



---

## CHAPTER VIII

---

# *Leadership in the North Vietnamese, US, Soviet, and Israeli Armies*

---

### *Characteristics of North Vietnamese Leadership*

**T**HE NORTH VIETNAMESE SOLDIER generally had great confidence in his immediate leaders. He trusted them, respected their abilities, and generally believed that under their direction he and his fellow soldiers could successfully meet the situations and environment encountered by their unit.

Leadership in the North Vietnamese Army emphasized personal and continuing face-to-face contacts between leader and soldier. This relationship was the primary one in both the soldier and the leader's life, taking precedence over all others, and it was expected by each to continue to be such so long as both remained in the Army.

Recognizing that managerial and strategic skills are required at higher levels, leadership efforts in the North Vietnamese Army were focused at the military cell, squad, platoon, and company levels where the organization with its objectives is linked to the fighting soldier and his group by the leader. The North Vietnamese leader generally was very successful in dominating the primary group and controlling its operative group norms to ensure

that the extraordinary cohesion that developed was congruent with North Vietnamese Army purposes.

Through demonstrated expertise and an extremely demanding, almost puritanical code of professional ethics that put the leader up front where he shared equally all hardship and danger, the North Vietnamese leader usually was able to lead his unit gracefully and repeatedly in surviving difficult situations. As a result, his personal reputation within his unit often approached some degree of charisma.

In those cases when he was not successful, he usually was able to rely on his expertise, formal and complete authority, and personal skills in manipulation of group pressures to neutralize the effects of failure or hardship and to use the perception of outside threat or difficult challenge to coalesce and control the unit.

Although the North Vietnamese desired to create "good communist soldiers," their attempts at indoctrination generally were not successful. Those soldiers who did respond, and were qualified otherwise (appropriate class background or skills), were recruited to be cadre-leaders. Vietnamese socialization did gain for the Army many of the effects sought through indoctrination and made leadership easier. Properly led, the Vietnamese soldier was more than willing to pursue the "honorable" task of defending Vietnam from foreigners and their "puppets."

The sources of the Vietnamese small-unit leader's personal influence within his unit were significant and were carefully nurtured through prescribed policies and through personal efforts.

### *Reward and Coercive Power*

Reward power has been previously defined as the ability to exert influence in interpersonal relationships based upon the ability to reward. Likewise, coercive power is defined as influence whose basis is the ability to punish. Within the NVA, the cadre-leader did not have wide latitude to reward materially or to coerce individual soldiers. Resources for rewards, such as money or luxurious rest-and-recuperation vacations, were nonexistent. Similarly, physical punishment and incarceration were seldom relied upon. In extraordinary circumstances, a deviant soldier might be assigned to a "reeducation" camp for two to six months.

However, such an assignment was not perceived as imprisonment. Instead, as the name implies, the soldier was reeducated along the lines of "correct thought." Upon successful completion of his re-education, he could, theoretically, rejoin a unit without bias.

As practiced within the NVA, reward and punishment were almost always related to the soldier's relationship with the primary group. The cadre's ability to regulate the group's acceptance or rejection of the individual was a source of tremendous power.

Among the most successful reward techniques were individual and unit awards and commendations. Through these awards, the individual was granted group recognition and esteem. Punishment was generally a group sanction entailing loss of face through a criticism session in which the violation of group or organizational discipline was publicly discussed, causing shame for the individual.

Rewards and punishment were always related to group norms. For example, a soldier criticized for being lazy might be cited as lacking in "commitment" or as guilty of "rightist thoughts" or "freedomism" (acting for one's own convenience), whereas an exemplary achievement might be cited as a commendable example of "correct thought," "virtue," and "revolutionary spirit."

The following excerpt from the minutes of a platoon party meeting illustrates how "Comrade Phuoc" was rewarded and how "Comrade Minh" was punished:

- a. The . . . Group Chapter decided to have the shining example of Comrade Phuoc studied by the entire PRP Youth Group.
- b. Comrade Minh was purged from the Group and put on probation for six months—if he made progress during this period he would be readmitted in the Group. He was disciplined for stealing two cans of rice from the unit, and for not observing the discipline of the unit. For example, he left the unit without permission, and when he was criticized by the collectivity he refused to admit his error.<sup>1</sup>

The NVA constantly shifted its organizational goals to meet the changing tactical situation. "Emulation" campaigns within the NVA ranks were designed to keep the soldier informed of the group's specific goals, providing a basis for measuring his

contribution. From September 1966 through the autumn of 1967, for example, the NVA mounted a program entitled "Troop Training and Combat Competition—An Emulation Plan," designed to intensify its combat efforts against US forces. The program spelled out how NVA units could earn "good" or "fair" ratings. An NVA company was required to destroy one US platoon or two "puppet" (ARVN) platoons for a "good" rating or "annihilate two US squads or one puppet platoon" for a "fair" rating. In addition, "Heroic Aircraft Annihilator" and "Assault Hero" status were to be awarded to appropriate individuals. A private discussing this program stated that his squad leader

killed 22 American soldiers in that battle and was elected "Valiant American Killer." He was also sent to attend the "Valiant American Killers Congress," 9 March 1966.<sup>2</sup>

Each soldier's performance in achieving group goals was routinely scrutinized by the cadre-leader. The following excerpt from an interview of a main force corporal describes how rewards and punishments were mediated through the group.

*Question:* Do you think that criticism and self-criticism is good or bad?

*Answer:* It is good. If there wasn't that system, the fighters' rank would immediately disintegrate. The criticism and self-criticism is a formidable weapon. I can tell you if there wasn't the criticism and self-criticism the fighters would all desert in one day. There was criticism and self-criticism every day. After a working day, a self-criticism session was immediately held at night. There were thirty nightly sessions a month. The criticism and self-criticism was part of the rules and regulations. It couldn't be missed. . . .

*Question:* What did the other men say? (about whether it was fair).

*Answer:* They also thought that the system was correct because it helped the cadres to make a difference between good and bad men. Those who had combat achievements or who did good work were commended, and those who had

shortcomings were criticized. This was the guideline of the leadership.<sup>3</sup>

While a system of rewards and punishments is available to almost every army, the NVA related it to the group and refined it to the point where it became a major motivational and control technique for reinforcing desired behavior and discouraging deviant behavior.

### *Legitimate Power*

The legitimate power of the NVA cadre-leader appeared to rest on Vietnamese cultural values, which include fatalism, respect for age, and nationalism. In addition, the fact that NVA cadre-leaders were appointed by an organization that had achieved some degree of legitimacy through its record of effective government in North Vietnam and in certain areas of South Vietnam added to their power.

In 1965, almost all men between the ages of 18 and 34 living in areas controlled by the Vietcong were available for drafting into the NVA.<sup>4</sup> The fatalistic draftee was likely to believe that he was in the NVA through a process over which he had little control. He tended to respond to the situation with courage, patience, and good will.

Leader reliance upon legitimate power, especially for controlling draftees, tended to be greater during the earlier period of a soldier's service. Later, the bases of power shifted away from legitimate power. Interviews of NVA draftees and volunteers with long periods of service suggested that both had similar motivation and that no distinction could be made in their motivation. Other Vietnamese cultural values that contributed greatly toward cadre legitimate power were respect and deference for elders. The transference of this respect to the NVA cadre was a common occurrence among NVA soldiers in their teens and twenties. In a very real sense, the leader became a "respected elder" or surrogate parent, fulfilling an important role. Numerous interviewees referred to the unit political officer in particular as the mother or parent to the group, guiding and caring for it in every way.

Interviews with captured NVA soldiers indicate how cadre authority was often interpreted in a parent-child context by the fighters:

If the fighters said that the squad leader was harsh to them, he (the political officer) would explain to them that the squad leader had to be harsh because he wanted them to be good and respectable. He also reminded them that people often said, "When one loved his children, he gave them spankings, and when one hated his children, he let them play (a Vietnamese proverb)." To me, his explanation about the squad leader's behavior was very correct and very pleasing.<sup>5</sup>

The fact that the Vietcong were identified as fighting for Vietnamese independence also contributed to the leaders' legitimacy. As the successor to the Vietminh, who struggled against the French, many Vietnamese saw the NVA as merely the latest organization to take up the traditional banner of Vietnamese nationalism. One NVA prisoner stated:

I think that the people here support the Liberation Front because, in previous times, they had fought during the First Resistance against the French. They want Vietnam to be independent and reunified. They continue to support the Front because Vietnam is not yet independent and reunified.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, the mere fact that a cadre-leader holds a decision-making position in a legitimate organization such as the NVA means that individuals will respond to his direction in much the same manner that workmen respond to a foreman. Cadre-leaders appointed by a legitimate organization tend automatically to benefit from a halo effect, gaining legitimacy through association with that organization. A fighter pointed to one reason why NVA soldiers fought for the NVA:

They wanted their families to be honored by the Front and by the other villagers. For example, if there was a Front meeting in the village, those who had children in Front troops would be invited to sit in the front seats. The villagers liked to be honored that way.<sup>7</sup>

The NVA, like the Chinese Peoples Liberation Army before it, made great efforts to engender support from the people and gain legitimacy. An NVA soldier notes:

the men in the unit would always help the villagers at all types of work: for example, if the villagers were working on their land, or fishing, or digging ditches, building dams etc., we would come and give them a hand. Wherever and whenever we arrived we gave help to the people; they were thus very appreciative of our sincerity and loved us very much. Our motto

is: The Army is welcomed wherever it goes, and loved wherever it stays. We will never touch even a piece of thread that belongs to the people. What belongs to the people remains theirs, and if by mistake it's damaged by us it will be compensated.<sup>8</sup>

### *Expert Power*

The NVA recognized the importance of the cadre-leader being an expertly qualified person. As an agent of the party, the cadre-leader was required to be of high "ethical virtue." A second requisite was "talent" in military affairs, as a Vietnamese document indicates:

To have an excellent cadre contingent serving as the nucleus of the armed forces, the Party set forth an ethical and talent criteria. . . . Morality and ability are two fundamental qualities that all our officers must have. He who lacks one of these qualities cannot become an officer. President Ho taught us "He who has talents must have virtues. He who has talents, but has no virtues . . . does harm to the country. He who has virtues, but no talents resembles a Buddha who, staying in the pagoda, does nobody any good." <sup>9</sup>

Evidence is plentiful that NVA soldiers saw their cadre-leaders as "men-of-steel," capable of expertly performing, for the benefit of the group, all tasks demanded by the situation. The following excerpts illustrate the soldiers' respect for the cadre. One soldier who was also a junior leader stated:

All of them [the cadre] had been trained in specialized schools, and matured in actual combat. Therefore all of them were worthy of confidence and admiration. Of course I had confidence in them. I could see they were men of good experience; I felt proud of them.

In large part, he saw the leader's influence with the fighters as dependent upon the leader's performance in combat. A cadre noted:

I also participated in direct combat side-by-side with the fighters. You see, the thing was, if you were a good fighter, then you would be listened to by others, moreover, if you treated others well, and if you were a good fighter also, then your work as a political cadre was already half over. A political cadre should be the one who acts first and then speaks.<sup>10</sup>

Successful decisions reflecting expertise also contributed to cadre influence. Another soldier observed:

I as well as other men had much confidence in the commanding cadres . . . because they were very clear-sighted. For example, the commanding cadres ordered the unit to move to another place just a day or half-day before the old campsite was bombarded by aircraft and artillery. This made the men have confidence in the cadre.<sup>11</sup>

When heavy cadre casualties required the rapid creation of new leaders, temporary lack of expertise reduced cadre influence among the fighters.<sup>12</sup> A private whose unit suffered heavy cadre losses points to a common feeling among fighters who saw their cadre as basically unable to lead the group effectively:

Because of heavy losses, most of the company, platoon, and squad leaders were new replacements. . . . The new cadres weren't as good as the earlier ones. They didn't know much about strategy and had no experience in tactics. In the last months, many fighters showed no respect and less obedience to platoon and squad leaders because most of those people didn't deserve the appointment and were not up to their tasks.<sup>13</sup>

### *Referent Power*

In many cases, the most potent source of cadre power was the intense identification of NVA soldiers with their cadre-leaders. Sometimes the cadre-leader approached the status of the charismatic leader who had demonstrated the Weberian quality of grace in difficult situations and was expected to do so in the future.

Referent power, derived from the satisfaction gained by the soldier through personal identification with the leader, overlaps other sources of power. For example, reward and expert power contribute to the desire to identify with the cadre-leader. The formation of close identities between the men and the cadre was not left to chance within the NVA. It was official policy that such relationships be developed to their fullest. Leaders were repeatedly told:

We must train ourselves into simple, modest, diligent, thrifty, honest, selfless, upright, and impartial cadres; resolutely eradicate individualism; and insure that in construction and combat and under favorable or difficult circumstances, a correct attitude is constantly maintained toward the enemy, the Party, the people, and our comrades and comrades-in-arms in combat, in work performance, and in other activities.<sup>14</sup>

A prisoner's remark is representative of how the cadre went about establishing close ties with their men:

As far as relations between the Leaders and the fighters were concerned, I can also say that close ties existed between them. Take, for example, the case of some of the fighters becoming ill: often a cadre would take care of the sick fighters. There were also cases of cadres sharing their food and clothing rations with the fighters. I can tell you that we cadres shared everything with our fighters. There was no case of each one keeping his own possession to himself alone, or hiding it away from others. The friendship and unity that existed among the cadres and fighters were as close as among the cadres themselves.<sup>15</sup>

The results of such cadre efforts usually produced attitudes similar to those expressed by a private, first class, discussing one of his cadre-leaders:

He was the best educated man in the unit. In any circumstance he always succeeded in producing reasonable arguments. So he won the mind of any person he had to deal with. He was honest and impartial.<sup>16</sup>

A portion from another POW interview gives a more comprehensive picture of fighter identity with their cadre:

*Question:* Describe the cadres in your unit. What kind of persons were they?

*Answer:* All of the cadres, platoon cadres and company cadres were very nice people. They were well-trained and well-educated. I heard that they were people who formerly had fought against the French.

*Question:* What did you think of them?

*Answer:* . . . We all respected and obeyed our leaders because, as I told you, they were nice people. They never did anything to hurt the feelings of the men in the unit. They always lived with us, ate with us, and they understood us very well. We strictly obeyed any order received from them. . . .

*Question:* Do you think the political cadre knew everything that was going on in the unit?

*Answer:* He lived with, and ate with us. Sometimes, when we talked to each other, he came and talked to us too. I think he knew everything.<sup>17</sup>

The role of the unit political officer in particular was important in the maintenance of close cadre-fighter relationships, especially during the hardships and dangers of sustained combat. Another excerpt from an NVA rallier interview illustrates the importance of the cadre-leader's role, the identity need he satisfied for the fighters, and the disintegrative effect when this need was not met:

*Question:* Who was in charge of . . . morale problems in your unit?

*Answer:* My unit had an excellent political cadre. He was very skillful in convincing people, particularly those who worried about their families. He used to get in contact with the soldiers in private to advise and comfort them. Everyone liked him and followed his advice. Unfortunately he was transferred to another place, leaving the post vacant for two months. If he had remained longer in my unit, I would have been unable to leave. . . .

*Question:* Did the political cadre in your unit do his work well?

*Answer:* The political cadre in my unit performed his duties perfectly well. Every soldier appreciated and obeyed him. He was very useful to the unit in settling conflicts and in raising the fighters' morale. They strengthened discipline and prevented desertion. Only during his absence from the unit did many desertions occur, mine included. I think if he left the unit for five or six months without a good replacement, most of the people would desert . . . his behavior, attitudes and performance always remained the same. He never lost the heart of any soldier.<sup>18</sup>

## *Characteristics of US Leadership*

To the limited degree that today's US soldier thinks about it, he probably sees his immediate leadership as professionally competent to lead his unit successfully in combat. Small-unit leaders, especially junior officers, are exposed to the finest courses of instruction offered in any army. When they graduate from these courses, they are among the most expert small-unit leaders in the world. A demanding code of professional ethics requires that US leaders lead by example and share equally all hardships and danger. Yet small-unit leaders are finding it difficult to grasp control of their units and create the cohesive units required to win in combat. The reason is not the result of major shortcomings in their expertise, leadership abilities, or desire. Rather, it is the result of a series of decisions, made primarily within the past two decades, that tend to separate the small-unit leader (NCO and officer) from his soldiers. These decisions have moved the US Army away from traditional and proven policies towards those designed to make a volunteer Army more palatable to the public and to potential recruits.

Another very significant part of this trend is that there appear to be noticeably fewer squad leaders, platoon sergeants, and first sergeants of the type once referred to as the "backbone of the Army." These NCOs were broadly representative of American society, they knew their jobs better than anyone else, they loved their troops, and they expected to be with them indefinitely. Large portions of the NCO corps are turning away from this traditional concept and from the career pattern of squad leader, platoon sergeant, and perhaps first sergeant. So many NCOs are avoiding the traditional career path that only a little more than one-half of the Army's first sergeant positions are filled by NCOs in the grade of E-8. The Army's response has been to offer monetary incentives rather than to question why senior NCOs are pursuing patterns other than the traditional one. In this regard, one notes that recent sergeants major promotion boards have selected as many administrative career E-8s as infantry E-8s for promotion to E-9. Personal observations as a battalion commander support this trend. Large numbers of combat arms NCOs actively seek

administrative positions through special duty, MOS (military occupational specialty) change, or taking advantage of physical profiles while squad and platoon sergeant positions in line units are left unfilled or viewed as temporary jobs until an administrative position opens up.

Central to this trend is what many observers would identify as the ascendancy during the past 20 years of a managerial approach to decisionmaking. Basic organizational assumptions about how to motivate soldiers have significantly affected the leader's ability to influence their behavior. This approach assumes that the soldier is an economic man motivated primarily by personal gain. To entice soldiers to do the tough jobs such as serve in the combat arms, utilitarian motivation appears to be the answer. The higher pay necessary to compete for "labor" in the market has had the effect of making soldiering much more of an occupation. The Army has had to adopt many of the attractions offered by business in order to compete. As Charles Moskos has pointed out, the achievement of recruiting goals is the major criteria of success for the volunteer Army. Cohesion and leadership, being essentially immeasurable, are considered to be comparatively insignificant.

One of the most significant changes of the volunteer Army has been the high pay given lower-ranking enlisted men. Along with associated policies (such as relaxation of pass policies), higher pay has permitted junior enlisted men much more independence. The majority of soldiers now spend most of their time away from the unit. The squad leader and platoon sergeant have become "shift bosses" controlling their soldiers approximately eight hours a day.

Combined with a series of court decisions that significantly shifted priorities toward safeguarding the rights of the individual and away from traditional practices designed to create group discipline and cohesion, the effects of the move toward the occupational model of an army have had profound effects on the abilities of American leaders to create cohesive units.

The sources of power the small-unit leader requires to influence his soldiers have unintentionally been weakened to the point that it is not possible to create the degree of cohesion seen in other

armies. If the ultimate purpose has been to create an army that pleases almost everyone, the US Army has done that. The soldiers are happy with their pay in a job that isn't too demanding and that requires little sacrifice; the public is happy because most don't have the inconvenience of serving; and the nation's elected officials are happy because most of their constituents are pleased. Unfortunately, this state of affairs has been brought about through a set of policies that, while enticing enough volunteers, has made the human element of the US Army less important than it is in other top armies in the world today. As a result, the United States no longer has a tough, professional army that matches other leading armies in an essential element of combat power—cohesion.

Efforts to correct the situation have been directed at a level much too high within the organization. While extended command tours at battalion and brigade level and conversion to a regimental-style system will help, these efforts neglect to put priority at lower levels where cohesion is created. Cohesion occurs primarily at the squad, platoon, and company levels; it is created primarily by sergeants and junior officers exercising leadership through a stable, long-term relationship with their soldiers. To build a cohesive army, leadership skills in company and lower-level units, which are the most crucial, must be given priority.

In Vietnam, for example, the Vietcong recognized the importance of this concept. If a platoon or squad leader became a casualty and there was no fully qualified individual available within the unit to take his place, a fully qualified officer from a higher level was sent to lead that unit permanently. Within the US Army, this is not the practice. Acting sergeants are routinely appointed. While the best man available is usually appointed, little thought is given to the individual's overall ability and almost never is a senior noncommissioned officer sent "down" from the staff to lead the lacking platoon or squad. Perhaps the fault is systemic, resting in the fact that recent US Army leadership efforts have been focused at battalion and brigade levels, where extensive efforts have been made to appoint selected leaders for extended tours. While these efforts may do some good, they miss the mark. As noted, cohesive armies are built primarily at squad and platoon levels; hence, an army must place its leadership efforts there.

The possibility of significant bias in the current emphasis on battalion and brigade leadership must be recognized. The fact that most Pentagon action officers in the US Army working on these questions are lieutenant colonels and colonels who tend to project their rank into organizational solutions should not be overlooked. As a result, battalion and brigade command positions are emphasized. If the action officers determining US Army policy in these areas were senior sergeants and company grade officers, the proposed solutions would more likely be at platoon and company levels and would further cohesion in the US Army.

The sources of influence required by a leader in order to create a cohesive unit are potent and varied. Unfortunately, the small-unit leader in today's US Army does not have full access to these necessary sources of leadership power.

### *Expert Power*

The extensive training received by US small-unit leaders places them among the most competent military leaders worldwide. Through a system of progressive branch and specialty schools and courses, lieutenants and captains as well as squad and platoon sergeants learn skills that enable them to meet successfully all anticipated situations in combat. In past wars, a leader's ability to care for his troops by calling in defensive air and artillery strikes and by arranging for resupply and medical evacuation was, along with his tactical skills, an important source of personal influence within his unit. If he were perceived as being the most expert in these skills, his influence and ability to lead were greatly enhanced. Expert power, however, is most potent in combat or extended training situations when these skills are of greater importance to unit success and survival. In peacetime and short-term training situations and in a civilian milieu where American soldiers spend most of their time, the need for military expertise is minimal, and therefore the personal expertise of the leader is less useful in building cohesion. If the American soldier spent significantly more of his time within the environs of his unit, as soldiers in other armies do, expert power would become a much greater source of influence for the leader.

### *Reward and Coercive Power*

The power to reward and punish are not significant sources of power for the American small-unit leader. For maximum effectiveness in a small unit, reward and punishment must be related to dominant group norms within the unit, and the leader must be in control of using these norms in order to control soldier behavior. This is not the case in the US Army, except in elite units. The American soldier's bonds to his unit are generally so tenuous that group pressures within the unit play little role in influencing his behavior. The soldier's primary social affiliations are outside the unit with groups the leader has little chance of influencing. The inability to reward or punish the soldier through his need for peer esteem and recognition is a significant loss of influence for the leader.

Other means of rewarding the soldier through symbolic acts, such as handing him pay on payday, have also been removed from the purview of the small-unit leader. The inability of the squad leader, platoon sergeant, or platoon leader to control his soldiers 24 hours a day has made irrelevant what has traditionally been one of the greatest sources of influence possible at that level—The Pass. Further, the inability to maintain discipline in his own right, through extra duty and other such restrictions, has removed another significant source of influence from the company-grade leader. Promotions are largely seen as being independent of the soldier's immediate squad or platoon and more dependent upon centralized board proceedings. Soldiers perceive it as their right to appear before the promotion board so long as they meet the basic criteria, which are established largely independently of the squad and platoon leaders. Although these leaders have a veto over soldier promotions, the exercise of this veto prerogative is often seen as a negative influence on soldier morale rather than as a positive source of influence for the unit leader.

Perhaps most significantly, the prerogative of the Army to enforce rules necessary for discipline and cohesion has been significantly weakened by the court system. Over the past 15 years, the Court of Military Appeals, the Federal Appellate Courts, and the Supreme Court have turned away from a prior principle that held, in accordance with democratic tradition, that soldiers give

up some of their individual rights while they serve. The commander was given the primary responsibility for rule enforcement under a code that gave priority to creating and maintaining military discipline. Under this system the priorities were clear, the rules were explained, and their enforcement was fair and swift. What has emerged from the highest courts over the past 15 years is a series of new precedents that have given priority to applying all legal safeguards and rights applicable to civilians and individual soldiers. The individual and his rights now have priority over the welfare of the unit. The maintenance of discipline and cohesion has suffered significantly as a result.<sup>19</sup> Civilian contract law is now applied to conditions of a soldier's service; a unit commander cannot personally conduct a search of his unit for any purpose and then press charges against soldiers found in violation of law, such as drug or weapons possession. Reinforcing the notion that military service can be compartmentalized into an eight-hour day and that the soldier is a civilian for the remainder of the day, the Supreme Court has ruled that the Army does not have courts-martial jurisdiction over a soldier off duty or off post.<sup>20</sup> Soldiers are allowed to bring suit against commanders attempting to maintain discipline (such as a suit against the Army urinalysis program to detect drug abuse). These and other such rulings recast many of the traditional practices considered necessary to maintain discipline and build cohesion.

### *Legitimate Power*

A small-unit leader's legitimate power is directly related to the perceived status of the Army in American society. In other words, operative legitimate power means that the soldier believes he "ought" to be in the Army and obey Army officials because he has learned that it is the responsibility of a citizen to serve in defense of the nation.

This learned cultural value is not uniform in the United States. America's fractured consensus about the citizen's proper duties with regard to serving in defense of his country was described previously. For the reasons cited in chapter 6, legitimate power based on a strong military ethos in American society is a very weak source of influence for the small-unit leader. More and more, he is being forced to turn to a different sort of legitimate,

but much less potent, power—that found in the relationship between employer and employee. This type of motivation is well-established in American society. It is the motivation of the marketplace and assumes the soldier is an economic man and thus can be influenced through utilitarian means. While marketplace motivation is legitimate, it is weak. It casts the soldier in the role of employee with the possibility of “opting out,” if the going gets too tough. In an Army where a primary source of leader influence is marketplace motivation, the bond of a soldier to his unit and his leader is not very strong.

### *Referent Power*

By far the strongest influence available to any leader is referent power. History is replete with battles won through the endurance and capabilities of cohesive armies formed primarily on the basis of referent power. Referent power is dependent upon the identity between leader and soldier formed through close, frequent, and structured association. Both parties expect the relationship to endure for an extended period. In such a relationship, the leader knows the personal history, background, aspirations, fears, capabilities, and attitudes of his soldier and uses these facts to promote the soldier’s identity with him and the unit—a unit that becomes the primary social affiliation for all assigned soldiers and that is bonded together to the degree that the soldier’s and the leader’s expectations about the soldier’s personal behavior are the same.

To a large degree, internal organizations and current US Army practices and policies deny referent power to small-unit leaders. The cumulative effects of the occupational model of the Army previously described prevent the frequent, structured, personal, and relatively permanent association between small-unit leaders and soldiers necessary for referent power to become operative and for cohesion to emerge. Very high pay for junior enlisted personnel, permanent-pass and liberal “out” policies, persistent personnel turbulence, primary affiliation with “outside” groups often on basis of race, drugs, or sex, large numbers of married soldiers, significant numbers of singles maintaining a room in the barracks but living off post, judicial erosion of company-grade leaders’ authority, soldiers’ perceptions of their

role as a job rather than as a vocation, configuration of rooms, mess halls, and other facilities, and other similar factors combine to ensure that the small unit remains a fragmented group, largely unable to coalesce around its leaders and produce cohesion to the degree it is achieved in other armies.

### *Characteristics of Soviet Leadership*

Unlike most other armies, the Soviet officer corps, not the NCO corps, is the backbone of the Soviet Army.<sup>21</sup> Soviet officers perform many of the important training and supervisory functions traditionally performed by sergeants. Combined with the ethnic, boredom, drinking, and other problems described earlier, not having a strong NCO corps presents major leadership problems to the Soviet Army for two reasons. First, leadership efforts are not focused at the small-unit level, especially at the squad and platoon levels. Because there are often not enough experienced officers available and because NCO experience and quality at these levels is generally low, the Soviet Army is not well represented at the level where an organization's best leaders are necessary if cohesive units are to be created.<sup>22</sup> Second, although the Soviet officer corps is perceived to be extremely competent, adhering to a demanding code of professional ethics, it includes within its ethos an elitist attitude that in many respects makes it an extremely privileged class, one that emphasizes material benefits and the prerogatives of rank and position. As a result, the most competent leadership within the Soviet Army, the officer corps, is effectively separated from the soldiers of the Soviet Army. The extended, frequent, and purposeful face-to-face contacts between leader and soldier necessary to build cohesive units generally are not present in most Soviet Army units. The Soviets have officially recognized the importance of the close leader-soldier relationships necessary to build cohesion and are attempting to improve the situation.<sup>23</sup> They have recently created the rank of warrant officer to bridge the gap between officer and NCO and are taking other measures to improve the quality of NCOs.

The Soviets deride the excessive reliance the United States puts on initiative (translated in Russian as "native wit"). They maintain that the biggest obstacle to combat effectiveness is stress

on the individual soldier caused by the surprise, fear, and hardship found in combat.<sup>24</sup> Instead of relying on the initiative, the Soviets place heavy emphasis on carefully worked out and detailed plans, characterized by surprise and maneuver, often without the complete massing of forces needed in order to achieve surprise. To enable the Soviet soldier to withstand the effects of stress, the Soviet Army emphasizes (1) unit cohesion under reliable leaders; (2) training under combat conditions, or practicing to be miserable (they believe that a certain amount of conditioning to stress is possible and expect that pre-conditioned soldiers will be better able to resist the fear and hardship of combat); and (3) drill in training. The Soviets believe that the first casualty of stress will be "clear and reasoned thinking." The last thing to go from a soldier's mind will be "well-rehearsed drills." Therefore, drill and repetition will eventually win out over intellect, wit, and initiative.<sup>25</sup> In essence, the Soviets believe that well-drilled units, formed into cohesive Kollektives, under the control of reliable leaders, following detailed plans, will prove superior in future wars. They believe their doctrine is based on years of wisdom and accumulated knowledge gained through surviving an intensity of warfare in World War II experienced by few other armies.

The Soviets further believe that they have a reliable Army because of the broad and powerful effects of Russian socialization, which gives enormous legitimacy to the Soviet Army and creates the expectation that all Soviet citizens have concerning their responsibilities toward serving the Army and the State. The Soviet soldier expects the intense supervision, indoctrination, regimentation, and hardship to which he is exposed. The resulting boredom, drinking, and occasional insubordination are not viewed as subversive but almost as normal elements of the milieu, as the Soviet soldier attempts to cope with a two-to-three-year enlistment that is purposefully made difficult and stressful by Soviet officers as part of their philosophy of training. Added to the legitimizing effects of socialization is an extremely exacting and comprehensive set of military regulations that prescribes correct actions and behavior for almost all envisioned circumstances. The authority of the Soviet officer to enforce regulations and orders is complete. In certain circumstances, he even has authority for on-the-spot executions. As might be expected, willingness to deviate from

prescribed procedures to exercise individual initiative is rare. There is a strong institutional bias toward protecting oneself from failure. If prescribed procedures have been followed and failure occurs, individuals cannot be held responsible. The Soviets recognize the need for some leadership initiative<sup>26</sup> and yet appear to be unable to nurture it sufficiently because of the continuing demands for exacting discipline and careful adherence to set plans and procedures. In short, the bases for Soviet Army leaders' influence over their soldiers are mixed.

### *Reward and Coercive Power*

Detailed regulations listing all undesired behavior and appropriate punishments are widely distributed within the Soviet Army.<sup>27</sup> Military tribunals impose courts-martial sentences that are often served in disciplinary battalions. For less serious offenses within units, commanders at various levels have authority to take a number of actions. A tank commander, for example, can impose punishment on the tank driver even if both are of the same rank.<sup>28</sup> Small-unit commanders can also mete out rewards. Typical rewards are

a statement of gratitude orally or in the form of a written order, removal of punishment imposed earlier, awarding of certificates, bestowing of valuable gifts or money, and awarding of the chest badge for an outstanding soldier. Disciplinary punishment includes admonition, reprimand, strict reprimand, arrest with detention in the guardhouse for a period of ten days, deprivation of the chest badge of outstanding soldier, removal from the post, discharge into the reserve until the expiration of the service period, and deprivation of military rank.<sup>29</sup>

While a formal system of punishment exists, it appears that commanders are reluctant to use it extensively. Because of the intense competition among units, many commanders attempt to keep punishment statistics at a low level, thus indicating a lack of significant disciplinary problems.<sup>30</sup> As a substitute, commanders often rely on informal group punishments such as harsh training to bring pressures within the group to punish and correct individual offenses.<sup>31</sup>

Even rewards, such as highly prized time away from the unit, do not always fully benefit the unit leader. Suvorov notes:

On Sundays, the commander of a sub-unit is allowed to send 10% of his NCOs and soldiers into town during daylight hours. This might seem to be a way of encouraging those who deserve it. In fact, however, although he may make a soldier a present of eight hours in this way, he cannot be sure that his battalion or regimental commander will not overrule him by stopping all leave. Besides, platoon and company commanders themselves are not enthusiastic about letting soldiers out of camp. If a soldier is checked by a patrol in the town and they find the slightest thing wrong, the officer who allowed the soldier to leave his barracks is held responsible. A commander, therefore, prefers to send soldiers off for the day in a group, under the eye of the political officer. This is the only way in which Soviet soldiers are allowed to go into a town in Eastern Europe and it is very frequently used in the Soviet Union, too. Since a Soviet soldier does not like being part of a convoy, he just does not bother to leave camp.<sup>32</sup>

Significantly, the small-unit commander, through team, squad, platoon, and higher levels, has authority to reward and punish based upon the functional authority of his position. He does not have to request delayed action from authorities at higher levels. The impact of his decision to reward or punish, especially informally, is immediate and recognized as a prerogative of his position.

The Soviet Army recognizes the power of the Kollektive to reward and punish in pursuit of Army goals. Soviet military texts on military psychology give instructions to leaders on how to control opinion formulation within the group to ensure that peer pressures are focused on a deviant soldier to isolate him from the group and then bring him back into the group on the leader's terms.<sup>33</sup> The Soviet Army recognizes the strong influence available to a unit leader through dispensing rewards and punishment via group pressures and is taking steps to reinforce this method of control. Results, however, appear to be mixed. Success has been limited because junior NCOs are not well established within their units as leaders capable of bringing about congruence between group and organizational needs. It appears that Soviet Army NCOs at lower unit levels are too inexperienced and generally identify with the soldiers at the expense of Army goals. An

official Soviet Army publication discusses the situation:

In contrast to officers, sergeants (senior NCOs) are not significantly older than their subordinates, and hence they have little advantage in experience which is an important factor in the moral and psychological influence upon people. Also, for completely understandable reasons, sergeants (senior NCOs) can only slightly surpass their subordinates in service experience . . . and are not always able to find a correct approach to the men or rationally use their disciplinary rights. . . . They are also more susceptible to the influence of the soldier's opinion than are officers. All this makes it difficult for sergeants to establish authority as the moral and psychological basis for proper relations with soldiers.<sup>34</sup>

### *Expert Power*

The Soviet Army recognizes that expert power is a significant source of influence for leaders. High Soviet authorities stress that the leader must strive to "be respected not only as a lieutenant or captain but as an expert in his job . . . he should win authority, and win it primarily by knowledge and experience."<sup>35</sup> To become well prepared, junior and warrant officers spend up to four or five years in one or more of approximately 140 specialized military schools. Soldiers under their command are well guided and appear to have confidence in the ability of these leaders.<sup>36</sup>

Two significant factors appear to work against the expert junior leader's ability to influence his soldiers. One is the obvious undermining of the junior leader's professional status by less well-qualified political officers. It is obvious to the Soviet soldier, as Scott and Scott point out, that the Party attaches "greater importance to the political than to the military qualifications of officers."<sup>37</sup> Because Soviet Army political officers enter the military through special academies and have relatively fewer military skills than regular officers, they tend to be somewhat isolated within the officer corps. Unlike the North Vietnamese political officer, who is foremost a military leader, the Soviet political officer is not perceived to be a military expert and his authority over military experts is resented. Second, while Soviet leaders are well qualified for their duties, they are narrowly focused; hence, they can quickly "get out of their area" of expertise merely by being

put in a situation that changes their duties even slightly. As long as operations proceed according to a set plan, the Soviet leader's expertise will tend to be a source of power in influencing his soldiers. But the lack of initiative evident at all levels of command below the General Staff level is a distinct liability. Because of the risk of failure and the need to assess blame, initiative is discouraged and usually penalized within the Soviet Army. In a turbulent situation where pre-established plans have been discarded and communication with higher headquarters is not possible, most Soviet leaders would "be at a loss."<sup>38</sup> The obvious lack of leadership expertise or willingness to improvise in such situations presents major problems for Soviet leaders attempting to influence their soldiers.

### *Legitimate Power*

The entire socialization process within Soviet society appears to reinforce the legitimate power of Soviet Army leaders. Soviet citizens have a strong need for direction and control by recognized authority as a result of learned cultural values. Within the Soviet Army this need for direction is translated into a strong sense of complying with orders merely because they are issued by formal authority figures. From an egalitarian beginning that did away with all rank distinctions after the Revolution of 1917, the Soviet Army has gradually instituted a system of rank, prerogatives, and privileges that requires compliance with a well-developed set of regulations and procedures; these require the soldiers' compliance on the basis of formal authority alone.<sup>39</sup>

Legitimate power appears to be the primary source of leader influence, even though top Soviet leadership recognizes that referent power is probably the most powerful form of leader influence and would like to maximize this source of leader power.

### *Referent Power*

The solidarity of the Kollektive under the positive influence of Soviet leaders is the desired goal within all units of the Soviet Army. While major problems prevent the accomplishment of this goal in the near term, the Soviet Army has instituted policies pro-

moting such leadership practices and is actively working toward achieving this goal.

Official Soviet guidance to officers in the field recognizes the power of the Kollektive when under the positive control of its leaders and emphasizes the need to develop trust and mutual loyalty between leaders and soldiers necessary for referent power. Only when the soldier believes that his immediate leader has that soldier's welfare in mind and demonstrates the capability of successfully leading the Kollektive through difficult hardships and danger will that soldier identify strongly with the leader and permit him to exercise influence over his own behavior.

The Soviets realize that the key to referent power is leader control of the group and the formation of group norms that are congruent with Soviet Army objectives. Goldhamer notes:

Soviet writings on morale, solidarity, and discipline increasingly emphasize the importance of a knowledge of psychology and sociology for understanding and motivating soldiers. Company officers, particularly the company political officers, study the character, behavior, and attitudes of the men.<sup>40</sup>

Official Soviet texts on "Control of Collective Attitudes" also emphasize the point:

The various meetings of personnel are the chief means of expressing a collective opinion, and at the same time a method for shaping it. . . . The opinion of a meeting of personnel, as a rule, has a very strong effect upon the men. This must be used carefully and skillfully in endeavoring to use group opinion for solving fundamental issues. . . .<sup>41</sup>

The Soviets are aware of the power a leader can achieve when the group identifies with him and, as noted above, are also aware of the control techniques necessary to achieve this power. But they have not yet taken the major reforms necessary to modify the exacting discipline and severe daily regimen that is the primary control system in use within the Soviet Army today.<sup>42</sup> Other significant changes would also be necessary. The Soviet officer corps emphasizes traditions, adopted from the Tzarist Imperial Army, that effectively separate it from close contact with the Soviet soldiers. Though tactically sound and possessing great expertise, the Soviet officer is not disposed to promote the close

professional relationships with soldiers that other armies have successfully formed in creating an enormously powerful source of influence for small-unit leaders. Soviet Army NCOs as presently trained and assigned are also not capable of forming militarily cohesive units. As noted earlier, most are assigned for two years only, are usually of the same age and general experience as the soldiers they are to lead, and usually perceive themselves as just another soldier with little difference in status. Because they eat, sleep, and work with their units to an extreme, they identify primarily with their soldiers, rather than with Army objectives.<sup>43</sup> Shelyag, Glotochkin, and Platonov illustrate the limitations and basic qualifications of Soviet NCOs:

The training divisions have no fixed establishment of personnel: every six months each division receives ten thousand recruits to train. After five months of brutally tough training these trainees become sergeants and are sent to combat divisions, to replace those who have been demobilized. Then the training division receives another ten thousand and the cycle begins again. Thus each training division turns out twenty thousand sergeants a year. Each trainee spends half of his first year at the training division, is promoted and then spends the remaining eighteen months of his service with a combat division.<sup>44</sup>

The type of training and the leadership example set for NCO trainees within NCO training divisions help explain why Soviet sergeants are not the backbone of the Soviet Army. Suvorov observes:

In a training division, a sergeant simply dominates his trainees, totally ignoring any views they may have. In addition, each platoon commander in a training division, supervising thirty or forty young trainees, is allowed to retain the services of one or two of the toughest of them. A sergeant in a training division also knows that he would have nothing like the same authority in a combat division. While he is still a trainee, therefore, he picks noisy quarrels with his fellows, in the hope that his platoon commander will notice and decide that he is someone who should be kept on to join the staff after the end of the course. He cannot afford to reduce his aggressiveness if he succeeds in landing a job with the training division, or he may find himself sent off to join a combat division, having been replaced by some young terror who is only too ready to spend all his nights as well as his days

enforcing order and discipline. (If, however, this should happen, he would soon realize that he is unlikely to be sent on anywhere else from a combat division and that he can therefore afford to let up a bit and to slacken the reins.)

Discipline in a training division is almost unbelievably strict. If you have not experienced life in one you could never imagine what it is like. For instance, you might have a section of non-smokers headed by a sergeant who does smoke. Every member of the section will carry cigarettes and matches in his pocket. If the sergeant, apparently without realizing that he is doing so, lifts two fingers to his mouth, the section will assume that he is in need of a cigarette. As one, ten trainees will rush forward, pulling cigarette packets from their pockets. The sergeant hesitates, considering which of the ten stands highest in his favour at that moment, and finally selects one of the cigarettes he is offered. By doing so, he rewards a trainee for his recent performance.

Older and more senior NCOs tend to follow the officer example and isolate themselves from the individual soldier except for formal contacts based upon extremely strict discipline.<sup>45</sup>

The unrelenting requirements of the daily training regimen in all Soviet Army combat units drive everyone—officers, NCOs, and soldiers alike—with their demands and competition. Along with the other divisive factors described earlier (such as the problems of ethnic conflict, apathy, and drinking), the tough daily requirements do not allow leaders the time or initiative necessary to break out of the present system toward a more positive leadership approach.<sup>46</sup>

### *Characteristics of Israeli Leadership*

Israelis have always stated that their security problem is unlike that of any other country. They are unique in that they have had to struggle as a nation for physical survival since 1948. During the course of four major wars and continuous smaller conflicts since that time, Israel's strategy of conducting brief but intensive warfare to defeat its enemies decisively has produced military leaders of the highest quality. Not only the highly visible top-ranking leadership but especially the lowest-ranking leadership at squad and platoon levels was exemplary. During the Sinai Campaign and the Six-Day War, about 50 percent of all Israeli

casualties were officers.<sup>47</sup> The character of Israeli leadership reflects the Israeli belief that the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) are “as good as [their] officers”:

Every officer was in the thick of it. Platoon commanders and brigadiers . . . knew their jobs well, had unlimited drive and determination, were keen, quick-thinking, and imbued with the aggressive spirit. Above all, they were offensive-minded and held an insatiable will to win. . . .<sup>48</sup>

While the strategic skills of Israel’s top military leadership have led to impressive victories, almost all of those within the IDF recognize that the key element in these victories is the Israeli soldier and his immediate leadership at squad, crew, and platoon levels. To an exceedingly high degree, there is almost complete congruence within these units between the goals and behavior of individual soldiers and the objectives of the organization. Because Israeli procedures for recruiting junior officers and NCOs ensure that the most qualified are selected for leadership positions, Army leaders are generally very successful in dominating the primary groups within the Israeli Army. As a result, the IDF is able to achieve a high degree of military cohesion which allows leaders at lower levels the initiative to explore opportunities in combat that few other armies are able to achieve:

Since the approved style of combat leadership is based on personal example, problem-solving and “leadership” contact, knowing that he will be able to “pull” his men after him by being the first to advance, the officer can choose daring tactical solutions which he might otherwise have to reject. When “leadership” consists of ordering reluctant men to advance bold tactics are out of the question. . . .<sup>49</sup>

The extraordinary action of the Israeli soldier in combat is based on the almost absolute control of the group over his behavior. Men said that what worried them most during combat was what others would think of them. Within the small unit the pre-eminence of the leader is assured because he sets the example in all those areas held in highest value by the group. Generally unsurpassed in military expertise, the Israeli leader adheres to a spartan, almost puritanical code of professional conduct, which eschews monetary gain and special status but offers recognized stature within the group as the primary reward.<sup>50</sup>

Within the Israeli Army, a system of employing "military psychologists" to conduct morale surveys on a regular basis has determined that several major factors affect the morale of Israeli troops. These factors have been confirmed most recently in IDF actions in Lebanon, where troop surveys found a very significant statistical correlation between (1) unit cohesion and perceived high levels of morale within the company, (2) confidence in leaders at company and lower unit levels, and (3) the individual soldier's confidence in himself as a soldier.<sup>51</sup>

### *Reward and Coercive Power*

Very little of the Israeli leader's influence over his troops is based on his perceived ability to reward or punish in a concrete manner. The Israelis have rejected motivating soldiers through higher pay or other incentives as being basically flawed. Likewise, physical restraint or coercion play a small role in Israeli leadership techniques. This slight use of physical punishment is even true for the limited number of soldiers with criminal or deviant behavior records drafted each year in an attempt to reform them for Israeli society.

Within the IDF, reward and punishment are usually related to the individual soldier's relationship with the primary group or unit. The leader's ability to control group sanctions and therefore the behavior of the individual soldier is an enormous source of personal power.

The decisive role of social ties and comradeship and the opportunity it presents to the leader to grant recognition and build the individual soldier's esteem in the eyes of the group are perhaps the most potent source of reward available to the Israeli leader.<sup>52</sup> Informal verbal approval is the most common form of recognition. Next are the many informal letters of commendation and appreciation through which the unit leader extends recognition. Such letters are the frequent form of recognition and reward; because they are not lightly given, they are accepted within the group as being deserved praise for a job well done.

Formal awards and decorations within the Israeli Army carry significant prestige because so few are given; therefore, those that are given are recognized as being especially deserving. There are

three basic Israeli decorations: one for good conduct, one for bravery, and one for heroism. From 1948 through the 1973 war, approximately 1,000 good conduct medals, 100 medals (Etour Haoz) for bravery, and fewer than 20 medals (Etour Hgevora) for heroism were awarded.<sup>53</sup> This is extraordinary by standards of most other armies, considering that the IDF was engaged in four major wars and numerous smaller conflicts during this period. The annual award by the President of Israel of a certificate of honor to 100 outstanding conscripts and career soldiers is also much sought after by the Israeli soldier as a mark of special recognition and esteem.

Little utilized but available to the Israeli officer is a military justice system that authorizes court-martial and administrative application of the law. Possible punishments include restriction to the unit area, loss of pay, reprimand, loss of rank, life imprisonment, and the death penalty. The last two penalties have never been used against an IDF member.<sup>54</sup> When used as punishment, the military justice system has been used primarily against conscripts with criminal records who attempt to continue their life of crime within the IDF. Some use has also been made against those few soldiers who go against the group norms and indulge in drugs (primarily hashish).

### *Legitimate Power*

The weakest source of the Israeli leader's power to influence his soldiers is probably legitimate power. As the only source of power that is impersonal and primarily dependent upon insignia of rank and position, it has less influence over the behavior of Israeli soldiers than do the other sources of power. The lack of significant authority figures in Israeli culture and the questioning nature of the Israeli soldier make the exercise of power merely on the basis of rank or position a doubtful one. For this reason, rank is worn casually in the Israeli Army and primarily identifies the leader to be followed rather than one to be obeyed:

It may be said that the concept of discipline in the Israeli Army is limited to the need for unquestionable obedience in executing orders, while dispensing with the symbols of submission. These may be necessary ingredients [in some armies], but they are vital only when there is a great discrepancy

between ranks as regards motivation, orientation, and courage.<sup>55</sup>

The fact that the IDF has been the main instrument ensuring the survival of the State of Israel since 1948 has earned the Israeli Defense Forces enormous legitimacy in the eyes of all Israelis, including its own soldiers. In this sense, great legitimacy is granted to IDF leaders but not on the basis of rank alone. Rolbant points to the ineffectiveness of an attempt to increase "formal respect for superiors":

He issued orders for soldiers to say "Yes, Commander." The soldiers did so. Nothing happened, except that the soldiers now said "Yes, Commander," as ordered. The change was of no educational value and was scrapped . . . obviously external symbols cannot be automatically imposed since they belong to the climate in which they grow; and Israeli society is still possessed of few non-utilitarian graces such as adorn a more stable society which is neither hard-pressed nor in a hurry to assert itself. . . .<sup>56</sup>

### *Expert Power*

Israeli officers and NCOs are the product of a unique selection and training process that make them the best qualified leaders in the Middle East to deal with the terrain and type of battle likely to be faced by the Israeli Defense Forces in any future wars. Because their anticipated area of operations is so limited and because the experience gained in four major conflicts since 1948 is so plentiful, the Israelis have the luxury of focusing their preparations for defense upon a relatively narrow range of problems. Interior lines of communications, training on future battlegrounds, and the unique type of combined-arms desert warfare perfected by the IDF have presented the Israeli with a well-defined arena and allowed the IDF to produce leaders for that arena that are unmatched by any other army.

Israeli soldiers have come to expect that their leaders are the most expert and most capable leaders possible. Almost all Israeli males are drafted. From the complete cross section of Israeli society, conscripts with the most leadership potential are selected early to attend NCO and officer schools. There is no central military academy. All potential officers attend a basic course and then are sent to specialized schools (for example, infantry or armor).

Two characteristics appear to be common to all instruction, however. First, care is taken to ensure that all conscripts, officer candidates, and ordinary soldiers train in every area of the country so that they all become very familiar with its geography. Second, IDF leaders, both officers and NCOs, are repeatedly taught "that the contagion of courage is the source of all battlefield unity and unity secures success in the field."<sup>57</sup>

There is little doubt in the Israeli soldier's mind that his leaders are the most expert in the Middle East; they have proven that point repeatedly over the past 30 or more years. This perceived expertise and the confidence it imparts to the collective unit in facing combat provide a source of tremendous influence for the small-unit leader in the Israeli Army.

### *Referent Power*

Without doubt, the intense identification of most Israeli soldiers with their leaders and, through them, with the nation of Israel and its cause of survival is the most potent source of leader influence within the Israeli Army. The very strong control of the group over the Israeli soldier gives the leader his influence. Interviews of Israeli war veterans illustrate the power of the group, indicating that their behavior was dominated by

the need to fulfill their obligation toward their fellow soldier, "the affiliative motive" as it has been called . . . [and] fear of shame, of possible ostracism or disapproval they might experience . . . everybody knew where you were . . . what you did or failed to do.<sup>58</sup>

Underlying the strong control of the group over the individual soldier's behavior is an almost universal sense of brotherhood, which exists among officers and enlisted soldiers alike. An unofficial but widely known and repeated address, "The Fellowship of Fighters," by Yitzhak Sadeh illustrates what the Israelis call their tradition of "unconditional" comradeship within the IDF. Although it strikes some as "somewhat naive" or a "trifle corny," it appears to represent the beliefs and attitudes of Israeli soldiers.<sup>59</sup>

The fellowship of men fighting for a common cause is surely the perfection of comradeship. Without it nothing can be achieved. . . . Who is your comrade? He is the man standing at your side ready to shield your body with his. . . .

Comradeship has to be nourished. It has to be learned. As you learn to feel that each and every day of the year is the crucial day, so you must learn to know that the friend at your side is your brother in the deepest sense—your comrade in dedication . . . and in act.<sup>60</sup>

Leadership of such soldiers falls to “the man who knows the most . . . is able to motivate his men to make the supreme effort required in battle. The men believe in him, rely on him, and expect him to give them the right orders.”<sup>61</sup>

The power of the group is so strong in the Israeli Army that significant breakthroughs have been made using the attraction of the group to treat soldiers suffering from severe psychological trauma or battle shock. Israeli standard procedure has been to evacuate “battle stress” casualties much as other casualties were evacuated. Few if any of these casualties ever returned to their units, and the traumatic effects often lasted for years. Beginning in the early 1970s, however, the Israeli Army, because of significant numbers of such casualties, assigned “battlefield psychologists” to units and began a program of treating such casualties at the front; “in most cases, they could hear or even see the battle.” The power and attraction of the group were used to assist in the “psychiatric first aid,” which was administered in the context of the patient’s daily regimen within his unit. Results of this new treatment have been very encouraging. Over 80 percent of such casualties, previously lost to the unit, are now reintegrated with their units as fully functioning soldiers.<sup>62</sup>

The significance of such cohesive units and the enormous influence Israeli leaders have within their units are often not realized by outsiders. One illustration of the significance of cohesion is the role it has played in Israeli victories over Arab armies that significantly lack cohesion and the leadership necessary to create it.<sup>63</sup>

TABLE 10  
*Characteristics of Leadership*

<i>Element</i>	<i>Army</i>			
	<i>North Vietnamese</i>	<i>United States</i>	<i>Soviet</i>	<i>Israeli</i>
Leadership priority focused on small units, platoon, and company	++	-	-	++
Strict code of professional ethics requires leaders to share danger and hardship	++	++	+	++
Leaders utilize effects of civic education or indoctrination to maximize leadership	++	-	+	+
Small-unit leaders have authority to control all events or actions in unit	++	-	+	+
Leader influence through power to reward and punish	++	-	+	+
Leader influence through expertise and as source of information	++	+	+	+
Leader influence through legitimate power	++	+	+	++
Leader influence through referent power	++	+	+	++

*Legend:* Strong ++  
+  
-  
Weak --