Will to Fight

Analyzing, Modeling, and Simulating the Will to Fight of Military Units

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This report defines and describes will to fight and provides a model of unit will to fight that can be applied to ground combat units of any scale. The model provides a research-grounded template for case-by-case adviser assessment of partner or allied military forces and the intelligence analysis of adversary forces. This report also provides a theoretical basis for adding will to fight to military war gaming and simulation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the core factors of will to fight?
- How can American advisers, intelligence analysts, and leaders influence will to fight?

KEY FINDINGS

There is no generally accepted definition of will to fight

- There are also no commonly accepted definitions or explanations of some of the key terms associated with will to fight, including *morale, cohesion, and discipline.*

Will to fight is essential to analyzing holistic combat effectiveness

- If will to fight matters to some degree, then it must be assumed and accepted that it is, at the very least, one necessary part of holistic combat effectiveness in all cases.

To understand tactical-operational will to fight, all factors should be considered

- Some experts on war propose unitary theories that seek to explain will to fight, but this report argues that these theories are unreliable and that many factors should be considered together.

Ground combat force and joint doctrine on will to fight is inconsistent and inadequate

- Lack of continuous emphasis on will to fight in doctrine undermines its emphasis in training, education, assessment, and analysis.
- When greater emphasis was placed on will to fight, the ground combat services described it as very important or most important in determining the outcome of war.

Adding will to fight changes combat simulation outcomes

- Most U.S. military war games and simulations either do not include will to fight or include only minor proxies of it.
- However, the simulated runs performed for this report showed that adding will-to-fight factors always changes combat outcomes and, in some cases, outcomes are significantly different.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- U.S. Army and Joint Force should adopt a universal definition and model of will to fight.
- Include will to fight in all holistic estimates of ground combat effectiveness.
- War games and simulations of combat should include will to fight.

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