

BOOK REVIEWS

Endurance and War: The National Sources of Military Cohesion

by **Jasen J. Castillo**

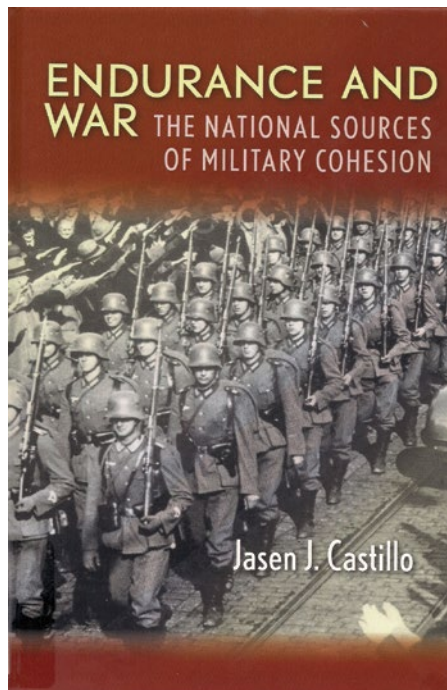
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Reviewed by **Peter Williams**

For a long time, the reasons why soldiers, sailors, and airmen fight, often against all odds or even logic, has held particular interest for me, and thus, over many years, I've found that the shelves of my library have been increasingly taken up with accounts of World War Two Bomber Command and German U-Boat crews, as well as personal accounts of Commonwealth soldiers in the Great War. In all these cases, the participants suffered losses which would be totally unacceptable by today's standards, yet they still kept fighting. Why? It was therefore with great interest that I came across this book in the National Defence Library, and decided to give it a read.



Jasen Castillo is an Assistant Professor in the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A & M University. His aim in writing this book is to propose a new theory to explore what binds fighting men and women together, which he refers to as cohesion theory. He also uses the following case studies of 20th Century armies to illustrate his hypothesis:

- Germany 1944-1945;
- France 1940;
- The Soviet Union 1941;
- North Vietnam (and here the author distinguishes this army from the Viet Cong); and
- The United States (US) 1968-1972.

At the heart of cohesion theory is the proposition that there are two key characteristics of a nation's wartime armed forces: its capacity to fight on the battlefield, and the ability to resist internal

pressures to collapse in cases where victory is increasingly unlikely. According to Castillo, military cohesion therefore is linked to the two variables of the degree to which the regime holds over its citizens, and hence, its armed forces, as well as the extent to

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which the army in question is left free to focus on training for war. To further develop his case, the author contends that there are essentially four kinds of militaries, and the aforementioned case studies include all of these:

- *Messianic*, in which there is a high degree of regime control, yet the army is given much independence to train. The German Army case study is illustrative here;
- *Authoritarian*, where there is again a high degree of regime control, but without the freedom of action allowed to messianic armies. Here, the 1941 Soviet Red Army is held as such an example, although the author does state that as the war progressed, and victory became more certain, the degree of freedom to train was increased;
- *Professional*. A professional army, as the author defines it, is the opposite of an authoritarian one, with a low degree of regime control, but a high degree of independence to train. I did find it somewhat ironic that the Vietnam-era US Army, the basis of this case study, was a not truly a volunteer army, and thus some readers might question the 'professional' sobriquet attached to it in the book; and
- *Apathetic*, the polar opposite of the messianic, with low degrees of both regime control and military autonomy. Here, the 1940 French Army is used as the case study.

For each case study, the author describes each army in terms of the cohesion theory variables, and attempts, through both narrative and data, to make his case. To a degree, he also sets out to show how other theories of military cohesion, such as primary group theory, which holds soldiers in battle, then fight for their comrades at the lower tactical levels (say, battalion and below), and not necessarily for grand causes, or even nationalism. In the cases of the German and French Army case studies, the author also compares their battlefield performance, and what Castillo calls their "staying power," with the earlier versions which fought in the First World War, in which both armies were in the "professional" category, demonstrating that armies can greatly evolve in a relatively short time.

The book is well-researched with some 46 pages of notes and a bibliography which runs a further 23 pages, including much up-to-date scholarship. Throughout, the reader is presented with a series of charts and tables containing statistics on such areas as German

and Allied battle casualties between September 1944 and May 1945 (in which the Germans overwhelmingly inflicted a greater ratio of casualties on the Allies, rather than vice-versa). There are some maps, but these are generally depictions of operations at a very high level. Those readers who may not be as familiar with some of the campaigns under consideration may wish to consult general histories of these actions first, to place Mr. Jansen's arguments in a better context. This is a small point in what I found otherwise to be a very engaging book.

The challenge with books covering historical actions is that the reader is often at a loss to extract lessons that are relevant for modern experience, and one can often get caught up in reading accounts of wars past for the sheer excitement of doing so. Although the author's style is quite engaging, Jansen does pose the question. "So what?" and offers some views about how the US defence and security community, in particular, might apply cohesion theory to combatting potential adversaries: specifically, North Korea, Iran, and China, as well as enemies recently being faced in Afghanistan. I won't spoil the ending by stating what he says, but one wonders if this book might become required reading within the higher echelons of the Pentagon?

The author's style is such that the work reads very much like a textbook, and perhaps that was Castillo's intent. At the outset, I found this somewhat distracting, but in the end, I found it to be an effective means for the author to make his points, and for this reviewer at least, I found his arguments in favour of *cohesion theory* quite convincing. Indeed, this work would serve as a useful text in officer training, and as I harken back to my days as a cadet at the Royal Military College (RMC), where one of our texts in the Military Leadership and Management course was Anthony Kellett's *Combat Motivation*¹ (which I still have, and which I understand is now somewhat rare), this volume would make an excellent addition to RMCs course material. Strongly recommended.

Colonel P.J. Williams is currently serving as Director Arms Control Verification on the Strategic Joint Staff.

NOTE

1. Anthony Kellett, *Combat Motivation: The Behavior of Soldiers in Battle* (Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff Publishing, 1982).