



Why they fight? Reconsidering the role of motivation in combat environments

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ABSTRACT

The current combat motivation model based on primary group thesis assumes that the main force behind motivation is peer-bonding or otherwise known as unit cohesion. Cohesion is perceived as an all-encompassing factor that leads to satisfactory (or unsatisfactory in lack thereof) military effectiveness and performance in conflict environments. However, the article identifies three main problems with this perspective: 1. mono-dimensional view of motivation; 2. motivation based on heteronomy, and 3. self-reporting bias. The current model does not consider motivation as a separate entity from cohesion; it does not place motivation as fundamental human value; lastly, it takes motivation as granted by-product of socialization. The article proposes a new combat motivation model based on The Self-Determination Theory. The theory maintains that human motivation requires satisfaction of three psychological needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy. The degree of satisfaction of those three needs leads to different types of regulated motivations – a continuum from intrinsic to extrinsic – each of which has specifiable consequences for learning, performance, and well-being of an individual.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 15 January 2019
Accepted 12 June 2019

KEYWORDS

Combat motivation; self-determination theory; unit cohesion; group behavior; Autonomy; Heteronomy

In life, things are done as a source of pleasure and satisfaction; but there are also things that are done due to social expectations, pressures, and deadlines. Whether it is mandatory or not, the driving factor is motivation. Without motivation, people would not act at all or act passively with no sense and full awareness of acting. War is a clash of two or more opposing wills (Clausewitz 1984), the definition indicates a complex set of motives to achieve desired objectives. Soldiers are the means towards those ends. It is, therefore, hardly surprising to find combat motivation as an important element in the military studies (Kellett 1982, Henderson 1985, King 2013). The current state of research and views on the subject at hand (Wong *et al.* 2003, King 2006, Siebold 2011) are heavily based on primary group thesis (Cooley 1909, Marshall 1947, Shils and Janowitz 1948) which assumes that human nature is not something existing separately in individual, but it is part of the psychical wholeness of society; that individualities are fused and integrated into common life and purpose of group. In a military context, the cohesive primary group replaces the civilian nature of individual as an immediate object

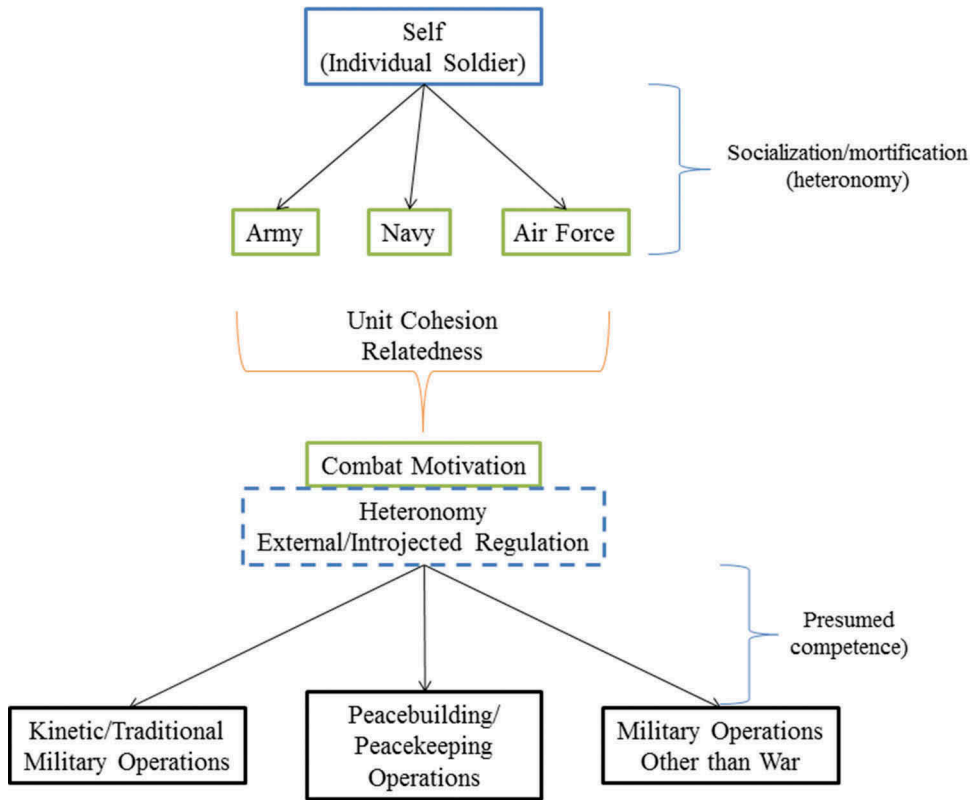


Figure 1. Current Cohesion Model.

of the soldiers’ affection and identification; the motivation to fight stems from membership in the group.

Although there are some divergences on the constituent elements of unit cohesion as a source of combat motivation (Newsome 2003); nonetheless, the core assumption remains intact: cohesion is perceived as an all-encompassing factor that leads to satisfactory (or unsatisfactory in lack thereof) military effectiveness and performance in conflict environments. It is a force behind combat readiness (Shamir *et al.* 2000), reduces combat stress and group disintegration (Griffith and Vaitkus 1999), and promotes general sense of purpose and meaningfulness (Siebold 2007). In the words of Grinker and Spiegel (Wessely 2006) “the ability to identify with a group and the past history of such identification are probably the most important components of a good motivation for combat.” However, the current model of unit cohesion → combat motivation does not consider motivation as a separate entity from cohesion; it does not place motivation as fundamental human value prior to the formation of cohesive groups; lastly, it takes motivation as granted by-product of socialization towards cohesion that leads to effective group performance. In other words, and to simplify, forming cohesive units will lead to more motivated soldiers.

The article claims that there is a significant misunderstanding in casual direction regarding the relation between unit cohesion → combat motivation, or to be more precise, the motivation driving every and each individual soldier. The reconceptualization of current model and discussion will follow on Self-Determination Theory (henceforth SDT) (Ryan and Deci 2008, 2017) which maintains that understanding human motivation requires consideration of three basic psychological needs essential for psychological growth, integrity, and wellness. The SDT distinguished the following needs: of autonomy, which concerns the self-organization and inner endorsement of one's behavior; of relatedness, which is defined as feeling connected with others and having a sense of belonging within one's community; and of competence, which refers to feeling effective in one's actions. Due to an existing imbalance in current and proposed theoretical models, the article will focus on autonomy and relatedness.

The article will consist of three sections. The first section will briefly describe the current state of unit cohesion → combat motivation and points out its weakness; the second section will present key assumptions behind SDT, why it is important for combat motivation, and how it can be integrated into the military environment. The article will propose a new model that considers motivation as a fundamental value for any human being, while cohesion as a product of motivation (individual motivation → task cohesion → unit cohesion). The last and concluding section will underline the importance of causal direction in future research concerning combat motivation.

Cohesive units and overemphasis of relatedness

A soldier in Iraq stated (Wong *et al.* 2003): “we eat, drink (...) everything together. I think that it should be like that (...) I really consider these guys my own family, because we fight together, we have fun together (...).” The bonding relation has been expressed by soldiers in many conflict environments, academic and non-academic books, research papers, and Hollywood movies, like *Saving Private Ryan*. Due to its significance for combat motivation and performance as well as its core nature within military culture, it is necessary to understand how unit cohesion → combat motivation process is achieved.

Upon entering the military organization, the personality of fresh recruits is in contradiction to military expectations. Civil reality allows individuals for social mobility, that is dis-identify from one or more social groups and identify with another group(s). This process can erode cohesiveness because it encourages individualistic rather than collectivist behavior among its members (Lickel *et al.* 2000, Al Ramiah *et al.* 2011). The military has long recognized the importance of identification with small groups in order to ensure soldiers' adjustment by reducing social mobility and increasing unit performance. According to Shamir *et al.* (2000) “the stronger the level of members' identification, the higher the perceived combat readiness.” It is through socialization process that the previous identities are depersonalized towards desired prototype (or in other words, prototype-based depersonalization); it is a deconstruction of the civilian status of recruits allowing them to transition into new social roles and statuses (Soeters *et al.* 2006, Hale 2008). Depersonalization refers to the process through which cognition, perception, and behavior are regulated by group standards, norms,

stereotypes (including out-group bias), and prototypes. The group prototype is a mental image of an average or ideal group member who embodies the characteristics that make in-group members distinct from out-group members. In other words, it is maximizing similarities within and differences between groups, thus elevating their entitativity/cohesiveness (Hogg *et al.* 1995, Hogg 2001, Van Dick *et al.* 2005).

The military environment offers a unique prototype characterized by, but not limited to, emotional control, overt heterosexual desire, self-reliance, aggressive tendencies and group absolutism justifying violent behavior (Higate and Hopton 2005, Nuciari 2006, Grossman 2009, Zurbriggen 2010). This prototype-based depersonalization is formed by enforced discipline through basic training and system of punishments and rewards (Henderson 1985, Hockey 2002, Siebold 2007). The desired outcome of the aforementioned process is well depicted by Sasson-Levy (2008) who quoted an Israeli soldier saying: “you simply have to say O.K., you the army, can do whatever you want with me. I . . . in the end, I will make it.” A soldier who does not represent those traits and does not fit the group prototype will experience ostracism or punishment as a form of external motivation to bend towards desired prototypicality. For instance, the military environment is overwhelmingly physical, and this physicality is impressed upon fresh recruit from the very first days of basic training. Any signs of obesity are a symbol of laziness and lack of discipline, therefore overweight soldiers are anti-prototypical; they are often bullied and abused by peers, while the military tends to reject those recruits who do not comply with the weight standards (Marques *et al.* 2001, Brown 2012). Once depersonalized towards the desired prototype, group members express positive feelings and bonding with each other, which results in a cohesive unit. This process serves as a basis for individual motivation in conflict environments (Griffith 2012).

However, there are three main problems with unit cohesion → combat motivation process: the first, mono-dimensional view of motivation; the second and related to first, motivation based on heteronomy; lastly, self-reporting bias.

The current perspective on the subject of combat motivation is heavily based, although with some alternations, on expectancy-valence approach (Atkinson 1964, Vroom 1964) and social-learning theories, of which Bandura’s self-efficacy theory (Bandura 1977, 1997) is most popular. The former is cognitive process theory of motivation based on the notion that people believe there is a relationship between the effort they put forth at work that leads to acceptable performance (expectancy) that will be rewarding (instrumentality) and that the value of rewards is highly positive (valence). In the words of Vroom (1964): “the probability of a person performing an act is a direct function of the algebraic sum of the products of the valence of outcomes and expectations that they will occur given the act.” In the latter theory, self-efficacy is defined as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainment” (Bandura 1997). In other words, efficiency (or competence) is the major determinant of effort, persistence, and goal setting. In general, those approaches perceive motivation as either unitary concept that varies in strength rather than kind (just as in the assumption that stronger cohesion leads to higher motivation; or weaker cohesion leads to lower motivation and unit disintegration) or determined by various factors where single variable provides the basis for motivation (just as in cohesion which is formed by various means, but the motivating factor is relatedness) (Deci and Ryan 2000, Gagné and Deci 2005).

On contrary, the SDT posits an existence of motivation continuum from heteronomous to autonomous (which will be discussed in the next section) distinguished on basis of the degree to which external values and regulations can be internalized and integrated within one's inner self. The external values and regulations that support the needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness are more internalized than those that thwart or hinder the three mentioned basic psychological needs (Ryan and Deci 2000a, 2002). This relates to the second issue, namely, heteronomy. Due to reduced or eliminated social mobility, controlling nature of the military environment, and sole focus on relatedness the mentioned process is characterized by heteronomy, defined as the experience of feeling controlled or pressured to think, feel, and behave in certain ways (Niemic *et al.* 2010). Whenever an individual engages in behavior that is self-incongruent with psychological needs it has to be self-regulated to fulfill expectations or demands. The act of self-regulation upon the externally controlling environment is ego-depleting, meaning, a condition of reduced resources of self-control following prior exercise in self-control. A vast majority of studies have demonstrated that ego-depletion and heteronomy can increase aggressiveness against the out-groups (Moller *et al.* 2006, Stucke and Baumeister 2006, Moller and Deci 2010, Nathan Dewart *et al.* 2011, Dewart and Chester 2016). For instance, a soldier, whose prototype-based socialization is focused on the execution of traditional kinetic operations, might feel self-incongruent when sent to peacekeeping operations that demand a significantly different set of skills, like cultural sensitivity. As a result of hindered autonomy and competence as well as reduced self-regulation strength, the soldier might act aggressively, even to a point of dehumanizing people whom he/she should be helping or protecting from external threats (Kold 2013, Braender 2015, Pawiński 2018). It will be argued in the next section that all three psychological needs have to be satisfied to avoid negative repercussions in various conflict environments.

Lastly, the unit cohesion → combat motivation is based on the self-report methodology that, within controlling environment, might lead to distortions. Wong *et al.* (2003), following Stouffer (1949) and other similar publications on the subject, asked soldiers the following question: "Generally, in your combat experience, what was the most important to you in making you want to keep going and do as well as you could?" On the one hand, any individual is at the same time a product of the social context and a creator of social reality, therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the self is the best source to answer such question. On the other hand, self-reports are themselves behavior and must be considered in terms of their determinants, including, but not limited to, consistency seeking, self-enhancement, and self-preservation. In addition, people are not always aware of the causes of their behavior because many cognitive processes occur below the level of awareness (Robins and John 1997, Maccoun *et al.* 2006). Further, within controlling military environment, that is congruence-expectancy with the prototype, a soldier might express social desirability bias, that is, a pressure to conform due to fear of ostracism if differed from the prototype (Donaldson and Grant-Vallone 2002, Paulhus and Vazire 2007). Altogether, when self-reporting soldiers are expected to compartmentalize cohesiveness and other military-related values, beliefs, and actions as their own because they cannot, or do not have courage, to identify those aspects as contradictory to their inner self needs. People do not like the experience of dissonance, thus, they often

“try not to see” how one value might conflict with another. However, ultimately, this form of self-deception (Ryan and Deci 2004) will have negative repercussions in the conflict environments.

It must be emphasized that the arguments presented so far are not against unit cohesion and the concept of relatedness as motivating factors in conflicts; on contrary, the need to belong is fundamental human motivation, in particular, in life-threatening conditions (Solomon *et al.* 1991, Baumeister and Leary 1995, Bryan and Heron 2015, Routledge and Vess 2018). However, people strive for a balance between inclusion within group and distinctiveness or uniqueness of their personal identity (Brewer 1991, Hogg 2001). Whenever the equilibrium is undermined or hindered individuals will supplement it by alternatives, like self-protection or self-deception, which has functional utility under controlling environments (maintain unit cohesion) but often leads to compensatory reactions, like aggression and dehumanization of out-groups. To conclude this section, unit cohesion should not be treated as the only motivational force, to be more specific, relatedness plays a more distal support of motivation. Overreliance on only one psychological need can produce dangerously negative behavioral outcomes of soldiers due to lack of self-congruence and limited self-regulatory capacity with mission values and objectives.

The balance: new model of combat motivation

Relatedness is one of the key elements of human motivation and well-being. However, as mentioned in the introduction, Self-Determination Theory distinguished two other elements – autonomy and competence. To remind, autonomy is concerned with the extent to which individual authentically concur with the forces that do influence his/her behavior; competence refers to feeling effective in one’s ongoing interactions with the external environment and the opportunities to exercise and express one’s capacities. The satisfaction of psychological needs depends on the degree to which behavior is intrinsically or extrinsically motivated (Deci 1972, Ryan and Deci 2000a). The former can be defined as bringing inherent satisfaction out of doing the activity; it is done for no apparent rewards or goals that are the ends in themselves. For example, just imagine a young boy or girl who dreams of becoming an aircraft pilot. As that person progresses through life, every decision he/she makes is geared towards fulfilling this dream. Although it is a probable scenario, in reality, the dominant motivation within military organizations is extrinsic, namely, engagement in activities because they lead to distinct consequences such as tangible and verbal rewards or avoidance of punishments. However, contrary to the mono-dimensional view of current unit cohesion → combat motivation model, the STD posits that there is a continuum of extrinsic motivation based on the process of internalization through which external values, attitudes, and regulatory structures can be taken in and integrated, to varying degrees, with one’s inner self. The more fully internalized, the more autonomous will be the subsequent extrinsically motivated behavior (Ryan and Deci 2002).

The controlling nature of the military can be characterized by two types of extrinsically motivating regulations: external and introjected regulations (Ryan *et al.* 1997, Deci and Ryan 2000, Ryan and Deci 2017). The former is least autonomous because behavior focuses on obtaining rewards or avoiding punishments, its only purpose is to satisfy

socially constructed demands. Conditioning for killing can be used as an example. The actual killing of another human being is neither natural nor an easy act, but it is an inevitability within military organizations. A soldier, who does not learn to kill, will not fit the military group prototype, which might result in ostracism by other members. Thus, due to fear of punishment, fear of failure, and the need of belonging, the soldier has no other choice than to learn to kill. The ability to kill another human being is possible due to group absolutisms as well as self-regulatory training that increases aggression (or obedience towards aggressive acts) (Denson *et al.* 2017). However, as mentioned before, it also means that the soldiers have lower self-control in other situations requiring higher self-regulation capacity, like cultural sensitivity in intercultural relations. Furthermore, such controlling environments can contribute to Type-A behavioral pattern, characterized by aggressiveness, achievement orientation, competitiveness, rigidity, and inflexibility (Deci and Ryan 1985, Vallerand 1997, Gagné and Deci 2005, Darshani 2014).

The introjected regulation represents partial internalization, in the sense that external contingencies did not become an integral part of the inner self, but the self exercises pressure to conform to avoid guilt, anxiety or to attain ego-enhancements, such as pride. In other words, external forces are acting indirectly, because it is an individual that feels obligated to act according to expectations (Deci and Ryan 1987). Ryan and Deci reported a clinical case of a soldier that experienced introjected internalization and its negative repercussions. Due to its significance for the present study, it is worth to state their research observations (Ryan and Deci 2000b):

“A soldier, entering a village from where shots had been fired, was ordered to kill an innocent person. He was of two minds: as a loyal soldier he believed in the importance of following orders; at the same time he knew that he ought not to kill an innocent person. The clash of values suggests that his motive to kill (to follow the order) could not be integrated within the self (...). He did kill the victim (...) subsequently, this individual suffered from post-traumatic stress caused by (...) actions that he had been neither able to integrate nor to adequately repress.”

It is well documented (Ryan *et al.* 1995, 2016) that extrinsic and poorly integrated motivation is a source of many negative behavioral implications. However, there are two more alternatives that might be considered as a positive source of motivation for soldiers.

Individuals in autonomy-supportive environments tend to show higher self-esteem, positive work attitude, creativity, and willingness to acquire new knowledge; but, more importantly, they also project less aggressiveness and reduced ethnocentrism and prejudiced attitudes towards culturally different people (Ryan and Deci 2006, Legault *et al.* 2007). Therefore, the SDT posits the existence of more autonomous types of extrinsic motivation, namely, regulation through identification and integrated regulation (Ryan *et al.* 1997, Ryan and Deci 2000a). In the former, people perceive external regulations as personally important for their own self-selected goals, values, or aspirations. For instance, if an individual identified regular exercising as a key for upholding health and well-being, he/she will exercise more volitionally although the behavior itself is still instrumental (keeping health), rather done for the sole pleasure and satisfaction out of exercising. Contrary to the previous two discussed regulations, the identified regulation is expected to be better maintained and associated with higher commitment

and performance. In the latter, integrated regulation is the fullest possible form of internalization of extrinsic motivation. It is characterized not by a person being interested in the activity, but rather the activity being instrumentally important for personal goals. For example, a soldier decided to join peacekeeping mission because of the need to help people under stress of war or post-conflict environments. In the following case, the nature of being a peacekeeper is more central to the soldier's identity, and therefore, would result in not only self-congruent behavior but also consistent with peacekeeping objectives and responsibilities.

An important component in the military organizations that can facilitate fuller internalization and promote autonomous motivation is the leadership. A good leadership, referred to as transformative or leader autonomy supportive, is empathetic towards supervisees, encourages self-invitation, sense of control, promotes creative and innovative problem solving as well as provides opportunities for choice and input into the daily life of organization (Gözükara and Şimşek 2015, Slemp *et al.* 2018). However, within the controlling nature of military the aspect of leadership is not immune to heteronomous motivation. Transactional and/or toxic leadership style is characterized by imposing external constraints on the behavior of soldiers to form as prototype similar individual as possible. Such leaders align individuals by utilizing organizational norms and regulations and through the system of rewards and punishments that can lead to physical and psychological abuse. For instance, in one US battalion deployed to Iraq, the non-commissioned officers were punishing junior enlisted soldiers by withholding mail to/from families as well as committed various forms of sexual misconduct (Reed 2015, Watola and Woycheshin 2016). Leadership, to be effective, has to experience autonomy-supportive environment itself in order to further extend this autonomy to subordinates.

Recognizing whether the action is autonomously (identified or integrated) or extrinsically motivated (external or introjected) is problematic due to the nature of the military itself; a nature with an environment characterized by obedience and conformity. Some soldiers might identify and internalized the mentioned prototype as their own and autonomously participate in kinetic operations, that is, result in autonomous motivation, others, within the same prototype, might be able to compartmentalize the internalization when deployed to non-kinetic operations, like peacekeeping, that is, to isolate socialized and depersonalized prototype from peacekeeper identity. However, this form of identification is defensively unintegrated and can have negative repercussions similar to heteronomous motivation (Ryan and Deci 2017). Therefore, with the current socialization and motivation model, the deployment to various missions together with the internalization process behind deployment motivation seems to be based on shared luck rather than a comprehensive evaluation of each soldier. Nonetheless, the following article follows a logical assumption that any organization, including the military, would prefer fuller internalization of regulation, rather than imposed or compartmentalized, as it results in better performance at work. The type of internalization can be recognized through behavioral outcomes; in the case of identified or integrated motivation, there should be a positive attitude and higher adaptability potential towards mission objectives, while with the external or introjected motivation there should be a negative attitude and lower adaptability towards mission objectives.

Rubinstein's (2008) have shown both behavioral outcomes while observing the military training simulation (role-playing) for the two units that were going to be deployed to Kosovo. During the simulation, soldiers were assigned to a road checkpoint between the Serbian and Albanian parts of Kosovo. A driver approached, who was an Albanian Kosovar community leader, with an intention to celebrate Albanian's national day on the Serb side. Allowing the car to pass could cause a violent incident. The soldier's mission was to keep the leader from crossing the checkpoint. After intense and frustrating interaction, the soldier in the first unit exclaimed: "I'm not going to talk to this guy, I'll just tell him what to do. I've got all the weapons!" The soldier in the second unit, who have had previous peacekeeping experience, resolved the problem through prolonged negotiations. According to Rubenstein, for both soldiers "their motivation was that they received orders." However, in the first case, the soldiers' attitude was negative, even taking the trajectory toward frustration-aggression hypothesis (Anderson and Bushman 2002), thus for him, the motivation to participate in the mission was extrinsic based on external pressures from authority. To be more precise, the deployment to Kosovo, for this particular soldier, was externally regulated, while enforced interaction with locals was introjected regulation. In the second case, the attitude was positive due to previous peacekeeping deployments, which might have been identified as personally important, and thus, corresponded to the identified or integrated regulation.

Another illustration of behavioral outcomes based on the type of motivation can be observed in the case of the UN Mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC/MONUSCO). In 1999 the Security Council authorized the deployment of MONUC. The main goals of the Mission were to maintain and monitor the ceasefire between warring groups, to work with the parties to obtain the release of all prisoners of war and to supervise and verify the disengagement and redeployment of the parties' forces. The mandate required that peacekeepers attempt to prevent sexual violence incorporates the gender mainstreaming goals established by Resolution 1325. In response to the changing situation of the DRC conflict, in July 2010 the UN Security Council deployed the MONUSCO, which also incorporated a concern for gender and sexual violence. However, despite this emphasis, peacekeepers were accused of committing sexual violence. It is estimated that since 2003 more than 600 allegations have been filed against MONUC personnel (UN General Assembly 2007, UN General Assembly 2008, UN General Assembly 2009). Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (hereafter SEA) have actually been characteristic of many peacekeeping missions (Nordås and Rustad 2013) and the allegations in the DRC show that this practice is continuing.

In 2004, various international media like The New York Times published reports that accused the MONUC of engaging in SEA against local Congolese women and girls (Lacey 2004). The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) investigated 72 allegations, all of which originated in Bunia, and were only able to substantiate seven claims (UN. Office of Internal Oversight Services 2005). Despite the ongoing OIOS investigation, peacekeepers continued to commit sexual violence and an additional 217 allegations were filed by women in 2006 (UN. Office of Internal Oversight Services 2007). In response, MONUC introduced additional measures on their personnel such as a non-fraternization policy, a curfew for military personnel, off-limits areas and the requirement of military personnel wearing their uniforms at all times when they are outside of

their base (Bellamy *et al.* 2010). Despite the anti-SEA policies, it was reported that MONUC was primarily responsible for the increase in allegations of SEA from 2008 to 2009 (Ospina 2010). External norms and rules might not be the effective tools to eliminate sexual-related violence because they do not address the core of the problem, that is heteronomous motivation and associated negative behavioral outcomes due to self-regulatory failures of previously depersonalized soldiers.

The Security Council authorized the mission to take all necessary actions, including the use of lethal force to preserve peace and stability on the grounds (Harrington 2010). In this regard, the UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC presented a new change. The problem with a military environment is that it does not necessarily go in the same line with peacekeeping as it encourages soldiers to think from an overly masculine perspective that privileges violence, aggression, and hatred towards women (Whitworth 2004). When peacekeepers interact with the local culture of the host country in conflict or post-conflict environments, it can create a potentially abusive environment (Aoláin *et al.* 2011). From the SDT perspective, any form of sexual violence, which stems from militarized masculinity formed during prototype-based depersonalization towards cohesive units, is anchored to introjections, compartmentalized identifications, and/or serious disturbances in self-regulation (Ryan and Deci 2017). During the UN peacekeeping mission in DRC, Higate (2007) noted some members of UN peacekeeping troops were extremely frank about their sexual encounters with local Congolese women and girls. They even shared several stories when they had sexual relations with women without being explicitly asked by the researcher. Peacekeepers' openness about their sexual relationships was intended to emphasize their masculine identity and feeling of belongingness.

Furthermore, gang rapes, which were also present at the MONUSCO (Caplan 2018), are often motivated by the metarelational desire to belong to a cohesive group that signals to other group members a willingness to take a risk for the in-group well-being (Goldstein 2001, Cohen 2013, Fiske and Rai 2014). Social bonds are also reinforced and replicated in the process of recounting the violence in the aftermath. It has been noted that perpetrators may boast about their participation in rapes to "revel in a sense of enhanced masculinity" (Sanday 2007). Morris (1996) argues that sexual violence is fundamental to some types of (mostly) male groups because of "rape-conducive sexual norms" that are "inadvertently(...) imparted" like in case of military organizations. Rape becomes a common practice especially under toxic leadership within cohesive units. Lastly, unlike soldiers in kinetic operations, peacekeepers can only resort to weapons used for self-defense, and this may lead some of them to feel unable to fulfill their socialized prototype of masculinity. As a result of heteronomous motivation and increased chance of self-regulatory failure, the need to validate the belongingness to a cohesive unit can lead peacekeepers to engage in sexual violence and abuse against local women and girls. Establishing autonomy-supportive military environment by offering a choice to engage in the mission can potentially ameliorate the negative aspects of the current combat motivation model.

Before proceeding with the discussion on autonomy and the role of choice within military environments, at this point, let us evaluate the importance of competence. Although it seems obvious to assume that the soldiers are trained (socialized) to perform effectively to achieve military objectives within conflict environments, recent

counterinsurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan (Ucko 2008) as well as, in general, peacekeeping operations (Franke 1999, China Global Television Network Africa 2018) indicate that soldiers do lack the competence to adjust to missions other than traditional kinetic operations. Both types of operations are characterized by intensive interactions with local communities on a daily basis; the mission objectives change from “target and kill” to “win hearts and minds” and the ability to understand the cultural dynamics and existing grievances (Rubinstein 2003, 2014, Salmoni and Holmes-Eber 2008). However, intercultural relations, the process adaptation, and gender sensitivity require a completely different set of competencies than traditionally related to military organizations (Nuciari 2006, Deardorff 2009). What is most important, any form of intercultural relations in conflict or post-conflict environments has to be autonomous. If an individual is not motivated to communicate, learn and respect the integrity of others, it probably does not matter the effort that has been involved in teaching such individual, as the acquired skills will not be implemented or misunderstood in worst case scenario (Davis 2010, Guesterson 2010).

If a soldier is trained and conditioned to kill an enemy, in other words, the competence of being a soldier is defined as the elimination of obstacle, it can be argued that the act represents an optimal challenge to possessed competencies. It is externally regulated activity that requires heightened self-regulatory capacity. It is also the reason why participation in traditional kinetic operations might not be internalized through identified and integrated regulations. When the same soldier is engaged in intercultural communication with the local community, the act is non-optimal and would require additional self-control effort. As mentioned before, the military prototype is ego involving and based on the system of punishments, hence, even when encountered with non-optimal challenge, the soldier has to engage in activity, but will focus on failure and incompetence avoidance approach which are perceived as antithetical to the very nature of the intrinsic motivation construct (Elliot and Harackiewicz 1996, Deci and Moller 2005). On the other hand, if a soldier decides to engage in peacekeeping operations the competence of being a soldier is defined as an intercultural facilitator (or any other competence required as a part of peacekeeping operations). Due to the autonomous decision, the self-regulatory capacity is not depleting (Moller *et al.* 2006), hence, it can be utilized during intercultural communication, gender-sensitive context or when the situation changes into a conflict-type encounter (self-regulation to kill).

To conclude the aspect of competence, the military, no matter how authoritarian, cannot force someone to be culturally and gender sensitive; it cannot immediately shift the mindset of individuals from one prototype-based depersonalization to another prototype (Fetherston 1995); it cannot control or manipulate, without repercussions, the influence of three psychological needs on the inner-self well-being of soldiers, including competence; lastly, it cannot rely only on one need as motivating factor. Research has shown (Assor *et al.* 2004) that satisfaction of the needs of competence and relatedness can facilitate internalization towards introjected regulation, but full integration is only possible with autonomy-supportive environments. It is the reason behind the significance of autonomy and choice in combat motivation. It is also the reason behind placing an additional box in Figure 2 next to three traditional military branches, namely, the peacekeeping forces. It is the argument of this article that soldiers should have a certain number of possible career and mission options that are self-congruent in

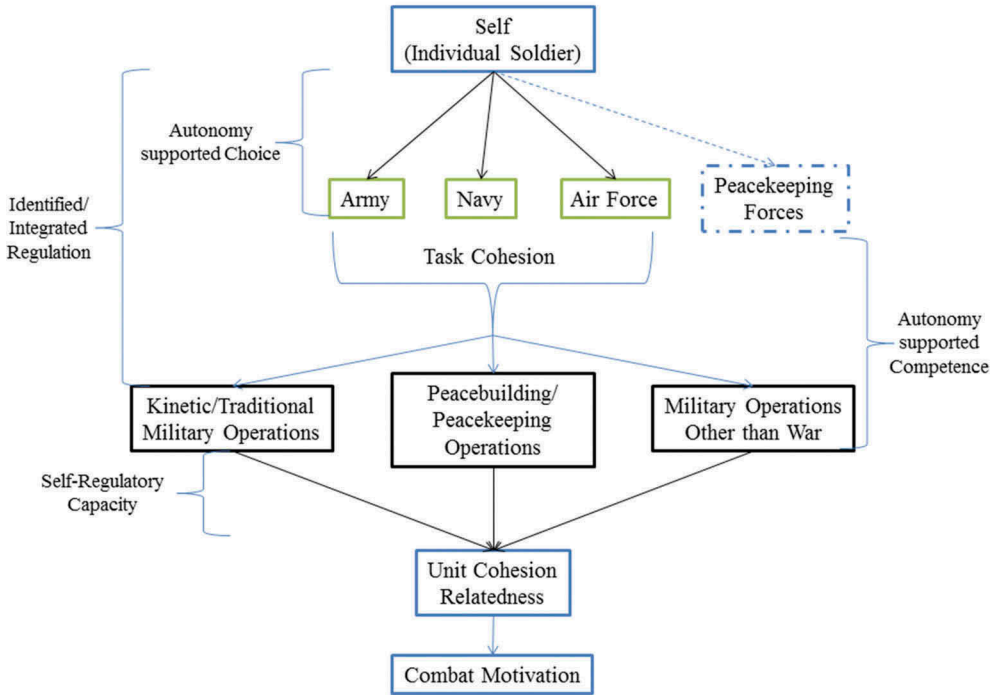


Figure 2. New Model of Combat Motivation.

order to achieve as intrinsic motivation as possible (or extrinsic based on identification/integration).

The choice should not be understood as a matter of preference as it relates to the mono-dimensional view of motivation that varies in strength; a preference is to have a degree of satisfaction where higher-ranking items satisfy a particular preference more than lower ranking items. The choice is about value, which does not have such a dimension; different items either do or do not satisfy a value, but they cannot do so more or less (Dan-Cohen 1992). Providing a choice enhances intrinsic motivation because it satisfies the needs (values) of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. A meta-analysis conducted by Patall *et al.* (2008) suggests that choice can have not only a positive impact on motivation but also on a number of related outcomes, for instance, effort, perceived competence, and preference for challenge. Furthermore, recent neuroscience research shows that having a choice, as compared to no-choice conditions, is responsible for significant improvement in task performance as it prevents a drop in the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (vmPFC) activation after failure and negative feedback, which suggests that autonomy satisfaction is associated with the brain resilience (Murayama *et al.* 2015). Individuals in a choice, as compared to no-choice, conditions had shown greater activity in, but not limited to, anterior insular cortex (AIC), amygdala (both, responsible for emotional awareness and emotion processing, like empathy), and anterior cingulate cortex (ACC, which is involved in

moral-based judgment and decision-making) (Lee and Reeve 2017, Sevinc *et al.* 2017, Reeve and Lee 2019). All those aspects, as argued before, are pertinent to non-traditional military operations, but potentially hampered by cohesion formation process and prevalent heteronomy.

Choice/no-choice environment has also an impact on moral responsibility and self-regulation capacity. A soldier initiating an action will conform to normative and social norms and rules no matter the existence of external contingencies, hence the effectiveness of leader autonomy-supportive style (for example, Geneva conventions); on contrary, in context of no-choice or external regulations, a soldier is no longer strictly responsible for his own actions (for instance, due to group absolutism) but is defined as instrument to carry out the orders of others as in case of transactional or toxic leadership. Referring back to neuroscience, a research conducted by Legault and Inzlicht (2013) suggests that autonomous motivation is related to error processing and sensitivity that bolsters self-regulation, specifically “autonomy predicts better and more accurate awareness and acceptance of negative affect and threat, which results in improved spontaneous coping (...) including dynamic adjustments to performance that can improve self-regulation.” There is a growing research evidence that decreases in self-regulation is correlated to the motivational priorities with intrinsic motivation as maintaining or mitigation the drop in self-control (Inzlicht *et al.* 2014, Kelly *et al.* 2017). With heteronomous motivation soldiers are no longer an independent actor making choices on the basis of their own values and needs, but embedded in group prototypicality and introjected with external beliefs of cohesive units, they serve for the better good of the in-group at the cost of the out-groups well-being (Bocchiaro and Zamperini 2012, Baumeister and Monroe 2014, Arvanitis 2017).

Having no choice, that is, being ordered or controlled, can be demotivating, however, the same detrimental effect can be observed when an individual is not allowed to choose while being aware of existing alternatives (Patall 2012). One set of items to choose from has already been mentioned, namely, the military branches; another set of possible options are tasks or missions. Within the military, the research focus on unit cohesion has overshadowed other possible explanations of combat motivation, including task cohesion (Maccoun *et al.* 2006, Maccoun and Hix 2010). If a soldier chooses the task in the autonomy-supportive environment, relatedness (or unit cohesion), due to shared commitment and competence (King 2016) that is self-congruent and optimally challenging together with the existentially threatening environment, will be a natural product of task cohesion. As mentioned, such a group will be intrinsically motivated (or externally motivated by identified or integrated regulation), morally responsible for their actions, with increased adaptability potential to cultural norms of the society of their deployment an important element in a variety of contemporary complex conflict environments. As previously mentioned, with no-choice conditions soldiers still can reach fuller internalization of external regulations, but there are no one-size-fits-all solutions.

To conclude, relatedness is only one of three ingredients behind motivation. Due to an overemphasis on unit cohesion in the past decades, the understanding and conceptualization of combat motivation might have been distorted; least to say, the subject of the study did not follow recent developments in motivation studies and motivational neuroscience. As discussed, the enormous qualitative and quantitative in-lab and in-

field research of the past four decades in Self-Determination Theory strongly indicates that autonomy is an essential factor for effective performance and well-being of the individual. This applies equally to all working environments, including the military and soldiers. The organization and constituent elements might perceive themselves as somehow unique and significantly different from other social out-groups, however, just like the law of physics applies to every living organism, the basics behind working mechanisms of motivation apply to every human being. Therefore, it might be the time to think of motivation as a fundamental value in itself within military studies rather than as a by-product of mere socialization toward desired group prototype.

The reconceptualization of combat motivation discourse

So, why they fight? Since its inception in 1896, when Gustave Le Bon reported his observations on crowds' behavior, cohesion continues to have a significant influence on the group research (Bruhn 2009), specifically in the military field. The Self-Determination Theory did recognize the importance of the concept by including relatedness as a basic psychological need. Contrary to its critics (Ben-Shalom *et al.* 2005, King 2016) who claim, that the "romantic mythology has grown up around the studies published after World War II leading people to suspend critical judgment (...) and to overlook subsequent research that suggested limits on their generalizability," the present article does not disregard cohesion as integral value behind combat motivation. However, a decision to go and perform effectively in conflict environments should not be reduced to a single-factor, no matter how important it is for a socializing organization. The ability to adapt to new challenges in changing social contexts is only possible by satisfying the need of competence. Competence is not something that can be forced and involuntarily trained without negative repercussions, like depleted self-regulation capacity. It is essentially a by-product in terms of people's intentions; competence develops as they do what they find interesting, important, or self-congruent. Yet, the most important is an element so far absent in both military research and military organizations, namely, the autonomy. As it has been discussed, the feeling of autonomy can produce a plethora of positive outcomes. One may wonder, why it is so fearful concept by the military organizations? Is the heteronomy prerequisite for soldiers' effectiveness? What if the past decades of research were based on the erroneous assumption that the only way to "make" soldiers do their job is through conformity and obedience?

It would be possible to argue that Self-Determination Theory does not apply in the military context; it is possible to argue that there are other theories of motivation (Ryan 2014, Cook and Artino 2016) that would explain better the motivation of soldiers in combat. Nonetheless, Phil Anderson (1972), a Nobel laureate in physics, has argued that sciences (as well as social sciences) exist in a form of hierarchy, where science X obeys the laws of science Y. However, this hierarchy does not imply that science X is just applied in Y (for instance, psychology is not applied biology); in each new stage, new concepts and generalizations appear that are not fully reducible to science Y, even though these new laws cannot violate the laws of more fundamental ones. Although social cohesion research has its own concepts, those ideas cannot violate the concepts of more fundamental social sciences, in this case, the fundamental nature of human

motivation. To put it in terms of military research, just as Clausewitz pointed out that war is a continuation of politics by other means, combat motivation is the continuation of human motivation in a specific context. Hence, whichever theory is taken and applied, the motivation has to be considered as a fundamental concept governing human behavior.

Further SDT research from the point of view of military organizations could commence from the aspect of leadership, specifically, if the leadership is heteronomously motivated, what is its impact on autonomously or heteronomous motivated soldiers; are heteronomous soldiers under heteronomous leadership more prone to committed SEA? And vice versa, if the leadership is autonomously motivated, what is its impact on autonomously or heteronomous motivated soldiers; are heteronomous soldiers under autonomous leadership better at self-regulating their masculine identify? Recent research in neuroscience opens a new horizon in the study of motivation that is absent in the cohesion literature (Di Domenico and Ryan 2017). The new avenues indicate that choice and autonomy should not be taken lightly to have effective and successful soldiers.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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