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The Army Profession: Trust is First

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The Army Profession: Trust is First

In 1992, then-Major Mark Rocke’s, “Trust, the Cornerstone of Leadership,” was recognized as the MacArthur Military Leadership award-winning essay.¹ That paper was written in aftermath of successful operations in Iraq (Desert Shield/Desert Storm) and in the midst of the of post-Cold War drawdown of the U.S. Army. Rocke’s exploration of trust challenged the conventional wisdom that effective leadership enables trust by reversing the direction of causality and posited that building trust provides the foundation for effective leadership. His analysis was primarily at the unit level and focused on three dimensions of trust—integrity, competence, and predictability—by subordinates in their commanders. Rocke provided the simple statement that trust is the expectation “held by leaders and those led.”²

Nearly two decades later, the Profession of Arms (PoA) Campaign has re-emphasized trust as a critical attribute of the Army Profession. The PoA Campaign had its official kickoff in January 2011 under the leadership of then-Commanding General, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), General Martin Dempsey. When Dempsey subsequently became the 37th Chief of Staff, Army his initial guidance to the force stressed Trust, Discipline, and Fitness as the three areas that he would discuss with commanders during visits around the Army. His successor, General Ray Odierno, in his “Initial Thoughts” memo called trust “the bedrock of our honored Profession.”³

In the first section, this paper presents the findings of the PoA Campaign as distilled from the analysis of several data sources—two Army-wide surveys, a survey of senior leaders, focus groups of Army personnel, and multiple senior leadership forums. The second section offers an examination of trust with the Army’s external stakeholders—

Army Profession that the community of practice developed to represent the basis for establishing and sustaining trust with multiple external stakeholders. The pillars depicted in Figure 1 give the impression that each is independent and distinct. In reality, these characteristics are overlapping, complementary, and interrelated. The initial version of the PoA White Paper did not implicitly address the significance of the codependence of these characteristics; consequently, the PoA study evolved to explicitly include these relationships in the overall examination of the profession.

A critical omission of the original PoA White Paper is a taxonomy that includes a definition of trust. A frequently cited definition of trust in the literature is a “willingness to be vulnerable,” which is formed around the “expectation that an exchange partner will not behave opportunistically.”⁵ This definition is consistent with the PoA White Paper because trust should be considered as a multilevel concept existing between individuals and within groups, organizations, and institutions as well as among institutions. Exchange relationships are part of everyday life. As organizational researchers assert, “[t]rust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of intentions and behaviors of another.”⁶

The concept of trust is most easily grasped at the individual level—between leaders and followers—in a military context. However, an important contributor of organizational effectiveness is the trust that exists between peers in units, among units that comprise Army formations (e.g., Brigade Combat Teams, Multi-national Divisions), and in the collective identity of the Army Profession. Within the Army, the trustworthiness of its members and its subordinate organizations is integral to establishing trust in the Army as an institution. This refines the definition to one more

appropriate for the Army that we adopt where “trust leads to a set of behavioral expectations among people [uniformed and civilian], allowing them to manage the uncertainty or risk associated with the interactions so that they can jointly optimize the gains that will result from cooperative behavior.”⁷ Hence, trust is a capstone that rests on essential internal characteristics and it, in turn, completes the Army Profession as an institution that serves others.

Trust re-examined

At the organizational level, researchers have categorized trust as either cognitive-based (perceptions) or affect-based (feelings).⁸ In reviewing the literature, we offer four components of trust that reflect both the cognitive and affective nature of trust—credibility of *competence*, *benevolence* of motives, *integrity* with the sense of fairness and honesty, and *predictability* of behavior. These components apply not only to individuals, but also to institutional structures and processes within the Army. It is important to members that their organizations have the ability to accomplish tasks and missions in a consistent manner. Also critical is the perception that organizational procedures (policies and regulations) are established for the common and greater good. Further, an essential element of trust is the feeling and belief that members behave according to a set of values that apply to all within the institution. Finally, trust is built on consistent achievement of moral objectives that advance both stakeholder and members feeling of good will. Violation of these conditions leads to a lack of trust or, more destructively, a sense of distrust.

The same components can reasonably be applied to the external trust of the Army. The Army must be credible and reliable; it must be predictably competent in matters of

national defense. We remember the Army's proclamation of "Ready and Relevant" following the challenges with employment of U.S. landpower in Operation Allied Force in Albania and Kosovo, which drove the transformation efforts of Army Chief of Staff General Eric Shinseki. The motivation of the Army and its senior leaders must be above question and adhere to the constitutional principle of civilian control. News stories such as "The Revolt of the Generals" and "The Runaway General" cause concern for the state of civil-military relations.⁹ The Army is expected to execute its missions to protect the security interests of the Nation and operate according to American values and its code of ethics. The outrage of constituents and stakeholders generated by wounded soldier care at Walter Reed, detainee abuse at Abu Ghraib, and contracting scandals during Operation Iraqi Freedom are warranted as violations of professional ethic at multiple levels.¹⁰

It is our hope that through examination and understanding of the nature of trust that the commentary offered by organizational scholars Kouzes and Posner would not be applied to the Army profession.

Many wonder if there are any leaders left who have the strength of character to sustain their trust. Substantial numbers of people believe that leaders lack the capability to guide business and governmental institutions to greatness in this intensely turbulent and competitive global marketplace. There is the gnawing sense in many corridors that leaders are not competent to handle the tough challenges; that they are not telling us the truth; and that they are more motivated by greed and self-interest than by concerns for the customer, the employees, or the country.¹¹

The exchange relationship of trust exists between the institutional Army as a profession and the Nation it serves. Senior Level College graduates are very familiar with the charter posed by Elihu Root to confer on “national defense, military science, and responsible command.”¹² Each of these three “great problems” has a trust component interrelated with the four other characteristics identified in Figure 1. National defense requires that citizens trust their Army to *serve honorably* and defend against all enemies, foreign, and domestic. Military science conveys the technical *expertise* of trusted professionals to employ violence to secure U.S. national interests and those of its allies. Responsible command embodies the trust that military professionals will be *trustworthy* as good *stewards* of people, facilities, equipment, and funds in accordance with the *values* and ethics of the profession of arms. These three great problems are aligned with four important areas of expert knowledge of the military profession (Military-Technical, Human Development, Moral-Ethical, and Political-Cultural).¹³

Trust In and Of the Profession

A recent US Army Center for Army Leadership report concluded, “Trust is currently a strategic advantage.”¹⁴ Analysis and deliberation over the course of the campaign established trust as an essential characteristic of the Army Profession. Trust of the profession is a goal to be maintained with external stakeholders—those of immediate importance include the President, Congress, Department of Defense and the American people. To achieve that goal, there needs to be a sustaining relationship of trust among the members of the profession, its cohorts, and organizations that generate internal trust of the institution by its constituents. The resulting discussions of the Profession of

Arms campaign established two forms of trust (external and internal) as civil-military trust and trustworthiness, respectively.

Current State of Trust

Trust is considered the lifeblood of the Profession of Arms in general, and the Army Profession in particular. The campaign surveys assessed trust across three dimensions: Trust Climate (within units and organizations; trust in Army Senior Leaders), Institutional Trust, and Public Trust (of the American public, civilian authorities, and the media). The interim findings reflect members' perceptions of trust toward internal constituents and external groups.

Trust Climate is generally positive within organizations and at one level up or down, but not necessarily with respect to Army senior leaders. About two-thirds agreed or strongly agreed with the statements: "I trust other members of this unit/organization" and "I can trust my subordinates to fully support my directive," indicative of trust between direct leaders and their subordinates. One in five, however, disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, "When an Army Senior Leader says something, you can believe it is true." The overall trust climate in the Army is an area of concern when only 25 percent agreed or strongly agreed with "The Army allows candid opinions without fear of repercussions" and 40 percent agreed or strongly agreed, "People can make an honest mistake without ruining their career."

Institutional Trust is a concern, a trend consistent with past studies conducted in the 1970s and 1990s, when the Army faced eras of transition and the attendant uncertainties.¹⁵ Forty percent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed, "The Army no longer demonstrates that it is committed to me as much as it expects me to be

committed.”¹⁶ Soldiers and civilians have a degree of skepticism (i.e., questionable trust) in Army-level decisions affecting them. Recent discussions about end-strength and pending force reduction, allocation of resources in anticipation of fiscal constraints, and perceived violation of expectations regarding retirement programs are sources of concern and potential distrust within the institution.

While senior leadersⁱ reported having trust in their military leaders and in the Army as an institution, there were some qualifications. They expected senior uniformed Army leaders to make right decisions (77.3 percent); trust their unit/organization's leaders to make right decision (85.9 percent); are confident in the Army and its Profession will sustain the trust of the American people (93.9 percent) and will accomplish the Mission (93.2 percent); and expressed belief that US society trusts the Army to do what is right to defend the Nation (93.7 percent). These same members expressed less trust in civilian leaders. Their response was varied to the statement “I trust senior civilian leaders within the Army to make right decisions” with 16.5 percent “disagree”, 27.1 percent “neither disagree or agree” and 56.3 percent “agree.” Additionally, the response to “I trust our elected and appointed civilian leaders to make right decisions” was 33.9 percent “disagree”; 31.7 percent “neither disagree or agree, and only 34.1 percent “agree.”

Public Trust with the American people is strong as reported in a 2011 Gallup Poll “Confidence in Institutions” and Harvard’s Center for Public Leadership 2010 review, “National Leadership Index.”¹⁷ The Profession of Arms campaign survey data indicated

ⁱ The Army-wide surveys of senior leaders included senior member of each cohort (officer ranks of Lieutenant Colonel and above; non-commission officers rank of Command Sergeants Major, and civilian grades of GS-15 and Senior Executive Service).

that trust by Army members in civilian authorities is markedly less where some 38 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement of "trust[ing] elected and appointed civilian officials to do what is best for the Army." In addition, only 13 percent agree or strongly agreed with "Members of the Army have a great deal of respect for media." While some may discount how soldiers and Army civilians feel about society as unimportant, these reported perceptions should not be ignored. Cynicism about senior Army leaders is not desirable and distrust in elected and appointed civilian leaders presents potential issues for civil-military relations. Negative perceptions of the media may facilitate a separation between soldiers and the society they serve.

In general, the Center for Army Leadership reported that a variety of data indicate that Army leaders are competent professionals who trust each other and believe that their unit will accomplish its mission. There, however, appears to be less trust at the institutional level of the Army. Specifically, there is low trust in the future of the Army and its evaluation system. Both interpersonal trust and institutional trust increase with rank—the more senior the individual, the more positive assertions of trust and confidence in others and the Army as an institution.

The Trust Challenge

Lack of internal trust appears related to the Army as an institution. Members expect senior leaders to be competent in establishing priorities, clearly defining and resourcing missions, and emplacing effective systems and processes to not only accomplish missions, but to care for people. The perception exists that senior leaders are not candid with their superiors, military or civilian.

Interviews with focus groups reveal a perceived lack of trust and confidence in subordinate leaders expertise (knowledge, skills, and abilities) for garrison (home station) operations. Commanders (O-5/O-6 level) as well as senior enlisted members (E-9) cited the lack of experience among midgrade officers and NCOs required for competence in the home station environment. These factors reinforce the belief that the competence and expertise of others is a major component of trust at the individual and organizational level.¹⁸

Within the Army and its organizations, lack of trust is related to the perception of a culture that fails to exhibit candor, does not permit honest mistakes, and where top-down loyalty is perceived as weak (at the expense of subordinates). Such perceptions are characteristic of poor leadership environments and were cited in two recent Army Times articles in 2011, related to toxic leadership and based on data in reports from the Center for Army Leadership.¹⁹

These indicators point to potential challenges for civil-military relations and societal trust issues. Lack of trust in civilian officials as well as significant distrust of the media by members of the profession pose a risk for the Army's separation from the society it serves.

Public Trust

So far, this paper has addressed trust at the personal and organizational levels within the Army. The construct of public trust toward the Army will be the focus of this section. We consider the public trust construct offered by business scholars Laura Poppo and Donald J. Schepker as "the degree to which the general public as a stakeholder group holds a collective trust orientation toward an organization".²⁰ For the

Army, it represents the aggregate perception of trust held by the American public in the Army, which is therefore distinguishable from both personal and organizational trust.

Two particular elements of public trust differentiate it from the personal and organizational constructs. First, the public does not have (or take) the opportunity to become intimately aware of the Army's structure, processes, operations, activities, and information. The public's lack of a direct experience relationship with the Army does not support assurance and predictability associated with personal or organizational trust. Second, given public trust's collective nature, the Army cannot appeal to an individual or collective of like-minded stakeholders as with internal members and constituents. Except for the broadest constructions of good will, social commitment, or competence shared by the American public, aggregating individual perceptions of trust is largely rendered moot.²¹ Actions taken to appease one group or individual will likely be viewed and weighted differently by diverse elements of the society.

Public trust determinations are therefore based on a collective perception of the Army's organizational legitimacy gained through limited knowledge of the organization and impersonal observations of the Army in a variety of contexts. Knowledge and observations of the Army are typically filtered through the interpretive lens of the media, and often complicated by other stakeholder perspectives. These intermediary conduits provide symbolic substitutes for the intimate knowledge and relational observations associated with personal and organizational trust determinations. Citing Samuel L. Popkin's (1994) reasoning voter model, Cooper, Knotts & Brennan (2008) suggested "that citizens are surprisingly adept at making good decisions with limited information," despite arms-length relationships devoid of direct intimate knowledge.²² The issue for

the Army is how much influence it should exert to shape public perceptions through its strategic communications messages. To promote public trust, the Army must enhance the perception of its legitimacy by encouraging positive attributions regarding the desirability and appropriateness of its actions within the public's construction of what the Army does and how it should do it.

This fundamental issue is tied closely to the role public trust plays in reconciling a desire for formal accountability and the Army's desire to achieve effectiveness through the exercise of discretionary professional judgment. Public trust is required for the Army to retain the flexibility inherent in using professional discretion to avoid costly and often rigid bureaucratic controls and external monitoring.²³ Retaining public trust is especially important as the Nation finds itself in an austere fiscal environment. Previously, such "peace dividend" periods have been accompanied by a heightened public distrust and fear of (1) maintaining a large standing army, and (2) an opportunistic military-industrial complex. This distrust generates resistance to Army influence and increased demands for higher accountability through surveillance and monitoring.

Drawing from a variety of disciplines, political scientist Seok-Eun Kim held that trust must be conceptualized as multifaceted with elements of affect, cognition, and behavior. This construction merged "into a mutually supporting construct that is collectively called *trust*" (italics in original).²⁴ Poppo and Schepker (2010) extended previous trust literature by developing a more nuanced multifaceted construction of public trust. Consistent with previous scholars, they operationalize public trust across three components: benevolence, integrity, and competence. The addition of the predictability (reliability/consistent performance) component from our earlier discussion captures the

role repetitive performance over time plays in building public trust and provides a framework to address violations.

Integrity, competence, and predictability of behavior determinations are results of cognitive functions, while benevolence is inherently a personal-relational (affective) function. It is difficult to achieve consensus regarding what benevolence means at the collective level. Since benevolence-based trust is inherently relational and idiosyncratic, it is difficult to synthesize at the aggregate level of public trust. However, if public consensus coalesces over time around legitimate claims of victimization to an individual (or a group sharing some common identity), it could negatively impact public trust linked to benevolence.²⁵ Public trust violations based on benevolence are generally remedied by increased external control and monitoring, which limits managerial flexibility and professional discretion.ⁱⁱ

Determinations of public trust associated with integrity, competence and predictability are arrived at through reason. They are based on incomplete knowledge and are informed by the public's perception of what practices or principles the organization has agreed to abide. Integrity determinations reflect perceptions of an organization's adherence to implicit or explicit commitments, and normative

ⁱⁱ The 1996 reports of sexual harassment, assault and rape of initial-entry trainees at Aberdeen Proving Ground and other locations resulted in extensive congressional, Department of Defense, and Department of the Army investigation and internal reviews. These investigations and reviews, a form of external monitoring, resulted in numerous external controls being placed on TRADOC training bases. Policy controls included everything from drill sergeant selection procedures and psychological screening, to mandatory values training and adjustments to training standards. For a detailed examination see Anne W. Chapman (2008). *Mixed-Gender Basic Training: The U.S. Army Experience, 1973-2004*. Fort Monroe, VA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command. <http://www.tradoc.army.mil/historian/pubs/mixed%20gender.pdf>

assessments of its honesty and fairness in meeting those commitments. Lack of integrity is linked to perceptions of opportunism.

The PFC Bradley Manning trial (WikiLeak's informant) and the Pat Tillman incident are two cases of perceived integrity violations, linked to perceptions of opportunism. With PFC Manning, the opportunism and integrity violations were at the individual level. In the Pat Tillman case, the institutional integrity of the U.S. Army was called into question. Many in the public believed the U.S. Army was exploiting the patriotism and celebrity of Pat Tillman for opportunistic reason—that the Army's leadership withheld details of his death until after the highly publicized memorial service to protect the Army's reputation. The collective and complex nature of the Army offers some protection against integrity violations that are perceived as non-systemic by the public. So long as the Army acknowledges the violation, takes action to distance itself from the behavior, and displays persistent behavior that demonstrates the violation as an anomaly the organization does not suffer substantial distrust from the public.

Competence-based public trust depends on the public's perception that an organization possesses the requisite skills and knowledge to perform the functions society expects of it. "When competence violations threaten the legitimacy of an organization's core function and *raison d'être*, they are more damaging to firm performance than integrity violations", which can be attributed to the aberrant behavior of individuals or small groups.²⁶ Unlike integrity violations, which do not transfer to the organization if the violation is acknowledged, dealt with, and perceived as non-systemic by the public, competence violations do transfer to the organization.

The predictability component of public trust encapsulates the role of repetitive behavior in creating and assuring organizational legitimacy. Predictability is the foundation upon which a common understanding of what constitutes "desirable, proper, or appropriate" behavior means between the American society and the profession. It establishes what the Army should do, and how it should do it as a generalized construction across both the Army and society collectives. As with other forms of trust, public trust "...is extremely hard to develop between the public and organizations, [and] it is much easier to destroy"²⁷ Public trust is developed through predictable repetitive behavior; but it only takes one confirmed violation to damage that trust.

How the Army handles contemporary issues could lead to the perception of public trust benevolence-based violations. Benevolence violations are most likely to occur over issues associated with the civil-military cultural gap. The benevolence component of public trust is dependent on affective notions, dealing with feelings and emotion, which are triggered when normative values associated with kindness or goodwill are violated. When the Army gets too far out-in-front of, or lags behind social norms, it provides fertile ground for perceived benevolence violations of public trust. The Army's assessment of the role of women in combat is a contemporary example of the Army's culture evolving at a faster pace than American society. In general, the Army's culture is perceived as being more progressive and tolerant of women in combat and mixed-gender training than American society. Conversely, the repeal of "don't ask don't tell" is a case where the public perceived the Army's culture as lagging behind American society's normative assessment of homosexual service in the military.

The Army's position on these cases was dominated by operational needs and the realities inherent in maintaining the most effective all-volunteer force, not as issues of goodwill or kindness. In both cases, the Army believes its policies are just and aligned with maintaining good order and discipline. In other words, aligned with the Army's cultural values. Any public perception of group victimization, therefore, will likely not be shared by the Army. Corrective actions to remedy perceptions of victimization are equally unlikely to be initiated from within the Army. Therefore, benevolence-based violations, by their nature, will most often be resolved by externally-imposed accountability controls and monitoring.

The Army can take action to avoid benevolence-based violations. This action is founded in classic civil-military relations theory. The profession approach (Huntington school) is to have an independent culture but be subordinate to civil authority, willingly accepting the social controls and monitoring necessary to satisfy societal values. The relationship entail some degree of professional discretion facilitating autonomous action that is consistent with the values of the society it serves.

Counter-intuitively, the convergence theory or industrial-occupational model approaches (Janowitz and Moskos schools, respectively) may offer the Army the best chance of preserving autonomous professional discretion. These models would suggest that the best means of avoiding benevolence-based violations may be through policies and practices that more closely align the military and civilian cultures (e.g. increased Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) commissioning and broadening experiences Army leader development in civilian settings), rather than maintaining a professional culture largely independent of society.

Deception is an example of an integrity-based violation of public trust. Adherence to the Army's professional ethic would make it unlikely that Army leaders would intentionally deceive subordinates, the public or civil authority; however, several situations could result in the perception of deception, which would have the same effect as a violation. Senior Army leaders offering testimony at public hearings or conveying a strategic communication message in support of an executive branch policy decision must guard against inadvertent deception. Public communications appearing to lack candor or driven by political correctness could be perceived as deceptive. Recent testimony indicates senior military leaders may be up to the challenge of navigating this potential mixed-message minefield.

Accommodation of various audiences and stakeholder perspectives is a challenging task for senior leader public messages. Accordingly, General Martin E. Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), had to balance a strategic communication message that recognized and honored the service of the National Guard while he opposed the elevation of the Chief, National Guard Bureau to full membership on the JCS. Similarly, General John R. Allen, the senior American commander in Afghanistan, suggested the possibility of an extended military commitment to Afghanistan, beyond the Obama administration's 2014 withdrawal target. Furthermore, budget realities or political pressures may force General Raymond Odierno, the Chief of Staff, Army, to modify his pledge to fund job assistance and health programs supporting returning soldiers and their families. If so, he will also face a tough strategic communication challenge with constituents within the Army. As empowered professionals, these senior officers are expected to balance the dual obligations of loyalty to civilian authority and

superiors, with the candor and personal courage expected by members of the Department of Defense and the American public. The virtues of loyalty and candor must be closely guarded and balanced in highly politicized settings, where political correctness can slide almost imperceptibly into perceptions of deception.

Public statements by retirees and veterans present another integrity-based vulnerability to the Army's hold on public trust, especially if those statements are critical of the Army or civilian authorities responsible for security strategy and policy. The retiree or veteran can be a political critic or advocate for the army. In either case, the retiree or veteran becomes the unofficial, but credible conduit intermediaries informing the public about the Army. As civilians with intimate knowledge of the Army, these retirees and veterans are entitled to their opinion and their rights of free speech; but the perceived politicizing of the debate violates the Army's tacit professional code of conduct ethic. As advocates or critics, retirees and veterans that politicize Army equity issues present a unique and largely uncontrollable vulnerability to the Army's public trust standing.ⁱⁱⁱ

Internal fractious bickering is another threat to integrity-based public trust. During periods of reduced conflict the American public can perceive the Army as an opportunistic component of the self-serving civil-military industrial complex. This perception is reinforced when disagreements over budget reduction and prioritization debates between the services or between the various components of the Army, are aired in public. The last round of fractious infighting between Army components over

ⁱⁱⁱ Retired officers who were highly publicized and vocal critics of the Rumsfeld Defense Department and their fellow senior officers include: MG John Batiste, MG Paul Eaton, MG Charles Swannack, LTG Gregory Newbold, GEN Barry McCaffrey, and GEN Anthony C. Zinni. Also, 'entertainment news' media are increasingly seeking out retired officers to advocate for or refute official positions, and to provide comment on alleged motives and rationales.

reduced defense spending occurred in the mid 1990s.^{iv} Perhaps as a harbinger of a resurgence of such in-fighting, Senator Patrick J. Leahy, commenting on the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012, stated that "entrenched bureaucratic interests still resist what most Americans now accept as an accomplished fact. The Joint Chiefs fought our efforts to bring the Chief of the Guard Bureau into the "Tank" not because they misunderstand the value the Guard and Reserve, but precisely because they fear that value proposition may threaten the size and budget of their active components in the years to come".²⁸

To the public, who seldom have a direct role in resolving these disagreements, this bickering appears to be self-interest opportunism. Inter-service and component infighting is unseemly of a profession. It may appear contrary to the leadership principles of stewardship and sacrifice in the national interest. Not engaging in the public bickering is the best way to avoid this perceived violation of trust. However, in a democratic system that informs civil decision authority through robust public debate, public silence is not always a viable option. Therefore, the most effective means of retaining public trust is to address accusations of opportunism directly; and to frame resourcing and prioritization arguments on societal good, not service or Army component based interests.

The US Army and its leaders currently enjoy the public's trust as warriors and combat leaders. Army leaders are trusted to competently and ethically represent the American people, solve tactical problems, and achieve operational objectives in combat and in challenging environments. This public confidence does not necessarily translate

^{iv} CRS Report 97-719F, *The Army Reserve Components: Strength and Force Structure Issues*, by Robert Goldich, updated July 15, 1997.

to the domains of strategy-policy leadership^v or the strategic management of the enterprise, associated with the Army’s institutional and Title 10 functions.^{vi}

The public’s impression that Army’s senior leaders are not strategic or that they lack the skills and knowledge to effectively manage the Army’s bureaucracy may be disputed. Army leaders have made significant and effective changes to organization, training, recruiting, and modernization policies and programs, while engaging in two demanding theaters of war, and over the course of a decade. Nonetheless, the mistrust generating perception persists when it comes to strategy-policy level competence, and managing the complexity of the service title 10 responsibilities.

The Army’s ethos and culture feed into this narrative of public distrust. During military operations, Army leaders seek the moral high-ground and focus efforts toward effectiveness over efficiency when it comes to decisions that put Soldiers at risk. Army culture lauds leadership and eschews management descriptors in its cultural idioms (e.g. performance appraisals, awards, citations, etc.). There is a cultural preference for ‘the field’ over ‘the Pentagon’ or ‘TRADOC’ assignments.

Army leaders are fluent in the language, imagery, and narrative necessary to explain Army doctrine and campaigns at the tactical and operational level. Yet they seem challenged when asked to offer a compelling land-power narrative to guide capabilities and resourcing decisions in the current policy-strategy debate. To assuage this confidence perception, senior leaders must develop a similar lexicon to engage

^v See intro in Allen, C. D. and Gerras, S. J. (2009). Developing creative and critical thinkers. *Military Review*, Nov-Dec, pp. 77-83..

^{vi} See HASC Chair, Duncan Hunter’s scathing remarks to LTG Joseph L. Yakovac, MG Buford C. Blount III and the acting Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition, Technology and Logistics) the Honorable Michael W. Wynne, during a 21 April 2004 hearing before the HASC Committee on the Armed Services (Retrieved on 20 Dec 2011 from http://www.archive.org/stream/performanceofdep00unit/performanceofdep00unit_djvu.txt). At one point he told these soldiers “You guys can’t tie your shoe laces!”

effectively in policy and resource prioritization debates. These debates shape the way the Army will balance, link, and explain choices between force structure and risk, policy and strategy, modernization and sustainment programming, and active-reserve balancing choices, among other senior management imperatives. Kim (2005) suggests that "...declining competence of agency members, in response to increasing demands related to complex problems, causes distrust of government".²⁹ To encourage the development of strategic management skills and knowledge, the Army Profession campaign should find ways to embrace the role strategic management plays in the language of the profession.

The Army's vulnerability to the predictability component of public trust is related to action horizons and strategic patience. Action horizons are the timelines in which leaders expect their actions to produce definitive results or trends. Army leaders are habituated to quick decisions and action horizons based on command tour lengths; but instituting strategic decisions for institutional change may require decades, not years. The strategic patience required to manage complexity has a corollary in the military mission sets of security cooperation, stability operations and security force assistance. Senior Army leaders appreciate the importance of patiently maintaining a strategic vision and adapting to meet operational requirements. Equally, leaders need to apply these same patience and adaptability to address institutional issues. Civilians have the authority to direct short-term actions based on austere resource conditions and political considerations outside the Army's professional jurisdiction. Yet Army senior leaders must maintain focus on the service's strategic vision (aligned with civilian policy and direction) and persist in the face of resource challenges. The Army Profession's senior

leadership has a duty and stewardship obligation to clearly and publically present strategic risks associated with landpower management and employment, thereby informing civilian decision-making.

Conclusion

Generally, the Army has a sustained tradition of trust at the individual and organizational levels while being held in high regard by the American public over the past decade. As with many other institutions, there is questioning of senior leadership within the hierarchy and bureaucracy. While trust may be a strategic advantage, it is fragile and the Army must guard against complacency. There are several areas of concern, which require constant vigilance to maintain internal and external trust of the Army and its leaders.

At the individual and organizational levels, trust concerns are associated with competency to lead and manage in garrison and home station functions. In operational theaters, junior leaders are empowered and expected to make decisions based on minimal guidance and under mission command intent with a wide range of duties and responsibilities. While deployed, they were held to accountability standards for people, equipment, and money in combat zones. In contrast, junior leaders may fear being stripped of their authority, autonomy, and freedom of action in the home station environment.

Institutional trust is related to perceptions of senior leader competence in managing service level processes and prioritization (personnel, training, acquisition/sustainment, family programs) for the force. These perceptions are particularly acute with the projected austere resource environment, impending end strength draw downs, and

program resourcing trade-offs. In the wake of resource prioritization decision by Army senior leader, soldiers may attribute untrustworthy motives to their choices, and perceive those choices as a breach of trust. This could occur during prioritization determinations that affect the treatment of those being separated from service, veteran care (especially wounded warriors), and budget cuts that sacrifice family programs and garrison quality-of-life.

Public trust is currently not an issue, as the Army is held in high esteem by the American public. It, however, is the most fragile echelon of trust, because it must accommodate a broad range of stakeholders and their interpretations of the behavior of Army leaders.

Potential areas of concern, exacerbated by the current economic environment and pending budget battles, include:

(a) The Army's capability to respond and defend national interests in a flexible and reliable way. (Competence and Predictability)

(b) Perceptions that the institution as self-serving, exploitive in cases of poor stewardship (fraud, waste, abuse, and mis-management), or not sharing the burden of the society at large. (Benevolence and Integrity)

Future Research

Several areas are rich for further research to better understand, build and sustain trust of the Army Profession. We should seek better understanding of trust internal to the Army. Research efforts should assess and track the trust relationship among Army senior leaders and the other cohorts as the institution transitions from a deployed force at war to a training force in home station. Accordingly, evaluating the capability of

professional military education systems to develop Army leader competency with strategic management of complex organization and Title 10 systems should be balanced with the emphasis on tactical and operational warfighting.

Additionally, research is required on the external trust phenomenon—the public trust of the Army Profession. Such research should include efforts to conduct surveys and analyze longitudinal trends in public trust. Necessarily, a cross-disciplinary approach would allow comparison and analysis of public trust trends across other domains (business organizations, civic bodies, government agencies, and other nations). Such research may provide insights for underlying processes and the antecedents of public trust in the military.

This paper is part of a year-long Army effort to study the Profession of Arms and evolved to examine the Army Profession with its many cohorts. The initial findings related to perceptions of trustworthiness from within the profession should inform Army senior leaders as they steward the force of the future. The detailed examination of trust with the Army’s external stakeholders—public trust—is equally important for senior leader. The paper attempted to identify the opportunities and challenges related to trust as the Army seeks to provide enterprise leadership for the years ahead.

The goal should be an Army comprised of members who trust in one another and in the institution’s ability to serve the Nation while caring for its people—both of these objectives are essential if the Army is to “serve the American people, protect enduring national interests, and fulfill the Nation’s military responsibilities.”³⁰ We want the US Army to reflect a profession trusted by soldiers and civilian members, civilian officials, the American society, and the international community.

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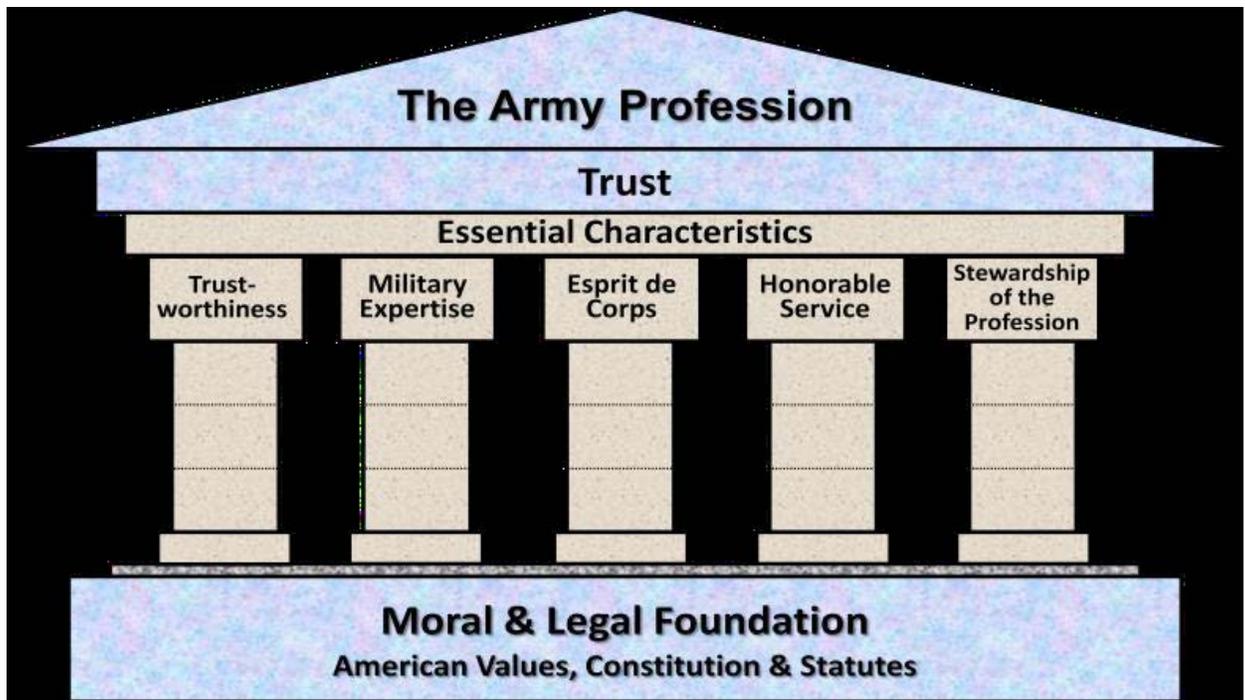


Figure 1. The Army Profession

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