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Research Essay

A Few Good Visions

Time for Wartime Leadership

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A Few Good Visions
Time for Wartime Leadership

“... the morale is to the physical as three is to one ...”

Napoleon¹

Introduction

Over the centuries, historians, military leaders and scientists have attempted to determine what it is that reaches into the “heart and soul” of a soldier and determines the “will to fight”. In his book On War, Karl von Clausewitz notes that warfare is a human issue that is complex and imprecise at best.² Similarly, morale, like any study of human behavior, is a complex matter that does not lend itself to simple explanations. In consequence, theories regarding the concept of morale abound. As suggested by Frederick Manning, morale is a key characteristic of individuals that is closely related to Leo Tolstoy’s unknown “X” which represents the spirit of an army.³

¹ Quoted in: Larry H. Ingraham and Frederick Manning, “Cohesion: Who Needs It, What Is It and How Do We Get It to Them?” Military Review (June 1981): 3.

² Karl von Clausewitz, On War trans. O.J. Matthijs Jolles (New York: Random House Inc, 1943), 84-86.

³ Manning opens his discussion on Morale, Cohesion and Esprit de Corps with a quote from Leo Tolstoy’s “War and Peace” 1904. Frederick J. Manning, “Morale Cohesion and Esprit de Corps,” Handbook of Military Psychology ed. R. Gal and A.D. Mangelsdorff (Chicester: John Wiley and Sons Ltd., 1991), 453.

Morale is so essential to the effective conduct of operations that the “maintenance of morale” is considered to be one of the ten principles of war.⁴ The morale of a soldier⁵ is influenced by a number of factors such as food, shelter, faith in leaders, and a clearly stated role and mission. During periods of war or major conflict, the challenge of overcoming an adversary functions as the mission and therefore provides a unifying “X” which motivates soldiers to succeed. In periods of peace, however, the threat from an adversary is no longer present. The role of the military therefore become less clear. How then, in periods of extended peace marked by uncertainty and downsizing, do military leaders define a worthy role for the military to motivate soldiers into action?

Lawrence and Ruth Birkner in their discussion of change, portray vision as something that gives people direction and hope, and motivates them into action.⁶ It captures the hearts and minds of an organization and acts to align all individuals towards a mental image of the future. Like Tolstoy’s elusive “X”, a vision provides purpose and inspires an organization to be much greater than the sum of its individual parts. From the proceeding, it would appear that a vision, like a compelling mission, has the potential to generate a unity of purpose and spirit. This special spirit, along with other factors such as

⁴ Canada, B-GL-300-000/FP-000 Canada’s Army: We Stand of Guard For Thee (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1998), 96.

⁵ Recognizing that militaries today consist of both males and females, the term “soldier” will be used in a non-gender sense to refer to both male and female members of the military regardless of their occupation.

⁶ Lawrence and Ruth Birkner, “Making Successful Change,” Occupational Hazards (June 1998): 14.

adequate working conditions, sufficient resources and quality of life, could therefore contribute to morale within an organization.

In this essay, the relationship between the morale of a military force and the presence of a clearly stated vision will be explored. The concept of morale, cohesion, and esprit will be examined in an attempt to establish a causal relationship with the presence of a well defined mission. Current leadership philosophies will be reviewed and the concept of vision will be investigated. In the end, it will be demonstrated that in the absence of major conflicts or war, the presence of a carefully prepared vision can positively influence morale at the operational level.

Some Thoughts on Morale

In his study of morale, Manning refers to Tolstoy's discussion of the unknown "X" which, when multiplied by the mass of an army, produces the force of an army. To expand on this concept, he quotes the following from Tolstoy: "X is the spirit of the army, the greater or less desire to fight and face dangers on the part of all the men composing the army, which is quite apart from the question whether they are fighting under leaders of genius or not, with cudgels or with guns that fire thirty times a minute."⁷ As early as 400 BC, Xenophon discovered that it is not just numbers or strength that bring victory, but whichever army goes into battle stronger in soul.⁸ It is therefore

⁷ Manning introduces the subject of morale using this quote to relate morale to Tolstoy's "X". Manning, "Morale Cohesion and Esprit de Corps," 453.

⁸ F.M. Richardson, Fighting Spirit: A Study of Psychological Factors in War (London: Leo Cooper Ltd., 1978), 3.

evident that there exists some elusive force that acts within a military to build soul or spirit, and enables its components to possess a force much greater than the sum of its individual parts.

Manning relates morale to this force or “X” in that it reflects the enthusiasm and persistence with which soldiers carry-out their duties.⁹ He identifies cohesion and esprit, as major contributors to morale, which while often used synonymously with morale, are in fact, distinct from it, and each other. While a number of approaches to defining morale have been taken by various authors,¹⁰ the preceding context provided by Manning will be used as the basis for the discussion of morale in this essay.

The Canadian Army places a great emphasis on cohesion as the most important requirement of a combat force that must be developed and protected above all else. To provide an understanding of cohesion, the Canadian Army offers the following statement:

⁹ Manning, “Morale Cohesion and Esprit de Corps,” 455.

¹⁰ In conducting research for this essay other approaches to defining the correlates of morale were identified. John Baynes bases his assessment of morale on a very broad definition which he expounds upon through an analysis of the actions of the Second Scottish Rifles Regiment during the battle of Neuve Chapelle 1915. In his study he does not address cohesion or esprit. John Baynes, Morale (London: Cassell & Company Ltd., 1967). In a similar manner, I.N. Evonic studies the components of morale from a more academic perspective but again does not include a discussion of cohesion or esprit. I.N. Evonic, “Motivation and Morale in Military Non-Combat Organizations”.

Cohesion, in its simplest sense, is unity. It is that vital attribute which binds and focuses the will and personal effort of individual soldiers in a force with synergistic effect towards a common aim or objective.¹¹

From this statement, it is evident that cohesion is a primary group concept.¹² It is characterized by the bonding together of individuals in face-to-face association, and can lead to horizontal integration within small groups and teams. The Defense Management Study Group on Military Cohesion identified the following situational factors that affect cohesion:¹³

Tradition the long established body of historical knowledge that defines the groups heritage and distinction from other groups;

Trend of recent experience the tendency of recent experience, particularly success, to build expectations and thus become a self fulfilling prophecy;

Crises the tendency of a group to pull together when it is faced with an external threat;

Equity a sense of fairness where the members of the group must perceive that they are being treated fairly; and

¹¹ Canada, B-GL-300-000/FP-000 Canada's Army: We Stand of Guard For Thee, 39.

¹² Janowitz provides the following definition: "By primary groups sociologists mean those small social groupings in which social behavior is governed by intimate face-to-face relations." Morris Janowitz, Sociology and the Military Establishment (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1975), 93.

¹³ John H. Johns et al., Cohesion in the US Military (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1984), 32.

Quality of Leadership this is the most critical factor as leaders must build both horizontal and vertical cohesion.

Manning reinforces these points when he states that shared military experiences, in particular combat experiences, are the “glue that bind” the group together.¹⁴ Like the Defense Management Study Group, he believes that the presence of an enemy, with the capacity and the intent to kill or injure, unites individuals together in a common effort. He suggests that these common experiences are effective in building cohesion to the extent that they provide soldiers with confidence in the ability and determination of their peers to protect them in danger or combat. Central to this theme is the individual’s conviction that he or she is firmly integrated into a “network of mutual obligation”.¹⁵ Manning submits that cohesion is a very important contributor to morale.

To explore the relationship between a mission and cohesion, it is useful to examine the following definition provided by Edward Meyer:

[T]he bonding together of soldiers in such a way as to sustain their will and commitment to each other, the unit, and mission accomplishment, despite combat or mission stress.¹⁶

¹⁴ Manning, “Morale Cohesion and Esprit de Corps,” 462.

¹⁵ Ibid., 463.

¹⁶ Manning refers to this quote to introduce the subject of cohesion. Manning, “Morale Cohesion and Esprit de Corps,” 457.

Although this definition does not mention satisfaction or the importance of the well-being of an individual, it does include commitment to the mission and the unit. It is evident that cohesion extends beyond the face-to-face bond and functions at the unit level. The Defense Management Study Group on Military Cohesion highlights the importance of commitment to the mission.¹⁷ This, they emphasize, is essential for cohesion to extend beyond the group itself towards the greater good or the effectiveness of the organization. Without this external view, group cohesion would be directed inwards for the good of the group only. It could therefore become a negative factor.¹⁸

Manning comments on the importance of “clear and meaningful group missions” in the maintenance of cohesion between units at the operational level.¹⁹ Soldiers have to see that their efforts and the risks that they incur are for something worthwhile. He refers to discipline problems and drug abuse in the U.S. Army in the later years of the Vietnam War. During this period, it became clear that America had determined that their task was not worth pursuing. It is important to recognize that while cohesion can act as a positive motivator, it is a human characteristic that can be problematic. In a study of difficulties encountered by the Canadian Airborne Regiment (CAR) deployment to Somalia, Donna

¹⁷ Johns et al., Cohesion in the US Military, 4.

¹⁸ This point is commented on by Nora Stewart when she refers to the darker side of cohesion resulting in fraggings, a drug subculture and even mutiny when the group does not have an external allegiance. Nora K. Stewart, Mates and Muchachos (Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s Inc., 1991), 18.

¹⁹ Manning, “Morale Cohesion and Esprit de Corps,” 464.

Winslow states that to maintain a strong outward commitment, discipline, self control, and commitment to a high standard of personal conduct must be continually reinforced.²⁰

In summary, cohesion is a primary group characteristic that ties individuals together in one-to-one associations and contributes to morale at all levels in the military. It extends beyond the one-to-one relationship and is reflected by the commitment of individuals to the unit and its mission. It is evident that the commitment of the individual to the mission does facilitate stronger cohesion. This could provide the basis for greater horizontal integration, and result in a more positive team spirit with the potential to enhance morale. While there are other factors to consider, it is recognized that a full understanding of the mechanisms that generate cohesion is a complex matter and therefore beyond the scope of this essay.

Tactical level leaders can generate cohesion and unity of effort through effective leadership and a clear articulation of the crew or section mission. They must establish the goals and values for the section and ensure that a high standard of discipline is maintained. These initiatives will build commitment throughout the chain of command, or vertical integration. At the operational level, leaders should utilize component goals to clearly define unit objectives. Through command presence and effective communications, they set the standards and expectations to build strong cohesion at the operational level.

²⁰ Donna Winslow, "The Canadian Airborne Regiment in Somalia: A Social-Cultural Inquiry," (Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing, 1997), 266.

According to Manning, esprit is a higher order concept that parallels cohesion at the primary group level. It implies above all, a pride in and devotion to the reputation of an organization beyond the primary group.²¹ He states that esprit is necessary for sustained effective performance of soldiers in combat. As a secondary group level function, esprit bridges the gap between the soldier and the strategic level. It binds the military member to the unit or regiment building organizational commitment. Canada and Britain have exploited this concept in the Army Regimental system which associates history and tradition with each regiment. As stated in B-GL-300-000/FP-000 Canada's Army: We Stand of Guard For Thee: "Its utility and value further lies in the strong sense of comradeship it fosters among the members of a regiment and in its tribal/familial nature which bonds soldiers in devotion, loyalty and selflessness to each other, contributing powerfully to unit cohesion."²² These attributes tie soldiers to the reputation and purpose of the regiment and motivate them to carry on against all odds. Nora Stewart, in her analysis of the Falklands War, makes the following comments on the power of the British regimental system:

The British with their long tradition of battles and heroes were well aware of who they were and what their proud tradition meant to the regiment and to the unit. ... When Lieutenant Colonel (now Colonel) Andrew Whitehead turned to the men of 45 Commando after the sinking of the *Atlantic Conveyor* and said 'We marched

²¹ Manning, "Morale Cohesion and Esprit de Corps," 458.

²² Canada, B-GL-300-000/FP-000 Canada's Army: We Stand of Guard For Thee, 44.

from Normandy to Berlin. We can bloody well march eighty miles to Stanley' his men knew that the tradition of the Royal Marines was at stake. They marched. They slogged. They yomped. They were Marines.²³

Regimental considerations should never be allowed to impinge on operational requirements.²⁴ Care must be taken to ensure that the regimental system is not embraced to such a degree that it fragments or weakens organizational cohesion. In her study of the deployment of the CAR to Somalia, Donna Winslow comments on how organizational cohesion can break down when allegiance to the identity of the unit becomes extremely distorted.²⁵ She notes that the emergence of a subculture within any formation, where there is exaggerated unit loyalty, can lead to dysfunctional behavior by unit members.²⁶ Moreover, the bonds of loyalty can lead members of a unit to protect each other, and unit pride becomes so exaggerated that respect for other units and authority is lost. Winslow refers to situations where “hyperinvestment in a group identity leads to strong in-group/out-group tendencies which in turn can be expressed in varying form of

²³ Stewart, Mates and Muchachos, 86-87.

²⁴ Canada, B-GL-300-000/FP-000 Canada's Army: We Stand of Guard For Thee, 43.

²⁵ Winslow, “The Canadian Airborne Regiment in Somalia: A Social-Cultural Inquiry,” 256-259.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 263.

aggression.”²⁷ Franklin Pinch in his assessment of lessons learned from Canadian peacekeeping experiences, notes that integration among units can be problematic and devastate cohesion and morale.²⁸ He recommends that leaders foster improved cohesion among the elements of a force through opportunities to interact in activities such as sports competitions. In addition, he suggests that commanders build an atmosphere where members of the units perceive that there is a sense of fair treatment and equal sharing of the burdens.

Manning relates esprit to the concept of “organizational commitment”, which is the relative strength of an individual’s identification with, and involvement in a particular organization.²⁹ He goes on to state that it involves a strong belief in the organization’s goals and values and a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization. In commenting on the group factors affecting esprit, Manning states that leaders are the links by which the primary groups are integrated into larger secondary groups at the operational level.³⁰ It is the operational level leaders that impress the values and goals of the larger group on the primary group to build vertical integration

²⁷ Ibid., 266.

²⁸ Franklin C. Pinch, “Lessons From Canadian Peacekeeping Experience: A Human Resources Perspective,” (Gloucester, Ontario: FCP Human Resources Consulting, 1994), 153.

²⁹ Manning, “Morale Cohesion and Esprit de Corps,” 458.

³⁰ Ibid., 465.

throughout the chain of command. In other words, leaders translate strategic goals into operational objectives and further to tactical missions. Manning suggests that the degree to which leaders are successful in this role determines the extent to which their units display “esprit de corps”. High levels of esprit mean that soldiers’ loyalties go beyond face-to-face peers and their immediate leaders. This is an important step if morale is to be maintained at the operational level, particularly in combat situations and the presence of danger.

To sum up, esprit functions at the secondary group level to create “organizational commitment” and results in a vertical integration throughout the chain of command. Esprit provides that higher purpose that ties soldiers to a unit and motivates them to “stand and fight vice break and run”. Moreover, through careful implementation of the regimental system, commanders can generate strong unit cohesion which should contribute to morale at the operational level. Commanders at this level should utilize objectives based on strategic goals to build unity of purpose which reinforces the operational level spirit. As noted by Winslow, it is the operational level leaders which must ensure that a balanced and outward commitment is maintained.³¹ E.H. Schein expands on this point in the following: “Leaders are the primary agents by which an organization’s culture and role norms are modelled, transmitted, and maintained.”³²

³¹ Winslow, “The Canadian Airborne Regiment in Somalia: A Social-Cultural Inquiry,” 266.

³² Quoted by Winslow to emphasize the importance of leaders in this area. Ibid.

Morale has been analyzed in a number of contexts: industrial, educational, medical and military. In each context, there have been variations in the definition of the term, which emphasize different aspects of this elusive concept. The U.S. Army defines morale as “the mental, emotional and spiritual state of the individual. It is how he feels – happy, hopeful, confident, appreciated, worthless, sad, unrecognized, or depressed.”³³ In this definition, the focus is on the individual. Yet as Manning suggests, there is no reference or relationship to an organization, higher purpose or goal. John Baynes in his study of the Second Scottish Rifles at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle 1915 explores morale in a greater context.³⁴ At the conclusion of his assessment, he refers to the following Webster’s dictionary definition of morale:

A confident, resolute, willing, often self-sacrificing and courageous attitude of an individual to the functions or tasks demanded or expected of him by a group of which he is part that is based upon such factors as pride in achievements and aims of the group, faith in its leadership and ultimate success, a sense of fruitful participation in its work, and a devotion and loyalty to other members of the group.³⁵

This definition is preferred as it extends the concept of morale to the secondary group level and reflects the influence of the mission as the “functions or tasks demanded or

³³ Manning refers to this definition in his discussion of morale. Manning, “Morale Cohesion and Esprit de Corps,” 454.

³⁴ Baynes, Morale, 108.

³⁵ Ibid.

expected of him”. Here the components of cohesion and esprit are reflected in the context set out by Manning.³⁶

In discussing the individual factors that act as determinants of morale, Manning identifies the importance of physical factors such as food, water, medical support, rest, and weapons to build or strengthen the cohesion.³⁷ Pinch notes that other considerations such as family support, rest and relaxation, and psychological support contribute to the well being and sense of satisfaction of the soldier.³⁸ In addition, Manning describes a number of psychological factors which, he contends, are more complex and have a much more substantial impact on morale than the physical factors.³⁹ He states that to have high morale, it is essential that each soldier be provided a goal, a role, and a reason for self-confidence. I.N. Evonic further emphasizes this point when he identifies “commitment to the organization aim” as one of three factors that define the dimensions of morale.⁴⁰

³⁶ Manning, “Morale Cohesion and Esprit de Corps,” 455.

³⁷ Ibid., 459.

³⁸ Pinch, “Lessons From Canadian Peacekeeping Experience: A Human Resources Perspective,” 94-121.

³⁹ Manning, “Morale Cohesion and Esprit de Corps,” 459.

⁴⁰ Evonic conducted an analysis of factors that influence the development and maintenance of morale in military non-combat organizations. In his exploration of the subject he proposed a theoretical framework in which he identified three main dimensions which he states cluster the facets of morale. Evonic, “Motivation and Morale in Military Non-Combat Organizations,” 26-28.

Evonic states that to be effective, military members must fully understand the objective, they must believe in its validity, and they must have a perception that it is attainable. In commenting on building morale, Manning notes that patriotism and other abstract ideas are rated low as incentives to achieve maximum effort.⁴¹ He suggests that it is the emphasis on primary groups and interpersonal relations in small combat units that contribute most significantly to morale. It is clear that, at the operational level, morale can be enhanced by defining objectives in terms that the individual member can relate to, thus stimulating the cohesive mechanisms. As noted earlier, these mechanisms are complex in nature and will not be explored in this essay.

The role of the soldier must be unambiguous so that he or she clearly understands what is expected and how he or she fits into the organization.⁴² This relationship enhances the sense of belonging to the organization to accept the traditions of the regiment and fight for its reputation. In commenting on self-confidence, Stewart states that soldiers must have confidence in themselves, their peers, and their leadership in order to motivate them to take that first step into battle.⁴³ This level of cohesion and confidence can only be achieved through teamwork and training which leads to increased competence. She reinforces this point in the following:

⁴¹ Manning, "Morale Cohesion and Esprit de Corps," 460.

⁴² Ibid., 462.

⁴³ Stewart, Mates and Muchachos, 102.

Teamwork in the military sense, means that men in the unit trust each other enough to go out on patrol, to fire weapons, to advance through minefields, and to make a second, third, or fourth advance. ... Teamwork involves knowing and trusting leaders, learning through advanced and realistic training, being sure of the mission, having a sense of patriotism, and knowing the weaknesses and strengths of their comrades.⁴⁴

From the proceeding, it is evident that morale is a complex and imprecise concept that is directly influenced by esprit and cohesion. Military leaders can play a critical role in the development of morale through effective leadership and by building commitment to a mission. Leaders provide the link between the strategic and operational levels and establish the goals and values of the group which should enhance external cohesion. To be effective at building morale at the operational level, commanders should provide units meaningful objectives. These can be readily translated into purposeful missions at the tactical level that reach down through the chain of command to the soldier. Commanders should possess personal drive and determination to achieve unity of effort through timely decision making, clearly articulated intent and development of the will to victory.⁴⁵ Consistent throughout this analysis is the importance of a mission in the development of strong cohesion and esprit, and consequently high morale at the operational level.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Canada, B-GL-300-000/FP-000 Canada's Army: We Stand of Guard For Thee,

Leadership or Management

To introduce the concept of leadership, John Kotter states that it is “the process of moving a group (or groups) of people in some direction through (mostly) non-coercive means”.⁴⁶ In their analysis of leadership, Gordon Sullivan and Michael Harper refer to the term “strategic leadership” as having the following three components: managing, creating the future, and team building.⁴⁷ While leadership is different from management, the two concepts are compatible. Both are, nevertheless, necessary for success. Kotter suggests that leadership is about coping with change, while management is about coping with complexity.⁴⁸ As stated by Ken Blanchard: “the leadership role – doing the right thing ... the management role, which is doing things right”.⁴⁹ It is evident from the preceding that leadership is a socially oriented concept based on human relationships while management is oriented in industrial psychology with a focus on analytical thinking and resource allocation.

⁴⁶ John Kotter, The Leadership Factor (New York: The Free Press, 1988), 16.

⁴⁷ Gordon R. Sullivan and Michael V. Harper, Hope is Not A Method (New York: Random House, 1996), 44.

⁴⁸ John Kotter, “What Leaders Really Do,” Harvard Business Review (May /Jun 1990): 104.

⁴⁹ Ken Blanchard, “Turning the Organizational Pyramid Upside Down,” The Leader of the Future ed. Francis Hesselebin, Marshall Goldsmith and Richard Beckhard (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996), 81.

According to Kotter, leadership in a complex organization involves three functions: establishing direction, aligning people, and motivating and inspiring.⁵⁰ Leaders establish direction through the development of a vision of the future along with the strategies necessary to achieve that vision. They align people by way of ardent communication to those whose cooperation will be needed to achieve the vision. This requires constant energy and enthusiasm to motivate and inspire individuals and keep them moving in the right direction, despite major barriers. In contrast, Kotter submits that managing involves: planning and budgeting, organizing and staffing, and controlling and problem solving.⁵¹ Managers plan and budget through careful analysis of the situation, and set goals for the future, typically for the next month or year. They establish detailed steps to achieve the plan and allocate the necessary resources for its success. To accomplish their plans, managers formulate an organizational structure, define the necessary jobs, and staff the jobs with qualified individuals. To be successful, managers must communicate the plan, delegate responsibility for its implementation, and establish control mechanisms. They must monitor feedback from the control mechanisms and resolve problems through fine tuning the organization and or the processes to ensure the targets are being met.

Leaders should recognize the differences between leadership and management and attempt to achieve a balance between both. As Regina Creech indicates in her

⁵⁰ John Kotter, A Force for Change (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 5.

⁵¹ Ibid., 4.

examination of employee motivation, leaders must seek-out occasions to afford employees motivational opportunities to enhance their morale and energize them into action.⁵² Critical in this process, is the need to align all employees in the same direction and motivate them to achieve excellence.

Vision an Essential Component of Leadership

In their study of leadership, Sullivan and Harper provide the following framework for vision: “Vision is a sense of the future. It is an imagined possibility, stretching beyond today’s capability, providing an intellectual bridge from today to tomorrow, and forming a basis for looking ahead, not for affirming the past or status quo.”⁵³ A vision serves as a beacon in the fog for all that need to understand what the organization is, and where it intends to go. Caryl Berry et al. emphasize the need to establish vision and trust in that vision.⁵⁴ They suggest that there is nothing more galvanizing than a clearly stated vision. In organizations where the development of teams was well supported, they found a marked similarity in the way that teams and managers shared an organizational vision. Lawrence and Ruth Birkner reinforce this point in discussing rapid change.⁵⁵ They

⁵² See Creech for an explanation of the categories of motivation factors. Regina M. Creech, “Employee Motivation,” Management Quarterly (Summer 1995): 33-34.

⁵³ Sullivan and Harper, Hope is Not A Method, 79.

⁵⁴ Caryl Berry, Amy Avergun and Darlene Russ-Eft, “Highly Responsive Teams and Your Competitive Edge,” Journal for Quality and Participation (September 1993): 73.

⁵⁵ Birkner and Birkner, “Making Successful Change,” 13.

comment on the direction and focus that a vision gives people, and how it motivates them to take action in support of a vision. Critical to the effectiveness of a vision is that it should capture the hearts and minds of an organization. James A. Vaughan relates vision to organizational excellence, and comments on the importance of a shared vision that provides a focal point for an organization.⁵⁶ He suggests that a vision is essential to guide staffs in organizations where they are required to work in isolation from each other or regularly deal with new situations. In summation, visioning provides a mental image of a future state of an organization. Moreover, it creates a unity of purpose that motivates individuals to excel.

Burt Nanus in his study of visionary leadership defines vision simply as an articulation of a realistic, credible, attractive future for an organization.⁵⁷ It is a mental model of a desirable or idealistic future for the organization that is better, more successful, and more desirable than the present. A vision describes where tomorrow begins, and the future that the organization will create. Nanus submits that a vision is so energizing that it jump-starts the future by calling forth the skills, talent, and resources to make it happen. A vision transcends the day to day. It inspires people to commit voluntarily and completely to something truly worthwhile. To be truly effective, a vision should have relevance to an organization, and be a mental image of something that its

⁵⁶ James A. Vaughan, "Vision and Meaning," Executive Excellence (March 1997): 11.

⁵⁷ Burt Nanus, Visionary Leadership (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1992), 8.

members can relate to and believe in.⁵⁸ According to Kotter, a vision should be specific enough to provide guidance to people, but vague enough to encourage initiative and to remain relevant under a variety of conditions.⁵⁹ From the proceeding, it is fair to state that vision is a concept that functions at the strategic level of a military organization to provide unity of purpose and a future destination for all components.

Visioning is a conscientious effort that requires a focus on cognitive skills. According to Sullivan and Harper, visioning requires a great deal of reflection and careful consideration before pen is put to paper. They state: “Before you move bricks and mortar, you must move your mind.”⁶⁰ Keith Denton in his thoughts on vision, stresses the role of the leader and the critical need for a vision that is shared throughout the organization.⁶¹ He likens the leader to the designer of a ship who conceived the frame as a foundation upon which everything is constructed. He states that: “The frame of an organization is its purpose, vision, and core values by which people act and interact.”⁶² Leaders should demonstrate consolidated support for and commitment to a vision, They need to

⁵⁸ Ibid., 16

⁵⁹ Kotter, A Force for Change, 36.

⁶⁰ Sullivan and Harper, Hope is Not A Method, 81.

⁶¹ Keith D. Denton, “Building a Shared Vision,” SAM Advanced Management Journal (Winter 1997): 36.

⁶² Ibid.

constantly communicate the vision in an honest and forthright manner. This aspect of building a vision is important as noted by James Kouzes and Berry Posner, “The leader’s clarity of purpose and ability to articulate both the vision and shared values give certainty and purpose to others who may be unsure, who are afraid, or who would otherwise have difficulty achieving greatness on their own.”⁶³ Leaders should be actively involved in the implementation of a vision, and take every opportunity to encourage participation in achievement of that vision. They should strive to motivate people and to align them in a common direction to achieve unity of purpose through active support of a vision.

Not all visions are created equal. Therefore, as suggested by Kotter, they should be subjected to desirability and feasibility tests.⁶⁴ The desirability of a vision is determined through consideration of how well the future state described in the vision serves the interests of all concerned. As put by Denton, “Before you begin to lead change, you want to ask yourself if you have a vision worthy of others’ commitment.”⁶⁵ To determine the feasibility of a vision, an implementation strategy should be considered and evaluated to ensure it is realistically possible to achieve the desired state.

⁶³ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, “Seven Lessons for Leading the Voyage into the Future,” The Leader of the Future ed. Francis Hesselebin, Marshall Goldsmith and Richard Beckhard (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996), 186.

⁶⁴ Kotter, A Force for Change, 36.

⁶⁵ Denton, “Building a Shared Vision,” 38.

It is necessary to generate a strategy for the implementation of a vision. The steps that lead to a vision should build on the known strengths of an organization and address the weaknesses that have been identified in that organization. To provide a true sense of accomplishment, small successes should be celebrated and achievements recognized. Kotter suggests that the development of a strategy should involve stakeholders at all levels. This will ensure that the strategy is meaningful and that stakeholders are committed to its success.⁶⁶ As the strategy unfolds, leaders should remain committed and continuously communicate the importance of the vision. Leaders should also listen for feedback and be prepared to make adjustments to address deficiencies or issues that were not contemplated.

In summary, a vision is a mental image of a future destination of an organization. It aligns its components and energizes its members into action. Vision can be likened to Tolstoy's "X", in that it gives the members of an organization meaning and focus. It generates a force within the organization that is greater than the sum of the individual components. While it is recognized that there other factors not addressed in this essay, it is reasonable to conclude that, through effective implementation of an appropriate vision, leaders can integrate the components of an organization in pursuit of a common objective.

To conclude, in the military context, a vision can serve as a strategic aim to achieve unity of effort within the military. It can be utilized by strategic leaders to define

⁶⁶ Kotter, "What Leaders Really Do," 107.

explicit goals for each component, and provide a clear focus and purpose regardless of environmental affiliation. A vision, implemented with strong leadership at the operational level, should result in clear unit objectives. Commanders at the tactical level should translate these objectives into meaningful missions for each unit. As indicated in the discussion of morale, the tactical leader should foster commitment to the mission reaching down to the individual level to build strong cohesion. At the operational level, commanders should utilize a vision to align units. This should allow them to achieve unity of command and create vertical integration. This in turn, could lead to increase in esprit at the operational level and establish the conditions for a higher level of morale.

Peacetime Management in Need of Leadership

In periods of war, the crisis and chaos associated with high intensity conflict, and the presence of a threatening adversary, provide a meaningful role and mission for the military. As the strategy of the war unfolds and the campaigns progress, the objectives become clear and the dangers become real. Soldiers also become bonded together in support of a common objective.⁶⁷ At times like this, wartime leaders emerge to build cohesion through strong leadership and commitment to clearly stated missions. The challenge for today's military leaders, therefore, is to create the same conditions in peacetime in the absence of the adversary and the physical danger.

⁶⁷ Janowitz in discussing social and psychological background factors points out that cohesion in primary groups is influenced by the proximity of danger and the importance of the mission which the group is assigned. As the threat of danger increases, the cohesion of the primary group increases. Janowitz, Sociology and the Military Establishment, 101.

Typically during periods of peace, conditions exist where events are reasonably predictable and crisis are considered less compelling than the dangers of war or high intensity conflict. In most western countries, these conditions normally result in defence budget reductions and military cutbacks. The population is less supportive of a large military and begins to question its value. As Manning states, during the Vietnam War, although it was a crisis, the public's will to support the war waned and the war became a de-motivating factor.⁶⁸ In consequence, the focus or purpose of the military begins to weaken which could lead to a break down of cohesion at the individual level and result in a loss of morale.⁶⁹ Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that, whether in war or Operations Other Than War (OOTW), support and appreciation by external stakeholders, such as the public, is essential to maintain a high morale.

This situation is portrayed for the Canadian military in the report on the Military and Civilian Employee Feedback Survey that was carried out by the Phillips Group in 1995.⁷⁰ In this report, the Phillips Group states that both military and civilian members

⁶⁸ Manning, "Morale Cohesion and Esprit de Corps," 461.

⁶⁹ Stewart summarizes this situation in the following passage: "Impinging on military cohesion are society's attitudes toward the military in general or toward a particular war. Those attitudes determine whether an adequate defense budget exists for the purchase of supplies and armaments, staffing of military hospitals, and training of officers and men. All the high level morale and all the will-to-win combined with officers and men who trust each other will come to naught if the men have no weapons or no food. If political will is absent or political strategy is incorrect, military strategy will also suffer." Stewart, Mates and Muchachos, 29.

⁷⁰ Phillips Group, National Defence Military and Civilian Employee Feedback Survey (The Phillips Group/The Wyatt Company, 1995), 4-9.

of the CF have lost or are losing their confidence in the leadership. Employees, especially at the more junior levels, are not well informed about the changing mandate and strategic direction of the department. Only one-fifth or fewer of those who responded to the survey agreed that levels of morale in their unit is good, and a majority of respondents indicated that stress levels are high. There is a perception of a lack of caring for balance between work and family, and there has been a lack of success in building an integrated team spirit.

The Phillips survey reflects the results of a military under siege due to budget and personnel reductions, and a significant decrease public support.⁷¹ In many cases, employment security has become an issue which has resulted in higher levels of stress and increased anxiety. The result has been a loss of focus and a drop in morale as leaders struggle to find new ways to motivate soldiers in a period of significant challenge. What is required, is a new means to focus the energy and actions of the military, and replace the challenge of a wartime adversary.

In her discussion of “wartime leadership”, Judith Bardwick makes the point that during times of peacetime comfort and status quo, people neither want nor need much leadership.⁷² Peacetime managers prepare business plans without vision or inspiration,

⁷¹ This statement represents the author’s opinion based on numerous observations in the air environment maintenance community over the past six years.

⁷² Judith M. Bardwick, “Peacetime Management and Wartime Leadership,” The Leader of the Future ed. Francis Hesselebin, Marshall Goldsmith and Richard Beckhard (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996), 131.

and act as caretakers for organizations, not leaders of change. Her contention is that in the private sector, through global competition and industry downsizing, wartime conditions have replaced the relative calm of the past. She goes on to state that the world has changed permanently and that the comfort zone is increasingly being replaced by endless danger.⁷³ In turn, peacetime managers who are most comfortable in static conditions, will have to learn to become wartime leaders; people who embrace major changes because they see far more opportunity than threat in turbulence.

Like industry, the military is facing a crisis in peacetime that requires wartime leadership. The military is in need of change to adapt to the peace dividend mentality where efficiency has taken priority over effectiveness, and business management is a requisite for survival. As stated in the 1994 Defence White Paper, the world is more unstable than in the Cold War period where, “it is clear that we can expect pockets of chaos and instability that will threaten international peace and security.”⁷⁴ It is anticipated that in the future, militaries will be increasingly involved in coalition OOTW. It follows then, that OOTW, which include peace support operations, could require a fundamental redefinition of the mission, with a focus on small accomplishments. The challenge for today’s leaders is to find ways to deal with insecurity and anxiety that will

⁷³ Ibid., 133.

⁷⁴ Canada, 1994 Defence White Paper (Ottawa: Canada Communications Group, 1994), 3.

motivate and inspire unity of purpose. At the same time they need to find new opportunities for success in a changing and unstable environment.

Wartime Leaders Arise

The time has come for the “wartime leaders” to step forward and take charge. In the absence of a well-defined purpose and leadership, individuals and groups will create their own goals that may run counter to the direction the military is taking. There is a need to clearly define the peacetime role of the military and redefine the goals and objectives at all levels. Military leaders need to reach down into the hearts and minds of service members to give each new spirit and unity of purpose. Somehow, they need to adapt motivation tools to be effective in peacetime conditions. In all, there is a requirement to identify new and meaningful missions that each soldier can identify with—something that will energize the military team into action and result in renewed pride and high levels of morale.

It is suggested that a carefully prepared strategic vision can meet this challenge. Moreover, a properly implemented vision can lead to renewed unity of purpose and inspire commitment and high levels of motivation. It is suggested that through the effective use of clearly defined objectives based on a vision, military leaders can achieve vertical and horizontal integration within the military. The vision should be defined in a manner that leads to unity of effort at the operational level, and unambiguous roles and missions at the tactical level. It is possible that by facilitating strong commitment to a mission at the tactical level, cohesion will be renewed and strengthened, leading to a

higher level of esprit at the operational level. In sum, it is suggested that, a properly implemented vision can lead to a unity of purpose in the military. This can, once again, instill pride and cohesion at the operational level and establish the conditions for a higher level of morale.

Military leaders should take the initiative to lead the change, set the direction and develop a vision for the future. The vision should take into account the government's intentions, and the interests of the Canadian public to capture their support and appreciation. As suggested in the Phillips report, notable effort should be made to communicate the vision to junior personnel who do not have a good understanding of the Department's strategic direction.⁷⁵ Operational leaders need to exercise command presence to clearly articulate the intent of the vision, and interpret it in meaningful terms. They should strive to develop the essential synergy in support of the vision and align the efforts of their subordinates through clear direction. Subordinate commanders should be empowered to pursue the vision within their units. They should be involved in the implementation of the vision and development of the operational objectives. Tactical commanders should also be responsible for and committed to the objectives and understand the strategic vision in order to adequately interpret this guidance. They, in turn, should provide each unit with missions that are meaningful and achievable.

⁷⁵ Phillips Group, National Defence Military and Civilian Employee Feedback Survey, 6.

To sum up, the implementation of a strategic vision for the military can lead to clear objectives at the operational level which should result in an improved sense of purpose for each unit. This along with other factors such as strong leadership should

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vision were discussed. It was argued that a well-prepared vision could lead to clear operational objectives increasing the sense of purpose and esprit at the operational level. Based on the discussion of morale, it was hypothesized that the presence of a carefully prepared vision could positively influence the morale of military members.

The challenge of motivating a military during peacetime was examined. It was suggested that the absence of an adversary and a clear mission in peacetime increases the challenge of motivating the military. A need was identified for a meaningful peacetime mission to energize and motivate the military into action. A case was presented for strong leadership instead of peacetime management. It was suggested that the presence of a strategic military vision would align and integrate components towards a common goal. This concept was further explored at the operational level, where it was suggested that objectives based on the vision would facilitate increased cohesion and esprit. In the end, it was submitted that the presence of an appropriate vision can have a positive influence on morale at the operational level.

Conclusions

In conclusion, commitment to a well defined mission is an important factor in building cohesion and esprit at the tactical and operational levels. While it is recognized that there are other complex factors that were not explored within this essay, it is believed that strong commitment to a mission should have a positive influence on morale at the operational level. Moreover, the presence of a carefully prepared vision at the strategic level can lead to clear objectives at the operational level resulting in unambiguous

mission statements at the tactical level. The presence of strategic vision therefore should lead to the effective integration of units at the operational level. This could result in strong cohesion and esprit and a higher level of morale. In the final analysis, in the absence of major conflicts or war, the presence of a carefully prepared vision can positively influence morale at the operational level.

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