



CHAPTER 3

STABILITY AND COHESION: HOW MUCH IS NEEDED?

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Introduction

Traditionally, the U.S. Army has assigned its units to specific geographic locations, and then staffed those units by rotating individual soldiers into them throughout the year. Starting with the operations in Bosnia and Kosovo, however, entire units were deployed and subsequently replaced by other units—a practice that contrasted starkly with the individual replacement system. Unit replacement has continued to dominate operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, where units are deployed for lengthy periods and replaced according to a rotational plan when they return home. In addition, units spend time in training prior to deploying, and more time in recovery upon returning home.

Some argue that discord between the two replacement approaches contributes to personnel turbulence and degrades unit training, cohesion, and ultimately, performance. They recommend that the Army consistently employ a unit replacement system to enhance stability and cohesion (defined as a low rate of change in assignments), to reduce personnel turbulence, and improve unit performance. In this view, stability and cohesion are unalloyed benefits that foster better unit performance.

This chapter suggests a more complex view. It argues that pursuing stability and cohesion as goals of personnel policy—or as a means for deciding the merits of a unit versus individual replacement system—should be done only with great care. Stability is difficult to accomplish and may be achieved only at the cost of other equally important goals. Further, the relationship between unit cohesion and performance is less direct and clear than is commonly believed.

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Unit Versus Individual Replacement

There are several methods by which to evaluate whether sufficient numbers of military forces are ready and available for overseas deployments. The first method is to use a large military formation as the unit of analysis—specifically, the brigade combat team. The number of brigades in the Army's force structure is fixed; hence a significant demand for brigades over time will require repeated deployments of these same units. Under some circumstances, the demand for units may be so high that brigades would be required to cycle repeatedly at rates that are difficult to maintain—stretching our military capabilities to their limits through overuse (Davis et al. 2005). These rates may cause unit members to spend more time deployed and less time at home than is desirable, for both active and reserve forces.

Analysis of the Army's overseas rotation requirements in the early years of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan supports this thesis (Davis et al. 2005). The high overseas rotation requirements have placed considerable stress on heavy-medium brigade units. Current policy guidelines, established by the Secretary of Defense, which call for active duty service members to remain at home for two years after each one-year deployment, are not being met. Units thus face shorter time between deployments, the Army risks lower unit readiness, and the nation has fewer units available in the event of an additional crisis.

To ameliorate the strain, the Army can rely to some degree on reserve component units. Yet, these units can only cover a portion of force requirements. Further, judicious use of reserve forces suggests a one-year deployment followed by five years at home. Another option is to allow any unit, not just heavy brigades, to fill rotational requirements. But this approach carries operational risk if missions require armor protection and on-the-ground mobility that only heavy brigades can provide. Thus, under circumstances of high operational tempo, as has been experienced in Iraq and Afghanistan, unit replacement requires trade-offs in relying on active and reserve units. These trade-offs include operational risks, questions over sufficient and effective training, the availability of resources to fund the Army's current force transformation, and expanding the size of the force. Analysis suggests that making such trade-offs presents many challenges.

An alternative approach, as described in the previous chapter by Junor and Dyches, is to employ a rotation policy that replaces smaller units or individuals rather than large military formations. Military force structure contains smaller, dispersed units of capability, in addition to the large fixed formations in the inventory—such as battalions and companies with specialized capabilities that are embedded in larger units. In addition, many individuals with critical skills needed in deployed units are dispersed throughout U.S. forces. Some of these individuals serve in operating units in the United States or in theaters around the world; others serve in headquarters staffs or in non-operational commands—as instructors in military schools, for example.

Junor and Dyches argue that these smaller elements of force structure provide a potential reservoir of additional capability. But that argument only holds true if the Department of Defense can identify and track these dispersed elements, and if the services, in the exercise of their responsibilities, can bring them together where and when they are needed. In theory, these elements could augment larger units, relieving the stress and strain of deployments on components of those units. They could also potentially be brought together to create new units of additional capability.

Building capable units from smaller force elements or individuals is difficult, however, because operational planners traditionally prefer to work with set organizational units. They do not address the actual personnel movements and flows that affect typical units. In addition, traditional operational planners argue that, while the types of reforms discussed by Junor and Dyches could potentially expand capacity, such approaches to force management could also have negative consequences. Specifically, they argue that these measures perpetuate “cross-leveling,” a practice that is seen as creating less capable forces and degrading the readiness of the organizations from which such elements are drawn.

By changing the composition of units that are about to deploy, and those that remain behind, the *stability* of these units could be degraded, compromising units’ ability to effectively train and prepare for deployment. In addition, by changing the composition of units, these reforms could undermine unit *cohesion*, which is also believed to be an important element of effective unit performance.

The different rotation systems have advantages and disadvantages. To choose between these systems, planners should recognize that trade-offs exist. They should consider the nature of expected deployments and the various benefits and liabilities of each rotation option. For example, a unit rotation system for deployments can serve several goals:

- Units can be tailored to perform certain missions and functions.
- Readiness can be concentrated in the units being deployed.
- The integrity and reporting authorities of the unit can be maintained during deployment.
- Political authorities in the host regions can be reassured that a force’s presence is temporary.
- The liability for deployment can be spread across different unit types, and consequently, across skill areas. This may be desirable if deployments do not demand highly specialized skills.

In contrast, individual replacement offers the following benefits:

- It eliminates the conflict between unit deployments and the Army's personnel policies.
- It spreads turbulence over time. (Unit deployments require expedited personnel rotation so that a unit can deploy with "fresh" soldiers who can remain with it for the entire deployment.)
- It spreads "unreadiness" equally across the force, which may be desirable for small deployments or deployments with highly specialized personnel requirements. It also eliminates the degradation of readiness that comes from preparing, deploying, and acclimating entire units abroad.
- It eliminates the loss of mission continuity that occurs when an entire unit rotates. Under individual replacement, a deployed unit is always staffed with personnel possessing a range of experience.
- It eliminates the costs associated with rotating entire units overseas.

In order to determine whether small unit and individual replacement is a viable means to create military capability, it is vital to examine concerns regarding stability and cohesion. Are these concerns significant enough to preclude the military from exploring management practices that draw together and integrate smaller units and individuals into existing, larger units? Are they so severe as to rule out practices that build new organizations from smaller units and individuals?

The role that stability and cohesion play with respect to unit performance is more complex than commonly understood, and possibly more tenuous than generally believed. Further, concerns about the effect of force management practices on stability and cohesion may be overstated. Stability may be desirable, but the characteristics of today's Army limit its ability to accomplish stabilization—under any management structure. Units constantly experience high levels of personnel turnover, and achieving significantly greater stability may come at the cost of other, equally important goals such as ensuring adequate breadth and depth of experience, including command experience, in the Army's officer corps. Furthermore, unit cohesion can be established and maintained even as units experience personnel changes and instability. Research has shown that leadership and successful performance are much more critical to unit cohesion than is stability of personnel within the unit.

Finally, it is important to note that much of the attention on stability and cohesion stems from a perceived correlation between stable, cohesive units and military effectiveness. But a careful review of the research indicates that the relationships between stability, cohesion, and unit performance are more complex and less straightforward than commonly believed. As force managers review the impact of possible personnel initiatives on stability and cohesion, they must be cognizant of how much increased stability and cohesion actually improve force effectiveness and further military priorities.

Stability

Stability, defined as a low rate of change in assignments, confers benefits. From the individual service member's perspective, it can reduce costs associated with permanent change of station moves. It may permit spouses to engage in more productive employment, and children may benefit from less frequent changes in schools and neighborhoods. Soldiers may experience greater rates of home ownership.

In terms of overall military missions, assignment stability can foster readiness, since longstanding crews and teams may perform their collective duties to a higher standard than groups of shorter tenure. However, the link between stability and performance has not been quantified. It seems reasonable to presume, however, that the effect would depend on individual roles, prior training, and experience. In fact, an analysis of stability among tank crews (Kahan et al. 1985) found that performance in positions that require more skill or time to learn suffered most from turbulence, while turbulence had little effect on low-skilled positions.

In recent years, the Army has sought to transform its organization and force management practices, moving toward smaller, more modular organizations, while implementing a unit rotation system. One reason the Army wishes to implement such a system stems from the belief that unit rotation, in combination with smaller units, will enhance unit stability. However, deployment demands, the flow of personnel into and out of the Army, and frequent moves and assignment changes, still make it difficult to significantly increase unit stability.

The Army's current structure, deployment posture, and missions necessitate a high level of personnel movement between operational units in the United States and those deployed overseas. This high level of personnel movement is likely to continue unless there are significant changes in the Army's overseas presence and current mission requirements. While the military has faced unprecedented demand in Operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom, and Noble Eagle, challenging deployment requirements are not new. The Army, for example, has faced continuing commitments in Korea, Europe, the Sinai, and elsewhere around the world for decades. The stress and strain of deployment has been with our military for some time, and will likely continue in the future.

Deployment demands are not the only factors that undermine unit stability. The flow of personnel into and out of the Army also contributes to instability as personnel receive promotions or leave the force, and as other personnel replace them. Today, approximately 20 percent of active duty service members leave the Army each year and are replaced with new recruits. In addition to attrition, stability is also affected by the rotation of personnel between operational units, headquarters, and functional organizations—movements that are necessary to ensure a flow of personnel to meet manpower requirements across the force. Many soldiers, for example, serve

in headquarters organizations where there are no operational units, meaning that these personnel must return to an operational unit every few years or risk erosion of their combat skills.

The Army's leader development system also requires significant movement of personnel from one assignment to another. By definition, the Army's system is sequential and progressive, providing individuals with a breadth of experience and increased levels of responsibility. These career characteristics are desirable for developing leaders and ensuring sufficient command experience. To cultivate this breadth of experience in its officers, the Army provides command opportunities (particularly early in a career) to as many officers as possible. Accordingly, officers move between command and staff positions, between operational and non-operational headquarters, and also return to school at various times in their careers.

Some of these job changes require officers to move from one station to another. Studies have shown that, on average, such station moves cause officers to move almost every two years (Hix et al. 1998). In April 1995, for example, officers in year-group 1985, who at that time had been in the military for 10 years, had moved an average of five times; officers in year-group 1980, who had been in for 15 years, had moved about 7.1 times. While officers typically make a change of station move every two years, they change *jobs* even more frequently. As of 1995, officers with 20 years of experience had held an average of almost 15 jobs, with each lasting for just over a year (13.8 months). More junior officers hold jobs for even shorter periods of time, typically less than a year.

Frequent moves and job changes are necessary to develop officers with the breadth of experience needed to become well-rounded and experienced leaders. Yet such changes also mean that officers do not remain in a position long enough to provide stable leadership to a particular unit. While less frequent moves would increase stability for officers and the troops they lead, it would also result in a less experienced officer corps. Some personnel turbulence is an unavoidable cost of providing officers with the career development they need to assume positions of greater responsibility.

Personnel turbulence is also an inherent characteristic of reserve units. In the Army, guard and reserve units experience attrition rates of approximately 18 percent per year. In addition to soldiers leaving the force, others change units because of personal moves, changes in civilian jobs, or voluntary moves between units. Altogether, personnel turnover rates upwards of 35 percent per year are not uncommon within Army reserve units (Orvis et al. 1996).

Taken together, these factors suggest that instability is an inherent feature of Army personnel policies that cannot easily be reduced or eradicated. And while the Army

would like to increase stability in units, such efforts might jeopardize its ability to accomplish other worthwhile goals. Current stability levels are driven by constraints such as the proportion of the force in fixed tour lengths, the geographic distribution of forces, the nature of deployments (unit versus individual), and the length and frequency of these tours. If one wishes to increase stability, these constraints must be relaxed, or other steps taken. Alternatives include increasing the length of careers, lengthening the time between promotions, or allowing longer tours for units deployed overseas.

Such changes, however, could affect other military objectives and priorities. For example, while extending tour lengths would increase the average time a soldier would spend at a given station, it also would fundamentally affect the depth and breadth of experience across the force, the opportunities for promotion, and the seniority level of the force (as well as associated personnel costs). In other words, it would reduce the opportunity for soldiers to broaden their experience and develop expertise in a variety of assignments and geographic settings. Further, reforms that lengthen deployments could create hardships for deployed members, their families, and—in the case of reservists—their civilian employers.

In short, while the Army wishes to enhance stability in units, inherent characteristics of personnel movements and turnover make it nearly impossible to achieve high levels of stability without jeopardizing other crucial objectives. In the face of this, it is difficult to imagine how unit instability would substantially increase as a result of personnel management practices that draw together and integrate smaller units and individuals within existing, larger units. It is also challenging to see how practices that build new organizations from smaller units and individuals in order to create additional capability could create instability.

Moreover, as a matter of practice, military planners and force providers already create new organizations to meet mission requirements. No doubt “cross-leveling,” the transfer of soldiers between units to ensure that units have sufficient qualified personnel to deploy, is viewed as an undesirable practice. However, “task organization,” the creation of deployable military organizations, tailored to meet mission requirements and drawn from an inventory of units, is viewed as a successful practice. Indeed, the Army’s transformation to “modular” forces recognizes the value of this approach. The force management techniques discussed by Junor and Dyches are consistent with a task organization approach to meeting mission requirements. As force managers develop personnel assignment and rotation policies, it is imperative that they have a better understanding of the negative consequences of instability in today’s forces, the benefits of enhancing stability, and the costs and other impacts associated with policy changes designed to improve stability.

Cohesion

Cohesion is another important consideration in managing units and designing rotation policies. Military lore has long held that unit cohesion is associated with more effective fighting qualities, so improving unit cohesion has traditionally been viewed as a priority goal of force management. But what evidence supports this view, and how can we evaluate it, particularly its applicability to today's forces? As discussed below, some research in this area suggests that the link between cohesion and performance may be weaker, and more complex, than previously thought.

Cohesion: An Historical View

Since the 1950s, the concept of cohesion has figured prominently in our idea of why soldiers fight. Study after study shows that an individual soldier's ties to his or her peers have proven far more important to keeping units together under fire than other factors, such as morale or ideology. Even in armies thought to be dominated by ideological indoctrination, such as the Soviet Army or the Wehrmacht, ideology was found to have played a minor role.

Five case studies—focused mainly on World War II—era conflicts—have played a seminal role in formulating this view. Shils and Janowitz's (1948) study of World War II broke the first ground on the subject, showing that strong interpersonal ties generated by the common experience of combat kept German units together, and that this complex web of support was more important than entrepreneurial skill or ideology. Similarly, Marshall's *Men Against Fire* (1947) demonstrated that peer group support was far more important to the American soldier's fighting ability than were the ideals for which World War II was fought. Stouffer's study of World War II showed that morale was relatively unimportant compared with group solidarity in combat (Stouffer, Lumsdaine, and Lumsdaine 1949). In *Fighting Power*, Van Creveld (1982) argued that the Wehrmacht was uniquely prepared to fight because of its high levels of cohesion, and that the role of ideology in that army was marginal. Finally, Keegan's *Face of Battle* (1976) demonstrated that, more than any other factor, peer group relations kept British soldiers fighting in conflicts ranging from Waterloo to the Somme.

Studies of more recent conflicts tended to confirm these conclusions. Little's (1964) examination of "buddy relations" in Korea emphasized the importance of small group solidarity, and Gal (1986) showed that high levels of cohesion helped the Israeli army in the Yom Kippur War far more than any supposed "Masada complex."

These historical analyses, however, have two problems with respect to their potential relevance for current U.S. personnel policy. First, while peer group solidarity appears to keep soldiers fighting in the face of otherwise devastating losses, how actual *variation* in cohesion affects performance is not well understood. Peer relations may moti-

vate soldiers, but nobody can say for certain whether variations in soldiers' fighting abilities have anything to do with differences in cohesion. Put another way, whatever one's views of the Wehrmacht, there is very little evidence that greater cohesion *per se* improves performance in war.

A second problem with these various studies is that most of them relate to armed forces that fought over half a century ago, with characteristics vastly different from America's present force. To what extent can we compare today's professional, specialized, high-technology, all-volunteer force with the Wehrmacht, or with America's World War II-era conscript Army, whose troops had relatively little military experience or training before they were thrust into large-scale conflict?

Another potential concern with at least one of these studies—Van Creveld's—is its failure to consider alternative theories for the observed link between cohesion and performance. Van Creveld's data were taken from engagements in which the German forces defended against Allied attack, often from prepared defenses. Although there were a handful of engagements in which Allied forces were not attacking, they never fought the Germans from prepared Allied defense positions. Thus, the explanation for Van Creveld's findings could be that the terrain and equipment essentially favored defensive operations. If this were the case, higher cohesion among the German troops may have played little role in their superior preparedness relative to Allied troops.

Given these concerns, those making decisions about the management and structure of today's troops should realize that parallels drawn to experiences with cohesion in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam are tenuous at best.

Cohesion: A Social Science View

Beyond the view offered by military history, a host of research conducted by social scientists sheds additional light on the subject of cohesion, and calls into question the long-held belief that cohesion improves troop performance. This body of research suggests a more complex link between cohesion and performance and points to the need for a more comprehensive examination of this relationship before meaningful policies for improving cohesion can succeed.

Unlike military researchers, who tend to distinguish among horizontal, vertical, and organizational cohesion, social scientists commonly distinguish between task-based and social cohesion. The distinction was outlined initially by Festinger (1950). Task cohesion refers to the shared commitment among members to achieve a goal that requires the collective efforts of the group. Social cohesion refers to emotional bonds of liking, caring, and friendship among group members (MacCoun 1993).

Both types of cohesion have been studied at length with respect to their effect on performance. One key analysis by Mullen and Copper (1994) compiled results from

66 different studies to develop a “meta-analysis” of the statistical relationship between cohesion and performance. According to Mullen and Copper’s analysis, key findings of these cohesion/performance studies include the following:

- Overall, cohesion has only a modest effect on performance. However, task-based cohesion, a shared commitment among members of a group to perform a task, such as firing a weapon or maneuvering a tank, has a much stronger relationship to performance than social cohesion.
- In contrast, social cohesion, a group affinity due to social interaction (such as being assigned to the same group or living together), does not necessarily improve performance. As one social psychologist concluded, “[socially] cohesive groups are often more enjoyable, but they aren’t always more productive” (Forsyth 1990). In fact, if social cohesion is too high, it can have powerful negative effects. For example, Stewart (1991) and Savage and Gabriel (1976) found that strong peer cohesion in Vietnam was associated with drug use, low performance, and “fraggings.” Balanced against these theories are the findings of Motowildo and Borman (1978), which relate such problems to low morale rather than high social cohesion. It seems reasonable to suppose that high social cohesion in the presence of low morale could lead to these negative effects, as well.
- While there may be a positive relationship between cohesion and performance, these studies indicate that successful performance predicts cohesion more strongly than cohesion predicts successful performance. In other words, success breeds cohesion, not the other way around (Mullen and Copper 1994).
- Task and social cohesion have different determinants. Good leadership, in conjunction with important work and shared goals, are key factors in enhancing task cohesion. On the other hand, similarity among group members and familiarity arising from proximity enhance social cohesion, especially in smaller groups (MacCoun 1993).
- Group size matters. Task-based cohesion helps increase performance the most when a group is small and its members are situated in close proximity. Cohesion in larger groups, in contrast, is amorphous and lacks immediacy.
- While social cohesion and performance are not strongly linked, social cohesion can serve as a buffer to stress, possibly reducing psychological casualties in combat and preventing groups from disintegrating in highly stressful non-combat situations, such as peacekeeping operations.

These findings suggest—contrary to long-held beliefs—that cohesion has only a modest effect on performance, and that social cohesion may actually hinder performance. Moreover, to the extent that cohesion and performance are related, it may be that successful performance generates cohesion, not the reverse.

This last point—that success breeds cohesion—raises an interesting possibility. If true, then cohesion may be easier to build and reinforce in today’s Army. The Army’s successes over the past several decades and its frequent deployments in peacekeeping operations have provided soldiers and leaders with experience and confidence that can carry over into new missions. In other words, successful performance from previous missions may enhance cohesion needed to perform well in new missions. Indeed, today’s volunteer Army, with high levels of experience and professionalism among its rank and file soldiers and leaders, might already have sufficient initial task and social cohesion to successfully undertake new missions.

In combination, these findings call into question the rationale for making cohesion a major personnel policy objective. While personnel managers may still wish to increase cohesion among the troops, they should understand that policy changes and resource investments designed to achieve this objective will not necessarily result in better performance. Cohesion can be important, but it depends on which type of cohesion (task or social). And while cohesion may indeed keep soldiers fighting in the face of brutal losses, this observation alone is too broad to preclude the adoption of personnel policies designed to increase readiness and performance across a range of missions.

Achieving Cohesion

Even if cohesion is determined to be a critical component of successful military performance, another important question is whether improving unit stability is the best way to achieve cohesion, or, put another way, whether less unit stability would degrade cohesion. While stability may foster cohesion, it is certainly not the only way to do so. Leadership, shared commitment, and other personnel policies can also advance cohesion; all should be evaluated as alternative methods for improving unit cohesion, particularly given the difficulty in achieving unit stability in today’s military.

Research findings have not established a clear relationship between unit stability and cohesion. Periodically, the Army has experimented with unit rotation, but to date these attempts to create more stable units have not produced demonstrable improvements in cohesion. In 1981, for example, the Army undertook COHORT, a unit-manning system that kept company-sized units intact for their entire first tour of duty. Unfortunately, studies of COHORT reached divergent conclusions, leaving the debate about unit rotation wide open.

For example, Griffith’s (1988 and 1989) reviews of the system showed that cohesion in unit-rotation companies was higher, but mainly in the form of social cohesion, which other research suggests would have little impact on unit performance. A year later Vaitkus and Griffith (1990) found that morale and cohesion were initially higher among COHORT units than among individual replacement units, but that over the two-year study period higher cohesion among COHORT units eventually declined.

Improved cohesion only persisted “prior to their first deployment,” and by the end of the observation period, the only remaining differences were in social cohesion (“off-duty social associations”).

By the end of the COHORT initiative, researchers concluded that evidence from COHORT was at best mixed, and that “the [COHORT] system is clearly not a panacea.” Although these findings may have been partly due to limitations in COHORT’s design (e.g., COHORT units did not stabilize officer and noncommissioned officer turbulence), it still appears that the primary advantage of the more stable units was in the area of social cohesion, which research suggests has little effect on performance.

The COHORT experiment leaves unanswered many questions about stability in the U.S. military, and the role that stability plays in promoting unit cohesion. For example, do cohesion in deployed units and morale among replacement personnel need to be improved, and if so, is increased stability the best way to go about it, or are there better approaches?

Research on other factors that may promote cohesion found that leadership is among the most important. Indeed, a variety of studies have emphasized the role of stable leadership in producing cohesion, although such studies have not always distinguished between task and social cohesion. Van Creveld’s study of cohesive units in World War II Germany, for example, noted that German noncommissioned officers and officers were typically assigned to a specific unit. And Little (1964) found that in cohesive units in Korea, officers worked closely with the enlisted personnel and the ranks tended to blur or disappear.

Thus, force managers wishing to increase unit cohesion should look beyond stability and explore other policies that might more effectively increase cohesion. To that end, some additional, modest experimentation is warranted, and should result in a more complete and nuanced understanding of cohesion than has been achieved in the past. Described below, for example, are two rotational options that may improve force stability and cohesion and could be implemented within the military’s current rotation system.

- **Rotation of Smaller Units.** Traditionally, unit rotation options involve battalions or higher echelon units deploying and redeploying together. If the Army aims to improve cohesion in deployed units, it could consider a replacement scheme involving smaller units, focused at company, platoon, or even crew or squad level. The idea draws from the research finding that smaller units focused on specific missions and tasks are better able to regulate their performance and are more effective and cohesive. Therefore they may be better able to integrate into a larger deployed unit and perform more effectively when they replace a similar unit.
- **Reception Units.** Another approach that could enhance cohesion within an individual replacement system is the field replacement battalion, a practice

used by the Wehrmacht in World War II, in which new and inexperienced individual replacements were assigned to a company in the rear echelon of a field division (Newland 1987). There, replacement soldiers received training in tactics from a cadre of officers and noncommissioned officers drawn from frontline units. The system offered a number of advantages: it provided training tailored to the immediate tasks, it integrated the soldier into the unit before being placed on the front line, and it built trust and confidence between leaders and replacement soldiers. In short, it established both task and social cohesion before combat. Such an approach was also used by the U.S. Army in Vietnam and could be adapted for use in current Army deployments.

Like any change, instituting smaller replacement units or reception units in today's military would raise questions of benefits, costs, trade-offs, and risks—such as whether the military can afford to maintain reception battalions in its deployed units, the potential effects on command and control, and the possibility of additional turbulence as smaller units prepare for deployment. And whether either of these initiatives would ultimately improve unit and member performance remains to be seen. But these and other policies are worthy of further study and modest experimentation.

Conclusion

The needs of the modern American Army require a thorough understanding of the complex relationships between stability, cohesion, and performance, as well as a better sense of how those factors operate in and relate to today's military. Even if unit stability were increased, it is not clear that additional stability would enhance cohesion, nor whether increasing cohesion would ultimately result in better performance or contribute to the Army's ability to accomplish its mission. New missions and more frequent deployments demand that special attention be given to personnel policies that enable high levels of performance in a variety of settings. Cost, deployment requirements, political considerations, spreading turbulence over time or across units, and improving task cohesion are all considerations, but there are often trade-offs between these factors that are not well understood.

It is important to keep in mind that cohesion and stability are not ends in themselves. Rather, they are means to more fundamental ends—a military force capable of successfully pursuing U.S. national security interests. The research described in this chapter suggests that the strength of evidence does not yet justify the adoption of personnel assignment and rotation policies on the basis of stability and cohesion. Each of these should be analyzed in greater depth to understand the costs and consequences of change, what brings them about, and how changes would improve the Army's ability to accomplish its objectives.

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