The effects of death threats during peace operations

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Being a soldier under threat

Being a soldier, amongst other things, means being prepared to fulfil one's tasks under life threatening circumstances. War or deployment in an expeditionary armed force regularly involved in peacekeeping or peace enforcing tasks brings along a confrontation with circumstances in which one's life is in danger. Minister of Defence Kamp (2004) states that soldiers must be aware of the risks, linking acceptance of these risks directly to courage: 'Soldiers also expect courage of each other. The Dutch serviceman is proud of his profession, performs his task with discretion and is aware of the risks, which he accepts'. Likewise, the Royal Netherlands Army code of behavior (rule 7) explicitly refers to risks that the military task entails: 'I will carry out the tasks I have been given in a professional manner, also under difficult circumstances and even at the risk of my own life'.

Carrying out tasks in life threatening circumstances, however, is not an automatism for soldiers, as is exemplified by the attention for coping with stressful and traumatic experiences. That soldiers are indeed influenced by the confrontation with the risk of death is shown by Israeli studies in which servicemen were asked to indicate their greatest fear in actual battle situations. The big difference between soldiers with and without combat experiences was the fear of death or being wounded. Those who did not have experience indicated they had more fear of wounds or death than those who had. The latter were more concerned about letting down subordinates or other soldiers in their units. Of the officers and NCOs, 42% indicated that what they feared most was letting down their subordinates, as did 40% of the men with regard to their comrades. As for fear of death, the score for officers and NCOs and men was 10% and 21%, respectively (Shalit 1988).

Military cohesion under threat

One question that is brought up by this investigation is why in threatening circumstances soldiers seem to have a greater fear of letting down their subordinates or other servicemen than their own death. In the Handbook of Military Psychology, Noy (1991) states, 'The main conflict of a soldier in the battlefield is survival versus duty and loyalty. Fear of death is not unique to the battlefield. It is common in all traumatic situations. In combat, this threat is pervasive and difficult. The normal, everyday death anxiety which [is] rationally and irrationally dealt with is especially difficult to curb in combat

and is distinctly felt by most soldiers before or during combat and most intensely when prolonged. It is almost impossible to deny or ignore the threat. While it is the perception of threat which creates stress in combat, the gap is slim between the reality of the threat and its perception'.

In his article the relation between social cohesion, stress resistance and readiness among IDF personnel is explored further. Discussing the subject, Noy writes, 'The soldier whose resources have been depleted and who is not protected by unit social support may feel unable to endure the mounting anxiety any longer, and therefore fails to function in combat. This breaking point of losing one's adaptability and control of the situation in the face of an existential threat is traumatic. As a consequence, the personality is flooded by feelings of helplessness and rage. This is the starting point for the label CSR (Combat Stress Reaction) or in some cases for the post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).' So, according to Noy, unit social support is of importance to curb the fear of death and threat of the battlefield.

Being threatened with death is the most existential fear a human being can experience and how soldiers act under this threat is the main question of this article. In the past decades psychologists have done research into the influence of the awareness of one's own mortality on human behavior. The insights originating from this research have been compressed in the Terror Management Theory (TMT). Terror in this context is fear of death, as soldiers sometimes have to act in circumstances involving a risk of death. The validity of the claims of TMT, however, will have to be assessed for the military target group.

A number of studies have been conducted at the Netherlands Defence Academy (NLDA) into the influence of threat (with fear of death) on military operations. The studies carried out so far have, on the one hand, been directed at the preparedness to co-operate with foreign military, so international co-operation under threat, and, on the other hand, on the deployability or readiness in threatening circumstances. Apart from that there is also research into acceptance of the death risk in circumstances of peace and threat, such as in missions like ISAF and SFIR. The present article begins with an exposition of TMT, followed by a description of research on the basis of TMT in the Royal Netherlands Army (RNLA). The article is concluded with a discussion of the significance of TMT for the RNLA. The findings, incidentally, seem to have a broader relevance.

Terror Management Theory
Terror Management Theory (Solomon, Greenberg & Pyszczynski 1991; Greenberg, Pyszczynski & Solomon 1997; Pyszczynski, Greenberg & Solomon 1999) is based on

the instinctive tendency of all living beings to protect themselves against death and to strive for survival of the individual and the species. Instinctive behavior, as well as conscious risk analyses, taking protective measures or fighting threats, protects life and increases the chance of survival. For this purpose the human being is endowed with a number of unique intellectual powers enabling him to postpone immediate reaction in order to contemplate alternative reactions or solutions. He can also relate past, present and future events, and, in doing so, imagine things that do not yet exist and subsequently realize them. As a result of his intellectual capacities the human being also has a self-awareness, which means he is conscious of his own existence. This self-awareness is an important element in human behavior. It makes people conscious of life and its possibilities, but, conversely, it also makes them aware of their own mortality. It is this awareness that causes fear of death. His intellectual powers, however, also protect him against this fear.

Worldview and protection against terror

By creating a culture the human being can control his fear of death. Culture is a complex of meanings giving sense to the world around us. By constructing a robust worldview the fear of one's own vulnerability and death is alleviated. The cultural worldview lends structure and meaning to the world around us and gives us values to strive for on the basis of that meaningful world. Living up to the values of the culture of which we are a part, however, makes us also feel protected against death in a certain way. Thus, we are not only here for ourselves, but also for the others and in that way we attain a symbolic sort of immortality through our significance for others. The worldview also provides concepts and structures to fit all events around us in a stable, well-ordered and meaningful totality (Dechesne, Van den Berg, Soeters 2005).

Military culture and survival

Cultural anthropologist Becker has defined the importance of culture for survival and, in doing so, he has given a major impulse to the relation between death awareness and human behavior as it is worked out in TMT. 'Everything cultural is fabricated and given meaning by the mind, a meaning that was not given by physical nature. Culture is in this sense "Supernatural", and all systematization of culture have in their end the same goal: to raise men above nature, to assure them that in some way their lives count in the universe more than merely physical things that count' (Becker 1975: 4).

It is for this reason that military culture is built up around symbols, customs and ideas that increase battlefield survival and contribute to military virtues, such as courage

and the spirit of self-sacrifice. Also the values summed up in the army officer domain, such as professionalism, discipline, resilience, team spirit, responsibility and integrity, are expressions of the military culture which champions steadfastness, endurance and conviction. Other well-known cultural expressions are the uniform with symbols to indicate one's own place in the organization. They usually refer to sports certificates, as physical achievement seems to be a precondition for resilience in life-threatening circumstances. Unit symbols also contribute to esprit de corps, which expresses the feeling of togetherness. Symbols and cultural expressions are therefore important for co-operation and mutual trust during operations in life-threatening circumstances.

Self-efficacy and protection against terror

Public appreciation of behavior in risky situations, which stimulates faith in the importance of one's own contribution, has also a relation with mental health[1]. In this study we did not search for an answer to this question. It might be the fact that having been decorated had a beneficial effect on the decorated heroes' mental health in later life. In addition, our findings that veterans of low military rank tended to report more PTSD symptoms and more general psychiatric symptomatology than veterans who were officers suggest that precombat factors played a role. Officers in the IDF represent an elite group of soldiers whose selection criteria include high IQ, high motivation to serve in the army, high self-esteem, and emotional maturity (Dekel et al. 2003).

This brings us to the second factor contributing to protection against fear of death, viz. self-esteem. Self-efficacy is the extent to which one feels valuable and it is an indicator for the measure in which one is appreciated and thus will be remembered by the others. Based on the conviction that there is more than just one's physical existence, self-esteem lends a certain symbolic immortality and alleviates the unique human dilemma of the fear of the finiteness of that physical existence.

That self-efficacy functions as a buffer against fear of death has also been confirmed in a number of experiments that show that people whose self-efficacy is increased or whose faith in their own worldview is strengthened report less fear of death than people with a low self-efficacy. People who are made aware of their mortality have a tendency to defend their cultural worldview and to increase their self-efficacy. Moreover, people whose self-efficacy is lowered in an experiment show more fear of death. This means that a high self-efficacy, so a high confidence in the importance of their own contribution to the armed forces or unit they belong to, is of importance for servicemen to protect themselves against fear of death. This, too, explains the tendency to attach more value to military culture in threatening circumstances.

The values of a culture and the behavior for which one may be appreciated can differ

per culture, as the emergence of suicide terrorism has made poignantly clear over the past few years. Where in his own environment the suicide terrorist is greatly admired and blessed with a promise of immortality, his deeds are only regarded with disgust in other cultures, like our own. The values of a culture or sub-culture, therefore, do most certainly not by definition lower risk in a rational manner.

In the above-mentioned studies there is a reference to one clear value within the culture of that group. As for the military the question may be whether it is only the military culture that determines the behavior of the soldier. In discussions on military operations social support and the home front also play a role (Van der Meulen and Soeters 2005). Soldiers who belong to more than one meaningful group, such as the unit and the home front, may also have to face contradictory values. Thus, the attitude towards the confrontation with danger in the culture of the unit or military culture may be appreciated differently than in the culture of the home front. A concurrence of expectations of the home front and the military profession can protect the soldier from having to live up to multiple standards.

As self-efficacy is based on the extent to which values that matter in one's own culture are lived up to, it can only serve as a protection against terror (fear of death) as long as the faith in one's own culture remains intact. Because the confirmation of a culture takes place through social interaction it is of importance that the values of the culture are confirmed by others. In confrontations with people of other cultures one's own worldview is threatened and with it the protection against the existential fear of death. In case of a death threat the confirmation of one's own culture becomes all the more vital, and that explains many problems and prejudices that emerge in confrontations with people of different cultures. When our own culture is threatened by another, there are in principle five ways to arm ourselves against the resulting loss of protection against the existential fear of death. First, the other culture can be considered inferior. The other worldview or its proponents are seen as backward. An alternative is to adapt to the other culture or, conversely, to convince the proponents of the other culture that one is right (assimilation). Another possibility is to form a new culture by encompassing parts of the other culture into one's own (accommodation). The last option is to destroy the other culture and in doing so, prove, as it were, that one's own culture is superior simply because the other culture does not exist anymore. Of all these mechanisms there are examples in the present-day political discussion on, for instance, the war on terror. Thus, in the debate on Islam, this religion is depicted as backward in certain circles, and Theo van Gogh, the late film director, too, succeeded in expressing himself in no uncertain graphic terms about Muslims. In the multi-cultural debate in the Netherlands, accommodation, with its ideal of mutual adjustment and the creation of a new "enriching" culture, is vying with the present political vogue of integration courses, also for religious leaders, and a

strong preference of new (and old) comers to "our" culture.

The first hypothesis that can be deduced from the TMT and that has also been confirmed in research, is that an awareness of death increases the meaning of the value of the contribution to one's own cultural worldview, and that when self-efficacy is decreased, the experienced fear of death increases. Many military studies have documented the fact that soldiers with a high self-efficacy show less fear than those with a decreased self-efficacy. Soldiers who have been defeated in battle show more anxiety disorders. The above-mentioned study by Noy (1991) reports a much higher number of Combat Stress Reactions casualties among the side that has lost than among the victors. The 1973 Yom Kippur war has confirmed this: 'Likewise, in 1973, the Israeli Army suffered many CSR casualties in the initial stage of trying desperately to hold on against the advancing enemies, while the Egyptian Army sustained only a few casualties. In contrast, once the initiative turned to the Israeli side, the Egyptians had many casualties.' (Noy 1991). Here, the role of self-efficacy with regard to the resistance against distress disorders among the winning side is obvious.

The second hypothesis is that the appreciation for and the significance of one's own worldview becomes more important as a protection against fear of death, when one is confronted with the awareness of one's own mortality through thoughts about or confrontations with death. This effect was indeed very clear after the 9/11 attacks, after which American culture and its expressions were extremely visible. There were overt reactions against people, countries or cultures that did not match the American culture. Clear examples were the showing of flags and expression like "If you're not with us, you're against us". Similar effects could be noticed in the Netherlands after the murder of film director Theo van Gogh. Freedom of expression as a symbol of Dutch citizenship was vehemently defended in the public discussion following the assassination and also hostilities towards the Muslim community bore witness to it.

TMT and the RNLA
The question is whether TMT also provides an explanation for the behavior of soldiers, who have to execute their profession in mission areas under potentially life-threatening circumstances and, in doing so, will no doubt be reminded of death, through the risks they take themselves, their thinking about it or the confrontation with victims of violence. It is the central question in the studies described below. In a number of NLDA studies the influence of awareness of one's own mortality or threat on behavior has been investigated. The first study which looked into the relevance and significance of TMT for the armed forces was the final paper written by student-officers Oppel and Van Dijk (2002). In their "*Terror management for the RNLA: the latest management trend*"

they asked themselves the following question, 'Do soldiers cling more to their world-view after exposure to thoughts of death, as compared to a situation in which they did not have that exposure?' In this final paper officer cadets gave their opinion about a foreign officer relating his experiences of his one year as a liaison officer in the RNLA. One half of the research group was confronted with thoughts about their own mortality prior to assessing the texts and the liaison officer. The other half filled out the questionnaire without this awareness. Their final conclusion was that soldiers confronted with thoughts about their own death held more negative views about soldiers of a different nationality than colleagues who had not thought about death. This conclusion is interesting for international military co-operation in risky circumstances - the typical environment of modern RNLA operations.

International military co-operation is a subject that cannot be ignored anymore in the present-day operations of the armed forces. The Officer Domain (2004) states that RNLA operations are always joint operations and very often take place in an international context. Examples of this close international co-operation are 1 German-Netherlands Corps (1GNC) as well as the NATO Response Force (NRF), of which the Netherlands constituted a part from 15 January 2005 until 15 July 2005. In order to investigate whether international co-operation comes under pressure in case of a threat, a unit was needed that co-operates with foreign military in peace circumstances (no threat) as well as situations of threat. During the Dutch contribution to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan such an opportunity presented itself. In the summer of 2003 an investigation was undertaken into the willingness to engage in international military co-operation in Afghanistan as well as Münster. It was precisely in this period that there were reports of tensions between Dutch and German soldiers. In their article Soeters and Moelker (2003) describe some of the problems that emerged during the ISAF mission in Afghanistan.

International military cooperation under threat
The possibility to do research into the influence of threat on international co-operation proved to be a unique opportunity, as 1GNC had already had a tradition of cooperation of several years' standing, which had proved to be a positive experience. In the ISAF study (Dechesne, Van den Berg, Soeters 2005) two personality factors were measured: a) need for structure, the extent of flexibility in dealing with new or unexpected situations, and b) self-efficacy. Apart from that identification with the RNLA as an organization, the Netherlands and international military co-operation and four factors of death threat were investigated. These factors were a) acceptance of risk of death, b) the need for care after being killed, such as a testament or help from the MoD, c) communica-

tion/talking about death and - finally – d) fear of death. The analysis of the results of the survey in which 313 ISAF soldiers from Kabul and 76 staff personnel of IGNC took part, showed significant differences with regard to the acceptance of the risk of death, fear of death and communication about death[2]. These death threat-related scores were higher for ISAF than for Münster personnel (see table 1)

	ISAF in Kabul	IGNC in Münster
Fear of death	4,64	3,70*
The need for care after being killed	6,57	6,88
Communication/talking about death	4,25	3,56*
Acceptance of the risk of death	6,07	5,26*

[Table 1: Differences on a scale of 1 to 9 (sign. dif. at p < 0.05)]*

More important than this result was the analysis of the way in which these factors influenced international co-operation. It showed that fear of death has a negative effect on the willingness to engage in international cooperation. Thus, soldiers who have a greater fear of death seem to be less inclined towards international co-operation. However, the analysis also showed that there were several factors that enhanced international cooperation[3]. First of all, there was a positive correlation between acceptance of the risk of death and the willingness to engage in international cooperation. Soldiers with a greater acceptance of this risk are more inclined towards international co-operation. At the same time a greater self-efficacy, so the extent to which one feels appreciated, contributes to a greater willingness to cooperate internationally. The factor that contributed most was the extent of identification with the RNLA. Identification as an expression of the worldview with which servicemen identify, therefore, is essential. In this study the RNLA proves to be important for soldiers on a mission.

Apart from these analyses, factors influencing the acceptance of the risk of death were looked into. This study showed that a greater degree of *need for structure*, so a more rigid attitude, affected this acceptance negatively. These results are in accordance with TMT predictions, viz. that a threat and the awareness of one's own mortality undermine the willingness to cooperate internationally. Conversely, elements that are considered valuable in the dominating culture can bring about a different effect. The fact that identification contributes so strongly to the willingness to co-operate internationally

seems to be an indication for the willingness of the RNLA to engage in international contexts. The risks of threat, however, cannot be excluded and a repetition of this survey in a situation in which the threat is greater may increase the force of the predictions. This would also allow further research into the question why acceptance of the risk of death enhances the willingness to cooperate internationally. Probably there is a correlation with the experienced use of the mission. Service personnel with a great need for structure, and consequently little flexibility with regard to a deviation of the objective of the mission they have accepted, show a lower acceptance of the risk of death and are therefore less inclined to cooperate internationally.

Operational readiness under threat

An opportunity that presented itself relatively quickly after the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, was the Dutch contribution to the Stabilization Force in Iraq (SFIR). In this mission, too, there was a real threat, which gave rise to several predictions based on the Terror Management Theory explanations. The aspects, interesting from a theoretical perspective, were the readiness to accept to risk of death in this mission, fear of death and the way in which these factors influence the participation in the mission. Within the framework of this study a survey was held among the RNLA units in SFIR 3 and SFIR 4, as well as a control group of a unit that was not sent out. There were 60, 202 and 115 respondents, respectively[4]. The prediction that threat has a positive influence on the appreciation for one's own cultural worldview had to be operationalized into a number of concepts such as the appreciation for the mission, the extent of the support for the task of the mission and identification with the RNLA. The factors measured in this study are:

- **need for structure** (as was indicated above, a measure for the need for fixed structure and predictability of events),
- **self-efficacy**[5],
- **acceptance of the risk of death and fear of death**,
- **identification with RNLA** and the military profession,
- **identification with foreign colleagues**,
- partaking in the mission out of **idealistic motives** (such as peace and security, the building up of a society, a struggle against terrorism and aiding people in distress),
- partaking because of **obligation** or **pecuniary motive**,
- the extent to which one supports the mission, or feels the mission is **useful**,
- the extent to which one feels **ready to be deployed** in crisis situations or battles.

The significant differences for the SFIR units and the barracks units in the Netherlands are presented in table 2.

	SFIR	Not on a mission
Need for structure	4,5	4,6
Self-efficacy	6,8*	6,2
Acceptance of the risk of death	6,1	6,3
Fear of death	3,6	4,0
Identification with RNLA	6,1	5,9
Identification with foreign colleagues	5,5	5,6
Partaking in the mission out of idealistic motives	6,0*	6,7
Partaking because of obligation or pecuniary motives	5,5*	6,3
Mission usefulness	6,3*	6,8
Ready to be deployed	7,6*	6,3

[Table 2: average score on a scale of 1-9 for questions about the topics indicated (sign. Dif. at p < 0.05)]*
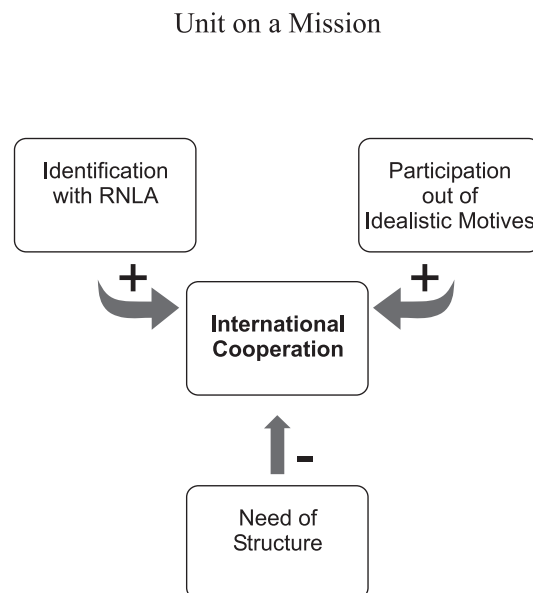
The questions on motivation for a mission were asked with respect to own experience during mission and the supposition of being on a mission, respectively.

Results for the reaction on threat in SFIR and control groups

In the first instance, there are few major differences between the results of the survey among units that were sent out and those that were not. The factors related to belief in one's own capacities and professionalism, viz. self-efficacy and operational readiness, however, show a higher score for the units in the mission area than those that stayed at home. Apart from that, the motivation for the mission of the unit in the mission area seems lower than that in the Netherlands. This is borne out by a lower motivation on

the basis of idealistic motives, and lower pecuniary motives or the mission being obligatory and a lower experienced usefulness of the mission. It is therefore interesting to further analyze the influence of the measured factors on the object of investigation, in this case the willingness to co-operate internationally, the usefulness of the mission and the extent of readiness. In order to do this the contribution of the factors mentioned in table 2 to these topics has been taken into consideration.
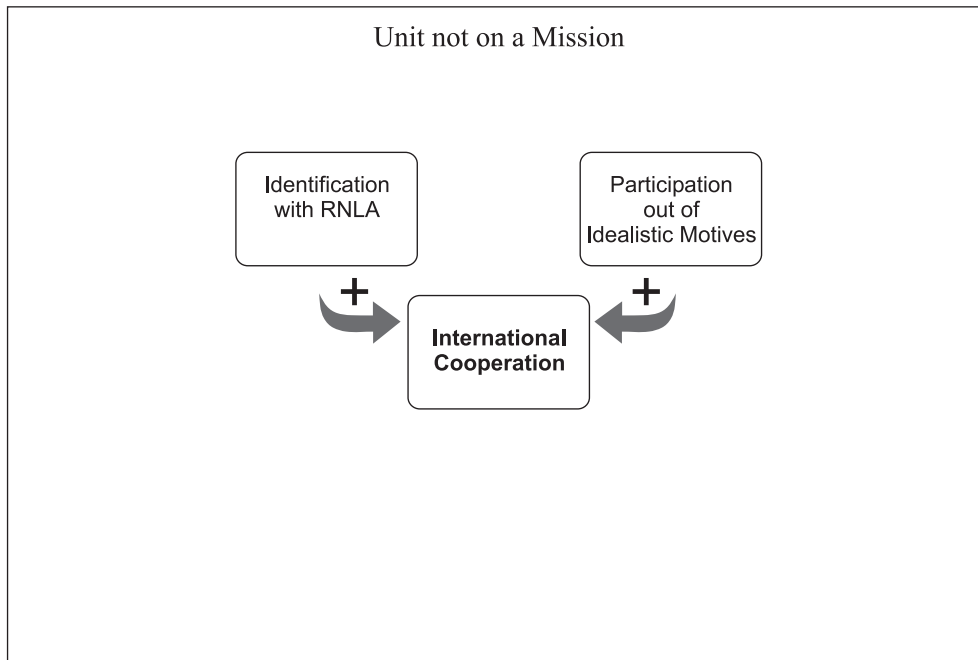
International Cooperation under threat

Unit on a Mission

[Figure 1: International cooperation under threat in Iraq]

First, the willingness to cooperate internationally by personnel that were on a mission was looked into (see figure 1). For the SFIR units it appeared that the identification with the RNLA, as well as the extent to which the objectives of the mission were supported (so partaking out of idealistic motives), had a positive impact on the willingness to cooperate internationally. Apart from that the need for structure played a significant role. Personnel with a more rigid or inflexible attitude were less willing to co-operate internationally in situations of threat, so during missions[6]. At the time of the survey it appeared that for the units that did not go on a mission (see figure 2) the identification with the RNLA, as well as the extent to which the objectives were supported (so partak-

ing out of idealistic motives), determined the willingness to cooperate internationally. So the need for structure did not play a role here[7].
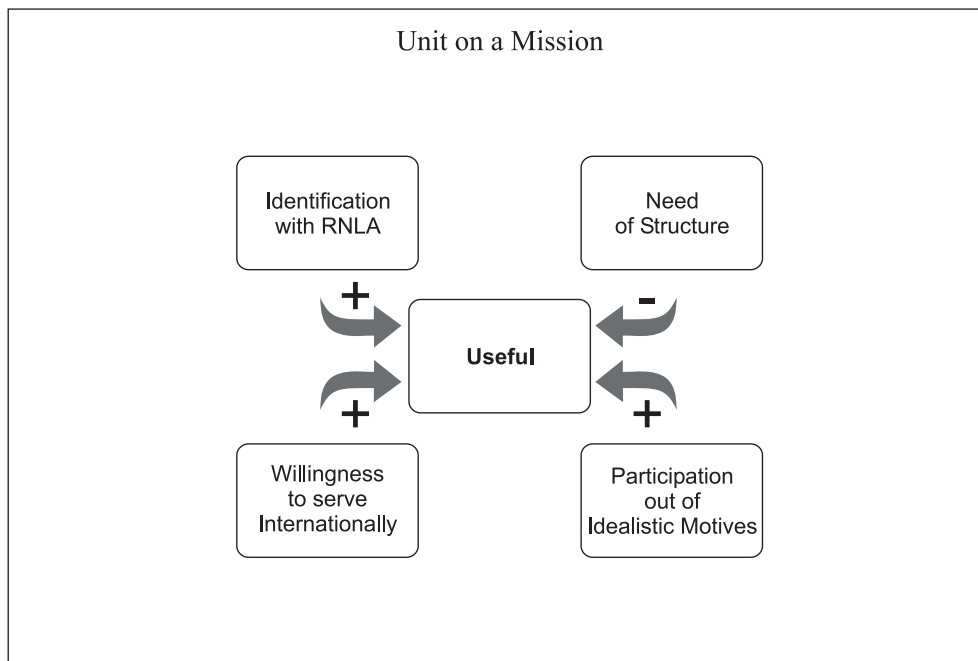

Unit not on a Mission

Identification with RNLA

Participation out of Idealistic Motives

+ International Cooperation +

[Figure 2: Willingness to cooperate internationally in a unit not on a mission]
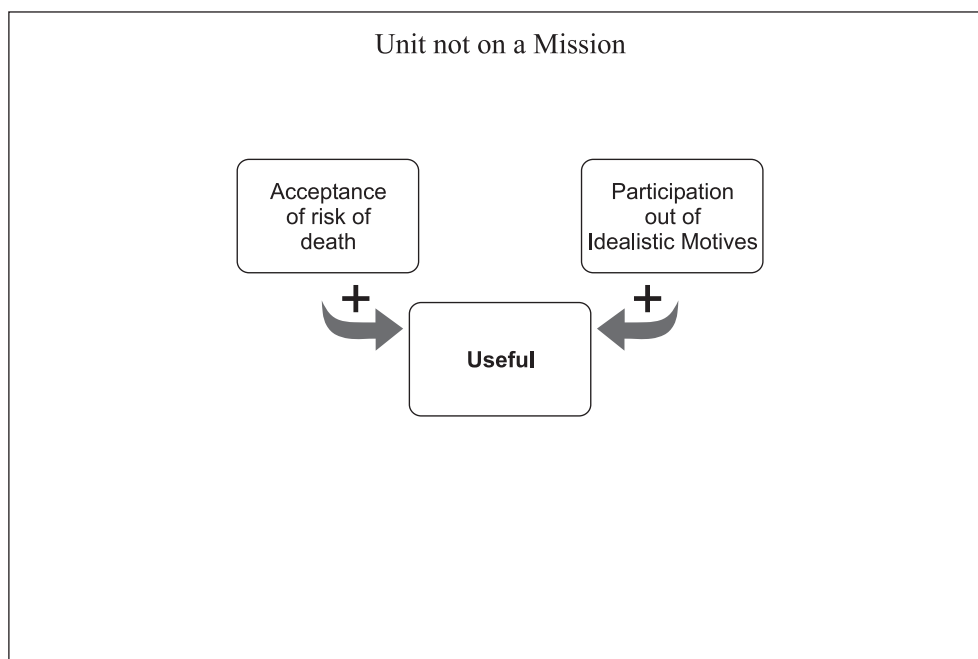
Usefulness of the Iraq mission under threat
Personnel of the SFIR units (see figure 3) indicate that participation out of idealistic motives and the identification with the RNLA and a greater willingness to co-operate internationally constitute a positive contribution to the experienced usefulness and that a greater need for structure has a negative influence. In other words, a more flexible attitude towards life matters to see the importance of the mission when under threat.

In the safe situation (see figure 4) the results of the control group show that the acceptance of the risk of death and the extent to which they support the mission objectives determine the degree of experienced usefulness of the mission[8].
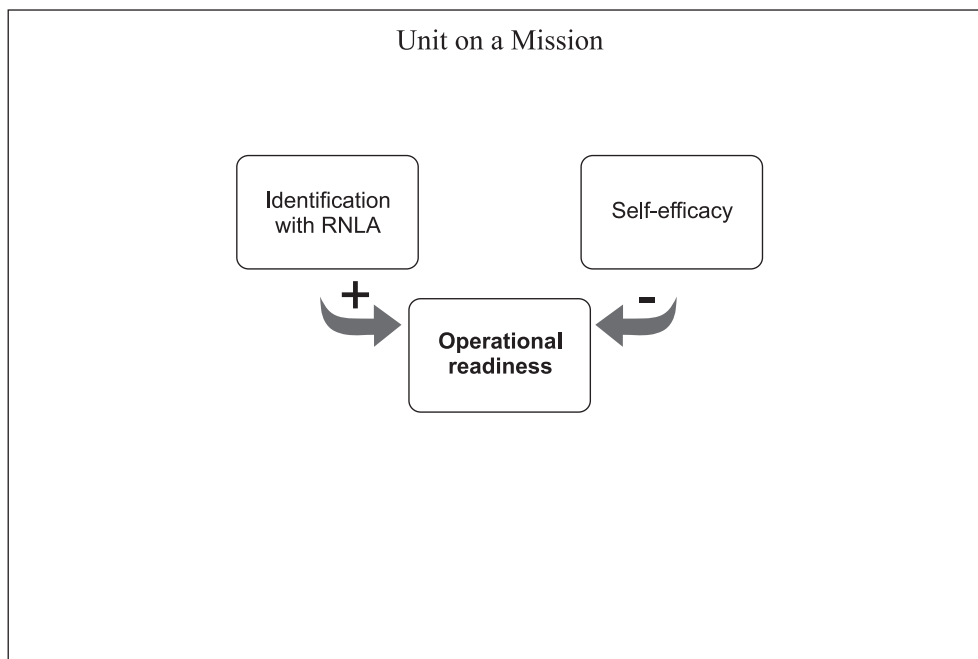
[Figure 3: Experienced usefulness of Mission]

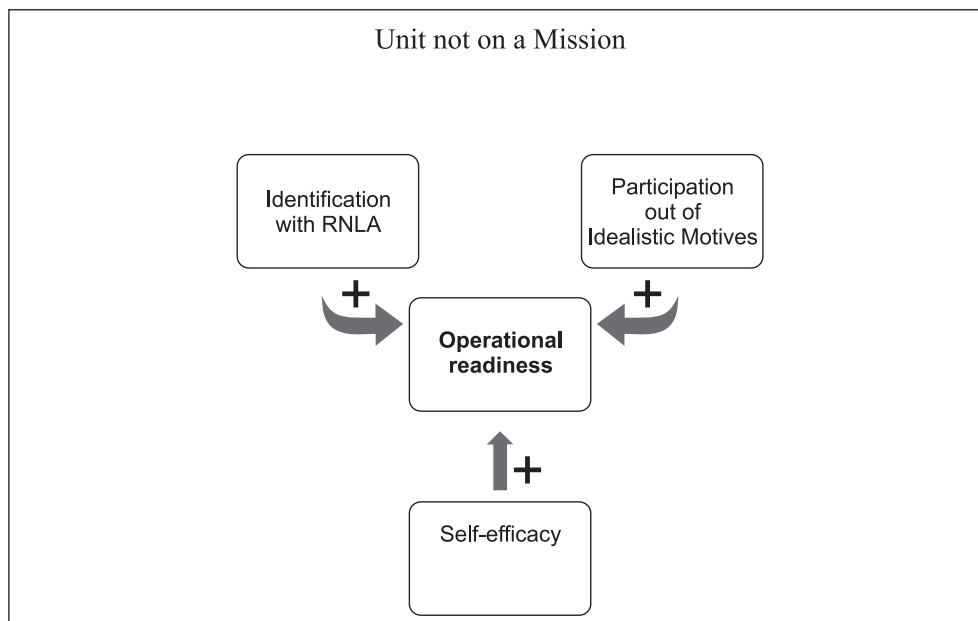*[Figure 4: Experienced usefulness of Mission]*

Operational readiness under threat in Iraq

The final comparison concerns the extent of operational readiness[9]. For units on a mission (see figure 5) the extent of operational readiness can be predicted by the self-efficacy and the identification with the RNLA. Personnel with a stronger belief in their own capabilities indicate a higher readiness. The same holds good for personnel that identify stronger with the RNLA. The factors idealistic motives and acceptance of the risk of death also play a role of some importance, although they fall just short of the significant level.

The control group, which is not in a threat situation, the own operational readiness is determined by the self-efficacy, idealistic motives for partaking in the mission as well as identification with the RNLA (see figure 6).

[Figure 5 : Operational readiness]

Unit not on a Mission

Identification with RNLA

Participation out of Idealistic Motives

+   Operational readiness   +

+ Self-efficacy

[Figure 6: Operational readiness]

Taken together, the results seem to indicate that identification with RNLA, which is strongly related to identification with the military profession, the extent of idealistic motivation for the mission, the acceptance of the risk of death, the soldier's flexibility and his or her self-efficacy are important factors for functioning in threatening circumstances. These factors also play a part in the thinking about functioning in threatening circumstances, but in the mission area the results become even more visible. In particular, the role of flexibility and self-efficacy become clear then. The two comparisons of the willingness to co-operate internationally and the experienced usefulness of the mission show the significance of a lower need for structure, so a higher degree of flexibility, in the mission area. With regard to the readiness, it is clearly the self-efficacy that plays a major role.

The above findings seem to be in line with the theoretical predictions that military personnel under threat will fall back more on their worldview and that self-efficacy and flexibility are important qualities to counterbalance all too rigid a worldview. The hypothesis that the education of military personnel and their operational attitude is important for the way they operate under threat seems to be confirmed, too. The Dutch soldier who identifies with the military profession and the RNLA is more willing to co-operate with foreign colleagues. Identification with the military profession is also of importance for the experienced usefulness of the mission and the extent to which one feels ready for operations.

Military culture has an effect under threat

The above clearly shows that fear of death influences the behavior of the soldier. However, the soldier does not flee from situations in which there is a risk of death. Rather, he seems to act in the spirit of the military profession. Terror Management Theory postulates that living according the values of one's own worldview allows one not to succumb to the fear of death (terror). It is not the most rational attitude in relation to the risk of death that is central in this, but the belief that one can make a valuable contribution to the value community that one belongs to. This pre-supposes a certain degree of self-esteem, the extent to which one believes one is making a contribution to the value community. Flexibility plays a part in questions related to following a certain worldview or discerning multiple opinions of value patterns. People who are (mentally) more flexible do not have to turn against those who hold a different worldview so much.

For the military profession, that pre-eminently manifests itself in threatening circumstances, an insight into the significance of that threat for one's actions is of importance. A further deepening of our insight into behavior under threatening circumstances and the influence of education, personal characteristics, unit formation and military culture are very relevant for the Dutch military and their foreign colleagues.

On the basis of the above-mentioned studies, a number of recommendations for units in threatening circumstances can be made. First, there is the strengthening of the identification with the RNLA or the military profession. This has repeatedly proved to be a major factor in readiness, experienced usefulness of the mission and willingness to co-operate internationally and, consequently, there is a clear relationship with the soldier's education. Furthermore, the personal motivation of the serviceman is of importance, in that the factor participation out of idealistic motives has a great influence on the effects investigated during a mission. Commanders can certainly make a contribution here by explaining to their subordinates what the objectives of the mission are and, in doing so, motivate them. Finally, there is the fostering of a belief in one's capabilities. On the one hand, this can be done by providing a good preparation and training of the units, and, on the other, by giving positive feedback, which makes the serviceman see and experience he is capable of carrying out his tasks in a professional manner. The survey shows that a lack of flexibility is a dangerous thing and therefore it is important to educate military personnel in this respect and to show them how to deal with the complex realities that often require a flexible way of thinking and acting.

Doing research in units that are on a mission, however, is not always easy. They are very busy carrying out operational tasks and they are not always eager to fill out questionnaires. The authors wish to thank the RNLA units, at home and Germany or abroad on a mission, for their co-operation in surveys like the present one[10].

Notes

1. The question arises why the heroes functioned better than the CSR casualties on the battlefield and suffered considerably less long-term pathology. In this study we did not search for an answer to this question. It might be that the fact of having been decorated had a beneficial effect on the decorated heroes' mental health in later life. In addition, our findings that veterans of low military rank tended to report more PTSD symptoms and more general psychiatric symptomatology than veterans who were officers suggest that precombat factors played a role. Officers in the IDF represent an elite group of soldiers whose selection criteria include high IQ, high motivation to serve in the army, high self-esteem, and emotional maturity (Dekel et al., 2003).

2. In this analysis no distinction has been made between officers, NCOs and privates because some groups in this survey are too small to warrant such a distinction.

3. Statistic data of the regression analysis: the willingness to co-operate internationally in the face of the four death threat related factors, identification with RNLA, identification with the Netherlands, self-esteem and need for structure. The model is significant $F(8,286) = 6.30$, p, . 001. A greater fear of death negatively correlates with the willingness to co-operate internationally, Beta = -2.829, p<.006. Acceptation of risk of death positively correlates, Beta = 2.019, p<.05. A greater identification with RNLA contributes positively, Beta =.354, p<.001 and so does a higher self-esteem, Beta = 2.08, p<.04.

4. In this analysis, too, no distinction was made between officers, NCOs and privates, as some groups in this survey are too small to warrant such a distinction.

5. In this survey use is made of the concept of self-efficacy, which is also a measure of *self-confidence*, but which has been designed for research in military units and is used in US Army research projects.

6. In the figure this is represented by a + sign for a positive correlation and a – sign for a negative correlation. The value at the Beta indicated the strength of this correlation. A positive correlation means that a higher score for the factor indicated, for instance, identification with RNLA, leads to a higher score for international cooperation. Identification with the RNLA thus predicts the extent of willingness to cooperate internationally.

7. Linear regression analysis with international co-operation for dependent variable. Unit in mission area (Iraq) R2 = 0.375, Need for structure: Beta = 0,212, sign=0,000; Identification with RNLA: Beta=0,446, sign=0,000; Participation out of idealistic motives: Beta=0,205, sign 0,000. Control unit outside mission area R2 =0.652, Identification with RNLA: Beta=0,488, sign=0,000; participation out of idealistic motives: Beta=0,383, sign=0,000.

8. Linear regression analysis with usefulness of mission for dependent variable. Unit in mission area (Iraq) R2 = 0.358, Need for structure: Beta=-0,149, sign=0,007; Identification with RNLA: Beta=0,242, sign=0,000; Participation out of idealistic motives: Beta=0,235, sign=0,000; Willingness to co-operate internationally: Beta= 0,233, sign=0,000. Control unit outside mission area R2 = 0.584, Acceptance of risk of death: Beta=0,211, sign=0,004; Participation out of idealistic motives: Beta=0,691, sign=0,000.

9. Linear regression analysis with Operational readiness for dependent variable. Unit in mission area (Iraq) R2 = 0.460, Self-efficacy: Beta = 0.540'sign 0,000; Identification with RNLA: Beta= 0,138, sign=0,015; Participation out of idealistic motives: Beta=0,019, sign=0,053; Acceptance of risk of death: Beta=0,095, sign=0,063. Control unit outside mission area R2 =0.435, Self-efficacy: Beta=0,327, sign=0,000; Identification with RNLA: Beta=0,275, sign=0,007; Participation out of idealistic motives: Beta=0,267, sign=0,006.

10. These thanks are extended in particular to Major General M. Celie, Brigadier General R.A.C. Bertholee, Lieutenant-Colonel R. de Vries, Lieutenant-Colonel R. van Harskamp, Lieutenant-Colonel A. Campo, Lieutenant-Colonel C.J. Matthijssen and Major drs. R.W.P. van der Heijden.

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