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Organizational Weapons: Explaining Cohesion in the Military

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Abstract: Cohesion is defined as *the creation and maintenance of cooperative effort towards the attainment of the organization's goals*. This paper argues that existing theories of cohesion in the military are deficient. For most soldiers, patriotism and ideology play only a diffuse an indirect motivational role. Explanations based on selective incentives and primary group solidarity also suffer from theoretical and empirical inconsistencies. This paper maintains that the more individual soldiers self-identify as members of an armed organization over other putative identities, the greater will be organizational cohesion. While the military provides individuals with a sense of belonging to an entity greater than the face-to-face primary group, it also provides a means of status distinction within, as opposed to across communities. Three mechanisms by which organizational socialization is strengthened are identified: training, ritual, and collective burden sharing. Evidence from the U.S. Army in Vietnam and the *Wehrmacht* in the Second World War suggests that the latter may be especially significant. Soldiers kill and die, not for society as a whole, but for an imagined community of fellow warriors, an imaginary brotherhood.

Keywords: Cohesion, Military, Identity, Vietnam, Wehrmacht

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"How many officers did you lose today?" asked Patton. "We were fortunate," Ward replied. "We didn't lose any officers." "Goddamit, Ward, that's not fortunate! That's bad for the morale of the enlisted men. I want you to get more officers killed." A brief pause followed before Ward said, "You're not serious, are you?" "Yes goddamit, I'm serious. I want you to put some officers out as observers," said Patton. "Keep them up front until a couple get killed. It's good for morale."

Discussion between General George S. Patton and General Orlando Ward during the Second World War.[1]

1. INTRODUCTION

Why do men fight? Yes, that question again. At least as far back as the writings of Niccolò Machiavelli, commentators on military affairs have pondered the question of how to collectively wield a body of men to act in the interest of the state.[2] Frustrated by his patron's reliance on unpredictable mercenaries, Machiavelli looked back to the practices of ancient Rome and saw an answer in the use of citizen soldiers, who would be motivated not simply by a love of the State, but by the most strenuous training and discipline. Despite Machivelli's advice, the reliability of armies in the field did not change much over the following centuries. The mid-seventeenth century conqueror of Northern Europe, Swedish Emperor Gustavus Adolphus, was scourged by turncoat mercenaries, while even the famed citizen soldiers of Revolutionary France were highly prone to indiscipline and desertion. For sure, victory and defeat in war are inexplicable without reference to the balance of power, operational strategy, and political will. However, the tendency to take Clausewitz's reductive dictum that war is politics by other means too literally often leads students of conflict to discount the importance of the fighting itself. Indeed, even Clausewitz was quick to stress what he called the human element (Clausewitz 1984). To better understand the effectiveness of armies in war, we

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[1] Quoted in (Gartner 1997, 1)

[2] Although Machiavelli drew heavily on the work of Romans like Vegetius, we may still say that his was the first systematic Western statement on military organization (Vegetius 1985; Machiavelli 2003).

need to know what makes a body of men collectively maintain the fight under stress. In other words, we need a theory of *cohesion*.

Cohesion is defined as *the creation and maintenance of cooperative effort towards the attainment of the organization's goals* (Kenny 2010). Clearly, cohesion implies that the organization continues to exist, but it focuses on the production of effort towards a common goal, above and beyond mere structural integrity. Cohesion refers in particular to the extent to which soldiers follow orders at a minimum and also to the extent to which they take actions intended to further the goals of the organization (Chodoff 1983; National Defense University 1984). As no perfect antonym exists, the opposite of cohesion can be termed *disintegration*. It can be seen in "the prevalence of internal conditions which make effective military operations difficult, if not, in some cases, impossible. These conditions are desertion, mutiny, assassination of leaders, and other factors, such as drug usage, which destroy discipline and combat effectiveness" (Gabriel & Savage 1978, 31).

Cohesion has been a concern of military sociologists for some time. Scholars in this tradition have generally explained cohesion as the result of group- or organizational-level factors, whether primary unit solidarity, military discipline, or logistical factors. While military sociologists have generally discounted the role of ideological motivations like Nazism or Communism in maintaining cohesion, in recent years, a number of historians and political scientists have argued that ideological fervor should not be ignored. It seems, in fact, that cohesion relies on mechanisms that operate at *both* the face-to-face and ideational levels. Yet most existing explanations are rather weak on how these two different levels are causally related. The reason, I argue, is that they typically fail to account for the powerful socialization effects of mere membership in an army. *Organizational socialization*, or the process by which the self-concept of the individual becomes inseparable from his membership of the organization, provides a simple, yet powerful, explanation of variations in cohesion. The more closely soldiers identify the army's goals as their own, the higher will be cohesion. Furthermore, this thesis suggests that formal organizations provide the structure by which primary social groups are tied together towards a common purpose, providing an important if overlooked mid-level set

of identities. While organizations provide individuals with a sense of belonging to an entity greater than the face-to-face primary group, they also provide a means of status distinction within, as opposed to between communities. Here I identify three particularly salient mechanisms by which organizational socialization is created and maintained: *training*, *ritual*, and *collective burden sharing*. While scholars have acknowledged the importance of training and ritual in enhancing cohesion, rather less has been said about collective burden sharing. The latter refers to the extent to which risk and sacrifice are shared equally across the organization, both vertically and horizontally.

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the inadequacy of existing theories of cohesion and to advance an alternative explanation based on organizational socialization. I begin by sketching out the existing theories of military cohesion. They can be distilled into four categories: ideology, selective incentives, discipline, and solidarity. The following section is a critical evaluation of these theories with respect to two prominent cases in the cohesion literature: the *Wehrmacht* (1939-1945), put forward as a model case of cohesion, and the U.S. Army in Vietnam (1965-1973), advanced as its polar opposite. I then put forward an alternative interpretation of the evidence, focusing on the role of organizational socialization in maintaining cohesion. The analysis suggests that to maintain cohesion, armies should train and deploy units collectively, rather than individually rotating soldiers in and out of units; encourage a high frequency of orchestrated, collective rituals focused on the organization; and ensure that there is a perception that the risks and sacrifices of war are fairly shared across the organization, regardless of an individual's function. The latter presents a particular challenge. Unlike in militaries of old where the main functional differentiation was a *vertical* one between officer and soldier, the army leaderships of today's high tech militaries must also cope with the need for increased *horizontal* specialization at the same rank.[3] I conclude with some thoughts on what this means for future research on cohesion in the military.

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[3] Horizontal functional specialization refers to the concentration of soldiers into combat and support units.

2. THEORIES OF COHESION

There are four main theories of cohesion: ideology, selective incentives, discipline, and solidarity. The ideology thesis posits that contributing a high level effort satisfies a pre-existing ideational goal of the individual. For men to be willing to kill and die, it is argued, they have to identify with something transcendental like Nationalism or Communism (Posen 1993). Other scholars have argued that collective goals like national glory are too subject to free-riding to induce individual commitment. For them, membership in an armed organization must confer some selective benefits which are above and beyond the communal benefits that will result from collective action. These incentives are typically material in nature and have been put forward as particularly germane to civil wars in Africa in recent decades but are also relevant even to the U.S. Army (Collier & Hoeffler 2004; Massing 2008). However, while selective material incentives may contribute to recruitment, given the incentive to free ride and the potential for adverse selection it is not clear that they enhance the contribution of effort once inside (Brehm & Gates 1994). In other words, they may have no effect on cohesion.

As Machiavelli observed in his *Art of War*, an effective army is not made by the presence of highly spirited men alone. Rather there must be order and discipline. Military sociologists have posited that cohesion is maintained by the threat of coercive sanctions for the failure to contribute the required level of effort (Rush 1999; Strachan 2006). The logic of this argument is essentially the same as the selective incentives one. That is, it rests on the leadership's ability to observe performance and to meet out punishment for bad behavior (rather than rewards for good behavior). In the case of modern armed organizations, where combat units are dispersed across the battlefield, this assumption may not be valid (Lang 1972, 73).

Because of the difficulty of relying on ideological commitment or selective incentives (whether material or coercive) alone, military sociologists have focused on group-level social dynamics. The so-called unit solidarity thesis is most strongly associated with Shils and Janowitz in their study of cohesion and disintegration in the *Wehrmacht* in World War II, but has its origins in S. L. A. Marshall's famed *Men Against*

Fire (1947) (also see Stouffer et al. 1949a; Stouffer et al. 1949b). Small unit solidarity refers to the bonds of dependence and trust that are developed among members of small fighting units (i.e. at the squad, platoon, or company level) in the course of their continued interactions. The individual contributes the ideal level of effort because failure to do so will result in social ostracism or punishment by his fellow members.[4] However, social discipline only works to produce cohesion if that is the outcome that is collectively desired and enforced. Bearman (1991) has gathered data on patterns of desertion of Confederate troops during the American Civil War, and found that units that had higher internal solidarity were more, not less, likely to desert as a group. Moreover, it seems that many armies have maintained high levels of cohesion *despite* the physical dismemberment of these primary groups.

3. EVALUATING THE THEORIES

The Wehrmacht (1943-1945)

The most prominently cited example of high organizational cohesion is the *Wehrmacht*, which is widely asserted to have retained remarkable levels of performance and commitment even as the Third Reich was in its death throes from 1944-45. In the seminal work on military cohesion, Shils and Janowitz put forward that the cohesion of the *Wehrmacht* was due to high levels of small unit solidarity. As they conclude (Shils & Janowitz 1948, 281):

> …the unity of the German Army was in fact sustained only to a very slight extent by the National Socialist political convictions of its members, and that more important in the motivation of the determined resistance of the German soldier was the steady satisfaction of certain *primary* personality demands afforded by the social organization of the army.

It is argued that Prussian military tradition had long stressed the importance of developing internally homogenous fighting units that trained and fought together, which

[4] The social-psychological mechanism behind the theory seems plausible, and there is experimental evidence that supports it, (Moreland & Levine 2002) But see Dyaram and Kamalanbhan (2005)).

would have strong internal bonds (Craig 1956); these traditions were upheld and reinforced in the *Wehrmacht*. This thesis has been remarkably persuasive and still remains the starting point for any discussion of military cohesion.

However, there are a number of objections to this characterization. First, even a cursory reading of the abundant testimonies of frontline soldiers seems to redound the universality of the *band of brothers* experience in war. Regardless of how soldiers feel about the military or the political objectives of their superiors, the bonds of loyalty between frontline soldiers seem to be all but universal. Thus, this would not seem to explain the variation in organizational cohesion that we observe across armies. Second, and more specific to the *Wehrmacht* case, on the basis of archival research, both Rush (1999) and Bartov (1991, ch. 2) have shown that primary unit solidarity in the *Wehrmacht* was in fact very weak by the second half of 1944, on both the Western and Eastern fronts (Sajer 2000, 64). Successive military defeats, which resulted in the loss of hundreds of thousands of men and the abandonment of the traditional unit replacement policy undermines the case that there was something unique about unit solidarity in the *Wehrmacht*.[5] Hitler's now known preference for creating new divisions over refitting old ones, and the ad hoc way in which divisions were assembled in the last year of the war as communications broke down undermines the strength of both hypotheses.

What then explains the tenacity with which the *Wehrmacht* defended the West Wall as the Americans approached, or fought so fiercely as the Red Army forced its retreat from Soviet territory? Rush (1999) argues that it was the draconian discipline meted out by superiors against anyone suspected of desertion or *Wehrkraftzersetzung* (undermining the fighting spirit of the men) (see also Fritz 1995, 89-98). "Squads were ordered to the front lines by pistol-waving officers, and officers followed attacks to ensure that there was no turning back" (Rush 1999, 498). Deserters who were found would be shot and their families arrested. Between 13,000 and 30,000 soldiers were executed for desertion or dishonorable behavior (Bartov 1991, 96; Welch 1999).

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[5] Furthermore, this collapse in the formerly efficient German logistical train at precisely the moment when cohesion is at its highest challenges the claim that effective supply and communications explained the dogged fighting of the *Wehrmacht*, (Van Creveld 1982).

According to Welch (1999, 379-80), "Within the first six months of the war German military judges had imposed more death sentences than their predecessors had during all of the First World War, and almost five times as many German soldiers were executed as had been between 1914 and 1918." Rush (1999, 500) thus concludes that, "organized terror from above kept many soldiers in line, not an identification with their primary group, love of cause, nor respect for their officers."

Rush's argument is persuasive, but I suggest that it does not tell the whole story. It is not clear why in this case brutal discipline led to cohesion rather than disintegration. In other cases, the effect of such harsh measures has resulted in a lowering of morale and performance. Moreover, it seems that the "softer" approach to discipline in the British Army that was fighting the *Wehrmacht* had no negative effect on cohesion; in fact, it may have boosted morale.[6] It is far from evident that the death penalty acts as a sufficient deterrent (or motivation) to men in battle (French 1998, 533). This is not to suggest that discipline was unimportant in the German case. On the contrary, discipline seems to have been a key component in maintaining cohesion in the *Wehrmacht*. As I will argue, however, discipline is more important in fostering a general culture of obedience, rather than in altering soldiers' cost-benefit calculations. What Rush plays down is the mutually constitutive relationship between organizational culture and stringent discipline.

The question then arises as to what the explanation is for the particular organizational culture of the *Wehrmacht*. Is ideology the real explanation? An increasing number of scholars have begun to challenge the standard view that the *Wehrmacht* was largely non-ideological (Bartov 1991, 2001; Wette 2006). Ultimately, even Shils and Janowitz (1948, 286) smuggle ideology into their account; "The presence of a few such men in the group, zealous, energetic, and unsparing of themselves, provided models for the weaker men, and facilitated the process of identification." Bartov (1991, 6) argues that the "group" we should be concerned with is not the primary unit of Shils and Janowitz, but "is in some respects the precise opposite of the one presented in the original theory, for it is very much the product not merely of social ties, but of ideological internalization, whereby humanity is divided into opposing groups of 'us' and 'them'."

[6] Oram (2002) finds similar evidence with respect to the British Army operating in Italy in the First World War.

That soldiers in the *Wehrmacht* could commit the heinous crimes they did in the East "reflected the moral values these young men had internalized before their recruitment" (Bartov 1991, 7). Fritz (1995, 90) writes, "military standards came to reflect those of civilian society, as for historical reasons Hitler aimed at creating a tight-knit *Volksgemeinschaft*, both civilian and military, which would do his bidding without cracking under the pressure of war." In other words, the *Wehrmacht* did not exist in a social vacuum. With approximately twenty million German men fighting for the *Wehrmacht* during the war, the values of the organization and society were mutually constitutive. On discipline, it is reasonable to argue that such harsh disciplinary measures were possible because of the characterization of desertion as a political crime of the highest order (Welch 1999). Desertion was no longer a matter of military justice but a crime against society, and its perpetrators the lowest form of social detritus. There was organizational culture that tolerated, even encouraged such discipline.

But does the fact that the *Wehrmacht* did not exist in a social vacuum mean that its soldiers were driven by a widely held German anti-Semitism? I find it hard to go as far as Bartov (Bartov 1986, 1991, 2001) or Goldhagen (1997) in this respect. Although extensive contemporary surveys of the attitudes of the rank-and-file do not exist, there is good cause to believe that many (we can't say how many) soldiers of the *Wehrmacht*, whatever about the *SS Einsatzgruppen*, were not driven by ideology, but by a sense of duty obedience to authority, and proficiency that was deeply ingrained into the organizational culture of the *Wehrmacht* (Craig 1956; Steinert 1977; Madej 1978; Peukert 1987; Browning 1992; Fritz 1995; Brustein 1996; Sajer 2000). Even though officers in the *Wehrmacht* had to be members of the Nazi Party, this does not mean that they were in any real sense Nazis. Similarly, the substantial presence of non-German fighting units after 1944 undermines the notion that German patriotism or Nazism writ large was the cause of cohesion in the military. Finally, it is worth pointing out that in theoretical terms, the ideology thesis suffers from the classic free-rider problem that is well noted in the collective action literature (Olson 1965; Hechter 1987). Because the goal of exterminating the Jews is a collective one, its benefits could in no way be restricted to

members of the *Wehrmacht*. It is difficult to maintain that the ideological motivations of individual members explain the cohesion of the *Wehrmacht*.

The U.S. Army in Vietnam (1965-1973)

Countless volumes have been written on the U.S. failure in Vietnam. While there is an undisputed necessity to consider the strategic paradox that lay at the heart of U.S. military policy in explaining the dynamics of the war, here I am interested in evaluating the theses put forward that focus on the internal disintegration of the U.S. Army. There continues to be debate over whether disintegration accurately describes the state of the U.S. Army in Vietnam. In part, this disagreement arises over confusion concerning the level of analysis. The tendency for authors to switch between the organizational and group levels, while still using the term "cohesion" makes for a rather frustrating debate. Several authors have countered the standard disintegration narrative, arguing that "cohesion" in the U.S. Army was high (Fowler 1979; Kaplan 1987). Although correct in a sense, these authors are primarily concerned with the *primary group* level, i.e. solidarity. Primary units extend up to the company level, which consisted of three to five platoons, each in turn typically had around 30-35 soldiers.[7] As we will see, primary unit solidarity was often high, although at the organizational level, disintegration was pervasive. This was especially the case after 1971, but disintegration had already begun to occur as early as 1968 (Moskos 1975). Between 1970 and 1972, 363 cases of assault on a senior officer with explosive devices (or "fragging") occurred with a further 118 possible cases. With just 700,000 soldiers deployed in Vietnam, this rate compares unfavorably with the U.S. Army's experience in the First World War, the Second World War, and the Korean War (Gabriel & Savage 1978, 43). Other indicators, including the use of narcotics by soldiers, the deliberate avoidance of the enemy, open refusal to fight, and outright desertion all point to substantial organizational disintegration in the latter years of the War (Savage & Gabriel 1976; Gabriel & Savage 1978; Gabriel 1981; Henderson 1985; Stanton 1985; Cortright 2005).

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[7] The effective operation size of platoons varied, as injured soldiers were put on temporary leave, and vacant spots went temporarily unfilled (Downs 2007).

Gabriel and Savage (1978) take up the logic outlined by Shils and Janowitz to argue that organizational cohesion the U.S. Army in Vietnam collapsed from within because it lacked the kind of primary unit solidarity that was believed to typify the *Wehrmacht*. They point to a number of processes which undermined primary unit solidarity. First, the U.S. adopted a man-for-man replacement policy. This meant that units were continually refitted at the front, while they did not have the time to build up strong group bonds. Second, there was the lack of respect for officers, which stemmed from the perception that officers did not bare a fair burden of risk or sacrifice. The problem with the unit solidarity thesis is that in many cases, unit solidarity was very high especially up until 1968 (Fowler 1979; Kaplan 1987); however, rather than this producing cooperative effort towards organizational objectives, whole units refused to carry out orders (Stanton 1985, 349). As Wessley concludes (2006, 281) from the persistence of social solidarity at the unit level along with the failure of these units to perform their required tasks, "Social cohesion may at times actively conflict with the aims of the military." Moser (1996, 62, 7) describes the process:

> The small buddy groups were centers of personal loyalty, mutual protection and survival… The Vietnam War and the cultural explosions of the 1960s transformed some of these buddy groups into conduits for war resistance and for the expression of alternative culture and politics.
>
> …it certainly appears that by 1968 the dynamics of group solidarity and behavior were as likely as to transmit political dissent as military discipline… The power of these groups to promote dissent cannot be overstated; they were the day-to-day organizations of the soldier resistance in Vietnam.

The U.S. Army experience in Vietnam provides a useful comparison with the *Wehrmacht* on the point of discipline. 252 cases of insubordination, mutiny, and willful disobedience were brought to military courts in 1968, and 382 in 1970 (Allison 2007). However, while punishments (including execution) were dealt out in the *Wehrmacht* with brutal efficiency, in the U.S. Army, the application of military justice was highly

inconsistent (Cortright 2005, 36). On the one hand, the Army imprisoned hundreds of American soldiers in appalling conditions for acts of defiance (Moser 1996). On the other hand, officers who pursued a too strict an interpretation of military codes of conduct could find themselves on the receiving end of an “accidentally” stray grenade. Thus many acts of insubordination went unpunished, as officers in effect “negotiated” with their men in the implementation of orders (Cortright 2005, ch. 2). The effect of this ambiguity was to intensify disintegration rather than to mitigate it. The prisons became a major source of disaffection with the war. Discipline, whether implemented softly or handed down brutally did not enhance cohesion in the U.S. Army in Vietnam.

Why this disparity in outcome? Focusing on the motivations of soldiers, Moser argues that the average recruit did not much care about the purported goals of the U.S. in Vietnam. Contrary to U.S. involvement in Europe in World War II or the Pacific War, Americans did not perceive the Vietnamese as enemies in the same sense (Moser 1996). In part this was a result of the highly confused rationales that the administration put forward for the intervention (Kahin 1987). As America’s true enemy was believed to be China, it was difficult to justify the perpetration of a war against a nation that also perceived itself to be an enemy of China. Simply put, soldiers did not know what they were fighting for. A related body of literature locates the disintegration of the U.S. Army within the broader social context of the radical social movements of 1960s America. In this sense, an ideology of non-conformity and resistance to the State is put forward as an explanation. Soldiers were said to have brought American values such as individual liberty and democracy with them into the military, while some have advanced a variant of the “stab-in-the-back” thesis as a lack of support at home undermined the effort abroad (Fowler 1979). However, there are a number of problems with this argument. U.S. forces have been involved in many overseas conflicts in which the political objectives did not seem to align with military strategy or deeper held democratic values, with no perceptible impact on cohesion (Wong et al. 2003). Second, it seems that many soldiers did in fact begin the war full of enthusiasm for the fight against the Communists (Edelman 1985).

4. ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION

In an insightful, but now little read article, Shils (1957) argues that both abstract ideas and inter-personal ties are necessary to explanations of collective action. However, if big ideas, like National Socialism, are important motivations of individual behavior, they only attain this importance through established patterns of social interaction among *Bunds* or band-like social groups. The obvious question (left unanswered by Shils) then concerns the mechanisms by which these *Bunds* come to cohere around a common project. There must, in other words, be some kind of vertical integration. While I agree that discipline is an important mechanism in maintaining cohesion, for soldiers to accept the imposition of sanctions without organized resistance, they must perceive the enforcer of these rules as having a legitimate claim to control, or authority. In a cohesive army each order is not evaluated, but is to be obeyed simply because of the *authority* of the giver of the order (Raz 1985). The question is where this authority comes from. Drawing on the insights of Philip Selznick's influential study of the Bolshevik Party from which I draw the title of this paper, I posit that organizational dynamics, specifically organizational socialization, are the key missing factor in the explanation of cohesion.

Appeal to socialization or identification as explanatory mechanisms are fraught with difficulty (Cerulo 1997; Brubaker & Cooper 2000). However, the improvement that the organizational socialization model gives us in conceptual and theoretical terms is worth the candle. Identification with the organization can be understood as the degree to which the individual defines his self-concept as that of a member of the organization, and hence, the degree to which the satisfaction of organizational goals becomes coeval with the satisfaction of his own goals. Over the last twenty years, a burgeoning body of research, known as social identity theory, has come to stress the importance of organizational identification in developing explanations of individual behavior in business and bureaucratic organizations (Cheney 1983; Ashforth & Mael 1989; Dutton et al. 1994; van Dick 2001). As social units, organizations are the product of individual beliefs, actions, and identities; yet organizations also construct, shape, and re-shape the beliefs, actions, and identities of their members. Organizational identification can be

summarized as the extent to which the organization's goals and values are integrated as the individual's own. Edwards (2005) puts it as follows:

> Deep… [OI] is where the individual has created such a link with the organization that an enduring cognitive schema exists whereby the employment relationship has in some way altered the mental model that the individual has of him or herself. The organizational identity has, in effect, been incorporated into the self-concept. In short, the organization becomes part of the individual's self-concept.

Armed organizations maintain a collective identity that is distinct from their constituent society but without necessarily viewing the rest of society in a negative way. Thus, while an armed organization is partly constituted by the broader cultural context in which the organization is situated, it stands apart from it (Spindler 1948, 83). The army becomes a brotherhood in a way few other organizations can.[8] The importance of identification with the army cannot be overstated. Gabriel and Savage (1978, 21) write:

> Military organizations successful in withstanding combat stress are truly corporative in that they require high levels of individual identification with institutional goals as the primary mechanism for compelling behavior. It is this sense of belonging, of sharing common values, and of being unique that defines a truly cohesive military unit.

Identification is notoriously difficult to observe directly, despite the optimism of some researchers (Abdelal et al. 2006). Operating at a level of consciousness that is not easily accessible, understanding one's own sense of identification and the priorities held between different identifications, and then articulating it is probably beyond most people (Reynolds et al. 2003). Changes in identification are even more problematic as memory is highly unreliable when it comes to prior states of mind or feelings of affect (Bower &

[8] That the military is commonly termed a "brotherhood" is significant and I use the term quite deliberately. Discrimination and even violence against females in the military is unfortunately pervasive (Beans 1975; Hankin et al. 1999) and the feeling that they should have absolutely no role in the armed forces persists (Mitchell 1998) I believe some of the reason for this lack of solidarity is the perception of systematically unequal burden-sharing between male and female soldiers because of the deployment of the latter almost exclusively in support roles (Yuval-Davis 1985; Miller 1998).

Cohen 1982). Consequently, interviews or surveys in which individuals are asked to indicate the strength of their various identities do not appear to be the best method of investigation. As organizational identification remains essentially unobservable, we have to set out and test a number of related predictions based on the factors associated with the creation and maintenance of organizational identification. The mechanisms we can observe fall into three categories: *training*, *ritual*, and *collective burden sharing*.

Training: Nowhere is this mechanism more evident than in the case of the U.S. Marine Corps. Thomas Ricks's *Making the Corps* (2007) describes how new recruits go from often apathetic, unfit, and disorderly social misfits into disciplined, strong, and loyal soldiers. Training, particularly drilling, is the key to this transformation, although not in the sense that we might expect (Holmes 2003; Strachan 2006). In boot camp, the emphasis is on "behavior and language, not military training… It may not be what the recruits expected, but it is central to the process of transformation they are about to experience. Marine Corps basic training is more a matter of cultural indoctrination than of teaching soldiering, which comes later, at combat training…"(Ricks 2007, 37). The repetition, often to the point of boredom or injury, is designed not only to foster an instinctual reaction in soldiers when battle eventually comes, but also to inculcate in soldiers the absolute necessity to follow orders, however mundane or menial (Fritz 1995, ch. 2). Drill "builds unit cohesion and unit and individual discipline" (Ricks 2007, 88). The following prediction arises:

H.1. The longer and more intensive are the training procedures, the higher will be cohesion.

Ritual: Events and rituals are critical in the formation and change of identity salience. Indeed, King (2006) argues that the group rituals, especially preparations for battle, which characterize everyday life in the professional military are far more important than affective bonds in maintaining cohesion (see also Winslow 1999). "The military profession," writes Janowitz (1960), "is more than an occupation; it is a complete style of life." The recruitment process and the initiation stage have a highly significant impact on identity formation. Recruitment to armed organizations typically involves a

total break with the past. Machiavelli (2003) wrote that as soon as a man becomes a soldier he “changes not only his clothing, but he adopts attitudes, manners, ways of speaking and bearing himself, quite at odds with those of civilian life.” For instance, in the Marine Corps, recruits must leave all vestiges of their old lives behind, including “hair, clothes, food, and friends” (Ricks 2007, 43). Their previous identity must be wholly broken down: “By the approach of evening at the end of their first day on Parris Island, the recruits’ identities have been hollowed out. They know very little about anything, except toeing the line, which they are getting good at doing” (Ricks 2007, 46). In the Marines, other rituals such as graduation from basic training are critical to the formation of a collective identity (Ricks 2007, ch. 6). Comparable rituals occur in non-state armies like the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda. In the LRA, child soldiers are often forced to participate in ritual killings of innocent civilians or other children as part of their initiation (Singer 2005). Recruits are told that this act, along with mutilation of their victims and ritualistic cannibalism, will give them special powers. The result is to dehumanize both the soldier and the victim, making the possibility of reintegration into one’s former life difficult, if not impossible. As I have noted, while discipline is critical to the fostering of this identity, it is important to distinguish this process from discipline as a component of the cost-benefit calculations of individuals.

H.2. The more frequent, pervasive, and intensive are organizational rituals, the higher will be cohesion.

Collective burden sharing: The main departure from existing approaches taken in the current analysis is the emphasis on the effect of collective identification above the level of the face-to-face group but below a higher societal level (e.g. the nation). The reason this level is stressed is because for soldiers to be willing to make such sacrifices they have to have a collective status that is differentiated from those who do not make those sacrifices (Watson & Porter 2010). To reinforce this differentiated status, soldiers not only have to share training and other rituals, but they also have to share a common burden. Units in all wars disintegrate through attrition (Williams Jr 1984). In cohesive organizations, however, units are able to be reformed and new bonds established because of a shared sense of burden and duty between fellow soldiers. For example, although it

wasn't compulsory, virtually all American infantrymen in Vietnam wore the insignia that was given to troops after the completion of 30 days in the field (Fowler 1979). It was, literally, a badge of honor. Problems arise when the level of burden sharing within an organization is systematically unequal. One example is the potentially different level of sacrifice between the officer corps and enlisted men. As Patton's chilling words in the epigraph indicate, it is essential for morale that officers are perceived to share in sacrifices just like the rank-and-file. Another example is the difference between combat and noncombat, or "tooth" and "tail", units. In modern armies where the use of high technology weapons demands an ever longer logistical train, more and more soldiers never engage with the enemy.[9] The final prediction is:

> *H.3. The more equally shared is the burden of sacrifice across the organization, the higher will be cohesion.*

Evaluating the OI Hypotheses

In this section, I illustrate the plausibility of (rather than test) the organizational identification theory of cohesion by reexamining the evidence from the *Wehrmacht* (1943-1945) and the U.S. Army in Vietnam (1965-1973) against the three hypotheses outlined above.

Training: The *Wehrmacht* was known for its stringent training regimen, which even in periods of severe manpower shortage, did not drop below twelve weeks (Holmes 2003). Basic training began with learning the standard formations: close order, extended order, and their derivatives (Citino 1999, 26). It was followed by training for combat situations, from the use of terrain, behavior under fire, techniques for close combat, and cooperation with artillery and air support units (Citino 1999, 27). For elite divisions the training was even more rigorous. Sajer (2000, 159) writes that "one sweated blood and water. One was either hospitalized after a week of almost insane effort or incorporated into the division and marched off to war…" Training again included marches, gymnastics, and combat exercises. The process was designed not simply to improve

[9] Research suggests that solidarity is typically lower in noncombat than combat units (Moskos 1970; Williams Jr 1984).

technological proficiency but to instill a sense of collective pride in the division. The men were put through numerous tests of endurance and were brutalized on a regular basis. Fierce punishments, like the *Hundehütte* which entailed prolonged isolation in a stress position, were meted out for infractions of discipline (Sajer 2000, 167). Men were trained in their squads with their squad leaders, who would then be deployed together, the goal being to foster a sense of group cohesion (Citino 1999, 26).

Military training up to and including the Vietnam War was based on the "behavioral paradigm" in psychology, in which the focus was on repetition and drill. All recruits went through initial processing, which included filling out forms, physical and psychological testing, and inoculation. U.S. Army training for Vietnam was short and intense. It consisted of eight weeks of "basic" training, which included such tasks as dress, parade, saluting, rifle maintenance, use of C-rations, first-aid, navigation, and so on. Bayonet drilling was one of the key components of the training regimen. Although the reality was that most killing would take place at too great a distance for use of the bayonet, it retained an important psychological function. Bayonet training required the recruit to advance on a dummy and stab it as forcefully as possible. Its purpose was to socialize the recruit to the fact that he will have to kill, to spill blood, to end life (Grossman 2009). The drill sergeant shouts, "What is the Purpose of the Bayonet?" and the recruit replies, *"To kill kill kill with the Cold Blue Steel!"*

Basic training was followed by a period of advanced individual training (AIT), which was designed to give the soldiers technical skills. AIT typically took another eight weeks for infantry, but this could vary by military occupational specialty (MOS). After AIT, the recruit underwent two weeks of Republic of Vietnam (RVN) training. This entailed practicing how to accurately shoot his rifle from the hip without bringing it to the shoulder to aim, jungle survival and basic techniques such as running and jumping into and out of the back of a *deuce-and-a-half* (a two and a half ton army truck) and various transport helicopters. The final stage was another two weeks of "in country" training in the RVN.[10] Numerous veterans have testified to the arduousness of training for Vietnam. On this account, the lack of cohesion in the U.S. Army might be surprising. However, it

[10] For a discussion see, http://www.warbirdforum.com/basic.htm

seems that the practice of immediately splitting up the primary units that had developed during "basic" served to alienate new recruits, and undermine one of the main purposes of the training process. Men arrived in country alone and were dispatched to their posts piecemeal, individualizing rather than collectivizing the process (Downs 2007). Thus, the experience of soldiers in Vietnam was quite unlike that of the men of Easy Company, 101st Battalion, whose shared experience together from "basic" to invasion to combat in the Second World War molded them into a well-knit and effective unit.[11] In Vietnam, new primary units would have to be formed from scratch and in the most testing of circumstances.

Ritual: Space limits the extent to which I can describe the pervasive rituals of the *Wehrmacht.* One central aspect of the organizational culture of the *Wehrmacht* was a novel introduction of Hitler. He introduced a new oath of loyalty directly to the *Führer* as the Commander in Chief of the armed forces. Note that the oath of loyalty is not to the state, but to the organization and its spiritual leader. Moreover, it was an oath to make the ultimate sacrifice. Recruits were greeted to their training grounds with a signs that read: "WE ARE BORN TO DIE" and "I SERVE" (Sajer 2000, 159). The *Wehrmacht*, while part of society, stood apart from it. Talks to groups of men by officers on the virtues of National Socialism and the *Volk* were a regular occurrence. Officers strictly enforced codes of dress and behavior and *Landser* proudly wore the insignia of their divisions (Sajer 2000, 121-2).

Ritual was pervasive in the U.S. Army in Vietnam, but it worked both to facilitate and undermine cohesion. The idiosyncratic language used by the military, which is largely unintelligible to outsiders, was just one way of maintaining their distinctive organizational culture. In Vietnam, the Army developed a whole lexicon of its own; helicopters and gunships were *choppers, slicks*, *hueys*, *ash and trash*, *shithooks*, *jolly green giants* and *Puff the magic dragons*; enemy soldiers were *dinks*, *gooks*, *slant-eyes*, *VC*, *Victor Charlie* or simply *Charlie*. Life *on the line* was one long ritual. Every operation had its particular routines: setting up *hooches* (or makeshift tents), digging foxholes, checking for leeches, keeping watch, setting new radio codes, and endless

[11] Depicted in the now well-known book and mini-series "Band of Brothers" (Ambrose 2001).

patrolling. However, while units operating in forward areas were for the most part cohesive, where the U.S. Army failed was in allowing primary unit solidarity to dissipate in rear areas. As U.S. forces pulled back from offensive actions first in 1968, and even more so after 1971, a greater proportion of units were deployed in rear areas. Although the regular awarding of medals of Honor should have served as a unifying ritual, the perception that medals were awarded unfairly to careerist officers undermined the potential community-building aspect of the ritual (Gabriel & Savage 1978). In the rear, few rituals were focused at the primary combat unit level (typically the platoon), or even at the Army level as a whole. In Vietnam, the Army brass believed that soldiers needed downtime in rear areas and recreational activities were individualized. Even the awarding of medals was a relatively private affair. Social groups emerged based on interpersonal ties, in which rituals, including the use of narcotics, were anti- rather than pro-Army (Moser 1996). The deliberate defacement of Army uniforms and the wearing of extraneous symbols signaled differentiation and individualism rather than conformity and unity (Downs 2007). Other identities became far more salient for many of the men sent to Vietnam, especially in rear areas. One prominent example is black culture (Moser 1996, 65-6):

> African American culture within the military was represented by the brothers, or "bloods." The brothers were organized around distinctive African American qualities that distinguished them from other soldiers… With the brothers an African American army began to emerge. The brothers promoted war resistance through a racial analysis of war and society… An identity based on the [alternative] "sense of nationhood" was essential to the brothers. This sense of identity went beyond fellow African Americans to include the Vietnamese.

Collective burden sharing: The notion of collective burden sharing goes a long way to explaining cohesion in the *Wehrmacht*. The cult of the warrior-soldier was a powerful one in Nazi Germany, epitomized by Ernst Jünger's *Storm of Steel* (1929). As he put it, "The deepest happiness of man lies in the fact that he will be sacrificed." Soldiers were exalted as the best of Germans and they could take great pride in that

status. The burden of sacrifice was shared relatively equally vertically within the *Wehrmacht*, at least up to the very highest levels. Officers died in their thousands just like their men. Cohesion in the *Wehrmacht* was also enhanced by its functional differentiation from other branches of the armed services. Although the notion that the *Wehrmacht* was unaware of the atrocities going on in the East has now been debunked (Wette 2006), the primary responsibility for dealing with partisans and Jews fell to the *SS Einsatzgrupen* and to a lesser extent the Police Battalions. There has been ample testimony from soldiers that shooting unarmed civilians and other such behavior has a negative effect on morale. Killing the defenseless runs counter to the warrior-hero myth at the core of the Army identity. Thus, the foot soldiers of the *Wehrmacht* had to be kept relatively isolated from such duties (Wette 2006). While all branches of the armed services were essentially working towards the same goal, this separation of functional roles served an important role increasing solidarity within each organization. However, it could also contribute to animosity between the branches (Groppe 1945). Although there does seem to have been some resentment towards and scapegoating of support troops, the enormous casualties suffered by the *Wehrmacht* especially towards the end of the war meant that support troops were often required to fill in gaps in combat units, while life operating on the supply trains was far from easy in any case (Sajer 2000, 70, 6).

The overwhelming majority of the men who served in Vietnam, especially from 1965-1968, performed with exceptional commitment. In Vietnam, disintegration intensified substantially after 1968 (Stevenson 1988), the point at which U.S. armed forces began to retreat from combat operations into support operations. In 1968 only 12% of all servicemen were in combat jobs, and this proportion decreased thereafter (Baskir & Strauss 1978).[12] Most of the incidents of disintegration occurred in the rear, thus the increase in numbers of men being deployed there increased incidence of the phenomenon. For those men being deployed into support operations, especially after 1971 when the Army's mission had become especially unclear, individual survival had come to trump all other motivations. For the declining proportion of soldiers actually in combat, the sense of unequal burden sharing must only have intensified. It may be partly because the

[12] Interestingly, being a draftee rather than a volunteer increased the likelihood of assignment to a combat rather than a support unit (Gimbel & Booth 1996).

Marines deployed with a smaller "tail" than the Army in Vietnam that cohesion is generally believed to have been higher than in Corps (Gabriel 1981). Furthermore, the Army suffered from an additional problem. The most persuasive aspect of Gabriel and Savage's (1978) account is the argument that rank-and-file troops felt that officers did not bear an equal share of the burden of fighting. While they probably overstate the negative case regarding the performance of officers once in the field, the fact that officers only served a six-month tour while the rank-and-file served a full year, may explain the sense that officers did not make a fair sacrifice, and account for the remarkable number of "fragging" incidents. However, it is fair to say that the perception that those in the rear didn't bear an equal share of the fight was much more prevalent. The contempt that combat troops had for those in support roles is epitomized in the nickname they gave them: *rear echelon mother fuckers* (REMFs).

5. DISCUSSION

While the *Wehrmacht* maintained its cohesion even in the latter years of the war, the U.S. Army began to disintegrate first in 1968 with the process intensifying from 1971. It seems reasonable to conclude that organizational identification was high in the *Wehrmacht* of the Second World War but low in the U.S. Army of the Vietnam War. Given the qualitative nature of the evidence and limited number of cases investigated here, a definitive assessment of the value of each mechanism cannot be provided. Nevertheless, we can point to a few general findings. First, training standards in the U.S. remained relatively high, even into the later years of the war. Certainly, they remained at least as rigorous as did training standards in the *Wehrmacht* from 1944. Thus, while training may be a necessary condition in fostering organizational identity and contributing to cohesion, it does not seem to be sufficient. Second, we can conclude that unlike the *Wehrmacht*, the Army lacked the kind of pervasive organizational rituals that reinforced the affect of the individual for the organization. In the Army, rituals devolved to a much more local level, and contributed to disintegration rather than cohesion. In the *Wehrmacht*, soldiers continued to be compelled to collectively enact rituals, like the singing of German songs, or watching and listening to Nazi propaganda. Third, the structure of the U.S. Army also mitigated the maintenance of cohesion. With such a large

noncombat contingent, those units that did the fighting bore an increasingly unequal share of the burden of the war. This was not the case in the *Wehrmacht*, where functional differentiation was achieved by organizational differentiation in the form of the Police Battalions and the *SS*.

6. CONCLUSION

The foregoing analysis supports the theory that the more individual soldiers define themselves as members of an armed organization, the greater will be organizational cohesion. This organizational identification theory of cohesion, if correct, has substantial implications for military sociology and the study of collective action and conflict more generally. It suggests a novel answer to the puzzle raised by Edward Shils over 50 years ago. If the behavior of individuals is strongly influenced by others in their immediate primary social group, how can their behavior be channeled to the broader interest? Until now, the widely accepted thesis has been that the inculcation of national or ideological loyalties by means of education, propaganda, and cultural values was the tie that bound primary groups, or *Bunds*, to society as a whole. However, this is more an idealization rather than a description of reality. The myth of the "nation at arms" created by the French Revolutionary Wars has proved enduring, for what could have made the French fight so valiantly but the wholehearted ingestion of the ideals of French revolutionary nationalism?

In reality, for most soldiers, patriotism and ideology play only a diffuse and indirect role (Shils 1957). In this respect, the ideological thesis seems fundamentally flawed. The extensive collective action literature has long argued that for individuals to take costly actions in the pursuit of collective goals, they should expect to attain benefits above the collective ones. Why should the military, or rebels for that matter, make a blood sacrifice while the rest of society does not? The combination of selective incentives and ideological fanaticism is insufficient. Furthermore, although coercive discipline serves to distinguish armed organizations from many other institutions, it serves to strengthen cohesion only when considered as part of a normative organizational structure. Without members that feel a strong sense of identification for the armed organization,

discipline may be counterproductive from the point of view of maintaining cohesion. The collective sharing of the major burden of war, supported by the common rituals that characterize everyday life in an armed organization, means that soldiers can and do make sacrifices that seem inexplicable from an individually rationalistic perspective. Soldiers are willing to kill and die, not for society as a whole, but for an imagined community of fellow warriors, an imaginary brotherhood. They become organizational weapons.

The implication of these conclusions for students of the military may be somewhat troubling. If soldiers owe their primary loyalties to the army, not the nation, what is to stop them acting against the state? As long ago as the foundation of the Roman Empire, we have seen the potential consequences of soldiers owing their primary loyalty to their organization and their general rather than to the state, while military coups continue to plague developing countries. Consequently, the U.S., like many developed states has favored an organizational structure that divides rather than unites the armed services, with one branch serving as a credible check on the other. However, modern armies like the U.S. Army face other equally tough challenges. In its ongoing restructuring of the armed services, the U.S. will to have to meet the contradictory demands for functional differentiation, professionalization, and gender equality along with facilitation of the primordial attachments of soldiers to a real and imagined brotherhood of warriors.

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