



AGNIETĖ ŽOTKEVIČIŪTĖ-BANEVIČIENĖ

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MORALINIS KARINĖS GALIOS ELEMENTAS: UKRAINOS KARIUOMENĖS PASIPRIEŠINIMAS RUSIJOS–UKRAINOS KARE

Moral Element of Military Power: The Ukrainian Military
Resistance in the Russia-Ukraine War

SUMMARY

The purpose of this paper is to examine the role of the moral component in the structure of military power, a component that is poorly understood in the twenty-first century conflicts, and, more particularly, to reveal how the Ukrainian army applies the moral component to its operations in the Russia-Ukraine war. The article is divided into three sections. The first section examines theoretical notions of military power and the significance of the moral element in the structure of military power. A case study of the Ukrainian military resistance in the Russia-Ukraine war is provided in the second section. It reveals how the Ukrainian army employed the moral component in the war, arguing that, at least to some extent, the moral component helps to balance the asymmetry of the military capabilities of the two countries. Based on the Ukrainian army experience, the last section of the article discusses the relevance of the moral element in the defense policy of Lithuania.

SANTRAUKA

Straipsnyje siekiama išanalizuoti moralinio elemento vaidmenį karinės galios struktūroje, elemento, kuriam XXI a. karyboje skiriamas menkas dėmesys, ir atskleisti, kaip Ukrainos kariuomenė taiko moralinį komponentą Rusijos–Ukrainos kare. Straipsnį sudaro trys dalys: pirmoje straipsnio dalyje analizuojama teorinė karinės galios samprata ir moralinio elemento reikšmė karinės galios struktūroje. Antroje straipsnio dalyje pateikiama Ukrainos ir Rusijos karo analizė, atskleidžiama, kaip Ukrainos kariuomenė pasitelkia moralinį elementą karyboje. Šiame skyriuje siekiama pagrįsti prielaidą, kad moralinis elementas tam tikru mastu padeda subalansuoti asimetrinius skirtumus tarp dviejų valstybių karinių pajėgumų. Paskutinėje straipsnio dalyje, remiantis Ukrainos kariuomenės pasipriešinimo patirtimi, aptariama moralinio elemento svarba Lietuvos gynybos politikai.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: karinė galia, moralinis karinės galios elementas, Rusijos–Ukrainos karas, valia kovoti.

KEYWORDS: Military Power, Moral Element of Military Power, Russian-Ukraine War, the Will to Fight.

INTRODUCTION

Most military and academic writings tend to focus on the physical components of military power such as manpower, high-tech weapons, etc. Considerable attention is given to the material components of military power due to its' quantitative nature and relatively easy measurement methods (Biddle, 2006). The significance of military power's intangible components such as moral or conceptual elements is widely recognized in academic and military literature (i.e., Biddle, 2006; Farrell, 2005; Allison & Zelikow, 1999; Rosen, 1996), but these factors are frequently taken out of consideration when calculating military power. In the twenty-first century, the moral component of military power is often overlooked and given a lack of at-

tention, which is the reason why this article investigates its significance. The Russia-Ukraine war, particularly the resistance of the Ukrainian army against the Russian power, has shown and proved that the moral element plays an extremely important role in the war. The purpose of the study is to analyse the role of the moral component in the structure of military power and specifically in the Russia-Ukraine war, by demonstrating how the Ukrainian army utilized the moral component in combat. The article relies on the assumption that the moral component can be used to balance out the asymmetrical differences between Russia and Ukraine and helps to explain why Ukraine is able to resist a far more powerful enemy.

THE STRUCTURE OF MILITARY POWER

The structure of military power as it is seen today seeks insights formed by General John Frederick Charles Fuller. The physical, moral, and cognitive realms of power were distinguished by Fuller. The simplest to recognize is the physical sphere: "the physical sphere is, in fact, the alphabet of war" (Fuller, 2012, p. 174), as it includes military technologies or military means. The cognitive sphere includes intellectual effort and the preparation of war plans. The moral domain is the most challenging to define because it incorporates soldier motivation and other factors that support warfare. Fuller defined the moral sphere as "the domain of the soul, ego, or "heart" –

there is no just name for this element – and this, I think, alone shows how complex this sphere is" (Fuller, 2012, p. 15, as cited in Zotkeviciute-Baneviciene, 2021). Moreover, Fuller stated that, „Mental force does not win a war; moral force does not win a war, physical force does not win a war; but what does win a war is the highest combination of these three forces acting as one force“ (Fuller, 2012, p. 146). The principles of war established by Fuller had a significant impact on the growth of military thought. In the second half of the 20th century, the spheres of power established by Fuller were incorporated into the military doctrines of the various states

by outlining the framework of the military power (also known as fighting power) (Boslego, 1996, p. 13, as cited in Zotkeviciute-Baneviciene, 2021).

In the modern military doctrines, military power in a general sense is recognised as the ability to fight and it consist of three components: the conceptual (the thought process), the physical (the means to fight) and the moral (the ability to get people to fight) (Land Warfare Doctrine, 2002, p. 15). The conceptual component incorporates the principles of war and “is the force’s knowledge, understanding and application of doctrine, and its continuous learning and adaptation” (North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO], 2022, p. 17). The ability to get people to fight is known as the moral factor, or put it simply – the will to fight, which frequently includes things one might do to maintain this will, including “the force’s morale, leadership and ethical conduct, along with the unique culture of that force” (NATO, 2022, p. 17). The physical element is the easiest to recognise and quantify as it “consists of the correct mix of personnel, equipment, training, sustainment and readiness” (NATO, 2022, p. 17).

Theoretically, the components of military power function together and none

of these factors are given precedence over the others; all of them work together to strengthen one another. For instance, there is a connection between the military’s power moral and conceptual components: “The conceptual and moral components represent the human dimension of warfighting. They are concerned with how people, individually and collectively, apply their non-material resources—intellect, emotions, motivation, and leadership—to fight and win” (Land Warfare Doctrine, 2002, p. 77). In reality, material resources typically receive greater consideration as they are widely used to quantify military might (e.g., Singer, 1972; 1982; Global Firepower Index; Global Militarization Index), since they are far simpler to measure and calculate than intangible resources, such as moral and conceptual components. Frequently, the focus is on the scale of the forces involved, their technical capabilities, and other factors (Samuels, 2020, pp. 2-3). However, non-material resources are an integral aspect of military power. These intangible elements of military power cannot be dismissed as minor ones (Fuller, 2012, p. 174), because without it “a force becomes less than the sum of its parts and readily susceptible to shock” (NATO, 2022, p. 41).

MORAL ELEMENT IN THE STRUCTURE OF MILITARY POWER

The moral element is not just an addition to military might: “morale should be more than a ‘force multiplier’ – the term ‘morale’ may even stand for the ‘force’ itself” (Simunovic, 1998, pp. 65–66). The significance of the moral com-

ponent in the warfare has a long historical background. The insights of various theorists have demonstrated that the moral component, which is based on the human aspect, is not a new characteristic of military power and cannot be under-

valued in conflict. A well-known Sun Tzu remark highlights its importance:

If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle (1971, p. vii).

In the theory of war, Clausewitz also distinguished the moral component: “The moral elements are among the most important in war.... They cannot be classified or counted.... Physical [components] seem little more than the wooden hilt, while the moral factors are the precious metal, the real weapon, the finely-honed blade” (Carl von Clausewitz, 1976, pp. 184–85). When studying the wars of Frederick the Great and Napoleon, the French colonel Ardant du Picq came to the conclusion that cohesion, which is a component of the moral element, permitted the army to defeat an opponent with greater physical resources: “Four brave men who do know each other will not dare to attack a lion. Four less brave, but knowing each other well, sure of their reliability and consequently of mutual aid, will attack resolutely” (Ardant du Picq, 1991, p. 110). From a statistical standpoint, a technologically or physically stronger opponent does not automatically ensure success. According to Jokull Johannesson, there have been numerous instances in military history where troop morale has changed the outcome of battle. These include Alexander’s victory over the Persian army at Issus, Napoleon’s triumph at Austerlitz, General O’Connor’s

army of 38,000 defeating the better-equipped Italian 10th Army, which consisted of 160,000 men, and Israel’s victory over Arab forces in the Six-Day War (Johannesson, 2020, pp. 253–254).

The study of what drove US and German soldiers to fight in World War II can be linked to the commencement of modern research on the moral component. Edward Shils and Morris Janowitz discovered that an efficient military is one whose soldiers have a high level of cohesion. They believed that a small fighting group’s cohesiveness was more crucial to preserving the combat effectiveness of the German army than ideology, propaganda, and political considerations (Shils, Janowitz, 1948, as cited in Zotkeviciute-Baneviciene, 2021). The professionalism of the troops, social solidarity, code of honour, esprit de corps, cohesion, collective discipline, operational and combat morale, and other elements may be covered in the studies, which are aimed at explaining the factors that affect the efficacy of the army (Kümmel, 1999, as cited in Zotkeviciute-Baneviciene, 2021). Although the moral component in the military doctrines can be discovered as early as the 20th century, it wasn’t until after World War II that this component became widely accepted. The 1909 edition of the British Army’s Field Service Regulations emphasizes:

Success in war depends more on moral than on physical qualities Superior numbers on the battlefield are an undoubted advantage, but skill, better organization, and training, and above all a firmer determination in all ranks to conquer at any cost, are the chief factors of

success [and a] lack of determination is the most fruitful source of defeat (p. 13 as cited in Samuels, 2020, pp. 2-3).

The Field Operations Manual 100-5 of the United States of America, published in 1986, also places a strong emphasis on the moral dimension of combat. In this manual, the value of the physical element, or the number and quality of material resources, is equated with the importance of leadership, cohesion, morality, courage, and abilities (Richardson, 1986). The majority of NATO and NATO countries' military doctrines now place a strong emphasis on the importance of the moral element of military power (e.g. NATO, 2022; USA Army Doctrine Publication, 2019; UK Land Power, 2017; Lithuanian Military Doctrine, 2016, etc.).

The significance of the moral component in modern warfare is shown by every protracted struggle. Before the Russia invasion in Ukraine, the US wars in Viet-

nam, Iraq, and Afghanistan showed that advanced weapons alone could not win a war. As the US president Joe Biden declared in August 2021: "We gave them [afghans] every chance to determine their own future. What we could not provide them was the will to fight for that future" (The White House, 2021). The human or psychological component, which has traditionally been thought of as the other half of battle, is represented by an emphasis on intangible human characteristics like will to fight and morale (Terrazas, 2022). However, despite the incorporation of the moral component into military doctrines and its importance in modern warfare, the emphasis is shifted away from the moral component and toward the physical one in practice because, while important, morale is an elusive quality that is difficult to define and quantify. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to raising soldier morale, claim John Spencer and Lionel Bechner (2022).

MORAL ELEMENT IN THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

As the Russia-Ukraine war rages on, it is becoming increasingly obvious that Russia's strategy to overwhelm Ukraine in a blitzkrieg (i.e. lightning attack) and force it to comply with its demands is difficult, if not impossible. Although Russian forces have a technical and numerical military advantage against Ukrainian defences, the majority of defense professionals and academics agree that Russia has not yet won a clear victory (Kofman & Edmonds, 2022). The high military morale in the Ukrainian military is one of the key factors contrib-

uting to the mathematical inaccuracy that makes achieving this "victory," or as Russia refers to it, "denazification," difficult (Musha Research, 2022). Contrarily, Pentagon Press Secretary John F. Kirby stated that "morale is a growing problem inside the Russian forces that are fighting in Ukraine" (Kirby, 2022) and that it actually has the potential to influence the result. Therefore, despite internal issues like corruption, top-down military organization, and poor coordination inside and between various agencies, Russian soldier morale is lower than

that of Ukrainian soldiers because Russia is conducting a war of choice (Fix & Kimmage, 2022). Jokull Johannesson asserts the following:

The high morale of the Ukrainian military and civilian population has multiplied the Ukrainian army's defense power in the war with Russia. In comparison, the low morale of the Russian supported forces and military has neutralized Russia's overwhelming military superiority over Ukraine... (Johannesson, 2020).

Little academic emphasis has been given to the research on the moral element of military power in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Research by William Marcellino and Michael J. McNerney (2022), Ben Conable (2022), and John Spencer and Lionel Beehner (2022) are among the most recent assessments. John Spencer and Lionel Beehner separate such elements of the moral component of military power as leadership, coherence, music, messaging, and cohesion. Ben Conable identified elements including desperation, identity, societal support, and messaging that have an impact on the will to fight of the Ukrainian military. Social media messaging is emphasized by William Marcellino and Michael J. McNerney as the key element in this war. An analysis of the Russia-Ukraine war reveals that classic aspects of the moral element like leadership and cohesion are combined with non-traditional ones, like music and social media messaging, to enhance the morale of the Ukrainian military.

The most crucial components that raise military morale are leadership and inspirational messages (Spencer & Beeh-

ner, 2022). In today's electronic age, messages may be quickly and easily accessed. Through a powerful social media and direct communications effort, the Ukrainians are dominating the information war, gaining support from all over the world and weakening Russian strategy (Connable, (2022). Even "Azovstal has been able to receive messages in real time," thanks to the circumstances that Starlink has produced (Spencer & Beehner, 2022). One of the most well-known examples of this is when the soldier from Snake Island reportedly exclaimed to the Russian ships, "Russian warship, go fuck yourself," originally stated in Russian, inspiring millions of people and other soldiers (Marcellino & McNerney, 2022). As Spencer & Beehner summarizes:

In the case of Ukraine, these messages are as tactical as they are strategic – they keep soldiers informed, aware of the actions of their allies. The modern communications aspect of this war – the ability to keep individuals to entire communities motivated – are what scholars from a previous era called a "revolution in military affairs" (2022).

Music-based messaging is another important topic. On the one hand, footage captured on the battlefield is available to the public and other soldiers. The song "Yankee Doodle" instantly became the national anthem, a sign of unity (Spencer & Beehner, 2022). The song about "Bayraktar" which was designed to attract public financial support as well as support from other soldiers is another one that is noteworthy to mention. Moreover, Ben Conable identified the

identity factor as part of a moral element. However, I consider the possibility that identity, or rather symbols that express identity, can be categorized as messaging through symbols that define a national's identity. For example, the Ukrainian flag has evolved into a potent representation of mobilization and resistance that is used by the Ukrainian diaspora as well as in Ukraine, offering a substantial amount of morale-boosting support for the armed forces (Connable, 2022).

Another crucial component of the moral factor is leadership. The first person to think of when discussing leadership is Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky:

Good leaders know that morale is not a constant. It can quickly expire and threaten the entire group's will to fight.... Russia has seen at least a dozen of its generals killed during the war. Its civilian leadership has made few public statements. By contrast, Ukraine's leadership has put out regular missives and is seen on a nightly basis. Zelensky's rousing speeches have put a positive spin on the conflict, serving to rally the troops and inspire other countries to open their purse strings (Spencer & Beehner, 2022).

Additionally, Zelensky's extremely direct language and communication skills, boosted by skilful social media use, has been crucial in battling Russian disinformation and interacting with important foreign audiences (Arnold, 2022). The president is not the only person who can lead during the war, though. Pictures of the mayor of Kyiv, Vitali Klitschko, in uniform with a crew-served weapon are currently trending on social media after he said on Instagram that he will take

part in the fight to defend his city (Marcellino & McNerney, 2022). It's also necessary to discuss mythical leaders like the Ghost of Kiev, a military hero, an accomplished fighter pilot lauded for allegedly shooting down numerous Russian aircraft, who served as a role model for soldiers. The media is also rife with stories about Ukrainian rock stars, politicians, and other public figures making the decision to travel to Ukraine to protect their country, exhibiting strong leadership. Ordinary people who behave bravely, for example, the farmers who use tractors to elude Russian tanks, also become role models, especially by inspiring others to join the army (Spoehr, 2022).

Because an army must fight as a unit and not as a collection of individuals, cohesion is another component of the moral factor (Spencer & Beehner, 2022). In 2014, as hostilities broke out in the country's east, the cohesion of the Ukrainian army started to deteriorate and volunteer battalions started to play a crucial role in the regular army:

The volunteers compensated for many of the shortcomings of the Ukrainian unreformed "post-Soviet" army, which included bureaucracy and non-transparency with respect to the army's resources provision; a culture wherein "personal loyalty" may harm the career growth of even the most qualified officers; cumbersome management; and the lack of adaptation to conditions within a particular area. All these shortcomings of the Soviet military tradition had for decades been inherent within the Ukrainian army but have gradually begun to change due to the influence of the volunteers (Volodymyrovych & Tyshchenko, 2022).

In addition to volunteers joining military units, societal support also strengthens military cohesion, especially when thousands of citizens have volunteered to fight (Connable, 2022). However, Russian soldiers serve as the clearest illustration of how a lack of morality can offset the benefits of having a considerably larger army. Many predicted that Kyiv would fall in a matter of days, but they failed to consider the fact that Ukrainian soldiers are not fighting a war of choice, but rather one that they must fight, and as a result, their motivation is much higher – they are fighting for the freedom of their family and country. Connable contends that engaging in an existential conflict serves as a means of creating a sense of desperation to prevent the Russians from destroying their democracy, infrastructure, and murdering their people (2022).

It is possible to make generalizations based on the example of Ukrainian re-

sistance that the moral element of military power creates the conditions to balance out the asymmetrical differences between Russia and Ukraine. However, it is important to note that will to fight cannot win a war on its own, and the moral disparity between the Russian and Ukrainian sides will not be the only factor in determining the result of the fight. The outcome of the war depends heavily on Western military support for Ukraine. Some analysts had come to believe that society had advanced to the point that armed conflict, such as that involving guns and missiles, was a thing of the past (Spoehr, 2022). This is untrue; while material military capabilities are crucial in combat, they are diminished in the hands of an unmotivated soldier. As a result, in order to maximize an army's military might, both material and non-material military qualities must be merged.

IMPLICATIONS TO LITHUANIAN DEFENCE POLICY

Due to its intangibility, the moral element of military power frequently becomes a declarable factor in military doctrines; yet the practical development of the moral component receives little attention. The moral component, according to Lithuanian military doctrine, consists of “the will, conduct, and *esprit de corps* of soldiers. The determination of soldiers and their determination to perform military tasks, functions and tasks – to fight and sacrifice and to follow the norms of law” (Lithuanian Military Doctrine, 2016, p. 3–3 as cited in Zotkeviciute-Baneviciene, 2021, p. 13). However, the Lithu-

anian military doctrine's subsequent explanation of the moral component is extremely prescriptive and outlines the qualities of an ideal soldier without providing guidance on how to achieve this (it is important to note that only the leadership, which is a part of a moral element, is considered in practice). The severity of this issue is evident in many Western militaries. For instance, in 2018 RAND conducted two investigations for the U.S. Army, the findings of which demonstrated that the moral component of military power is still undervalued and frequently ignored in practice:

On the surface, the American military officially adopts the view of war as a contest of opposing, independent, and irreconcilable wills. But when it comes to practice ... these theories often amount to little more than lip service. The integration of will to fight concepts into military education, training, planning, assessments, international engagement, and operations is glaringly sparse. In most cases, American and allied military professionals view war through the lens of technology and physical effects (Connable et al., 2019).

In 2016, the U.S. Joint Staff found an overwhelming lack of understanding of the combat will of both partners and adversaries:

A failure to grasp human aspects can, and often will, result in a prolonged struggle and an inability to achieve strategic goals. Improving understanding of will to fight might not be a panacea; war is not won by silver bullets. But if will to fight is the most important factor in war ... then improvement is absolutely necessary. Ignoring will to fight can contribute to tactical or even strategic defeat (Connable et al., 2019).

One could argue that the Russia invasion of Ukraine brought to light the value of military power's moral component. This is untrue, though. As has already been stated, numerous prior wars have demonstrated the significance of the moral component in warfare, yet the

moral component continues to be undervalued because of its elusiveness. However, the initial steps toward making the moral element a quantifiable indicator have already been made. The Rand Corporation has taken the initiative to systematically organize important facets of the moral component that support boosting military power. RAND's research offers a starting point by presenting "29 major factors and 61 sub-factors derived from empirical research. Factors are major influences on the will to fight, while sub-factors provide further points of examination for portable assessment and analysis" (Connable et al., 2019). Naturally, these models are still more theoretical and may not work in actual combat, but if the moral component is left to be announced in military doctrines but not put into action, it will be impossible to forecast the outcomes of any conflicts in the future. In a short period of time, two distinct nations debunked potential predictions: the Afghans' lack of will to fight, despite a different prognosis; and the Ukrainians' underestimated ability to do so, which shocked a large portion of the international community. As a result, the first step is to attempt to organize the components of the moral element of military power by trying to put them into practice through trials and errors.

CONCLUSIONS

The moral component of military power, or the will to fight, is one of the most important factors in war. Quantitative military capabilities like tanks or bombs are useless without a human fac-

tor and with no emphasis on technology. The great attention given to material military capabilities has repeatedly confirmed during different wars, from Vietnam to Afghanistan and Ukraine, that

war cannot be won without assessing the significance of the human factor. The relatively unexpected strength of the Ukrainian army has once again confirmed that the army can gain an advantage over a stronger enemy through the moral element of military power. The Ukrainian military's employment of the moral element in the Russia – Ukraine war should be an example for Western militaries to develop and fill deficiencies in their military doctrines by making the moral element a non-declarative but practical issue. Despite the moral element's lack of a systematized approach, its application is still achievable through trials and errors, particularly considering

Ukraine's example of how traditional moral element characteristics can be merged with non-traditional aspects.

However, the moral element cannot win the war of its own accord. It gives more power to the army, but the country alone is unable to provide the means for effective long-term resistance. Ukraine's reserves, such as manpower, military, and financial resources, are lower than those of Russia and the moral element should not be viewed as a silver bullet. That is why, in the long run, without sufficient material support from Western countries, the moral element alone is not going to be able to secure Ukraine's victory.

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