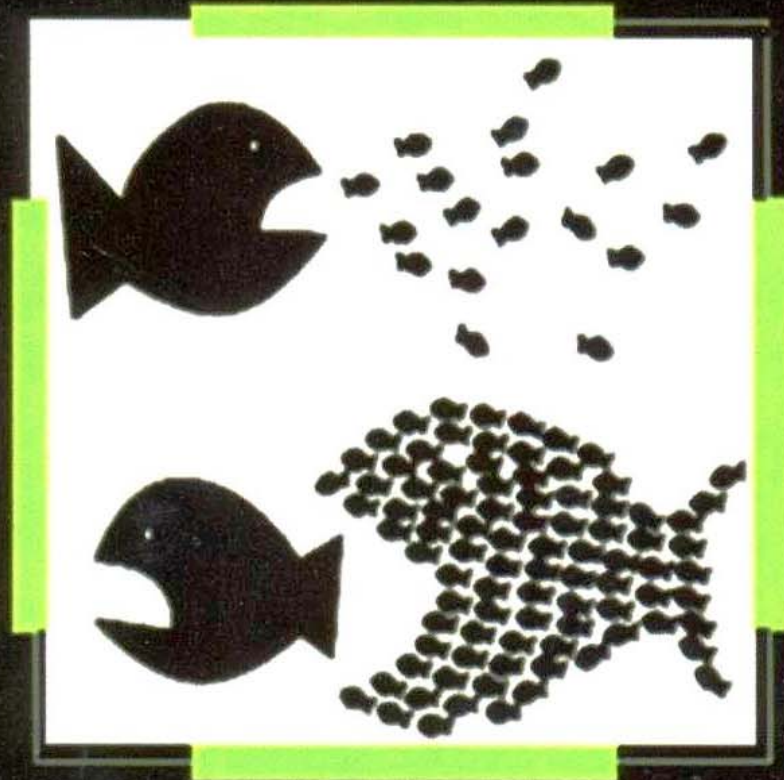




# THE HUMAN ELEMENT IN COMBAT



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**By**  
**Farshad Najafipour, MD.PhD**

**IN The Name of God**





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## **INTRODUCTION**

One of the perils for military planners in a high-tech world is to be taken in by the destructiveness of modern weapons and to give in to the currently popular theory that modern war will last for days or weeks rather than months or years in short, to envision a world where technologies, not people, dominate war. We can ill afford to dismiss the human element in combat. The stakes are far too great. Iraq's war with Iran was potentially a high-tech and swift war. That war is entering its fourth year and has cost, to date, 900,000 lives. Cohesion--mutual beliefs and needs that cause people to act as a collective whole has so far played a more significant role in the Iran-Iraq war than all the sophisticated weapons on either side.

**In assessing who wins wars and why**, it is easy to overweigh any one factor and neglect others. Broad factors such as objectives and strategies, weapons and materials, technology, numbers of soldiers, and the human element must all be considered in determining who wins and why. I m concerned with the human element in war, it recognizes the probability of major effects on war outcomes from other sources. Single-cause



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explanations must be avoided: they claim too much for one factor at the expense of others. This appears to be the case with the determining factor in future modern wars. I want to register my reservations about the school assertion that unit cohesion will not significantly affect future "high-tech" wars; and assertion that cohesion can only be maintained in mass armies and not in small, specialized team armies of the future. In the future, the effect of high technology on military cohesion and combat effectiveness must be considered. The lethality and multiplier effects of new and modernized weapons systems will continue to modify the nature of war, as they have through history. From the time of the French Revolution and the beginning of the era of modern warfare, when French armies dominated the battlefield, cohesion and its relation to nationalism became a major factor in warfare. With major advances in the capabilities of wide numbers of weapons systems and accompanying operational doctrine, it has been suggested that the significance of military cohesion will decrease as a principal factor in determination the outcome of future battles. FM 100-5 states that future major battles will likely be conducted within an integrated battlefield. The overall battlefield will be extended beyond the more traditional front lines and will encompass conventional, electronic, chemical, and possibly nuclear weapons, In viewing this future change in the characteristics of future battles, some observers have raised the important question of whether "by adapting military organization and tactics to the projected technology of the battlefield of the future, we run the risk of undermining the sources of social support that have historically sustained

soldiers in battle."Those who are most concerned with this possibility appear to be primarily influenced by the two major considerations.\* One is the low personnel density in the form of relatively small weapons teams scattered widely over the battlefield because of weapon lethality, chemical contamination, and improved communications. The other consideration appears to be an implicit conclusion that cohesion that is congruent with Army objectives cannot exist without an undetermined but large number of troops organized into large maneuver elements that interact on a daily, face-to-face basis and thereby provide the social support necessary for cohesion. Others carry the argument further, stating that even if large armies were feasible. The counter proposition made here and in the chapters that follow is that cohesion will become even more important as the technology of war develops but that cohesion will probably also become more difficult to achieve. The chance, dispersion, isolation, confusion, danger, stress, and hardship of the future battlefield will ensure that the decades-old trend of authority and decision making moving downward in the organization will continue. A form of warfare where soldiers marched lock-step into battle in long lines under the watchful eye of a sergeant behind them with drawn sword has changed to one of the small, independent-unit tactics and leadership found in recent wars. Perhaps the 1973 Arab-Israeli war best illustrates this trend. The 1973 war was the largest tank battle ever fought, yet it was characterized by numerous small unit engagements most often won by the side displaying the most initiative, leadership, and cohesion at the small-unit level.

Strong military cohesion is possible in quite small groups

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and under intense pressure and stress. In fact, in both the Chinese and North Vietnamese examples, three-man military cells are used as the basic building block in constructing cohesive units following their 3 x 3 organizational concept. In it, each unit is one of three like units which are part of a larger unit also comprised of three like units. In both armies, the central focus of cohesion is at the very small unit level. The three-man military cell with proper leadership and control became the strength upon which the extraordinary endurance of both armies was based. This is especially significant in the case of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) since it was required to operate widely dispersed under the conditions of extreme hardship and stress often described as characteristic of future battlefields. In this regard, it is also interesting to note how the Israeli Army deals with battle stress similar to the type envisioned in future wars. During the 1973 and Lebanon conflicts, treatment of stress casualties had the goal of returning the soldier to duty with his unit. The power and attraction of the small cohesive unit to the soldier helped achieve a remarkably high rate of success in treating his battle stress. It has also been suggested that the importance of cohesion in explaining combat performance has been overstated or that cohesion can be replaced by alternative sources of motivation and control. Support for the view that the significance of cohesion has been overstated is made by some who point to prior studies describing soldiers who fought as individuals rather than as part of a cohesive unit. Such conclusions are probably questionable. Related suggestions also discount military cohesion by suggesting that patriotism can be an alternative combat

motivator. The view of cohesion as an isolated phenomenon on the battle-field indicates a narrow comprehension of the nature of military cohesion and its origins. It is important to recognize the various sources of cohesion. Patriotism or nationalism are not alternative motivators; rather, they manifest themselves in cohesive units by helping provide the well-integrated group values and communications necessary for military cohesion. Another suggestion, that smarter soldiers require less of the social support and leadership that bind cohesive units together, appears to be made upon an incomplete examination of the evidence. Those armies that have enjoyed the highest degrees of cohesion and combat effectiveness in the past have achieved such success in part because they relied upon the most qualified and the smartest people available. Certainly, an army that has the smartest people available in its ranks has greater capability. It also has a far greater challenge in motivating and leading more active, intellectually diverse, and questioning soldiers. One is reminded that the Principles of War, which apply equally to all nations, are autonomous and that an army that achieves the greatest cohesion will win, everything else being equal. The Arab-Israeli wars illustrate this point well. Finally, the suggestion that drugs be seriously considered as an alternative form of motivation in view of the expected loss of social support on the modern battlefield is very questionable. Numerous moral, physiological, and other questions can be imagined. It seems certain that the army that succeeds in creating and maintaining cohesive units on future battlefields will have a significant advantage over those that do not.



## CHAPTER ONE

### **The Significance of Military Cohesion**

By all traditional methods of measuring military power, the United States and its allied forces should have had difficulty defeating the North Vietnamese during the second Vietnamese war (1965-1972). At the height of its involvement in Vietnam, the United States was spending in excess of \$25 billion a year. The US Army had committed 40 percent of all its combat-ready divisions. They were supported by 50 percent of US tactical air power and one-third of US Naval Forces. Combined with allied contributions, US forces overwhelmed the North Vietnamese numerically in all traditional categories of military power. In opposition, the North Vietnamese fielded an army in the south that was inferior in strength and significantly inferior in logistical support, firepower, and mobility. Never before had such massive firepower been concentrated against an opposing army in such a limited area for such an extended period of time. In view of the overwhelming military power opposing it, North Vietnam had to rely on the human factor. **Van Tien Dung,**

**Army Chief of Staff, outlined their strategy:**

Our arms and equipment were weaker than the enemy's thus we could only develop moral superiority (within the army) and only then have the courage to attack the enemy, only then dare to fight the enemy resolutely, only then could we stand solidly before all difficult trials created by the superior firepower that the enemy had brought into the war. Following this strategy, the North Vietnamese Army maintained its cohesion and endured while all other armies were defeated or retired from the battlefield. North Vietnamese Army endured the most concentrated firepower ever directed against an army for seven continuous years. When Van Tien Dung spoke of "moral superiority" within the ranks of the North Vietnamese Army, he was referring to what many analysts consider the creation of one of the most cohesive armies ever fielded. The attention paid within that army to organization, leadership, care of the soldier, and development of military cohesion and psychological control within the smallest units has not been equaled by other modern armies. The North Vietnamese Army was able to endure some of the greatest stress of combat and hardship because of its extensive development of the human element. Remarkable as it may seem, the North Vietnamese experience is not unique. Strategists such as Clausewitz, Napoleon, and Mao Tse Tung preceded Ho Chi Minh in recognizing the effect and importance of the human element in warfare. Examples can be cited from the Punic Wars through World War II, the Korean war, and the Vietnam war. Unfortunately, in most cases all that was noted were interesting stories implying the importance of the cohesion, but little was said about how this cohesion was

created or maintained. A similar situation occurred in the Falklands war. During the weeks it took the British Fleet to steam to the occupied Falkland Islands, analysts throughout the world assessed the opposing forces. Conclusions on the probable outcome were made on the basis of opposing numbers and technical capabilities, which were known with reasonable accuracy. Opposing numbers of troops were weighed. The advantage of shoreline defense versus amphibious landings and the capabilities of the limited numbers of British Harriers versus more numerous Argentine A-4 Sky hawks and Mirages were considered. The relative strength of the naval forces involved and the enormous difficulties for the British in mounting a major naval and amphibious operation at the end of an extremely long sea line of communication were discussed at length. Even the weather of the approaching winter in the southern hemisphere was considered in pronouncements about possible outcomes. Such assessments were further favored by the isolation of the theater and the apparent nature of the key terrain. Almost every significant factor was considered except the one that was to become the most important, the human element. The opposing qualities of the individual soldiers and their organization, leadership, and cohesion became the deciding factor in the war. In battle, it became apparent that the Argentine Army was decisively outclassed. Although they outnumbered the British and although their weapons and supplies were more than adequate, it became clear that the Argentines lacked the will to prevail that is characteristic in cohesive, well-led units. This became even more apparent when, during negotiations for surrender, a main Argentine



condition was that their officers be allowed to retain their side arms for protection against their own men.

### **Measuring Military Power**

The failure to consider the human element in war adequately and an overemphasis on weapon capabilities, numbers of troops, and other concrete factors are caused by the difficulty in quantifying the human element, whereas the more tangible factors are easily counted, totaled, and compared. The preparation for and the analysis of modern warfare are traditionally divided into four broad elements: (1) strategy, (2) weapons and materiel, (3) technology, and (4) numbers of soldiers. Seldom is there any analysis of the human element.

### **The Human Element**

The human element has been referred to in such terms as esprit de corps, group morale, and élan. Various analysts have emphasized these terms differently, but they have all tended to refer to the motivation of the individual soldier as part of a group. Currently, the favored term, cohesion, is given a broader and more definitive meaning. Recognizing that small-group norms can militate against the organization, some writers prefer to use the term "military cohesion" to signify that small-unit norms are in congruence with army objectives and goals. More specifically, cohesion has been defined as the bonding together of members of an organization/unit in such a way as to sustain their will and commitment to each other, their unit, and the mission. Even more specifically, cohesion exists in a unit when

the primary day-to-day goals of the individual soldier, of the small group with which he identifies, and of unit leaders are congruent with each giving his primary loyalty to the group so that it trains and fights as a unit with all members willing to risk death to achieve a common objective. Cohesion, as described above, is the determining factor in assessing and comparing the human element of opposing armies. The nature of modern war indicates that small-unit cohesion is the only force capable of causing soldiers to expose themselves consistently to enemy fire in pursuit of an army's goals. The confusion, danger, hardship, and isolation of the modern battlefield have caused a pronounced de-emphasis on strict orders, rote training, and coercive discipline. At the same time, there has been a significant shift downward in the control of soldiers in combat. Accompanying these changes has been increased emphasis on controlling soldiers through an internalization of values and operating rules congruent with the objectives, goals, and values of the organization. The need for these changes has been recognized to some degree within most armies but especially by the Vietnamese and the Chinese. Early in the organization of their armies, they realized their need to rely on the human element in view of their inferiority in weapons and technology.

### **Why Soldiers Fight?**

In modern war the individual soldier is alone except for two or three close comrades on his right and left. The formal organization of the army has no means even to keep the soldier in view, much less closely supervise his behavior. For this

reason, the significance of the small unit to which the soldier belongs can hardly be overstated. The small group develops strong rules of behavior and expectations about individual conduct on the basis of face-to-face relationships and thereby becomes the immediate determinant of the soldier's behavior. In a unit that is properly led and controlled by its leaders, all other influences become secondary. Such overwhelming influence of the small group in war as well as peace has been documented in many armies. The impact of the primary group on unit cohesion is recognized by all observers as very significant. Even those who suggest it has limitations agree that the concept of the primary group is central in explaining a soldier's behavior. Most of the discussion concerning the degree to which the primary group should be credited for explaining why men fight, however, appears to be of the straw-man variety. Primary group influences can militate against organizational goals unless appointed leaders become the dominant influence within the group. Concept of the primary group must be included within a "theory of organizational behavior in which an array of sociological concepts is employed. Combining individual, organizational, and social factors with situational ones offers a more complete explanation of combat motivation. The purpose of this book is to offer an approach for assessing and comparing cohesion in armed forces. This approach centers on the influence of the small group on the soldier's daily life but also takes into account organizational, situational, and social factors such as leadership, socialization, ideology, organizational support and policies, and the stress caused by combat and hardship. The appropriate focus of such an approach is on the

small unit because this is the only locus within an army where the individual soldier with his personal characteristics, influenced by his socialization and ideology, can be observed within the organization. Together with the small group facing situational factors, the organization is also very visible at this level with its leadership, policies, and support.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Characteristics of a Cohesive Army**

EVIDENCE OF COHESION in an army must be sought where it occurs--at the small-unit level among the intimate, face-to-face groups that emerge in peacetime as well as in war. As already defined, military cohesion involves the bonding of members of a unit in such a way as to sustain their will and commitment to each other, the organization, and the mission. In view of the general consensus of what a cohesive army is, any ordering of characteristics of such an army must consider the following areas: the overall organizational structure, which includes the party, army, or other sources of goals, policy, and support; the "human element" or the small intimate groups that control and motivate soldiers through their norms; and the influence of the leader on the small group and the resulting commitment of the individual soldier toward achieving army goals. The only level in an army where these three factors simultaneously occur--and therefore the most appropriate focus of research on cohesion--is that point at which the organization,

the small group, and the leader come together in an army: the lower levels of the organization. Squad, platoon, and section-level units are ideal for this approach because the formal organization is evident at this level, because it is possible to observe how small-group members respond as individuals within these organizations, and because leadership techniques and their impact on the small group are also visible at this level.

### **Organizational Characteristics**

Perhaps the primary function of the organization is to provide purpose to the cohesive unit in the form of goals and objectives. If the purpose of war is the achievement of political ends, then the overall organization of an army must serve to transmit these political goals through a "chain of command" to those specific units ultimately charged with accomplishing the goals. In this way, the broad, political purposes of a party or a nation penetrate the small cohesive group. Another function of organizational top management is to provide the varied support required by lower-level cohesive units. Personnel and logistical support, as well as policies designed to promote cohesion, is required of the organization and is discussed in detail in the next chapter. A final function of the organization is to prescribe structural characteristics for the small unit that will promote cohesion. The purpose of these structural characteristics is to de-emphasize individualism within the soldier. Instead, the small unit is structured to promote responsibility. The soldier is constantly reminded of his responsibilities to his buddies, to his leaders, to the squad, to the platoon, and ultimately to the people and the nation or party through the structure of his

immediate unit. Certain organizational characteristics are thus important: the size of the group, for example, takes on added significance, because cohesion is inversely proportional to the numbers in the group. Several armies, in fact, have determined that the ideal size is up to nine men, with some armies choosing a three-man unit or military cell, which becomes the basic personnel building block of the army. Another factor is the soldier's belief about the duration of his commitment to the unit. Cohesion is promoted the longer the soldier anticipates remaining in his unit. And the frequency with which soldiers associate with each other is also important. The greater the frequency of association in pursuit of common purposes, the greater the cohesion. Finally, the more fully structured the associations among soldiers within the group become, the more influence the unit will have over the soldiers. Structured associations also serve to establish boundaries around the group and form a clear distinction between members and nonmembers, or between "us" and "them."

### **Small Group and Unit Characteristics**

Small, cohesive units usually have several discernible characteristics. The unit serves as a basic, tactical, fire-and-maneuver or service unit. The cohesive unit must function as a "buddy group" capable of satisfying basic physiological and social needs for the individual soldier. Another characteristic is the presence of a dominant group, which controls the day-to-day behavior of the soldier. The leader operates within this group to ensure that group norms or expectations of behavior



are congruent with organizational objectives. A final characteristic is the existence of an observation-and-reporting system that is self-correcting for deviance from group norms by mobilizing peer groups or leadership pressures in order to correct individual behavior.

### **Leadership Characteristics**

Leadership is the most important factor in achieving congruence between unit norms and organizational objectives. For leaders to be effective in influencing the emergence of norms compatible with organizational objectives, leadership must be based upon personal relationships between leaders and soldiers, rather than upon an impersonal managerial style. Specific functions characterize effective leadership in a cohesive unit. The leader must transmit organizational goals or objectives effectively from the chain of command to the small, cohesive group. Then he must lead the unit in achieving these objectives through his personal influence and technical expertise. The leader must also maintain unit cohesion by ensuring continuous organizational support and by the detection and correction of deviance from group norms. Finally, the leader assists in making or maintaining an ideologically-sound soldier by setting an example, by teaching, and by in-

doctrinating. Because the organization, the individual soldier, and the leader all come together in the small unit, this level is best suited for investigating the degree of cohesion in an army. Small, cohesive units are characterized by specific functions. To summarize:

1. Functions of the larger organization are to

- a. establish goals and objectives;
- b. provide support;
- c. prescribe small-unit policies for
  - (1) numbers (cohesion is inverse to size);
  - (2) duration (the longer, the stronger cohesion becomes);
  - (3) frequency (the more association, the more cohesion is promoted);
  - (4) structure (the more structured the relationships, the more cohesion is promoted).
2. Functions of the small unit are to
  - a. serve as a "buddy group" satisfying basic needs of the soldier;
  - b. serve as a dominant group controlling behavior of soldiers, within which the leader acts to ensure group norms are congruent with organizational objectives;
  - c. provide a mutual observation and reporting system that mobilizes peer and leader pressures to correct individual deviance;
  - d. serve as a basic, tactical, fire-and-maneuver or operational unit.
3. Functions of the leader are to
  - a. transmit organization goals to the small group;
  - b. lead the unit in achieving goals;
  - c. maintain desired small-group norms by ensuring organizational support and detection and correction of deviance;
  - d. create or maintain an ideologically sound soldier through setting example, teaching, or indoctrination.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Assessing Cohesion in Small Units**

SMALL-UNIT COHESION capable of causing soldiers to expose themselves to enemy fire in pursuit of unit objectives must also satisfy certain needs for the soldier. Individual soldiers must identify with their immediate unit leaders, and the unit must satisfy physical, security, and social needs. The cohesive unit becomes, in effect, a social and support organization capable of satisfying the soldier's major needs.

#### **Physical, Security, and Social Needs**

A soldier will not willingly stay in a unit unless physical, security, and social needs are met. Most armies are able to meet them to some degree, but many have difficulty in the confusion and displacement of war. A cohesive unit will provide adequate food, water, medical support, and essential supplies and weapons at all times but will also endure during periods of scarcity when other less cohesive units would disintegrate. For a unit to endure, it must receive logistical support that, in the

eyes of unit members, will allow the unit to survive the situation faced by the unit. Whether the small unit is the dominant primary group for the individual soldier is of the utmost importance. Primary social affiliation within the unit is an extremely significant indicator of cohesion because it means that the small military unit has replaced other influences such as the family as the primary determinant of the soldier's day-to-day behavior. In such a unit, the soldier becomes bound by the expectations and needs of his fellow soldiers. Such relationships completely overshadow other obligations and claims on his loyalties. It is not necessary that the primacy of the unit be formally recognized. The soldier merely recognizes that more immediate considerations and relationships have displaced family, parents, and friends as the prime determinant of his behavior. Despite the intensity of the relationship, it is not usually seen as permanent but as one that is limited to a specific period or to the duration of the conflict. Such devotion to a cohesive unit does not, of course, occur spontaneously. Besides reliable logistical support, a cohesive unit provides the major source of esteem and recognition for unit members. Because a unit is able to meet this powerful need, the soldier tends to dedicate his time and energy to it, to its activities, and to its goals. Conversely, in units where these needs are not met, the soldier will seek them outside the unit, and often in groups with goals not congruent with those of the army. Leaders need to plan and create these conditions for cohesion systematically. The cohesive unit also requires an environment that promotes a strong sense of mutual affection among unit members. The greater the degree of challenge, hardship, and danger, the

greater the development of mutual affection and attraction among unit members. Such attraction can occur in peace as well as in combat. For a purpose to be perceived as worthwhile by the group, what seems to be necessary is common exposure to hardship, or to difficult training, or to danger. Of course, the role of the leader in establishing the goals and in leading the formation of the unit members' opinion about the significance of those goals is paramount. Preventing the soldiers' alienation not only from the group but also from the unit's leaders is a responsibility of leadership. The soldier will tend to identify strongly with his unit and its leaders if the leader conducts his relationships with his subordinates in a manner that convinces the soldier that influence is a two-way street and that he, the soldier, not merely at the end of a long, impersonal chain of command. Instead, the leader must ensure that the soldier does not become alienated and that he obtains a sense of influence over some of the events that occur in his immediate unit. Those events include passes, chow, safety measures, or other unit activities controlled by his immediate leaders. Events outside the control of immediate unit leaders can also contribute to the soldier's identification with his unit. Cohesion occurs when the unit and its leaders act to protect the soldier from and to regulate relations with higher authorities. An example involves the situation when soldiers perceive orders or allocations from higher headquarters as being unfair or inadequate. The sergeant, platoon leader, or company commander who goes to higher headquarters and wins relief or who merely makes the attempt not only increases his influence among his soldiers but also significantly contributes to their sense of belonging to a group

that can deal with an otherwise uncaring environment. What is important in such situations is not whether the leader was able to correct the perceived inequity but that the leader's foremost priority was the unit. Also important is the unit members' perception that, whatever the outcome, they and their leaders will share its effects equally and that the unit is a vehicle through which the individual is taken care of. Although small-group cohesion can exist independently of unit leaders, unit cohesion that accepts and reinforces army goals and purposes as the unit's own can only occur consistently when soldiers identify closely with their immediate leaders.

In summary, the soldier identifies strongly with his unit when the unit satisfies his major physical, security, and social needs. A cohesive unit:

1. provides adequate food, water, medical support, rest, and essential supplies and weapons;
2. is the primary social group for the individual soldier and controls his day-to-day behavior;
3. provides the major source of esteem and recognition;
4. provides a strong sense of mutual affection and attraction among unit members;
5. protects the soldier from and regulates relations with higher authorities;
6. provides the soldier a sense of influence over events in his immediate unit; and
7. causes the soldier to identify strongly with immediate unit leaders at squad, section, platoon, and company levels.

A Soldier's Perception of Successfully Escaping the Unit

The soldier's perception of his chances to avoid service or

escape his unit successfully for the civilian world significantly affects unit cohesion. There must be no conflict within the soldier's mind concerning his personal reasons for remaining with his unit. He must perceive no option other than service with his unit. When the soldier thinks beyond his buddies and the group, he must be able to justify to himself, with minimum doubt, why he chooses to endure hardship and danger with his unit when a familiar civilian environment, offering comfort and safety, is nearby. If soldiers perceive that relatively harmless administrative avenues of escape are open, or if soldiers believe the penalties for desertion are relatively light, cohesion in a unit will be weakened. If such courses are clouded with ambiguity, however, and the soldier has significant doubts about his ability to leave his unit successfully, he will conclude that he is committed for the duration and will see his best chances for survival as dependent upon the members of his immediate unit. To achieve this end, a cohesive unit will ensure that the soldier is aware of all legal, moral, and physical barriers that separate him from the civilian world and bind him to his unit. As a result, the ambiguous and often alien nature of the world beyond the borders of the unit should be emphasized, especially to young soldiers. Other factors supporting cohesion are linked directly to broad, societal agreement about the citizen's duty to serve in defense of the nation and indirectly to the nation's potential for nationalism. Soldiers must be aware that their society will exact significant penalties for being AWOL and for deserting and will attach significant social sanctions for "bad paper" discharges. The soldier must also perceive that chances for avoiding such punishment are small for those who choose to



avoid service. There can be no expectation that sanctions and penalties will be lifted or eased at a later date or that those who avoided service will be valued equally with those who served. Cohesive units will also benefit from internal army policies that do not grant administrative and medical discharges or transfers easily. Another significant set of policies concerns the provisions made by the society to recognize successful completion of a soldier's tour of service. Tangible and significant rewards such as job preference, assistance with education or assistance in purchasing property are examples of a society's recognizing the sacrifices soldiers endure. The greater the emphasis on these rewards, the greater the attraction of military service and the stronger the bonding of a soldier to his unit. In sum, if unit policy and societal norms cause the soldier to perceive that all courses for leaving his unit are problematical while positive group and societal practices attract him toward his group, then unit cohesion will be strengthened.

A cohesive unit:

1. will ensure that the soldier is aware of all legal, moral, and physical barriers that separate him from the remainder of society and that tend to keep him within his unit;
2. will not grant discharges and transfers easily;
3. will attach significant social sanctions for "bad paper" discharges;
4. will exact significant penalties for being AWOL and for deserting; and
5. will recognize and reward successful completion of tours of service.

**Maintenance of Unit Integrity and Stability**

The soldier will identify more closely with his unit, and cohesion will be strengthened, if organizational policies give priority to maintaining unit integrity during off-duty and maintenance hours as well as during training and operations. Personnel policies, to include replacement practices, should also emphasize maintenance of unit integrity. Creating and maintaining cohesion requires a firm policy of relying on small-unit rotation, rather than on individual replacements, as well as an emphasis on personnel stability within units. From a management perspective, it is often much more efficient to assign individual replacements, based upon skills and the needs of the army. However, treating individual soldiers as "spare parts" in a large and complex personnel machine fails to recognize why men fight in combat. Cohesion, that state binding men together as members of a combat unit capable of enduring the stress of danger and hardship, is dependent upon personnel stability within small units. The creation of a cohesive unit is best accomplished upon its initial formation, before other norms form that are incongruent with army values. Creating a cohesive unit requires an intensive resocialization process. The determinants of the new recruit's day-to-day behavior must be replaced by a new set of rules based on his perceptions of what his new fellow soldiers and his leaders expect. This type of resocialization is best created through a rites-of-passage process that totally consumes the soldier's attention and efforts for an extended period and from which he emerges with a new or adapted set of operating rules for his

daily life. These norms must be firmly grounded in the bonds and expectations formed between him, his fellow soldiers, and his immediate leaders. It must be emphasized that the creation of a cohesive unit is equally important in teaching skills to the soldier. Ideally, both occur simultaneously, and the learned skills are seen as essential for meeting the expectations of fellow soldiers. The danger occurs when cost-effectiveness managers review a training program and eliminate portions that promote cohesion but that don't contribute to learning a skill and are thus seen as areas in which time and money can be saved. It is also essential that units created through this process be maintained as operational units at the platoon and company level and not be broken up to provide for individual replacements. The maintenance of unit boundaries and, therefore, of cohesion directly depends upon the frequency with which unit members associate with each other, the perception of a common and worthwhile purpose, and the structure of the group to achieve its purpose and to distinguish the unit from other organizations. Small-unit boundaries must be reinforced by physical surroundings, personnel policies, day-to-day routines, traditions, and ceremonies. Cohesive units will benefit significantly from barracks and mess halls designed to increase the frequency and duration of unit members' association. Other unit housekeeping facilities and activities should also be designed to promote frequent and extended association. Clubs, athletics, and social events should be organized to promote unit participation. To the same end, unit history, ceremonies, distinctive insignia, and other items representative of unit and national history should be taught to new members and should

be periodically reinforced for older members. Pass and leave policies that are not routine and that ensure that absences from the unit are limited to approved purposes help maintain the high frequency of association necessary for cohesion. In particular, passes should be awarded only to soldiers who have demonstrated solidarity with the group by strict adherence to group norms in their day-to-day behavior. When possible, passes should be given to groups of two or three soldiers from the same unit. In this manner, unit norms are maintained when the soldier is away from the unit. Cohesive units discourage member soldiers from belonging to autonomous groups with possibly deviant norms. Such discouragement is accomplished by structuring army life to be an all-consuming experience, capable of satisfying all of the soldier's needs during the expected duration of his service. The soldier must view his immediate unit as the source of the good things in his life as well as the originator and enforcer of strict behavioral norms. Control over pay, promotions, awards, and recognition of all types should be located at platoon and company levels. Although centralized control of these functions at higher levels might be more efficient and equitable, it focuses the soldier's attention away from his immediate unit and detracts significantly from the ability of unit leaders to use such rewards in building unit cohesion. Finally, the number of soldiers in a unit under the direct influence of competent noncommissioned and junior officers and the amount of structure between soldiers and leaders significantly affect cohesion. The general rules are that cohesion is inversely proportioned to the size of the group and that the more the relationships are structured, the greater the

cohesion. For an army, the key question is this: how far down in the ranks does the formal organizational structure reach? An army concerned with building cohesive units will ensure that each

soldier is firmly associated with a group that is a formal military unit as well as the primary influence in controlling his day-to-day behavior. This process is most effectively accomplished in three-to-five-man groups in which the leader is appointed by the army and is the actual as well as the formal leader of the group. Such a group will be the basic building block of an army organization and will serve as a disciplined, fire-and-maneuver, combat, or operational unit as well as a buddy group capable of meeting the basic affection and recognition needs of the soldier. Such an organization extends itself into a group of soldiers and, through leadership, brings congruence between group norms and army objectives. In sum, unit cohesion will be strengthened significantly if army policies and practices emphasize unit integrity during off-duty and maintenance hours as well as during training and operations. Unit stability must be given priority within units as well as throughout the army replacement system. Preserving unit integrity maintains the primary group with which soldiers identify. Within units, personnel policies must emphasize structuring small groups under the positive control of competent and respected noncommissioned and junior officers. Additionally, actions of individual soldiers must be controlled 24 hours a day in order to increase the frequency of intra-unit association and the ultimate dependence of the soldier upon the unit. An army building cohesive units will

1. structure smallest units not to exceed 10 soldiers with sub-elements numbering 3 to 5 under the positive control of respected and competent leadership;
2. use a unit rotation system rather than individual replacements, emphasizing personnel stability within units;
3. rely on rites-of-passage processes in basic training and initial entry to resocialize soldiers and form initial cohesive units;
4. maintain high frequency of association among unit members by reinforcing unit boundaries through design of barracks, mess halls, and day rooms and provide clubs and athletic facilities designed to promote unit association at off-duty social and athletic events;
5. distinguish boundaries of the unit by creating a "we-they" view through traditions, ceremonies, and distinctive insignia;
6. prohibit soldiers from belonging to autonomous groups with possibly deviant norms;
7. establish pass and leave policies that keep leave short and encourage joint passes with other unit members; and
8. reduce centralized, bureaucratic control over the good things in the soldier's life and give control of these to the immediate leaders of the individual soldier. Pay, promotions, leaves, passes, and awards should be dispersed and in some instances controlled no higher than section or company level.

**Motivation and Control**

Causes of a soldier's behavior are directly linked to the satisfaction of needs and values, which in turn can often be determined from a soldier's attitude. Controlling behavior through a soldier's needs and values can be effected in several ways. Three approaches are generally recognized--coercive, utilitarian, and normative (i.e., involving personal commitment). Each approaches the individual through needs and values. Coercive motivation is based on the need of the individual to avoid severe physiological deprivation, hardship, or pain for himself or for someone whom he values. Such an approach is often termed negative motivation, and the individual is alienated from the organization. The limitations of this type of motivation for an army are obvious. Modern warfare has made the control of troops in combat exceedingly difficult. No longer do soldiers enter combat in rigid formations under the watchful eye of noncommissioned officers who are behind them with swords drawn. Modern weapons and tactics have made direct control of troops in combat exceedingly difficult if not impossible. The dispersion, confusion, chance, and danger that characterize modern battlefields have caused a significant historical shift downwards in the locus of control and have increased attempts to rely on other methods of control. Utilitarian control is essentially based upon a managerial approach to leadership and decision making that relies heavily upon utilitarian motivation in the form of monetary reward or other tangible benefits. This approach assumes that the soldier is an "economic man," who, when paid enough, can be recruited

and induced to do the tough jobs such as serve in the combat arms. Utilitarian motivation is the motivation of the marketplace; individual decisions are made primarily for tangible benefit on the basis of a calculative attitude, with the decision to opt out of the army always a real choice if the going gets too tough. In an army where significant incentives are utilitarian, the commitment of a soldier to his unit is not very strong--no job is worth getting killed for. The only force on the battlefield strong enough to make a soldier advance under fire is his loyalty to a small group and the group's expectation that he will advance. This behavior is the consequence of strong personal or moral commitment. It represents the internalization of strong group values and norms that causes the soldier to conform to unit expectations even when separated from the unit. The soldier with a strong moral commitment to his unit sees himself in battle or even in day-to-day routine as part of a small, intimate group, represented by a few buddies on his right and left or in the same vehicle, with a sergeant or junior officer who is always near. The normative power of the group causes the strong personal commitment on the part of the soldier that he ought to conform to group expectations, that doing so is the responsible thing to do, and that conformity is expected in spite of the fact that he might personally prefer to be doing something else. Such commitment is often referred to as a calling or, at the small-unit level, as "not letting your buddies down." This is the strongest possible type of motivation for soldiers to endure the danger and hardship of war. An army that relies on a normative control system, one that brings about a strong personal commitment to a unit and its objectives, will



prevail over an army that relies more on coercive or utilitarian control, everything else being equal. An army with a normative control system will:

1. emphasize the development of unit norms and values in such a way that unit members are bonded together in their commitment to each other, the unit, and its purposes;
2. refrain from using managerial leadership but emphasize personal and continuing face-to-face contact with all soldiers by leaders;
3. refrain from negotiating businesslike contracts between soldier and organization, or between leader and organization, for the purpose of expressing terms of service or expected performance; and
4. refrain from persuading soldiers and junior leaders to accept difficult jobs or duties through material reward (such as bonuses for enlisting in combat arms or special benefits for taking first sergeant positions).

### **Surveillance and Conformity**

Once achieved, cohesion is not necessarily permanent. Monitoring the conditions that affect the attitudes and behavior of soldiers requires constant attention. A comprehensive observation and reporting system that effectively penetrates the smallest unit contributes significantly to unit cohesion. Such a system must have legitimacy with the soldiers. It must be perceived as having enforcement of accepted group norms as its only purpose and must be manned and operated primarily by the soldiers themselves. The goal of this system is to detect, not

to punish, the deviant soldier in order to focus group pressures in support of the organizational principle of responsibility to unit norms. The soldier is never allowed to be an individual but is constantly reminded of the expectations that his buddies, his unit, and his leaders have about his actions. The system for surveillance and for achieving conformity should be emphasized when units become debilitated through combat, hardship, and shortages of qualified leaders. The focus of these efforts must be where the soldiers and the organization meet, at the small-unit level. The reporting system then gives leaders at all levels the capability of monitoring individual and group attitudes, behavior, and adherence to unit norms. Depending upon the gravity of the deviation from unit norms, conformity is reestablished primarily through two techniques—focusing group pressures and isolation. These techniques are not meant to deal with the outlaw or the criminal but to provide the small-unit leader with powerful tools to maintain cohesion. Isolation from, or restricted access to, all social contact is a powerful conditioner of attitudes. Isolated individuals tend to conform quickly to dominant norms as a condition of being accepted by the group. Likewise, a unit that has suffered some measure of disintegration through combat loss or hardship can reestablish cohesion quickly through isolation, which turns the group inward on itself, and through emphasizing the basic cohesion-building procedures described previously. Most often, isolation techniques will not be necessary if group pressures are properly mobilized and brought to focus. Group pressure is a significant tool available to unit leaders. Either through self-criticism or peer pressure, psychological anxieties can be brought to bear on

the soldier concerning his status within the unit. If the soldier is psychologically dependent for security and other needs upon his relationship with the group, tremendous pressures can be brought on the soldier by the leader who is able to mobilize and direct such pressures. The relief from anxiety that comes from the individual's reaffirmation of his intent to conform to group expectations is an extremely strong force for cohesion. A comprehensive surveillance and reporting system penetrates an army down to the smallest unit, detects the deviant soldier, and serves as the basis for mobilizing group pressures in order to preserve cohesion. A cohesive unit will:

1. rely on observation reports on deviant soldiers, reports initiated by peers;
2. view deviance as a violation of group trust concerning common expectations about individual attitudes and behavior;
3. reject the view of the reporting system as "informing" because the uncovered soldier is not punished but is brought back into the group; and
4. accept criticism to mobilize group pressure and isolation as legitimate techniques by leaders for focusing group sanctions against deviant soldiers.

### **Commonality of Values**

Certain characteristics found within the secondary group or nation from which soldiers are drawn also affect the ease with which cohesive units are built. These characteristics are generally associated with a nation's potential for nationalism. However, the degree to which these characteristics are evident

within the small units of an army affects cohesion.

Major cultural factors enhancing cohesion are common social experiences based on soldiers' sharing a common religion, race, ethnic group, age or social-economic standing . These factors indicate the extent to which basic cultural values are shared and therefore the extent to which they contribute to or hinder communication among unit members. Cohesive units drawn from a heterogeneous society:

1. are ethnically similar and share other major cultural characteristics or
2. are integrated and socialized to the degree that minorities
  - a. are able to communicate effectively,
  - b. share and adhere to dominant secondary and primary group norms,
  - c. do not form autonomous minority groups with separate norms incongruent with army norms.

### **Measuring Societal Group Effects on Cohesion**

COMMON ATTITUDES, VALUES, AND BELIEFS among members of a unit promote cohesion; in fact, some observers contend that similarity of attitudes contributes to group cohesion more than any other single factor. They also point out that if such similarity does not exist, conflict will often result, especially if the group is held together primarily by outside authority. Incompatibility of attitudes and values among unit members can be altered through intense resocialization and leadership, but such efforts are usually only partially successful. Cohesion can be achieved far more quickly and to a far greater

extent within a unit if a basic similarity has previously existed among soldiers' attitudes, values, and beliefs. The population that supplies soldiers to an army also provides at the same time their beliefs and values. Soldiers in small units (primary groups) are drawn from an overall population, or secondary group, which can be defined as the pattern of impersonal relationships within a large organized group. A secondary group is too large to function on the intimate face-to-face basis of the cohesive small group, yet it also supports cultural norms and values, which guide the behavior and decisions of its members. Developing over time, these cultural values can be traced to such factors within the larger group as history, language, and religion. If soldiers in a small unit are from a relatively homogeneous secondary group, unit cohesion is likely to be enhanced. On the other hand, dissimilar characteristics within a unit, such as language, religion, race, history, and the values that accompany these characteristics, tend to hinder cohesion.

#### Potential for Nationalism Indicates Degree of Cohesion

Significant research has been accomplished on the relationship between the commonality of cultural characteristics, the phenomenon of nationalism, and the ease with which cohesive armies have been created among nations experiencing nationalism. Nationalism may be defined as follows:

A belief on the part of a large group of people that they constitute a community called a nation, that is entitled to independent statehood and the willingness of that people to grant their nation their primary terminal loyalty.

A study of nationalism will reveal that the role of cultural

values and beliefs is central to its explanation, just as they are to explanations of cohesion in small units. The degree to which a strong commonality of such attitudes, values, and beliefs can be demonstrated between large secondary groups and much smaller primary groups will indicate the ease with which small cohesive military units can be created within a society. A nation's potential for nationalism and thereby the existence of the basic values and beliefs necessary for cohesive military units may be determined through an investigation of the cultural characteristics of the nation. Two primary requisites for nationalism are an adequate population and the amount of territory a state controls or aspires to control. There is no recognized minimum number for either factor. Modern nation states can be militarily powerful and yet be relatively small in numbers of citizens and square miles of territory. The ultimate survival of a nation depends on the unique circumstances facing it.

Another significant factor contributing to nationalism is a group's sense of a common and unique history and shared values. Generally, a people's history is a source of common values. It will be a force that draws a people together, especially if it includes a significant period of trial such as fighting and winning a revolutionary war or a war in defense of its boundaries. Even more significant is a people's expectation of a common future. Such a history rapidly becomes part of a people's culture. Legends and historical tales become part of every citizen's socialization. The telling and retelling of these experiences by teachers, grandparents, and friends perpetuates a group's history and also passes on cultural values to new

generations. A common language also promotes nationalism. It eases communication among a people for a wide variety of purposes, while also establishing firm boundaries that often distinguish the group from others. A sense of belonging to a unique ethnic group or race, often with an accompanying religion, also contributes to nationalism. Consider the Iranian resurgence of national pride and unity with its emphasis on the Persian heritage and Islamic religion. Leadership, too, is an extremely important nationalistic factor. It is essential that the nation is the primary loyalty among the elite of a people. An elite or leadership with loyalties divided between transnational parties, specific geographical regions, or particular ethnic groups or tribes within the larger secondary group is a significant hindrance to the emergence of nationalism and ultimately to cohesion in that nation's army. The final indication of a group's potential for nationalism is affected by all of the preceding indicators. It is the degree to which the overall population is aware that they are part of a nation and the priority they give that nation. Just a bare outline of the principal factors affecting a nation's potential for nationalism has been presented here.

### **Effects of Other Societal Factors**

The individual soldier's commitment to his political system and to its ideology and related symbols contributes to cohesion in small units. The issue of why soldiers fight cannot be reduced to one particular reason--neither to small-group explanations nor to broader, fighting-for-a-cause explanations that are based in cultural or ideological causal roots. Compared

to the influence of the small group, broad political and cultural values are not nearly as significant in explaining why soldiers fight. Leadership, especially great confidence in the commander at the company level, far outweighs any feelings that question the legitimacy of the war in affecting troop performance in combat. Nevertheless, cultural factors are useful in explaining soldiers' motivation and, indirectly, for building cohesion in small groups. Broad cultural and ideological values can influence a soldier's behavior. These widely shared sentiments do have concrete consequences for combat motivation. The belief system of soldiers "must therefore be taken into account in explaining combat performance." Commitment to a sociopolitical system is usually characterized by broad and general statements by a soldier that his governmental system is best. In support of his belief, the soldier points to evidence supporting the inherent superiority of his political system. Such attitudes can further explain a soldier's behavior if they reflect a perceived need to protect the system through actions against another system or ideology. Secondary group values have their greatest impact on a soldier's motivation when they are internalized by the soldier through the small group that incorporates these broad norms within its day-to-day operating norms. In this instance, the cultural value loses much of its "empty-slogan" character for the soldier and is linked directly to specific group rules and expectations about his behavior and actions. The soldier's perception that society sincerely values his contribution and sacrifices for the nation can also motivate him and contribute to unit cohesion. Societies that value soldiers reinforce the romanticism and manly honor often seen



in the soldier's life by members of society, especially the youth. This value is perpetuated through tradition and ceremonies honoring the military and, of course, through military victories. Materially, societies that value soldiers provide them priority and special privileges in obtaining the good things a country has, such as special stores and access to scarce goods. Soldiers can be further motivated toward successfully completing their tours of service through programs established by a society that are designed to reward and reintegrate them into society in a manner that recognizes their military service. In addition to symbolic awards, programs for further education and provision of financial aid for such needs as housing have been successfully used in a number of armies. A people's potential for nationalism is, then, a significant indicator of the degree of cohesion that might be achieved in a nation's armed forces. A nation's potential for nationalism and ultimately

for cohesion in its army is indicated by the degree to which the following are present:

1. a large enough population,
2. sufficient territory,
3. a common and unique history,
4. a common and unique culture,
5. a common language,
6. a common religion,
7. a common race,
8. a nation that is the primary loyalty for the elite,
9. an adequate percentage of the population that is aware of the nation and give it a primary loyalty.

Additional cultural characteristics that complement

nationalism, motivate soldiers, and contribute to unit cohesion are:

1. the soldier's belief his nation's political system is best as result of socialization or indoctrination,
2. evidence of the superiority of their system, such as the material well-being of the West or the classless society of communism,
3. a felt need by the soldier to protect the system through actions against another system (such as anti-communism or anti-imperialism),
4. broad cultural values and norms that have been internalized by the soldiers and become operating norms of the small unit,
5. the romanticism and manly honor often seen by youth in the soldier's life through tradition and society,
6. special programs to provide soldiers priority and special privileges for the good things in a society, and
7. programs designed to reward and reintegrate soldiers into society upon the successful completion of their service.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Leadership in Cohesive Units**

The effective control of soldiers in combat and in peace is complex and difficult. The nature of modern war has dictated a significant shift over the past 100 years from methods of control dependent upon physical domination of the soldier to those that rely on internalized discipline within the soldier. Today's warfare no longer allows mass formations to attack under the watchful eyes and control of sergeants and officers. Modern leaders no longer bivouac well before darkness or during periods of fog or low visibility in order to prevent mass desertions. The requirements of leadership have changed significantly. The many requirements for small and independent unit actions have deemphasized strict discipline, rote training, and drill. The dispersion, confusion, danger, and hardship that characterize modern battlefields have made it essential to gain control of the individual soldier through the process of internalizing values and codes of behavior that cause the soldier to act as a reliable member of his unit in combat. Because the source of the soldier's values and codes is the small group and

because the only force strong enough to make the soldier willing to advance under fire is his loyalty to the small group and that group's expectation that he will advance, it becomes the primary task of the organization to control the small fighting group through its leaders. Training and situation drills assist the leader in building cohesive units. The confidence that characterizes well-trained troops, especially that training validated in combat, is significant; the soldier needs to feel that he is part of a group that can successfully meet and survive most situations found on the battlefield. The drill aspect of training also contributes by helping the soldier overcome the often immobilizing fear experienced in combat operations (e.g., airborne) and by helping him take appropriate actions expected by the group. Outside threats perceived by the group also cause it to coalesce and pull together to face the common danger. It is leadership, however, that is the most critical factor in building cohesive units.

### **Characteristics of Leadership in Cohesive Units**

Leadership that is most effective in building cohesive units has several characteristics. Of primary importance is that it is not managerial in approach. Instead, it emphasizes personal, empathic, and continuing face-to-face contact with all soldiers in the unit. Because the leader's ability to develop fully professional relationships is limited to a small number of soldiers, units must necessarily be small if leaders are to have maximum impact. An army's maximum leadership efforts must be focused at the small-unit level where the leader makes the link between the formal organization and the fighting soldier--at

the squad, platoon, and company level. Above these levels, more emphasis on a managerial approach is required. The transition from leadership to managerial styles is a problem for some armies. The correct style depends primarily on the level of the organization being led or managed. Many armies tend to adopt one approach and apply it inflexibly at all levels. The most evident example is that of the French Army between the World Wars. Personal leadership and example, along with the spirit of the offense, under the slogan of "Elan!" were thought to be appropriate for all levels, especially among the field grade ranks. As a result, strategy and management were not adequately considered, resulting in the major debacle suffered by the French Army at the hands of the German Wehrmacht in World War II. Few armies today adequately make the required transition

from the major emphasis on leadership required at lower-level units to the very different managerial and strategic emphasis required at higher levels of command. For example, the assumption that because an officer was a first-rate company commander he will also be an outstanding battalion, brigade, or division commander is not warranted. Different skills are required. But in building a cohesive army, leadership skills at company and lower-level units are the most critical and must be given priority. Leaders at the small-unit level in a cohesive unit should have a degree of charisma--not glibness, but the ability to guide the unit gracefully in repeatedly surviving difficult situations. In battle, nothing succeeds like success. Men in danger become acutely aware of the qualities of their leaders. They desire leadership so their immediate needs can be met and

their anxieties controlled. In this regard, well-trained and respected company grade officers and sergeants relay a sense of competence and security to their soldiers and, if successful over a period of time, gain a degree of influence and control over members of their units often associated with charismatic leaders. Casualties can significantly weaken group cohesion, especially casualties that are considered "wasteful" by soldiers in the unit and that are attributed to leadership failure or unreasonable missions. Such a situation puts the unit leader in a difficult position between his requirement to complete his assigned mission and his duty to maintain the integrity and welfare of the unit. In their linking function between soldier and organization, leaders must be perceived by unit members as protecting them from harassment and unrealistic missions from above. In addition to building upon success, the unit leader must act to neutralize the effects of failure. In success or failure, the leader uses the perception of outside threat or difficult challenges to mobilize and coalesce the unit. The effects of failure can vary considerably, depending upon whether the unit is in the front line or in the rear. When cohesion has been seriously impaired, soldiers will still fight for survival, and this need can be used by the unit leader as a basis for rebuilding cohesion. The soldier's individual need for self-preservation affects his relations within his unit. He recognizes that his chances of survival are greater if he shares the danger within a limited range of tasks that must be accomplished to improve overall unit chances for survival?

### **The Effect of Ideology**

Indoctrination or civic education is most effective in getting the soldier to the battle and in assisting him to withstand further combat after the battle. During the battle, ideology appears to have significantly less influence in controlling a soldier's behavior. Additionally, there is some evidence that soldiers well versed in ideology are better able to resist and to stop the spread of demoralization. Whatever the ultimate effect of ideology or civic education, it is dependent upon unit leaders. Successful and competent leaders who make certain that all unit members share equally in the hardship and danger facing the unit and who set the example will be successful in imparting ideology. In many cases, broad ideological slogans and goals have become specific operational rules of behavior within small units. An essential requirement is that first-line leaders have authority to implement the policies and procedures necessary for the creation of cohesive units. If authority is centralized at higher levels of command for political or economic reasons, small-unit leaders often are left without the means to execute their responsibility.

As a result, soldiers quickly see that the sources of good things in their life are not controlled by their immediate leaders. Promotions, pay, leave, passes, job assignments, billeting, and messing policies are sources of influence for small-unit leaders. When control of these personnel actions is removed from the leader, his ability to create cohesive units becomes significantly impaired?



**On Understanding Leadership and Cohesion**

Many approaches to and definitions of leadership have been offered. The purpose here is not to offer another but to relate leadership to cohesion in military units by synthesizing available knowledge about the individual soldier, the small group, the organization, and the leadership itself. Military leadership involves enduring--and primary--personal relationships between a leader and soldiers. Many officers appear to believe that inspiring talks and appearances by brigadiers and colonels offer the best examples of leadership. On the contrary, the vital leadership role is consistent competence at the squad, platoon, and company levels by company grade sergeants and officers. It is at this level where the phenomenon of leadership takes place because it is here that the individual soldier is persuaded to pursue goals that are often in direct conflict with his own best interests. The individual's need for cover from enemy fire, for example, is in direct conflict with the organizational requirement to advance toward an enemy position and defeat it. The primary function of small-unit leadership is to bring about congruence between the requirements of the organization and the needs of the individual soldier. The leader must bring about internalized values and discipline within the soldier to enable him to overcome his fear and expose himself to enemy fire. To accomplish this task, the leader must create and accommodate the soldier's needs by developing a group within his unit whose norms and procedures are strongly congruent with organizational objectives. Ideally, the soldier will pursue Army goals in satisfying his individual

needs. The key is similarity of values among soldier, leader, and organization so that such values become the primary guide for the soldier's day-to-day behavior. Therefore, units organized on the basis of similar values have a much better chance at congruence with organizational objectives. If this is not possible, extensive efforts must be made to socialize all soldiers into the desired value system of the group. The greater the effectiveness of these efforts the less formal controls will be required within the unit.

### **The Leadership Model**

The following model describes the leadership function for achieving congruence of primary values among soldiers, leaders, and organization. Leadership, then, may be defined as the phenomenon that occurs when the influence of A (the leader) causes B (the group) to perform C (goal-directed behavior) when B would not have performed C had it not been for the influence of A. Interaction between the leader (A) and the group (B) is signified by the two arrows and indicates the exercise of influence through which the leader creates and uses norms for directing behavior within the group. The arrows also indicate the leader's perceptions of group needs upon which the norms are based. The behavior depicted by C is mission-oriented activity desired by the leader, as the agent of the organization, and performed by the group. Feedback enables the leader and the group to adjust their behavior and activities over time as the situation changes.

### **Sources of Leader Influence**

Leaders of cohesive units have several bases of power that are the sources of the influence necessary to control and direct the group. These may be placed into several categories evident at the squad, platoon, and company levels: (1) reward and coercive power, (2) legitimate power, (3) referent power, and (4) expert power.

#### **Reward and Coercive Power**

Reward and coercive powers are available to all armies. They may be defined as the ability to exert influence in personal relationships based upon the ability to reward and punish. To be of maximum effectiveness in cohesive units, reward and punishment must be related to group norms. Both the action and the reward or punishment itself must be congruent with group norms. Material rewards and the ability to punish a soldier physically should also be available to the leader, but such devices must be viewed as complementary to reward and punishment through the group. In other words, reward and punishment must be related to the soldier's relationship with the group. The leader's ability to focus group pressures and acceptance or sanctioning of an individual is a source of tremendous power. It can threaten or heighten the soldier's sense of security, and source of affection and recognition, in such a manner that significant pressures become focused on the soldier to conform to group rules and procedures. In cohesive armies, awards and commendations as well as restriction and criticism are rooted strongly within the group and are implemented within full view of the unit.

### **Legitimate Power**

Legitimate power in cohesive units may be defined as compliance with orders because of attitudes or beliefs that have their basis in a feeling of internalized "doughtiness " a sense of what is right and wrong that, in turn, is based on learned cultural values. Legitimate power tends to be the most impersonal source of power. It is dependent upon cultural value congruence among members of the unit and between leader and subordinates. Leader reliance on legitimate power is usually greater during the earlier period of a soldier's service or after defeat or extreme hardship when other sources of power are not as effective. In addition to arising from cultural values, legitimate power can also derive from the reputation of the organization the leader represents. Legitimate power reaches its most potent influence when the leader becomes a surrogate for authority figures held in greatest respect by unit members. Soldiers respond to legitimate power much in the same manner that citizens respond to a policeman or that a parishioner responds to a priest.

### **Referent Power**

Referent power is most dependent on close, personal relationships between leaders and subordinate soldiers. Its great influence stems directly from the intense identification of the soldier with his immediate leader. Often, the leader approaches the stature of a loved and respected parent or of the charismatic leader who demonstrates consistently the Weber quality of "grace," or the ability to consistently handle difficult situations

well. Such referent power is based on the satisfaction of the soldier's personal needs for affection, recognition, and security through strong identification with a respected leader who has successfully led his unit through situations of danger and hardship. Leaders who maximize their referent power know the personal history and circumstances of all their subordinates. They know the aspirations, fears, capabilities, and attitudes of their soldiers in great detail and build relationships on these facts. In cohesive armies, the formation of such close ties between soldiers and leaders is not a matter of individual initiative or chance but of official policy.

### **Expert Power**

Expert power may be defined as the soldier's compliance with a leader's orders because the leader is perceived as having superior knowledge and ability important to the soldier and his unit in the context of a current or expected situation. In hardship situations and in combat especially, leadership expertise that allows the leader to cope successfully with the situation is a significant source of power. The proven ability to carry out a tactical plan, to arrange for and adjust artillery, to demonstrate professional expertise with weapons, to navigate well, and to provide medical care and supplies are all significant sources of power. Just possessing information transmitted via radio, telephone, or messenger that is vital to the unit is a proven source of power. Armies desiring cohesive

units must ensure that unit leaders are professionally trained and prepared. Leaders of front line units must be viewed as "men of steel" professionally equal to meeting all tasks

demanded by the situation. Leadership is probably the most important consideration in building cohesive units, and it requires extended and intensive face-to-face contact between leaders and soldiers. Leaders in cohesive units:

1. are perceived by the group as professionally competent to meet successfully the situation and environment faced by the unit;
2. are not managerial in approach, but emphasize personal and continuing face-to-face contact with all soldiers in the leader's unit;
3. are found at the small-unit level, at squad, platoon, and company;
4. possess a degree of charisma (the ability to gracefully and repeatedly survive difficult situations) or act to neutralize the effects of failure. In either case the leader will use the perception of outside threat or difficult challenges to mobilize and coalesce the unit;
5. utilize the effects of indoctrination or civic education to maximize leadership influence;
6. emphasize, through professional ethics, that all members of the unit and especially the leaders share equally all hardship and danger;
7. are granted sufficient authority to control events or actions within the unit in order to meet their responsibility for building a cohesive unit;
8. will make use of all sources of power and influence within the group, including the power to reward, the power to coerce, legitimate power, referent power, and expert power.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **On Why Soldiers Fight**

Many investigations of why men fight have focused on the concepts of morale or esprit de corps and have discussed individual and unit performance in combat in terms of courage, discipline, enthusiasm, and willingness to endure hardship. Such research, however, does not adequately explain the factors involved in the endurance of a modern professional army. Even in the smallest unit there is an 'iron framework' of organization which serves as a basis of social control. The single concept of military morale must give way, therefore, to a theory of organizational behavior in which an array of sociological concepts is employed. The literature on military motivation suggests a number of explanations for human behavior in combat. These approaches treat the primary group and its relationship to the organization in explaining combat behavior. Small-group cohesion, interaction within the group, and organization have been increasingly emphasized. By the term primary group, investigators refer to the concept of Gemeinschaft (small, intimate, community relationships). More



specifically, primary groups have been conceptualized as being characterized by intimate face-to-face association and cooperation. They are primary in several senses, but chiefly in that they are fundamental in forming the social nature and ideals of the individual. The result of intimate association, is a certain fusion of individualities into a common whole, so that one's very self, for many purposes at least, is the common life and purpose of the group. Perhaps the simplest way of describing this wholeness is by saying it is a "we." Soldier is strongly bound to the primary group as long as it is capable of satisfying his major physiological and social needs. As long as the Wehrmacht soldier had the necessary resources and as long as the primary group met his essential personal needs, he was bound by the expectations and demands of its other members. Soldiers bound to some degree by social role and status patterns common to a primary group. It appears that a soldier's ability to resist is a function of the capacity of his immediate primary group [his squad or section] to avoid social disintegration. When the individual's immediate group, and its supporting formations, met his basic organic needs, offered him affection and esteem from both officers and comrades, supplied him with a sense of power and adequately regulated his relations with authority, the element of self-concern in battle, which would lead to disruption of the effective functioning of his primary group was minimized. For the ordinary German soldier the decisive fact was that he was a member of a squad or section which maintained its structural integrity and which coincided roughly with the social unit which satisfied some of his major primary needs. He was likely to go on fighting, provided he had

the necessary weapons, as long as the group possessed leadership with which he could identify himself, and as long as he gave affection to and received affection from the other members of his squad and platoon. In other words, as long as he felt himself to be a member of his primary group and therefore bound by the expectations and demands of its other members, his soldierly achievement was likely to be good. Additional factors also impact upon the cohesiveness of the primary group and its influence on the behavior of the soldier. Concept of the primary group takes on an added sharpness under combat conditions. In considering the primary group as a dependent variable, the mere fact that a combat situation entails an increase in solidarity in response to an external threat is a phenomenon that has been verified many times. When a threat and the responsibilities for coping with it are shared, an increase in group solidarity and a reduction of internal group conflict usually occur. Observers of men in combat have called attention "again and again to the fact that the most significant persons for the combat soldier are the men who fight by his side and share with him the ordeal of trying to survive. One of the simplest truths of war that the thing which enables an infantry soldier to keep going with his weapon is the near presence or the presumed presence of a comrade. Another variable that seems to increase primary group cohesion in combat is the soldier's calculation of his chances for escape from the threatening situation. If he is bound to the primary group by isolation from surrounding groups, by anxiety-producing doubts about his ability to leave his unit successfully, and by other such ambiguities, he sees his best chance of survival as resting with

one or two buddies or with the other members of his primary group. Other factors influencing primary group cohesiveness are the past social experiences of the members. Common religion, race, ethnic group, social class, age, geographical region, and history appear to contribute to the communications necessary for intimate interpersonal relationships common to a primary group. Another influence shaping primary group solidarity is the member's commitment to his sociopolitical system, ideology, secondary group symbols, and causes, such as common awareness and resentment of the nation's colonial history. In

this concept of "latent ideology," has some importance to broad sociopolitical values in explaining why men fight. Indoctrination induces commitment to secondary symbols by establishing preconditions for primary group cohesion. Indoctrination themes generally stress the legitimacy of war aims and justify fighting for such aims. While recognizing the impact of secondary groups on the individual soldier, their influence is slight, compared to that of the primary group. The company [military unit] is the only truly existent community. This community allows neither time nor rest for a personal life. It forces us into its circle, for life is at stake. Obviously compromises must be made and claims be surrendered. Therefore the idea of fighting, living, and dying for the fatherland, for the cultural possessions of the fatherland, is but a relatively distant thought. At least it does not play a great role in the practical motivations of the individual. The honor and romanticism involved in fighting a war often appeal to the young soldier who experiences the need for asserting manliness

or toughness. The coincidence of these personal needs with similar group norms and military codes also serves to reinforce group solidarity. This discussion has emphasized the influence of the primary group in shaping the behavior of the soldier. However, a significant question remains. Will the primary group produce behavior by the soldier that is congruent with the goals of the organization? Many investigators have noted that the primary group cohesiveness that emerges in the small combat unit can militate either for or against the goals of the formal military organization. For example, in discussing problems of "Negro" US Army units during World War II, pointed out that: Primary groups can be highly cohesive and yet impede the goals of military organizations. Cohesive primary groups contribute to organizational effectiveness only when the standards of behavior they enforce are articulated with the requirements of formal authority. Units that surrendered as a group were led by "soft-core," non-Nazi comrades to whom organizational goals were relatively unimportant. The performance of the group in meeting organizational goals is largely dependent upon the effectiveness of the leader. Research suggests that a capable leader can manipulate primary group members through a wide range of organizational mechanisms, psychological techniques, and indoctrination themes in order to shape primary group norms and attitudes that are compatible with organizational objectives. He can accomplish this task because he has been accepted as the natural leader of the small group. Men who fight modern wars must be convinced that

their leaders have their welfare in mind, and leaders must continually demonstrate expertise and set the example in

adhering to group norms before men will follow them. Primary group behavior, whether deviant or desirable from the organization's point of view, is the result of norms formed by primary group interaction. The primary group is therefore a major factor in explaining man's behavior (positive or negative) in combat. The soldier fought for the reasons that men have always fought: because he felt himself a member of a well-integrated, well-led team whose structure, administration, and functioning were perceived to be equitable and just. In actual combat soldiers fight because of the desire to survive and because of the cohesive effects of the small group and its leadership. In preparing for combat, group cohesion and leadership are again very significant along with two other factors: the confidence the individual has in himself as a soldier within the context of his training, weapons, and ability to meet any anticipated situation and the perceived legitimacy of the "war" within the public and unit. However, legitimacy was not requisite. Again the conclusion that cohesion, common values, and leadership must be viewed within an overall approach that considers individual, organizational, situational, and social factors in explaining why men fight is strongly reinforced.

## **NOTES**

- ❑ U.S.G. Sharp and W.C. Westmoreland, Report on the War in Vietnam (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1968), pp. 107-207.
- ❑ The North Vietnamese Army included "Vietcong" Main Force Units formed from "Regroupees" who returned to the South after the defeat of the French and the failure to hold unifying elections. North Vietnamese control of Vietcong forces was firm in all areas, not only operationally but also including control of internal organization and policies within Vietcong Main Force units. Soldiers from the North were always present in Vietcong units and their numbers increased as the war continued.
- ❑ Van Tien Dung, "On Experiences in Building the Revolutionary Armed Strength of Our Party." Taken from a paper presented at the American Political Science Association Convention in San Francisco, September 1975; "The Political Role and Development of the Peoples'

Army of Vietnam," by William S. Turley, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Ill., 1975.

- ❑ One of the few analysts to consider the "human element" in assessing the opposing forces in the Falklands war was William T. Taylor, Jr., in an article on the Falklands war, *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 June 1982, p. 1.
- ❑ T.N. Dupuy, *Numbers, Predictions, and War* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1979). An interesting method of predicting war outcomes based on assigning numerical weights to various factors (offensive or defensive posture, logistics, weather, terrain, communications, firepower, strength, equipment, morale and leadership, and others) determined to be significant factors through historical study. Although morale and leadership are considered to "probably have more influence on the outcome of a battle than any of the other qualitative variables of combat," no method of assessing or comparing these factors is offered other than indicating that the weighting process for these variables is highly suggestive.
- ❑ Martin Van Creveld, *Fighting Power* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982). In a recent work that again demonstrates the significance of the small group, leadership, and military cohesion in combat, the author compares the internal personnel practices, policies, and leadership of the Wehrmacht and the US Army in World War II and concludes that the Wehrmacht was a far superior army in its human capabilities.
- ❑ Edward A. Shils and Morris Janowitz, "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War I,"

- Public Opinion Quarterly 12 (1948): 281.
- ❑ Drew Middleton, "Racial Clashes Said to Hinder Soviet Forces," *New York Times*, 11 July 1982, p. 9. Andrew Cockburn, *The Threat Inside the Soviet Military Machine* (New York: Random House, 1953). This recent analysis of Soviet military strength appears to have as its primary purpose the discounting of the Soviet military threat to the United States and its allies. Instead of looking at Soviet military capabilities, it emphasizes the many problems and failures of the Soviet military establishment. In the area of the human element or the motivation of Soviet soldiers, the author offers little that is new. Relying on recent studies by Richard Gabriel and the Rand Corporation that used primarily political emigres and ex-soldiers from low priority units as sources, Cockburn presents the Soviet soldier as unreliable, unmotivated, and unthreatening.
  - ❑ There is evidence that the Soviets formed an all-Afghan unit comprised of Soviet citizens for deployment in Afghanistan but disbanded it after discipline and control problems arose.
  - ❑ This definition of nationalism and the accompanying criteria for measuring its potential are taken largely from a series of lectures delivered by Professor Richard Cottam at the University of Pittsburgh during the summer of 1969. In arriving at this definition Professor Cottam built on the ideas of Hans Kohn and Rupert Emerson. See Hans Kohn, *Nationalism, Its Meaning and History*, rev.ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand, 1965), and Rupert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967).



- ❑ Charles C. Moskos, "Civic Education and the All-Volunteer Force," paper presented at the IUS symposium on "Civic Education in the Military," 15-16 October 1981, p. 21. See also James N. Rosenau and Ole R. Holsti, "U.S. Leadership in a Shrinking World: The Breakdown of Consensus and the Emergence of Conflicting Belief Systems," *World Politics* 35 (April 1983): 368-92.
- ❑ The concept of "latent patriotism" is a useful concept in explaining why soldiers fight. See Charles C. Moskos, "The All-Volunteer Force," in *The Political Education of Soldiers*, Morris Janowitz and Stephen D. Westbrook, eds. (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1983), p. 308.
- ❑ John H. Johns et al., *Cohesion in the US Military* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1984), p. 69. Henderson, *Why the Vietcong Fought*, p. 73. Much contemporary writing on leadership involves a redefinition of the phenomenon and then a suggested framework for analysis. To move beyond this, analysts must begin to relate and synthesize knowledge from other disciplines. This study attempts to relate a particular view of leadership to a broad body of knowledge about cohesion and its sources among soldiers in several different armies. Many leadership approaches focus on the sources of the leader's power within the group. The categories of power used here rely primarily upon J.R.P.
- ❑ While a recent court ruling regarding off-post drug offenses has taken a small step back towards emphasizing unit discipline over individual rights, overall impact on decisions of the past two decades is insignificant

- ❑ Y. Harkabi, "Basic Factors in the Arab Collapse," *Orbis*, Fall 1967. This is illustrated by a recent observation of officer-soldier relationships in an Arab army. An officer visiting an Arab unit on maneuvers was puzzled by a line of Arab soldiers standing in formation along the side of the officers' briefing and mess tent. The side of the tent was rolled up and the visiting officer could see these soldiers standing there indefinitely. It was not until the direction of the wind shifted and the soldiers were marched around the tent that he realized these soldiers, standing for hours in the sun, were acting as a wind break for the officers' tent.
- ❑ For a more extensive discussion on the shift to an "occupational model" for the Armed Forces, the following readings are recommended: Charles Moskos, "From Institution to Occupation: Trends in Military Organization," *Armed Forces and Society*, vol. 4, no. 1. (1977), pp. 41-50 and "Social Considerations of the All-Volunteer Force," in Brent Scowcroft, ed. *Military Service in the United States* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1982), pp. 129-150.
- ❑ Alexander L. George, "Primary Groups, Organizations and Military Performance," *The Study of Leadership* (West Point: USMA Printing Plant, 1972), p. 19-3. For a broader discussion of combat motivation linking primary group processes to individual self-concern and shared beliefs among soldiers, see Charles Moskos, "Surviving the War in Vietnam," Charles R. Figley and Seymour Leventman, *Strangers at Home: The Vietnam Veteran Since the War* (New York: Praeger, 1980), pp. 71-85.



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