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## **COMMANDING OFFICERS’ ROLE IN MOTIVATING PEOPLE IN THE ARMENIAN ARMY**

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### **Abstract**

*This essay examines the pivotal role of commanding officers in motivating soldiers within the Armenian Armed Forces. It delves into how effective leadership transcends mere command, focusing instead on fostering deep commitment, resilience, and optimal performance, particularly in challenging geopolitical contexts. The discussion explores key motivational strategies, including building trust and respect, ensuring clear communication aligned with national vision, leading by personal example and courage, empowering and developing subordinates, providing culturally relevant recognition, and cultivating strong unit cohesion and esprit de corps. Ultimately, the essay argues that a commanding officer's ability to inspire and sustain motivation is fundamental to the success of missions and the overall security of the Armenian nation.*

**Keywords:** *motivation; armed forces; commandind officers; trust, cohesion; success.*

### **1. Introduction**

Within the hierarchical structure of the Armenian Armed Forces, characterized by a disciplined chain of command essential for national defense, the role of a commanding officer extends far beyond mere strategic planning, resource allocation, and tactical execution. While these foundational elements are undoubtedly critical for military operations, a commander's most profound and enduring impact lies in their ability to genuinely motivate the soldiers under their charge. In a nation like Armenia, with its rich military history—marked by pivotal moments such as the Battle of Avarayr, the heroic stand at Sardarabad, and the recent Artsakh Wars, which deeply in still a sense of national duty and sacrifice—and confronted by ongoing geopolitical challenges including persistent border tensions, regional instability, and the constant imperative of safeguarding sovereignty, the need for a highly motivated fighting force is paramount [1].

Motivation, in this specific context, is not merely about compliance with orders but about fostering a deep-seated commitment rooted in hayrenasirutyan (patriotism), cultivating an unyielding resilience in the face of immense pressure, and an unwavering willingness to perform optimally [2]. This is especially crucial when confronting adversity and high-stakes defense scenarios, which can involve harsh mountainous terrain, extreme weather conditions, and the ever-present threat to civilian populations and ancestral lands. This essay will therefore meticulously explore the multifaceted role of commanding officers in motivating their personnel within the Armenian army, examining various leadership styles (which often lean towards a paternalistic yet demanding approach), psychological principles (leveraging collective memory and national pride), and practical strategies they employ to inspire dedication, cohesion, and peak performance, often drawing upon the unique cultural and historical ethos of Armenia, where concepts of family, community, and national survival are deeply intertwined with military service.



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## **2. The Foundation of Trust and Respect**

At the core of effective motivation within the Armenian military is the establishment of profound trust and respect. A commanding officer who is trusted and respected by their subordinates creates an environment where soldiers feel valued, heard, and confident in their leadership, particularly given the critical role of the Armenian army in national defense.

### **2.1 Building Trust**

Trust is built through consistent, ethical behavior, transparency (where operational security permits), and a demonstrated, unwavering commitment to the well-being and safety of the troops. When Armenian soldiers believe their commander genuinely prioritizes their welfare and the nation's security, they are far more likely to commit fully to the mission and endure significant hardships.

**Example:** During harsh winter conditions on a frontline position, a commanding officer not only ensures that all soldiers have adequate cold-weather gear and hot meals but also personally inspects living quarters, addresses individual concerns about heating or supplies, and even spends nights on the front lines alongside their troops. This direct involvement and shared hardship, rather than simply delegating, demonstrates a genuine commitment to their well-being, fostering deep trust. If a soldier faces a personal or family emergency, a commander who goes out of their way to provide support or facilitate leave, within military regulations, further solidifies this trust, showing that the commander cares for them as individuals, not just as military assets.

### **2.2 Earning Respect**

Respect, conversely, is earned through demonstrated competence in military strategy and tactics, unyielding integrity, and absolute fairness in treatment, regardless of rank or background. A commander who displays expertise, makes sound decisions, and treats all personnel equitably naturally garners respect, fostering a reciprocal relationship that forms the bedrock upon which all other motivational efforts are built.

**Example:** During a complex border patrol operation in challenging terrain, the commanding officer personally leads the most difficult reconnaissance segment, utilizing their expert knowledge of the local geography and enemy tactics to navigate safely and gather critical intelligence. Later, when a disciplinary issue arises involving a soldier from a prominent family and another from a modest background, the commander conducts a thorough, unbiased investigation and applies the regulations strictly and equally to both, despite potential external pressures. This combination of demonstrable tactical skill and unwavering commitment to justice earns the deep respect of every soldier, solidifying their belief in the commander's leadership and fairness.

## **3. Clear Communication and National Vision**

One of the most potent tools in an Armenian commanding officer's motivational arsenal is clear and consistent communication, deeply rooted in the national vision. Soldiers are profoundly motivated when they understand the "why" behind their tasks and the broader national defense objectives they are contributing to.

### **3.1 Articulating Mission and Significance**

A commanding officer must articulate the mission, objectives, and their significance in a way that resonates with every individual, often connecting it to Armenia's historical struggles, national



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identity, and the imperative of protecting the homeland [3]. This involves not only conveying directives but also explaining the strategic context, the existential impact of their efforts, and the critical importance of each soldier's role within the larger framework of national security.

**Example:** Before a border defense exercise, the commanding officer reminds the unit of the land's historical significance, linking their duties to past Armenian sacrifices. They then clearly outline the exercise's objectives, explaining how these maneuvers directly protect nearby villages and deter aggression. The commander emphasizes, "Every effort you make here is a continuation of our ancestors' vigilance. Your dedication ensures our families' safety and Armenia's future. Your role is vital to this sacred duty." This speech connects the immediate task to a profound historical and national purpose.

### **3.2 Fostering Purpose and Ownership**

When Armenian personnel grasp how their individual contributions safeguard their families, communities, and national sovereignty, they develop an unparalleled sense of purpose and ownership. Furthermore, effective communication involves active listening, providing constructive feedback, and maintaining open channels for dialogue, ensuring that concerns are addressed and soldiers feel genuinely involved in the defense effort.

**Example:** During planning for a new observation post, the commander invites junior soldiers' insights on terrain and logistics. A private identifies a crucial water source. The commander acknowledges this, adjusts the plan, and credits the soldier publicly. Throughout construction, the commander engages with soldiers, offering advice and accepting suggestions for improvements. This active participation and recognition foster ownership, showing every soldier's perspective is valued in defending the homeland.

## **4. Leading by Example and Unwavering Courage**

Actions speak louder than words, and this adage holds particular weight for commanding officers in the Armenian army, where historical valor and personal sacrifice are deeply ingrained. Leading by example is an indispensable motivational technique. A commander's willingness to share hardships, face dangers alongside their troops, and embody the very values they preach builds an undeniable bond and inspires emulation.

### **4.1 Demonstrating Expected Qualities**

When a commander demonstrates the very qualities they expect from their subordinates—such as discipline, resilience, unwavering courage in the face of threats, integrity, and a strong work ethic—it sets a powerful precedent. Armenian soldiers are more likely to push their limits and embrace challenges if they see their leader doing the same, especially in the demanding operational environments they often face.

**Example:** If a commander expects their unit to maintain immaculate barracks, they ensure their own office and quarters are spotless. If they demand punctuality for drills, they are always the first to arrive. This consistent personal adherence to high standards, rather than just giving orders, inspires soldiers to follow suit, fostering a culture of discipline and excellence throughout the unit.

### **4.2 Inspiring Confidence in Adversity**

In high-stress or dangerous situations, a commander's personal courage, composure, and willingness to share risks can be profoundly motivating, instilling confidence and reducing fear among the ranks. Conversely, a commander who preaches one thing but practices another will quickly erode trust and undermine morale. Authenticity and consistency between words and deeds



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are paramount, inspiring emulation and fostering a culture of excellence and unwavering commitment to the defense of the nation.

**Example:** During a sudden, unexpected enemy ambush, the commanding officer does not panic or retreat but immediately assesses the situation, issues clear counter-attack orders, and personally leads a flanking maneuver. Their calm demeanor and decisive action under fire reassure the soldiers, transforming potential chaos into organized resistance and boosting their confidence to fight effectively.

## **5. Empowering and Developing Soldiers**

Effective Armenian commanding officers understand that motivation is not solely about external incentives (like promotions or awards) but also about fostering intrinsic drive, which is a deeper, self-sustaining commitment stemming from within. This intrinsic motivation is crucial for long-term dedication and optimal performance, especially given the demanding nature of military service and the existential threats faced by Armenia. This is achieved primarily through two interconnected strategies: empowering soldiers and investing in their professional development [2].

### **5.1 Delegating Responsibility and Autonomy**

Empowerment involves delegating responsibility, trusting individuals to make decisions within their purview, and providing them with the autonomy necessary to complete tasks. When Armenian soldiers feel they have agency, are entrusted with significant responsibilities, and their initiative is valued, their sense of competence and self-worth increases, leading to greater job satisfaction and motivation.

**Example:** A commanding officer assigns a junior sergeant the lead role in planning and executing a routine supply convoy to a remote outpost. Instead of micromanaging, the officer provides clear objectives and resources but allows the sergeant to determine the best route, timing, and security measures. This trust in the sergeant's judgment fosters their confidence and sense of responsibility.

### **5.2 Investing in Professional Growth**

Moreover, a commanding officer plays a crucial role in the continuous development of their team. This includes providing opportunities for specialized training, mentorship, and career progression within the armed forces, recognizing achievements, and offering constructive criticism that helps individuals improve their military skills and leadership potential. By demonstrating a genuine interest in their subordinates' career progression and personal growth, commanders cultivate loyalty and a desire to excel, knowing that their efforts are recognized and supported.

**Example:** A commander notices a young private with a keen interest in drone technology. They arrange for the private to attend a specialized drone operation course, even if it means temporary reassignment. Upon the private's return, the commander assigns them the responsibility of training other soldiers in basic drone surveillance, integrating their new skills into the unit's operations. This direct investment in the soldier's specific talent and career path fosters immense loyalty and motivates others to seek similar development opportunities.

## **6. Recognition and Rewards within the Armenian Military Context**

While intrinsic motivation, stemming from patriotism and personal commitment, is undeniably powerful and fundamental to the Armenian military, external recognition and appropriate rewards also play a significant and complementary role. These external motivators are crucial for sustaining morale over time, especially during prolonged periods of high stress or routine duties, and



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for reinforcing desired behaviors by visibly acknowledging exceptional effort and achievement. Commanding officers must therefore be adept at identifying and acknowledging the efforts and achievements of their personnel, ensuring that no act of valor, diligence, or initiative goes unnoticed. This dual approach—nurturing internal drive while strategically applying external appreciation—creates a comprehensive motivational framework [4].

### **6.1 Forms of Recognition**

This can range from formal commendations, promotions, and military honors to informal praise, public recognition within the unit, and even simple gestures of appreciation that resonate within the Armenian cultural context of respect and camaraderie. The key is that recognition should be timely, specific, and genuinely heartfelt.

**Example:** After a successful patrol, the commanding officer publicly commends a soldier for their exceptional vigilance, shaking their hand and acknowledging their contribution in front of the entire unit. For a more significant achievement, like mastering a new weapon system, the commander might ensure the soldier receives a formal commendation or even recommends them for a specialized training program, demonstrating tangible appreciation.

### **6.2 Impact on Morale and Performance**

When Armenian soldiers feel their hard work, dedication, and sacrifices are noticed and valued, it significantly boosts their morale and encourages continued high performance. Rewards, whether tangible or intangible, should be perceived as fair and directly linked to performance and contribution to national security, creating a positive feedback loop that reinforces the idea that dedication and excellence are recognized and rewarded within the Armenian Armed Forces.

**Example:** A unit successfully completes a challenging multi-day training exercise in harsh conditions, exceeding all expectations. The commanding officer ensures that not only are the top performers recognized individually, but the entire unit receives a special commendation during a formation. Additionally, they might arrange for a well-deserved extended rest period or a unit recreational event, demonstrating that their collective effort is genuinely valued and directly leads to tangible benefits and improved well-being. This reinforces that their sacrifices are seen, appreciated, and lead to positive outcomes, further motivating them for future challenges.

## **7. Fostering Cohesion and Esprit de Corps**

A highly motivated unit in the Armenian army is often characterized by exceptionally strong cohesion and a powerful esprit de corps. Cohesion refers to the bonds that tie soldiers together, both task-related (working effectively as a team) and social (liking and trusting each other). Esprit de corps is the collective spirit, pride, and enthusiasm of a unit, a shared sense of honor and dedication. These elements are often deeply rooted in a profound sense of national identity (their shared Armenian heritage, history, and destiny) and brotherhood (the strong, familial-like bonds forged through shared hardship and mutual reliance). Commanding officers are instrumental in cultivating this sense of shared identity, purpose, and camaraderie, transforming a group of individuals into a unified and resilient fighting force.

### **7.1 Promoting Teamwork and Mutual Support**

This involves promoting teamwork, encouraging mutual support, and creating opportunities for personnel to bond both professionally and socially, recognizing the strong communal bonds prevalent in Armenian society.



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**Example:** After a rigorous week of joint drills, a commanding officer might organize an informal unit gathering, perhaps a traditional Armenian barbecue (khorovats) or a friendly sports competition between platoons. This allows soldiers to relax, share stories, and build camaraderie outside of formal duties, strengthening their interpersonal bonds and their sense of being part of a supportive "family" within the military.

## **7.2 Building Unit Pride**

Activities that build unit pride, such as shared training experiences, commemorative events honoring national heroes, and even informal gatherings, contribute to a strong collective identity. When Armenian soldiers feel a strong sense of belonging and loyalty to their unit, their comrades, and the nation, they are motivated not only by personal goals but also by an unwavering desire to uphold the unit's reputation and defend their fellow members and homeland. A commander who prioritizes the well-being and interconnectedness of their team builds a resilient and highly motivated force, ready to face any challenge for Armenia.

**Example:** A commander organizes a unit-wide competition for designing a new unit patch that incorporates Armenian symbols and reflects their specific mission. The winning design is then officially adopted and worn by all soldiers, creating a tangible symbol of their shared identity and unique contribution to the Armenian Armed Forces. This fosters a sense of pride and belonging that goes beyond individual achievement, tying their service to a collective legacy.

## **8. Conclusion**

The role of a commanding officer in motivating soldiers within the Armenian Army is complex, dynamic, and absolutely vital to the success of any mission and the security of the nation. This complexity stems from the constantly evolving nature of military threats and the diverse psychological needs of individual soldiers, while its vitality is underscored by Armenia's critical geopolitical position. It transcends simple authority, meaning it's not just about giving orders, but about influencing hearts and minds. This leadership delves deeply into the realms of human psychology, understanding what drives individuals; leadership, applying effective principles; and interpersonal dynamics, fostering strong relationships within the unit. This is particularly effective when drawing upon the unique cultural and historical resilience of the Armenian people, leveraging their deep-seated patriotism (hayrenasirutyun), their collective memory of historical struggles and triumphs (like Avarayr or Sardarabad), and their strong communal bonds.

By consistently applying the strategies outlined in this essay—building a foundation of profound trust and respect, communicating a clear national vision that connects daily tasks to the defense of the homeland, leading by unwavering example in both discipline and courage, empowering and developing soldiers through responsibility and growth opportunities, providing timely and culturally relevant recognition for their efforts, and fostering strong unit cohesion and esprit de corps through shared experiences and pride—Armenian commanding officers can inspire their personnel to achieve extraordinary feats. These feats might include maintaining vigilant defense in harsh border conditions, demonstrating exceptional resilience during unexpected engagements, or innovating solutions under pressure. Their ability to ignite and sustain this deep motivation transforms a group of individuals into a unified, resilient, and high-performing force. This force is characterized by unwavering morale, strong internal bonds, and a collective determination to excel, making it capable of overcoming immense challenges such as prolonged conflicts, resource limitations, and psychological pressures. Ultimately, this ensures the collective defense and prosperity of Armenia. Therefore, the effectiveness of an Armenian commanding officer is measured not just by their strategic acumen and tactical brilliance, but profoundly by the



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unwavering spirit, dedication, and patriotism of the soldiers they lead, embodying the true strength of the Armenian Armed Forces.

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