some of their fundamental beliefs. Individuals vary in the degree and number of assumptions rejected as a result of exposure to the traumatic stressor. According to psychologists Dekel *et al.*,

The psychological aftermath of a traumatic event is multidimensional and may be manifested by cognitive, somatic, psychiatric, and functional dysfunction. Among long-term sequelae that investigators have observed in victims of traumatic events is the challenging, and even the shattering, of their basic cognitive schemes regarding the world and themselves, including a feeling of invulnerability, the tendency to see the world as meaningful, and the tendency to see themselves as worthy.

Dekel *et al.* (2004, p. 407)

A traumatic event may lead individuals to abandon one of their core beliefs. For example, an individual may no longer view the world as a meaningful or valuable place. This may contribute to a loss in the belief of one's agency. Once the world is no longer seen as a predictable place, it is difficult to feel a sense of control over one's life. In an uncertain world, it is difficult to form reliable expectations, or any expectations at all, about how others will react to one's actions. This in turn may lead to a general apathy towards one's projects or the world.

### Losing fundamental beliefs

Losing the belief in the meaningfulness of the world and in our agency can lead to paranoia or fear. Psychiatrist Jonathan Shay (1994) writes, 'Every trauma narrative pierces our adult cloak of safety; it... leaves us terrified and disoriented' (p. 37). After a traumatic event, we may no longer trust or assume that we can effectively reduce our vulnerability through our actions. A natural consequence of this frame of mind is paranoia, constantly being vigilant, no matter what we do to reduce risk, because harm may still come our way at any moment.

Such paranoia may reflect a loss of general trust. Shay works with combat veterans with PTSD. When describing the effects of PTSD he writes,

Combat trauma destroys the capacity for social trust, accounting for the paranoid state of being that blights the lives of the most severely traumatized combat veterans. This is not a selective mistrust directed at a specific individual or institution that has betrayed its charge, but a comprehensive destruction of social trust. Lies and

euphemisms by the soldier's own military superiors and civilian leaders of course undermine social trust by destroying confidence in language.

Shay (1994, p. 34)

When social trust is lost, individuals can no longer take anything, including the words of others, at face value. Normally, an individual can trust that the meaning of words is undermined when the expectations we make of others on the basis of their words are violated. Such distrust can undermine our capacity for intimacy, which is possible only in a context where you trust the one with whom you are intimate. 'Unhealed PTSD can devastate life and incapacitate its victims from participation in the domestic, economic, and political life of the nation' (Shay, 1994, p. xx).

To summarize, PTSD refers to the characteristic symptoms that individuals exhibit when exposed to a traumatic stressor. A traumatic stressor refers to an experience outside the ordinary that would normally be distressing. Such experiences call into question the fundamental beliefs and expectations of individuals that form part of the cognitive framework they use to navigate in the world. The challenging of these beliefs has a powerful effect on individuals. Symptoms of PTSD include flashbacks, difficulty sleeping, and avoidance of people and places associated with the experience. It can contribute to their abandonment of those beliefs and to distrust, rage, resentment, or detachment.

## 4.5 Implications for theorizing about the rule of law

In the previous sections I discussed the concepts of the rule of law and of PTSD. In this section, I first discuss structural similarities between these concepts. My objective in exploring these similarities is to show two ways that the concept of PTSD can enrich our grasp of reconciliation by deepening our understanding of the rule of law.

### What the breakdown of the rule of law and post-traumatic stress disorder have in common

The breakdown of the rule of law and PTSD-inducing traumatic events share two important features. First, both consist of actions whose occurrence violates the expectations of individuals. Violations of the rule of law contravene the expectations citizens have about how officials or other citizens will act. Traumatic events challenge the validity of beliefs individuals commonly have about the nature of the world and themselves. These beliefs are used as a guideline for forming expectations about what the consequences of our

actions will be. These expectations form part of the framework individuals rely upon when deliberating about how to act.

In addition, both phenomena have analogous, profoundly damaging effects. The legacy of the breakdown of the rule of law includes widespread distrust, resentment, and uncertainty among citizens; symptoms of PTSD consist of distrust, fear, rage, and uncertainty. The intense, analogous effects of the violation of expectations in both cases suggests that fulfillment of certain expectations is crucial for societal and individual well-being.

### **How theories of post-traumatic stress disorder can be a resource in understanding the breakdown of the rule of law**

#### **Primary and secondary post-traumatic stress disorder**

Psychologists increasingly distinguish among various types of PTSD. These distinctions provide resources for developing a more nuanced perspective on the societal impacts of the breakdown of the rule of law, given the conceptual similarities between the rule of law and PTSD. One distinction psychologists make is between primary and secondary PTSD. What is interesting about this distinction is that it highlights the different ways individuals with various relationships to a traumatic event might be impacted by such an event. Individuals with primary PTSD directly experienced the threat or infliction of physical harm and exhibit certain characteristic symptoms as a result (Figley and Kleber, 1995, pp. 78–9). Secondary PTSD impacts the significant others who learn about such traumatic experiences. Significant others might include spouse, children, friends, colleagues, or helping professionals. Secondary PTSD refers to the characteristic behaviors and emotions that result from the knowledge that a significant other suffered a certain event.

#### **Application to breakdowns of the rule of law**

That particular ways of experiencing traumatic events results in distinct effects suggests that the breakdown of the rule of law might not impact everyone in society in the same way. The effects of the breakdown Fuller discussed might be different, or more pronounced, among various groups within society. Consider a society in which torture is systematic, though illegal. Assume that security forces disproportionately target members of a certain ethnic or racial group. Violations of the congruence requirement by security forces will affect members of the targeted group in different ways than it affects members of the nontargeted group. Many members of the nontargeted group may never learn about or have to come to terms with violations during the repressive regime. Like secondary PTSD victims, they may only learn about the breakdown after the fact. In contrast, sympathetic but nontargeted individuals or members of

the targeted group live with the daily knowledge of the discrepancy between declared rules and legal practices. Their experience is continually and directly traumatic in a way more analogous to those with primary PTSD. The impact that the breakdown of the rule of law has, then, can vary among different segments of society. Consequently, processes designed to restore mutual respect for the rule of law and deal with the legacy from its breakdown need to be sensitive to the differential effects it may have upon society.

#### **Post-traumatic stress disorder and healing processes**

The conceptual similarities between the breakdown of the rule of law and PTSD are of use when thinking about processes of reconciliation. Given that the cause and effects of both are analogous, it is likely that there are structural parallels between their healing processes. Only recently have scholars begun to think systematically about how to judge the effectiveness of processes designed to restore the rule of law and deal with the legacy from the breakdown of the rule of law. Thus, discussions about therapy for PTSD have the potential to contribute to the discussions about processes of reconciliation.

Among psychiatrists and psychologists, there is no consensus on what form of therapy is best when treating individuals with PTSD. Thus, there is no substantive notion of the therapeutic process from which to examine what features might find analogues in processes of reconciliation. However, when thinking about processes of reconciliation, it is instructive to look at the aspects of the therapeutic process currently being debated. The issues about which psychologists are debating suggest questions about reconciliation that need to be, but currently are not systematically being, asked by advocates of reconciliation.

Additionally, there is no agreement among psychologists and psychiatrists about what the goal of therapy should be. There is a minimum consensus that, when therapy is successful, patients should report reduced distress. However, there are competing understandings of what reducing distress entails. Distress may be reduced because, as a result of therapy, individuals are able to work through their anxiety when it arises. Or distress may be reduced because, through therapy, anxiety is no longer part of the current chapter of their lives.

These various conceptions of reduced distress reflect different views of the proper goal of therapy. Some therapeutic approaches set overcoming anxiety as a goal while others aim to help individuals cope with their anxiety. Anxiety is overcome when a patient no longer experiences fear in situations that previously caused anxiety. The outcome of therapy is different if an individual learns to cope with anxiety. In such cases, an individual would continue to experience fear in situations that are anxiety-producing. The difference

would be that she learned how to respond in ways that enabled her to deal with her fear in a healthier way.

Underlying debates about the appropriate goal for therapeutic processes are unstated assumptions about what is possible for individuals to achieve. One reason to view the goal of therapy as that of learning how to manage, rather than overcome, anxiety is the conviction that overcoming anxiety is impossible. If an individual will always feel fear in certain situations, then the best she can try to do is learn to respond to these effects of PTSD in a way that enables her to live to the greatest extent possible a normal life.

#### Application to breakdowns of the rule of law

These questions about the goal of therapy and what is possible in therapy suggest issues that advocates of reconciliation should be debating more explicitly. In the literature, there is not substantial discussion about what the goal of processes of reconciliation should be. Yet there are a number of goals that processes of reconciliation might have. For example, one goal might be to help a society in transition overcome the effects of the legacy of the breakdown of the rule of law, including pervasive distrust and resentment. Another, different goal would be to help a society learn how to cope with the pervasive distrust and resentment.

Just as the resolution of questions about the goal of therapy turns partly on what kind of change is possible for individuals with PTSD, the resolution of debates about the appropriate goal of processes of reconciliation depends on what kind of reconciliation is possible for each society in transition. In a particular case, it may be impossible to surmount the resentment and distrust among citizens. The goal of processes of reconciliation, then, would be to help citizens interact in the healthiest way possible, given their distrust and resentment.

Psychologists also disagree about what method is most successful for realizing the goal of therapy. In particular, there are debates about whether, and to what extent, it is healthy for individuals to re-experience anger as part of their therapy. Becoming angry is seen by some as an important aspect of therapy because this enables individuals to have a cathartic experience. Psychotherapists, for example, are interested in providing a venue for patients to work through their anger. Critics of this school of thought argue that this approach reinforces and entrenches the anger of patients rather than helps them move past it. It is better, they argue, to help individuals move beyond their anger, without requiring that individuals experience a stronger version of their anger. The role of the therapist, on this view, is to help patients see how their anger is poisoning their lives and why they need to set such anger aside in order to be able to move on with their lives.

We should be asking analogous questions about the kinds of processes societies use to foster reconciliation. Should a society strive to establish a context in which catharsis might be achieved? Or should a society work to raise consciousness among citizens about how anger and resentment poison relationships? Was it helpful for Bishop Tutu to praise and hold up as role models victims who expressed forgiveness during the hearings of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission? Or should he instead have encouraged victims to express the anger and resentment they felt towards their perpetrators? If voicing anger is a necessary condition for overcoming anger, then processes of reconciliation should be structured to allow anger to be articulated.

#### Therapeutic relationships and relationships that facilitate political reconciliation

One final debate in psychology that is instructive for understanding and evaluating processes of reconciliation centers around the nature of the therapeutic relationship between the patient and therapist. There is no consensus on what kind of relationship a patient and therapist need to have in order for therapy to be effective. In particular, therapists disagree about how deeply the patient should trust the therapist and why such trust is important. We might ask similar questions about those who should conduct processes of reconciliation. (Why) is it necessary for the individuals in charge of processes such as truth commissions to be trusted within society? (Why) is it valuable or necessary to have an outside, third party, like the therapist, to facilitate such processes?

In this section, I have argued that the breakdown of the rule of law and of PTSD share a similar structure. Both involve the violation of certain fundamental and important expectations. In both cases, the effects of such violations include deep distrust, resentment, and other negative psychological effects that impair the ability of individuals or society to function in a healthy way. I have suggested that these conceptual similarities have two interesting implications. First, they provide a way for distinguishing more carefully among the various effects of the breakdown of the rule of law. Second, debates about PTSD suggest a framework for examining the efficacy of different kinds of processes of reconciliation.

## 4.6 Implications for post-traumatic stress disorder

In the previous section, I explored implications that the conceptual similarities between PTSD and the breakdown of the rule of law might have for understanding the nature of and remedy for the breakdown of the rule of law.



In this section, I focus on the frequent interplay between the breakdown of the rule of law and PTSD in practice. Systematic violations of the congruence requirement of the rule of law are also typically PTSD-inducing events. After looking at this interaction, I consider how this recognition might enrich our understanding of PTSD.

### Breakdowns of the rule of law are post-traumatic stress disorder inducing

Frequently, the official actions that violate the congruence requirement of the rule of law are also potential traumatic stressors. Governments rarely publicly sanction actions that are likely to draw international or domestic criticism. However, repressive governments characteristically rely upon terror, understood as 'the arbitrary use... of severe coercion' (Linz, 2000, p. 100) in order to frighten citizens into compliance. So, while declared rules rarely sanction torture or extra-judicial killing, in practice torture and extra-judicial killing are often systematic in repressive regimes. Argentina during the Dirty War is a paradigmatic case of such official, though illegal, practices. When describing what happened to the *desaparecidos*, or disappeared, Marguerite Feitlowitz writes, 'suspected "subversives" were kidnapped from the streets, tortured in secret concentration camps, and "disappeared". Victims died during torture, were machine-gunned at the edge of enormous pits, or were thrown, drugged, from airplanes into the sea' (Feitlowitz, 1998, p. ix). The disappeared faced threatened or actual infliction of bodily injury or death and lived in uncertainty and fear. Their experience fulfilled both criteria for traumatic stressors.

### Direct and indirect effects

Recognizing that the same event can be part of the process of systematically violating the rule of law and a PTSD-inducing traumatic stressor puts particular traumatic events into social context and helps us make sense of observations of psychologists working with survivors of political violence in a society with ongoing or recent political violence or repressive rule. Such psychologists recognize that the effects of torture and killing extend far beyond the victims and their immediate family and friends. They recognize, in other words, that political violence has societal ramifications. As Elizabeth Kornfeld writes about Chile,

Violations of human rights cannot be viewed exclusively from the perspective of isolated individual abuses. Their implications are much more extensive, for they describe not only a system's response to conflict, but a general ambience of political threat, both of which lead to an atmosphere of chronic fear. Those violations have

implied a strong threat affecting everyday life in Chilean society... Insecurity, vulnerability, and fear were widespread feelings among people, whatever their actual political involvement. Fear, which is normally a reaction to a specific external or internal threat, became a permanent component of everyday personal and social life. This constant state of fear, while affecting more directly those people who identified themselves as possible targets of political repression, did not leave the uninvolved unscathed.

Kornfeld (1995, p. 117)

The framework of the rule of law helps us make sense of why and how individual traumatic events can impact members of society who have no direct or significant relationship with those who were harmed or threatened with such harm. The rule of law draws attention to the broad, shared expectations that a legal system cultivates and the way that those shared expectations can be undermined or maintained by the actions of officials and citizens. When a particular official tortures a citizen illegally and the official's action is part of a larger systematic effort, then the official's individual action contributes to the ongoing officially sanctioned process of creating an uncertain environment for citizens. These systematic actions undermine the reliability of the shared expectations citizens develop based on declared rules. Thus, the systematic actions of officials undermine the confidence with which citizens can look to declared rules to determine what official treatment they are likely to receive if they perform certain actions. The social environment becomes unpredictable as a result.

Creating an environment of uncertainty undermines the ability of citizens to act effectively as agents. Citizens can no longer reliably decide which actions to take to ensure their safety. Such decisions depend on calculations of the consequences of different courses of actions. Calculations are difficult to make when one can no longer predict the likely consequences of different courses of action. When they can no longer act as agents, it is difficult for citizens to believe in the efficacy of their agency. This belief is normally part of the cognitive schema of individuals; undermining this belief threatens the very framework individuals rely upon when navigating in the social world. Thus, the rule of law highlights the broader, indirect effects that traumatic events that are also violations of the rule of law might have on the general relations or dealings among citizens and the general atmosphere within society.

### Research implications

This interaction between the breakdown of the rule of law and PTSD-inducing events suggests interesting considerations for the research on therapy for PTSD. The validity of an answer to particular questions, such as what it is

possible for individuals to achieve in therapy, might be context-specific. The achievable goals of therapy might be different depending on the political context. If, as I suggested, repressive regimes systematically violate the rule of law in practice, under repressive regimes it is difficult for citizens to develop stable expectations of how officials and other citizens will respond to their actions. In such contexts, it might be impossible for individuals to overcome their anxiety because one cause of anxiety, namely an unpredictable social environment, remains. The possibilities for the goals of therapy might be broader in a stable democratic context in which there is a more stable social environment.

#### 4.7 Conclusions

It is common for academics and politicians to call for reconciliation in societies emerging from civil conflict and repressive rule. However, it remains unclear what the call for reconciliation means. In this paper, I discussed one important aspect of the process of reconciliation, namely the restoration of mutual respect for the rule of law. I argued that our understanding of what this process entails can be enriched by looking at the psychological research on PTSD. Not only can academics interested in societies in transition benefit from the research of psychologists, but also psychologists can benefit from the work being done on societal reconciliation. As I suggested in the last section, discussions of societal reconciliation draw attention to the broader social context in which traumatic events occur and highlight the role that this social context might play in influencing what it is possible for individual therapy to achieve.

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