# *PREFACE*

IN ASSESSING WHO WINS WARS AND WHY, it is easy to overweigh any one factor and neglect others. Broad factors such as objectives and strategies, weapons and materials, technology, numbers of soldiers, and the human element must all be considered in determining who wins and why. Although this study is concerned with the human element in war, it recognizes the probability of major effects on war outcomes from other sources. Single-cause explanations must be avoided: they claim too much for one factor at the expense of others. This appears to be the case with today's emphasis on a defective US strategy as the prime explanation of the US loss in Vietnam and on technology as probably the determining factor in future modern wars. I want to register my reservations about three seemingly prevailing currents in contemporary thought about military affairs: the strategy-failure school explanation of the outcome in Vietnam; the high-technology school assertion that unit cohesion will not significantly affect future "high-tech" wars; and a related school assertion that cohesion can only be maintained in mass armies and not in small, specialized team armies of the future.

First, the Vietnam outcome: in a limited analysis of US strategy in Vietnam contrasting US strategy with the axioms of Clausewitz and the Principles of War, Colonel Harry G.

Summers, Jr., points to deficient US strategy as the main cause of the US loss in Vietnam.* This conclusion is probably not justified based on Colonel Summers' work. By limiting his analytical framework to Clausewitz and the Principles of War, Colonel Summers neglects a thorough examination of what many other knowledgeable observers have identified as the overall US strategy in Vietnam, that of "graduated compellance."

The chief objective of this strategy was to bring the North Vietnamese to the negotiating table on US terms through a process of escalating the costs of their involvement in the war. Because US strategy was determined primarily by civilian analysts, an examination of their product, its assumptions, and especially its underpinning in economic game theory in such books as Thomas Schelling's *Arms and Influence* and *The Strategy of Conflict* is essential. Further work must be done before the full story of US strategy in Vietnam is revealed. Perhaps an even more significant shortcoming of the strategy school is the failure to consider the quality of the human element on each side prior to determining reasons for the US defeat. The organization, policies, and leadership that created North Vietnamese Army resiliency to hardship, danger, and outside influences while their opponents were significantly affected by almost all elements within their environment are perhaps as important in explaining the final outcome of Vietnam as is defective US strategy.

In the future, the effect of high technology on military cohesion and combat effectiveness must be considered. The lethality and multiplier effects of new and modernized weapons systems will continue to modify the nature of war, as they have through history. From the time of the French Revolution and the beginning of the era of modern warfare, when French armies dominated the battlefield, cohesion and its relation to nationalism became a major factor in warfare. With major advances in the capabilities of wide numbers of weapons systems and accompanying operational doctrine, it has been suggested that the significance of military cohesion will decrease as a principal factor in determinating the outcome of future battles, especially in the air-land battles possible around the year 2000. The latest US Army

* Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1982).

field manual on this subject (FM 100-5) states that future major battles will likely be conducted within an integrated battlefield. This doctrine envisions the air-land battle to be characterized by deep attacks against follow-on echelons behind the front lines, principally through increased coordination of ground and air operations. The overall battlefield will be extended beyond the more traditional front lines and will encompass conventional, electronic, chemical, and possibly nuclear weapons, In viewing this future change in the characteristics of future battles, some observers have raised the important question of whether "by adapting military organization and tactics to the projected technology of the battlefield of the future, we run the risk of undermining the sources of social support that have historically sustained soldiers in battle."

Those who are most concerned with this possibility appear to be primarily influenced by the two major considerations.* One is the low personnel density in the form of relatively small weapons teams scattered widely over the battlefield because of weapon lethality, chemical contamination, and improved communications. The other consideration appears to be an implicit conclusion that cohesion that is congruent with Army objectives cannot exist without an undetermined but large number of troops organized into large maneuver elements that interact on a daily, face-to-face basis and thereby provide the social support necessary for cohesion. Others carry the argument further, stating that even if large armies were feasible, American society doesn't have the will to man such an army. Again technology is seen as the answer. Robert Cooper, Director of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), recently observed:

> It's my view that this society has decided that it will only use a certain fraction of its human effort in its own defense or in preparation for its own defense in peacetime. The imperative just isn't there. We are what we are. We don't have the resolve . . . so consequently we have no other alternative but to turn to high technology. That's it.**

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* Unless otherwise indentified, the case for high technology has been taken from a widely circulated paper by David R. Segal, "Cohesion, Leadership and Stress in Airland Battle 2000," University of Maryland, 1983.

** See Michael Schrage, "The Sword of Science," *Washington Post Magazine,* 9 October 1983, pp. 22-23.

The counter proposition made here and in the chapters that follow is that cohesion will become even more important as the technology of war develops but that cohesion will probably also become more difficult to achieve. The chance, dispersion, isolation, confusion, danger, stress, and hardship of the future battlefield will ensure that the decades-old trend of authority and decisionmaking moving downward in the organization will continue. A form of warfare where soldiers marched lock-step into battle in long lines under the watchful eye of a sergeant behind them with drawn sword has changed to one of the small, independent-unit tactics and leadership found in recent wars. Perhaps the 1973 Arab-Israeli war best illustrates this trend. The 1973 war was the largest tank battle ever fought, yet it was characterized by numerous small unit engagements most often won by the side displaying the most initiative, leadership, and cohesion at the small-unit level.

Statements and research findings that support the view that cohesion will be less important in future small and more specialized armies appear to be unduly dependent upon study of the American Army, especially in Korea and Vietnam, and lead to the tentative conclusion that research has not shed any light on the critical social mass or size of group necessary to provide cohesion in military units. However, research is available (for example, on Israeli, Chinese, and North Vietnamese armies) that suggests that strong military cohesion is possible in quite small groups and under intense pressure and stress. In fact, in both the Chinese and North Vietnamese examples, three-man military cells are used as the basic building block in constructing cohesive units following their 3 x 3 organizational concept. In it, each unit is one of three like units which are part of a larger unit also comprised of three like units. In both armies, the central focus of cohesion is at the very small unit level. The three-man military cell with proper leadership and control became the strength upon which the extraordinary endurance of both armies was based. This is especially significant in the case of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) since it was required to operate widely dispersed under the conditions of extreme hardship and stress often described as characteristic of future battlefields. In this regard, it is also interesting to note how the Israeli Army deals with battle stress similar to the type

envisioned in future wars. During the 1973 and Lebanon conflicts, treatment of stress casualties had the goal of returning the soldier to duty with his unit. The power and attraction of the small cohesive unit to the soldier helped achieve a remarkably high rate of success in treating his battle stress.

It has also been suggested that the importance of cohesion in explaining combat performance has been overstated or that cohesion can be replaced by alternative sources of motivation and control (from patriotism to drugs). Support for the view that the significance of cohesion has been overstated is made by some who point to prior studies describing soldiers who fought as individuals rather than as part of a cohesive unit. Such conclusions are probably questionable. Although in some instances US soldiers might have fought as individuals in Vietnam, no one, to my knowledge, has seriously proposed this form of combat motivation as a superior one.*

Related suggestions also discount military cohesion by suggesting that patriotism can be an alternative combat motivator. The view of cohesion as an isolated phenomenon on the battlefield indicates a narrow comprehension of the nature of military cohesion and its origins. It is important to recognize the various sources of cohesion. Patriotism or nationalism are not alternative motivators; rather, they manifest themselves in cohesive units by helping provide the well-integrated group values and communications necessary for military cohesion.

Another suggestion, that smarter soldiers require less of the social support and leadership that bind cohesive units together, appears to be made upon an incomplete examination of the evidence. Those armies that have enjoyed the highest degrees of cohesion and combat effectiveness in the past have achieved such success in part because they relied upon the most qualified and the smartest people available (for example, the Israeli and NVA Armies). Certainly, an army that has the smartest people available in its ranks has greater capability. It also has a far greater

* The primary research in this area is descriptive, not prescriptive, and should not be interpreted that combat motivation based on individual survival is a superior form of combat motivation. See Charles C. Moskos, "The American Combat Soldier in Vietnam," *Journal of Social Issues* 31 (1975): 27.

challenge in motivating and leading more active, intellectually diverse, and questioning soldiers.

Still others, apparently generalizing on the American experience in Vietnam, have suggested that because of the socialization of American youth, today's US soldier now requires less social support of the type traditionally found in cohesive units. But one is reminded that the Principles of War, which apply equally to all nations, are autonomous and that an army that achieves the greatest cohesion will win, everything else being equal. One cannot view American society and its impact on the US Army in isolation. The US Army must be capable of competing with other armies. Accommodations with the "dictates" of American society and domestic politics must also be considered in view of the Army's mission. The Arab-Israeli wars illustrate this point well. The cohesion and leadership evident in Israeli society and in the Israeli Army are described in later chapters. Contrast with this the Arab soldier who does not benefit from a strong socialization process emphasizing strong loyalties and social ties beyond the family. The result is the weak leadership and noncohesive practices of many Arab armies. Hence, the Arab soldier, although he may be well trained, often becomes an isolated and lonely individual in the face of stress and danger on the battlefield. As described in a following chapter, this has been a major factor in the many Israeli victories in the Middle East.

Finally, the suggestion that drugs be seriously considered as an alternative form of motivation in view of the expected loss of social support on the modern battlefield is very questionable. Numerous moral, physiological, and other questions can be imagined.

A common thread that appears in each of the above suggestions is their basis in the American experience and in the future impact of high technology on the battlefield. The danger is that other armies have dealt with the problems raised here far more effectively and appear to offer a more proven basis for generalizing about the future of cohesion on the modern battlefield. In this regard, it seems certain that the army that succeeds in creating and maintaining cohesive units on future battlefields will have a significant advantage over those that do not.