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## **TIN 3.193: Understanding the Moral Component of Conflict - Reuniting Moral and Morale -**

Proposal to DHCSTC, 14 January 2016

### Introduction

1. This proposal is for an exploratory study into the role that the perceived legitimacy of a conflict plays in the morale and effectiveness of the forces deployed. By linking political theory, social anthropology and tactical psychology, this sub-task within TIN 3.193 will explore and illuminate one of the bottom-line features of the moral component of conflict. The proposed work is a short, intense collaboration between Durham University and Wapentake Systems.\*

### Brief History of Moral and Morale

2. Until the nineteenth century the words moral and morale were interchangeable.<sup>1</sup> For the military this was more than linguistic happenstance, as the moral superiority of a cause was seen to drive the morale of troops and therefore had a clear link to operational effectiveness. Wars were won not only by Voltaire's big battalions and better shots, but by the side that "had the right of it". The belief that God, Progress or national destiny was on one's side was seen to drive the collective performance of armies, and variations in individuals' endurance or gallantry were attributed to their moral fibre. This allowed a tight conceptual correlation between might and right.
3. Even as moral and morale began to separate linguistically, belief in the rightness of cause or country remained an essential component in the performance of armed forces. In WW1 the perception of a just cause helped to set the initial deposit in Lord Moran's "bank of courage",<sup>2</sup> in the Spanish Civil War it was one of Dollard's antidotes to fear.<sup>3</sup> Even in the mechanised combat of WW2, Stouffer *et al* found that belief in cause, race or country was still central to the will-to-combat.<sup>4</sup>
4. Ironically, the academic delamination of moral and morale came from Shils and Janowitz's assessment of Wehrmacht cohesion and disintegration in WW2.<sup>5</sup> Their study portrayed an interaction between perceived legitimacy of war aims and organisational culture as the main determinants of cohesion, morale and effectiveness. Yet rather than allowing an interpretation of organisational culture and as an intermediary, the introduction of the combat team component appears to have driven a wedge between moral and morale. So, while the relationship between morale and morale has stayed central to British Military Doctrine,<sup>6</sup> research has underplayed legitimacy's influence on the will-to-combat.

### Toward a theory of the moral-morale relationship

5. Despite the conceptual gap between moral and morale, there are indications of potential for the two to be reunited. One such is the negative correlation between perceived legitimacy of war and incidence of Battle Stress Reaction (BSR)<sup>7</sup> and related phenomena among Israeli

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\* As Durham is not yet a DHCSTC supplier, the university will subcontract through Wapentake Systems. It is anticipated that any future work would involve collaborative proposals, with Durham as a direct supplier.

soldiers.<sup>8</sup> Anecdotal reports from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission suggest a similar link between perceived legitimacy, BSR and combat avoidance.<sup>9</sup> Post-Afghanistan interviews often have the tone of those from Vietnam, with interviewees citing the lack of legitimacy or the impossibility of achieving campaign objectives as they describe their morale or stress problems.<sup>10</sup>

6. As with any aspect of the psychology of war, there is a danger that the sheer number of extraneous variables will cloud understanding of the moral-morale relationship. To achieve clarity it will be necessary to generate a testable theory.
7. The three disciplines that appear to offer the best means to generate such a theory are:
  - a. Political Theory, which describes the high-level moral component that defines campaign legitimacy;
  - b. Tactical Psychology, which describes the low-level “battle morale” component that determines the effectiveness of combat teams;
  - c. Social Anthropology, which has the potential to describe the cultural bridge between strategic legitimacy and tactical morale.
8. Despite overlapping areas of interest, notably concerning tactics and the way of command, the practitioners of these disciplines very rarely meet. This has created considerable differences in perspective, methodology and jargon, and these hinder mutual understanding.
9. Political Theory (particularly the engagement between political and moral philosophers in the arena of Just War theory) has become increasingly abstract as the influence of analytical moral philosophy has grown.<sup>11</sup> The reliance on formal philosophical method and thought experiments has weakened traditional connections between Just War theory and military experience and practice. The alternative approach, seeing war as a ‘social practice’,<sup>12</sup> relies on case-based, applied ethical reasoning<sup>13</sup> and is more open to insights from combatants, but this has lost scholarly prominence. Consequently, consideration of the effects that the morality of a conflict has on the morale of combatants has been increasingly marginalised.
10. Murray’s tactical psychology model describes the cognitive and emotional responses to fire and manoeuvre, and therefore the means of shaping battle morale, combat participation and effectiveness, but it treats belief in war aims as one of several ill-defined inputs to baseline combat motivation.<sup>14</sup> Although baseline inputs have occasionally been drawn from studies on nationality and collective training, there is no mechanism for representing commitment to war aims. As a result, tactical psychological studies rarely reach above the consideration of cognitive burden or the suppressive effects of small arms fire.
11. Kirke’s social anthropological study of the social structures of the British Army provides a rich description of how units and combat teams cohere, and links this to the wider social environment.<sup>15</sup> While Kirke’s model could be used to identify the effect of public perceptions of a war’s legitimacy on unit morale and effectiveness, it has never explicitly been used to do so.
12. Despite the limitations to each discipline, there are areas where overlap provides potential for collaboration to address the moral-morale relationship. In tactical psychology, cohesion is an essential modifier of combat participation but is, in practice, a simplification of the informal and loyalty structures described by Kirke. Likewise, compulsion in tactical psychology is analogous to the interaction of Kirke’s formal and functional structures.
13. The links between social anthropology and political theory are less obvious but Kirke’s “cultural stripe” offers a means by which public attitudes can influence commitment to war aims. This reinforces Kelsay’s argument for the importance of Just War thinking as a social

practice<sup>16</sup> and potentially links with recent analyses of the role of public engagement in political debate about the legitimacy of specific conflicts and the deployment of UK armed forces.<sup>17</sup>

14. These areas of overlap suggest the potential for a simple conceptual model of the interaction between moral, morale and combat effectiveness. One such model is shown at Figure 1, below.

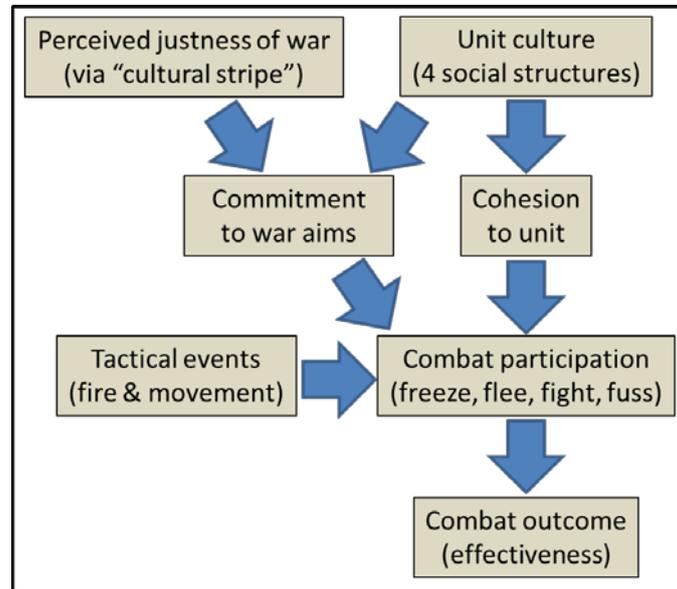


Figure 1: Initial conceptual model of the moral-morale relationship

15. As it stands, this model has very little practical value but a concerted effort at theory generation could produce a model that has predictive power, is testable and may (in work beyond the scope of the current proposal) allow quantification of the moral-morale relationship. With a robust theory of the moral-morale relationship it should be possible to predict the problems indicated earlier (paragraphs 5 and 6).<sup>†</sup>

### Approach

16. The proposed approach will use a recognised leader from two of the three disciplines.<sup>‡</sup> The work will be a collaborative exploration of the relationship between moral and morale factors – a genuine first look aiming to generate a testable theory. A tight model-test-model approach is proposed, where Wapentake Systems and Durham University personnel create then critique and refine their understanding of the moral-morale relationship.
17. The main component of the work will be in phase 2, where Wapentake Systems will build from the conceptual model indicated at Figure 1, adapting or abandoning it in light of the factors identified in the opening workshop. Phase 2 will use three secondary sources – Waltzer’s *Just and Unjust Wars*, Kirke’s *Red Coat*, *Green Machine* and Murray’s *Brains and Bullets*. There will also be reference to the many primary sources used in tactical psychology (such as those mentioned in paragraphs 2 to 4).

<sup>†</sup> Whether such a theory could hope to predict the effectiveness of enemy and allied forces, or the benefits of an information campaign, is uncertain at present.

<sup>‡</sup> Unfortunately the third, Dr Charles Kirke, has prior commitments but will be consulted on an informal basis.

18. The model will then be passed to Durham for critique and back to Wapentake for refinement and reporting. These activities are outlined in Table 1, below.

Activity	Description	Responsibility
1. Opening workshop	Scope boundaries; refine questions, hypotheses & approach.	Durham 30%; Wapentake 70%
2. Model creation	Build influence diagram; identify potential relationship on unit effectiveness.	Wapentake 100%
3. Model critique	Criticise model and suggest improvement	Durham 100%
4. Model refinement	Adjust model in light of critique; identify implications.	Durham 10%; Wapentake 90%
5. Model confirmation	Workshop to determine final characteristics of the model.	Durham 30%; Wapentake 70%
6. Reporting	As defined in SOR.	Wapentake 100%

*Table 1: Proposed project phases*

19. Several hypotheses will be examined during the work, including:

- a. That moral and morale are connected;
- b. That the primary mechanism linking them is organisational culture;
- c. That the moral-morale interaction can be expressed in two dimensions with perceived legitimacy and unit cohesion as the axes;
- d. That when perceived legitimacy and unit cohesion are weak, combat incidents will tend toward being characterised by avoidance of combat;
- e. That when perceived legitimacy is weak but unit cohesion is strong, combat incidents will tend toward being characterised by atrocity.

20. These hypotheses will be used and refined to address two key questions:

- a. What is the relationship between the moral legitimacy of a conflict and the morale of deployed forces?
- b. Can mitigation be put in place to protect the morale of forces deployed on operations lacking popular support?

### The team

21. Dermot Rooney developed the combat participation model, was co-author of *Brains and Bullets* and has been central to the development of tactical psychology since running the *Human Factors input to Operational Analysis* project in the 1990s.<sup>18</sup> More recently he was the author of *Tactical Psychology in PCE*<sup>19</sup> for DHCSTC and supported Dstl work on the morale effects of suppressive fire.<sup>20</sup>

22. Prof John Williams specialises in ethics in international relations, with a particular focus on ethics and culture, and ethics and violence. He is the author of *Ethics, Diversity and World Politics*<sup>21</sup> and contributing co-editor to *Just War: Authority, Tradition and Practice*<sup>22</sup> writing on UK public opinion and the ethics of the 2003 Iraq invasion. He has published on the impact of drones on Just War theory<sup>23</sup> and ethical dimensions of regulatory debates around emergent autonomous weapons systems.<sup>24</sup>

### Constraints

23. The main constraints on the proposed work are time and the availability of personnel. As noted earlier, Dr Charles Kirke is not available but Dermot Rooney will be able to fill this gap

due a long collaboration with Dr Kirke and frequent exposure to the development of *Red Coat, Green Machine*. The proposed study is further limited by the limited time available to Durham University and Wapentake Systems personnel (see Part C).

24. The study is therefore unavoidably exploratory and discursive but the novel combination of approaches and the competence of the team will certainly provide valuable insights into the moral-morale relationship.

## Output

25. Products will consist of a written report, by 31 Mar 2015, and a presentation at the customer's convenience. These will describe the relationship between the perceived legitimacy of conflict, the morale of the forces involved and the implications for future operations. The report will also describe the moral-morale model and options for future development.

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<sup>1</sup> Barnhart, R. K. and Steinmetz, S. (Eds.) 1999. Chambers Dictionary of Etymology. Edinburgh: Chambers.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, C., McM. (Lord Moran). 1945. The Anatomy of Courage. London: Constable & Co.

<sup>3</sup> Dollard, J. and Horton, D. 1944. Fear in Battle. Washington: Infantry Journal.

<sup>4</sup> Stouffer, S. A., Lumsdaine, A. A., Lumsdaine, M. H., Williams, R. M., Smith, M. B., Janis, I. L., Star, S. A. and Cottrell, L. S. 1949. The American Soldier: Combat and its Aftermath. Princeton: University Press.

<sup>5</sup> Shils, E. A. and Janowitz, M. 1948. Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II. Public Opinion Quarterly 12 (2): 280-315.

<sup>6</sup> In current doctrine the "moral component" of fighting power is concerned with morale, namely '*the ability to get people to operate and fight*'. DCDC, 2010. ADP Operations. Army Code 71940.

<sup>7</sup> Definition from NATO STANAG 2564 AMedP-8.6, Forward Mental Healthcare, Edition A Version 1, May 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Solomon, Z. 1993. Combat Stress: The Enduring Toll of War. New York: Springer.

<sup>9</sup> There is no open reference for this statement. It is based on post combat interviews and units' post operation reports. Hints can be seen in some commercial unit histories, for example Ch 17 of Harbden, T. 2013. Dead Men Risen: The Welsh Guards and the Defining Story of Britain's War in Afghanistan. London: Quercus.

<sup>10</sup> "Sallust" 2015. Myth, Muddle and Spin. The British War in Afghanistan 2001-2014. Createspace.

<sup>11</sup> Key texts include Rodin, D. 2002, War and Self-Defense; McMahan, J. 2009, Killing in War; Fabre, C. 2014, Cosmopolitan War.

<sup>12</sup> Kelsay, J. 2013. Just War Thinking as a Social Practice. Ethics and International Affairs 27 (1): 67-86.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. Rengger, N. 2002. On the Just War Tradition in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. International Affairs 78 (2): 353-363.

Walzer, M. 2006 Just and Unjust Wars: a Moral Argument With Historical Illustrations (4<sup>th</sup> edition)

<sup>14</sup> Murray, L. 2013. Brains & Bullets: How Psychology Wins Wars. London: Biteback.

<sup>15</sup> Kirke, C. 2009. Red Coat, Green Machine. Continuity and Change in the British Army 1700 to 2000. London: Continuum.

<sup>16</sup> Kelsay, 2013.

<sup>17</sup> E.g. Williams, J. 2013. "Not in My Name"? Legitimate Authority and Liberal Just War Theory. in Lang, A. F. Jr., O'Driscoll, C. and Williams J. (Eds.). Just War: Authority, Tradition and Practice.

<sup>18</sup> Rooney, D. 1999. ShockSAF and the Combat Participation Model. Human behaviour in a combat model. DERA report.

<sup>19</sup> Rooney, D. 2014. Tactical psychology in Platoon Combat Experimentation scoping study. UC-DHCSTC\_I387246\_I\_T3\_104/002.

<sup>20</sup> Rooney, D. 2015. Resetting the 1m rule: support to STANAG 4513 update. Wapentake Systems 20150801 STANAG 4513 Letter Report.

<sup>21</sup> Williams, J. C. 2015. Ethics, Diversity and World Politics: Saving Pluralism from Itself? Oxford: UP.

<sup>22</sup> Lang, A. F., O'Driscoll, C. and Williams, J. C. (Eds.) 2013. Just War: Authority, Tradition and Practice. Georgetown: UP.

<sup>23</sup> Williams, J. C. 2015. Distant Intimacy: Space, drones, and just war. Ethics & International Affairs 29(01): 93-100.

<sup>24</sup> Williams, J. C. 2015. Democracy and Regulating Autonomous Weapons: Biting the Bullet while Missing the Point? Global Policy 6(3): 179-189.