Introduction

> We have come through another great war and its reality is already cloaked in the mists of peace. In the course of that war we learned anew that man is supreme, that it is the soldier who fights who wins battles, that fighting means using a weapon, and that it is the heart of man which controls this use.
>
> (S. L. A. Marshall)[1]

On 20 October 1942, three days before the start of the battle of El Alamein, General Georg Stumme, in temporary command of the German and Italian *Panzerarmee Afrika*, informed his commanders that 'the enemy is by no means certain of victory. We must increase that uncertainty every day ... The feeling of complete moral superiority over the enemy must be awakened and fostered in every soldier, from the highest commander to the youngest man ... From this moral superiority comes coolness, confidence, self-reliance and an unshakeable will to fight. This is the secret to every victory.'[2]

In such words Stumme articulated his firm belief that morale was the key factor that would decide the upcoming battle of El Alamein. Sir Bernard Law Montgomery, Stumme's opponent at El Alamein, believed that morale was equally significant. He wrote after the battle that 'the more fighting I see, the more I am convinced that the big thing in war is morale'.[3] It is vital, therefore, he said, 'that we make a study of this subject'.[4] This book bases its analysis on this rationale, that war should be studied through the lens of morale. It considers the relationship

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[1] S. L. A. Marshall, *Men against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command in Future War* (Gloucester, 1978), p. 23.

[2] Australian War Memorial (AWM) 54 492/4/77 Stumme to Lower Formations, 20 October 1942, German–Italian Forces in Africa, September to October 1942, Translation of Appendices to Panzerarmee Afrika War Diary. Quoted in Niall Barr, *Pendulum of War: The Three Battles of El Alamein* (London, 2005), pp. 305–6.

[3] National Archives (NA) War Office File (WO) 277/16 Lieut.-Col. J. H. A. Sparrow, 'The Second World War 1939–1945, Army Morale', p. 2.

[4] Imperial War Museum (IWM) 99/1/2 Maj.-Gen. Raymond Briggs, 'Exercise Evolution', p. 40.

between morale and combat performance, explores the issues that affected the morale of Eighth Army and addresses the question of whether morale was a key factor in deciding the outcome of the battle of El Alamein.

Throughout history, soldiers, military theorists and historians have identified morale as an important factor in combat performance. Four hundred years before Christ, Xenophon argued that 'in action, the sustaining of morale was an imperative',[5] and when morale was high 'action must be sought'.[6] In the sixteenth century, Machiavelli commented that 'if an army is to win the day it is essential to give it confidence so as to make it feel sure that it must win, whatever happens'.[7] Napoleon had his dictum that the moral outweighs the material by three to one.[8] Clausewitz argued that moral elements were 'among the most important in war',[9] while du Picq wrote that 'nothing can wisely be described in an army . . . without exact knowledge of the fundamental instrument, man, and his state of mind, his morale'.[10] Foch's famous formula 'Victory = Will' was 'representative of opinion among military professionals throughout Europe' at the time of the First World War.[11] Liddell Hart argued, between the wars, for 'the predominance of moral factors in all military decisions'. On them, he argued, 'constantly turns the issue of war and battle. And in the history of war they form the more constant factors, changing only in degree, whereas the physical factors are fundamentally different in almost every war and every situation.'[12] Referring to the Second World War, Patton claimed that 80 per cent of a commander's role was 'to arouse morale in his men'.[13] Even today, General Sir Rupert Smith argues that 'the will to win is the paramount factor in any battle' and that 'we call this will morale'.[14]

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[5] Godfrey Hutchinson, *Xenophon and the Art of Command* (London, 2000), p. 60.
[6] Ibid., p. 191.   [7] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Discourses* (London, 1998), pp. 493–4.
[8] Letter from Napoleon to his brother Joseph advising him on how to rule Spain, 27 August 1808. Quoted in Trevor N. Dupuy, 'Theory of Combat', in Franklin D. Margiotta (ed.), *Brassey's Encyclopaedia of Military History and Biography* (London, 1994), p. 967.
[9] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (London, 1993), p. 216. First published in German in 1831.
[10] Col. Ardant du Picq, 'Battle Studies: Ancient and Modern Battle', in *Roots of Strategy, Book Two: Three Military Classics* (Mechanicsburg, PA, 1987), p. 65.
[11] David Englander, 'Mutinies and Military Morale', in Hew Strachan (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War* (Oxford, 1998), p. 191.
[12] B. H. Liddell Hart, *The Decisive Wars of History: A Study in Strategy* (London, 1929), p. 3.
[13] Rick Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942–1943* (London, 2003), p. 138.
[14] General Sir Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (London, 2005), p. 241.

Historians have not studied morale to the extent that might be expected
from the significance accorded it in such statements. Morale is a nebulous
and difficult to define concept. It is not obviously amenable to quantifi-
cation. General Sir Ronald Adam, the Adjutant-General of the British
Army, who set up the War Office Morale Committee in March 1942, said
that morale could only be 'painted with the impressionistic brush of a
Turner and not with the microscopic detail of a Canaletto'.[15] Without a
clear and reliable definition of morale, or an accepted approach to quan-
tify or 'measure' morale, it is extremely difficult to make connections
between military outcomes and morale. Historians have, therefore, and
perhaps quite wisely, concentrated on more quantifiable subjects such as
technology, economics, logistics, fire and manoeuvre to explain the out-
comes of battles and wars.

Published work on morale is consequentially quite limited. Most of the
literature on morale has focused on the 'apocalyptic' struggles of 'total
war' in the twentieth century. Beginning with John Baynes's *Morale: A
Study of Men and Courage*, scholars have tried to explain how soldiers
continued fighting for four terrible years in the dreadful conditions of the
trenches in the First World War.[16] These authors have concentrated in
particular on the French mutinies of 1917, the British Étaples mutiny of
the same year and the German collapse at the end of 1918. Their works
have clearly highlighted a connection between morale and combat per-
formance, although one that, more often than not, (Alexander Watson's
Enduring the Great War being an exception) is based mainly on personal
accounts.[17]

Literature on morale in the Second World War has focused largely on
the eastern front and Pacific theatres of operations. Much of this literature
has concentrated on the ideological issues that can both build morale and

[15] NA WO 259/44 'Army Morale': Paper by Adjutant-General, May 1944.
[16] John Baynes, *Morale: A Study of Men and Courage* (London, 1967); Tony Ashworth,
Trench Warfare: The Live and Let Live System (London, 1980); Hugh Cecil and Peter
H. Liddle, *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced* (London, 1996); John
Horne (ed.), *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War* (London,
1997); David Englander, 'Soldiering and Identity: Reflections on the Great War', *War in
History*, 1(3), (1994); G. D. Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches: Officer–Man Relations,
Morale and Discipline in the British Army in the Era of the First World War* (London, 2000);
Alexander Watson, *Enduring the Great War: Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German
and British Armies, 1914–1918* (Cambridge, 2008).
[17] Leonard V. Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience: The Case of the French Fifth Infantry
Division during World War I* (Princeton, 1994); Wilhelm Deist, 'The Military Collapse of
the German Empire: The Reality Behind the Stab-in-the-Back Myth', *War in History*,
3(2), (1996); David Englander, 'Mutinies and Military Morale', in Strachan (ed.), *The
Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War*; Douglas Gill and Gloden Dallas, 'Mutiny
at Étaples Base in 1917', in *Past and Present*, 69 (November 1975).

also lead to a barbarisation of warfare in combat between different cultures. These works put forward strong arguments to support the view that morale (sustained by e.g. the primary group, ideology, discipline or training) and combat performance are intimately related. However, again, these studies are mainly dependent on personal sources for their analysis of morale.[18]

Historians of the British Army in the Second World War and of Eighth Army in the North African campaign have mostly also steered clear of morale, although some have acknowledged that morale played an indefinable role in defeat and victory.[19] Instead, the largest body of literature on North Africa has addressed the issue of leadership.[20] The qualities and deficiencies of Field Marshal Montgomery, Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck and Field Marshal Erwin Rommel have been tirelessly debated decade after decade since the cessation of hostilities. More recently, a number of new books have been published, focusing on the operational history of the campaign. Niall Barr's *Pendulum of War*, Peter Stanley and Mark Johnston's *Alamein: The Australian Story*, and Martin Kitchen's *Rommel's Desert War* stand out as excellent narratives that base their analysis firmly on extensive study of the primary sources. These works have pointed to the fact that morale played a role in determining

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[18] See for example, Paul Addison and Angus Calder (eds.), *Time to Kill: The Soldier's Experience of War in the West 1939–1945* (London, 1997); John Ellis, *The Sharp End: The Fighting Man in World War II* (London, 1993; first published 1980); Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front, 1941–45: German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare* (Oxford, 1985); Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (Oxford, 1992); John W. Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (London, 1986); Gerald F. Linderman, *The World within War: American Combat Experience in World War II* (London, 1997); Sam C. Sarkessian (ed.), *Combat Effectiveness: Cohesion, Stress, and the Volunteer Military* (London, 1980); Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: The Red Army 1939–45* (London, 2005); Catherine Merridale, 'Culture, Ideology and Combat in the Red Army, 1939–45', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 41(2) (2006); Mark Johnston, *Australian Soldiers and Their Adversaries in World War II* (Cambridge, 2000); Hew Strachan, 'Training, Morale and Modern War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 41(2) (2006).

[19] Barr, *Pendulum of War*, p. xxxix; Mark Johnston and Peter Stanley, *Alamein: The Australian Story* (Oxford, 2002), p. 270; Michael Carver, *Tobruk* (London, 1964), p. 262.

[20] See for example, Correlli Barnett, *The Desert Generals* (London, 1983; first published 1960. In the 1983 (2nd) edition Barnett addressed further some issues he had touched on in the first edition); Michael Carver, *Dilemmas of the Desert War: A New Look at the Libyan Campaign 1940–1942* (London, 1986); John Connell, *Auchinleck: A Biography of Field-Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck* (London, 1959); Nigel Hamilton, *The Full Monty: Montgomery of Alamein 1887–1942* (London, 2002); Barrie Pitt, *The Crucible of War: Wavell's Command: The Definitive History of the Desert War*, vol. I (London, 2001; first published 1980); Barrie Pitt, *The Crucible of War: Auchinleck's Command: The Definitive History of the Desert War*, vol. II (London, 2001; first published 1980); Barrie Pitt, *The Crucible of War: Montgomery and Alamein: The Definitive History of the Desert War*, vol. III (London, 2001; first published 1982); Desmond Young, *Rommel* (London, 1950).

combat performance in the desert, without fully addressing the issue and
its significance.[21]

There can be no doubt that the vast body of literature published on El
Alamein has been due, in many ways, to the fact that the battle holds a
special place in the British imagination. It was at El Alamein that British
and Empire forces first defeated the Germans on land in the Second
World War. Eighth Army was a remarkably heterogeneous force (with
British, Australian, New Zealand, South African, Indian, Greek, French,
Cypriot and even a few American soldiers) that represented, to a large
extent, the strength of the Empire fighting together in pursuit of a com-
mon cause. Churchill remarked that it 'may almost be said, "before
Alamein we never had a victory. After Alamein we never had a defeat."'[22]
The battle saved the reputation of the British Army. It also created the
myth of the Eighth Army and Montgomery.[23]

After the victory, the British and American press gave the battle satu-
ration coverage. With nearly one hundred Allied war correspondents in
the desert, including Alan Moorehead and Chester Wilmot, the struggle
was well covered and commanded a mass following in the home
countries.[24] Within months, the Allied publics could watch the events that
had unfolded, on the big screen. Released in March 1943, *Desert Victory*
became the biggest box-office success of all British war documentaries,
grossing an impressive £77,250 in the first twelve months, against produc-
tion costs of £5,793. Its director, David MacDonald, won an Oscar.[25]

It is perhaps no wonder that El Alamein has become so famous, con-
sidering the commander who brought the victory. Montgomery was, with
the possible exception of Kitchener, Britain's first 'celebrity' general of the
twentieth century. Where other more austere, traditional generals, such as
Field Marshal Archibald Lord Wavell and Auchinleck, shunned the lime-
light, Montgomery actively embraced it and reaped the rewards.
Following the war, Montgomery became a national symbol and remained
in the public focus for as long as he lived, if for no other reason than he was
consistently controversial. He was relentlessly self-aggrandising and
obnoxiously insistent on his own infallibility. Nevertheless, 'Monty'
became a tabloid hero. 'He was the people's soldier.'[26]

[21] Barr, *Pendulum of War*; Johnston and Stanley, *Alamein;* Martin Kitchen, *Rommel's Desert War: Waging World War II in North Africa, 1941–1943* (Cambridge, 2009). This is entirely understandable, as these works set out to describe the operational history of the El Alamein campaign rather than deal with thematic issues such as morale.
[22] Winston Churchill, *The Second World War* (London, 2002), p. 630. This abridged version of the book was first published in 1959.
[23] Stephen Bungay, *Alamein* (London, 2002), pp. 214–5.   [24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., p. 216.   [26] Ibid.

Montgomery consistently praised and defended his troops and actively and consciously created Eighth Army's image. In a message to his men, on 8 April 1943, he said, 'I doubt if our Empire has ever possessed such a magnificent fighting machine as the Eighth Army; you have made its name a household word all over the world.'[27] Following the defeat of Germany, Montgomery described the morale of his troops during the war as 'second to none'.[28] In 1983, Correlli Barnett insisted that it was Montgomery's vanity that encouraged him to keep on embellishing his own myth as well as that of the Eighth Army.[29] Nevertheless, the image of the Eighth Army as an elite force with high morale and battle motivation survives today.[30]

This image, created by Montgomery during the war to bolster the confidence of his own troops, tells only a small part of the story. On taking over command of Eighth Army, on 13 August 1942, Montgomery found an army morally shaken, lacking in confidence and potentially on the verge of losing Egypt, the Suez Canal and the oil reserves of the Middle East. 'Early in August, 1942', Montgomery noted in his diary, 'the Eighth Army was in a bad state; the troops had their tails right down and there was no confidence in the higher command. It was clear that ROMMEL was preparing further attacks and the troops were looking over their shoulders for rear lines to which to withdraw ... The whole "atmosphere" was wrong. The condition of Eighth Army ... was almost unbelievable.'[31] Montgomery, who was not, perhaps, the most objective of commentators, would later argue that it was his ability to revive the morale of Eighth Army, in the days leading up to the battles of Alam Halfa and El Alamein, that secured victory for the British forces in the desert and proved the turning point of the war.[32]

The desert war provides an ideal case study to examine the relationship between morale and combat performance and to explore the factors that affect morale. Montgomery's version of events at El Alamein placed morale at the centre of the story. Indeed, if morale is 'the big thing in war', then it rightfully should be placed at the centre of explanations for

[27] IWM Misc 74 (1110) Eighth Army, Personal Message from the Army Commander to be read out to all troops. B. L. Montgomery, General Eighth Army, 8 April 1943.
[28] Bernard Law Montgomery, *The Memoirs of Field Marshal Montgomery of Alamein* (London, 1958), p. xi.
[29] Barnett, *The Desert Generals*, p. 312.
[30] Robin Neillands, *Eighth Army: From the Western Desert to the Alps, 1939–1945* (London, 2004), p. xxv.
[31] IWM Papers of Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery (BLM) 27 Diary Notes, 12 August to 23 October 1942.
[32] Montgomery, *Memoirs*, pp. 112–16.

military outcomes. This book, therefore, deals directly with the role of
morale at El Alamein.

The approach taken to researching morale incorporates a number of
strands. In the first instance, the book tackles the problem of over reliance
on personal records and reminiscences in the study of morale by making
greater use of official sources. Many of these have been mostly unexplored
in work on the desert war, particularly the weekly and fortnightly censor-
ship summaries of the soldiers' mail. About one letter in every thirteen or
fourteen sent by the soldiers in the desert was examined by the army
authorities to assess the troops' morale and the issues that were affecting
it. These summaries described in detail the state of morale of the con-
stituent parts and nationalities of Middle East Command, as well as the
causes of good or bad morale. Many of them are to be found in the Australian
War Memorial in Canberra and the rest in Wellington, at Archives New
Zealand. The portions of the summaries that deal with Australian morale
have been used by Mark Johnston and Peter Stanley in their works on the
Australian experience during the Second World War. The New Zealand
Official Histories and John McLeod, in *Myth and Reality: The New Zealand
Soldier in World War II*, used the parts referring to New Zealand morale.[33]
The sections referring to British and South African morale, as far as the
author is aware, have never before been used.

The summaries covered morale as widely and deeply as possible and
only expressed views that represented a considerable body of opinion
among the troops in the desert, not isolated instances of over-exuberance
or ill temper.[34] When evaluating the historical value of these official
sources, however, due attention should be given to the fact that they are
based on soldiers' letters. The soldiers of Eighth Army, like soldiers in
most armies, would have tried to 'minimise the dangers and discomforts
of war in [their] letters to loved ones'.[35] A report on the 'Assessment of
Morale by Statistical Methods', carried out during the war, noted that 'in
correspondence topics of great importance which are disturbing may well
be suppressed, because of fear of upsetting the correspondent or unwill-
ingness to disclose opinions to the censor. There is likely to be little

[33] Mark Johnston, *At the Front Line: Experiences of Australian Soldiers in World War II*
(Cambridge, 1996); Johnston, *Australian Soldiers and Their Adversaries in World War II*;
Johnston and Stanley, *Alamein*; J. L. Scoullar, *Battle for Egypt: The Summer of 1942. Official
History of New Zealand in the Second World War 1939–1945* (Wellington, 1955); John
McLeod, *Myth and Reality: The New Zealand Soldier in World War II* (Auckland, 1986).
[34] AWM 54 883/2/97 Middle East Field Censorship Weekly Summary (MEFCWS), no. I
(12 to 18 November 1941), p. 1.
[35] Myles Hildyard, *It Is Bliss Here: Letters Home 1939–1945* (London 2005), p. 14; ANZ
WAII/1/DA508/1 vol. 1, MEFCWS, no. XXXV (8 to 14 July 1942), p. 1.

mention of long standing troubles, however much they may concern the writer.'[36] To that extent the letters written by the troops of Eighth Army can portray a more positive picture of morale than actually existed. Reported instances of poor morale are, therefore, all the more striking.

To give an example of the extent of investigation that went into the formulation of these summaries, the 1st and 2nd New Zealand field censorship sections examined approximately 33,855 letters out of a total of 454,320 sent in April, May and June 1942.[37] From letters such as these, the censors summarised, on a weekly basis, and, from 7 October 1942, fortnightly, the main factors relating to morale, and passed them on to divisional, corps, army and command headquarters. Each summary was quite detailed, being, on average, about twenty typed pages long. Those used in this book cover the period from 3 July 1941 to 15 December 1942, involving, in all, some seventy weekly summaries from the component parts of Middle East Command.[38] The use of these sources allows this study to describe and assess morale in a way heretofore impossible. Every quarter, the Commander-in-Chief in the desert was obliged to write a report, compiled from these summaries and material available at divisional and brigade headquarters, on the state of morale of his troops. All these reports were subsequently passed on to London for inclusion in the War Office quarterly morale reports begun by the Adjutant-General, Ronald Adam, in February 1942 for his newly devised Morale Committee.[39] These, less detailed, official appraisals of morale are also included in this analysis. Official and other documents from the South African Military Archives Depot in Pretoria (many of which are not available in the UK) are also used.

The second main strand of the approach to researching morale taken in this book addresses the conceptualisation and assessment of morale. Morale is a complex term that can be defined in many different ways. Lieutenant-Colonel J. H. A. Sparrow, the compiler of the army morale reports during the Second World War and later Warden of All Souls

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[36] NA WO 193/453 Assessment of Morale by Statistical Methods (Report by IS2), n.d. but probably 1942 or 1943.

[37] ANZ WAII/1/DA 302/15/1–31 History 1 and 2 NZ Field Censor Sections, p. 35.

[38] The summaries did not address the morale of Indian units; virtually all of the censorship reports that dealt with Indian morale were destroyed. See Gerald Douds, '"Matters of Honour": Indian Troops in the North African and Italian Theatres', in Addison and Calder (eds.), *Time to Kill*, p. 121. The censorship summaries for 3 to 9 September and 10 to 16 December 1941 were not available in the archives.

[39] NA WO 193/453 Morale Committee Papers, 25 February 1942 to 25 October 1945, 'Assessment of Morale by Statistical Methods (Report by IS2). These morale reports were also based on intelligence reports from the Ministry of Intelligence, censorship reports on letters of complaint and enquiry received by the BBC and the *News of the World*, letters to the War Office and courts martial statistics.

College, Oxford, defined morale as the 'attitude of the soldier towards his own employment'.[40] It comprised, according to Sparrow, 'all those things' which made 'the soldier more, or less, keen to carry out his job of soldiering, and readier, or less ready, to endure the hardships, discomforts, and dangers that it entails'.[41] Montgomery defined morale, in a paper he wrote on the subject in April 1946, as 'endurance and courage in supporting fatigue and danger . . . the quality which makes men go forward in an attack and hold their ground in defence. It is the quality without which no war can be won.'[42] Morale, according to these definitions, is not just a feeling or emotion, but is more like an overall causative influence on a soldier's conduct; some psychologists use the term 'motivation' in similar contexts.[43]

Sparrow's and Montgomery's definitions get to the heart of the concept of morale. Sparrow referred to morale as 'keenness' or 'readiness' to carry out a 'job' or action. Montgomery defined morale as 'courage' or 'a quality' which makes soldiers 'go forward' or 'hold their ground', or to put it another way, act in an institutionally required manner. Morale, therefore, can be defined as the willingness of an individual or group to prepare for and engage in an action required by an authority or institution; this willingness may be engendered by a positive desire for action and/or by the discipline to accept orders to take such action. The degree of morale of an individual or army relates to the extent of their desire or discipline to act, or their determination to see an action through. This is the broad approach to the conceptualisation of morale that is taken in this book.

The problem of how to 'measure' morale is also a major hurdle for historians. Commanders, the War Office and military psychologists and psychiatrists assessed morale not only through the actual fighting behaviour of the troops or their stated 'willingness' to engage with the enemy, as evidenced for instance in the censorship summaries, but by means of a complex web of other factors.[44] These factors can be categorised as follows:

- rates of desertion, sickness, surrender and breakdown among the troops
- the troops' perceptions of their weapons and military hardware as compared with those of the enemy

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[40] NA WO 277/16 Sparrow, 'Army Morale', p. 1.   [41] Ibid., p. 3.
[42] IWM 99/1/2 Maj.-Gen. Raymond Briggs Papers, Paper by Field Marshal Montgomery, 'Morale in Battle: Analysis, 30 April 1946', p. 43.
[43] Douglas A. Bernstein, Alison Clarke-Stewart, Edward J. Roy, Christopher D. Wickens, *Psychology* (Boston, 1997). p. 337.
[44] NA WO 193/453 Assessment of Morale by Statistical Methods (Report by IS2), n.d. but probably 1942 or 1943.

- the quality of both ordinary recruits and officers and how they were allocated to duties
- supplies of food and water, and other issues relating to leave and the terrain in which a campaign was waged
- news from and contact with home and loved ones, and how this was managed by the army
- welfare provisions for mitigating the discomfort and boredom of army life
- the troops' belief in the cause for which they were fighting and how this was inculcated in them by the army
- the quality of leadership and command
- the troops' experiences of victory and defeat
- the training and disciplining of the troops
- the troops' level of integration within their immediate group
- casualty rates.

Some of these factors are primarily outcomes or correlates of morale; desertion and surrender rates easily fall into this category. Others, however, are influencers or determinants of morale; weapons, quality of manpower and the desert environment would fall into this category. Each factor is explored, using the available primary and secondary sources, thus generating a multidimensional contextualisation of morale that not only recognises and gives expression to morale's complexity but also takes account of the many factors that sustain or undermine morale or are correlates of good or bad morale.

Some factors (such as desertion, surrender, sickness and breakdown rates) are amenable to quantitative analysis and comparisons. Where such analysis on official records is possible, it is presented here. More well established qualitative procedures for assessing troop morale, such as the examination and interpretation of recorded perceptions of the troops themselves, their commanders and the War Office, are also presented. This overall integration of quantitative and qualitative analyses of the many factors that are associated with morale introduces, it is suggested, a methodological innovation in the study of the British Army during the Second World War. The detailed picture of morale that emerges is then compared with Eighth Army's known battlefield performance in the desert. This allows the development of a clear and supportable narrative plotting the relationship between morale and combat performance.

This book aims, as Archibald Wavell advised Staff College candidates in the 1930s, 'to study the human side of military history'. Wavell said that 'to learn that Napoleon in 1796 with 20,000 men beat combined forces of 30,000 by something called "economy of force" or "operating on interior lines" is a mere waste of time'. Instead he encouraged his students to