

# Military psychology

Government, Army



Military Psychology Military psychology is a broad market of psychology in which virtually any and all subfields of psychology where the lessons of personality, organizational and abnormal psychology among others are applied to the needs or desires of military planners and strategists. Reasons for their application may be immediate or sustained. The application of psychological research or theory to the military can be used to analyze either enemy or friendly forces, exemplified by perfecting an attack on an enemy or strengthening the weakness of an ally.

By extension, military psychology could be used to examine the differences in attitude to the battlefield in terms of philosophy and execution of operations. The field has developed its greatest recognition through the variably sustained or ineffective post-combat programs for troubled veterans. Conditions like "shell shock" and "post-traumatic stress disorder" (PTSD) have figured prominently in the development of military therapy programs.

Strategically, intelligence and personality testing have been applied to placement exams for prospective military recruits. The events of World War I had a formative effect on the application of psychology to the realities of the battlefield, giving the nascent field crucial legitimacy. Co-founder of the British Psychological Society and the National Institute of Industrial Psychology, Dr. Charles Myers, was selected as the primary advisor on psychological matters to the British armies in France during the war.

His work is considered foundational and he himself describes in statements that it was a frustrating endeavor to have British military elite recognize the legitimacy of his claims that soldiers deserved psychological consideration

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for their inability and perceived unwillingness to perform in battle. Coining the term "shell shock," he engraved an enduring term into historical consciousness that defines the apparent psychological damage inflicted by war. The term today is the most recognizable in defining so-called "combat stress reactions" (CSRs) which entail extreme battle fatigue and subsequent poor performance in war.

Simultaneously, American psychologist Robert Yerkes initiated widespread intelligence and aptitude testing in the American military by devising standard intelligence tests for literate and illiterate recruits, given the names Army Alpha and Army Beta tests respectively. The tests analyzed recruits' ability to draw analogies, recognize patterns and perform arithmetic, among other tests, in order to judge their intelligence regardless of their formal educational backgrounds. The dramatic rise in recruits with World War II provoked a massive effort to streamline draftees.

Based on the experiences beginning with World War I testing, several committees and divisions were created devoted to evaluation and placement on a psychological basis. The massive effort analyzed roughly 800,000 new soldiers every year during World War II, having a tremendous influence on the development of organizational and industrial psychology. The systemic methodology played well into the 1950s as veterans returned to the workforce or advanced their own businesses on a similarly organized recruitment and placement model.

The tests, developed in conjunction with the Committee on Classification of Military Personnel, constituted the next stage in the evolution of American military aptitude tests. They replaced the earlier Alpha and Beta tests, and

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laid the foundations for the standard ASVAB test used by the American armed forces as of 2011. The uncertainty and anxiety of the Vietnamese theater gave rise to new levels of battle-induced psychological problems, most prominently in post-traumatic stress disorder.

The support system for American veterans, particularly sufferers of this condition, is notorious in American culture and often criticized. Many argue the American military has demonstrated it has learned the appropriate lessons from the mismanagement of the PTSD outbreak after the Vietnam War. A stronger cultural support structure for returning American veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan is thought to have displaced cultural hostility, and advances in clinical psychology have been referenced.

The use of psychology to intimidate or analyze the weaknesses of an enemy has been called "psychological warfare. Additionally, practical applications like individual profiling and organizational psychology techniques have devised studies on enemy commanders, even their methodology, and guided philosophy in making decisions about war. This application has been applied with equal vigor to perceived allies, such as comparative analyses between American and NATO military commands. Hesitation and ambiguity have been pointed to as crucial weaknesses in European military culture, whereas American commanders have been cited as quicker and less reluctant to use force to accomplish a mission.

Simultaneously, American commanders have been criticized for institutionalizing a tendency to diminish the importance of the aftermath of military operations and the threat the resulting social conditions may constitute against consolidating military gains. Military psychology is a broad

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