

# Empowering Army Leadership for Future High-Intensity Conflicts: Assessing Army Leadership Doctrine

A Monograph

by

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## Abstract

Empowering Army Leadership for Future High-Intensity Conflicts: Assessing Army Leadership Doctrine by MAJ David Kim, 48 pages.

Large-scale combat and multi-domain operations in the Knowledge Era will require Army leaders to manage linear combat operations while maintaining an entirely separate operational approach in the complex consolidation areas. Within the Army's tactical formations, units' abilities to rapidly transition from counterinsurgency or stability operations to offensive or defensive decisive operations, and across multiple domains will pose a significant organizational challenge. No amount of materials, planning, or leader traits will ever mitigate these challenges. Complex challenges require leadership that enables emergent solutions, but the Army's current leader-centric, top-down approach perpetuates risk averse, zero-defect cultures. The Army must change its leadership doctrine. Transformational change to leadership doctrine will allow leaders at all levels to learn to embrace complexity and team-based approaches, fostering emergent solutions to complex problems. The trait-based leader-centric approach is archaic, inefficient, and promotes a risk-averse culture that will not prevail in large scale combat or multi-domain operations.

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## Abbreviations

ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
ALRM	Army Leadership Requirements Model
ATP	Army Technical Publication
CLT	Complexity Leadership Theory
FM	Field Manual
LMX	Leader-Member Exchange
MLQ	Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire
TLI	Transformational Leadership Inventory

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## Introduction: The Problem with Leadership

The character of war is always changing. In today's Knowledge Era, global human interactions are increasing at unprecedented rates. Rapid technological advancements enable US adversaries to achieve parity in multiple domains at increasingly lower costs.<sup>1</sup> In 2013, H.R. McMaster, former National Security Advisor, warned that despite technological advancements, "American forces must cope with the political and human dynamics of war in complex, uncertain environments."<sup>2</sup> Coping with these dynamics will require the right type of leadership. Newtonian-style leadership paradigms reflected in current Army leadership doctrine are outdated and inadequate for future conflicts.

The 2017 revision of Army Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*, spurred a fundamental change to the Army's capstone doctrine from low-intensity conflict to large-scale combat operations as a part of a multi-domain joint force. The 2018 Army Vision projects a lethal and ready force capable of fighting in high intensity conflicts and irregular warfare in multiple domains by 2028.<sup>3</sup> Future Army leaders must be capable of harnessing complexity and keeping pace with the speed of information in multi-domain and large-scale combat operations. They must be masters in the art of brokering between tactical action and strategic guidance. This requires organizational leaders to be creative, learning, and adaptable. Developing such leaders requires the Army to rethink Army leadership doctrine. Currently, Army leadership doctrine promotes hierarchy, bureaucracy, and centralized decision making.

The 2017 US National Security Strategy communicates an urgent requirement to eliminate expensive and bureaucratic barriers to innovation.<sup>4</sup> The Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy highlights the detriment of decreased global influence without modernizing the military to fit the

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<sup>1</sup> Donald J. Trump, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), 27.

<sup>2</sup> H. R. McMaster, "The Pipe Dream of Easy War," *The New York Times*, July 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/21/opinion/sunday/the-pipe-dream-of-easy-war.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Mark T. Esper, "The Army Vision," *US Army*, June 6, 2018, accessed February 20, 2020, [https://www.army.mil/e2/downloads/rv7/vision/the\\_army\\_vision.pdf](https://www.army.mil/e2/downloads/rv7/vision/the_army_vision.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Trump, 29.

challenges of the current strategic and operational environments.<sup>5</sup> Being prepared to meet these challenges will demand that the US Joint Force implement innovative and adaptive solutions of force development and design.<sup>6</sup> This requires innovative and adaptive leadership, yet there is no leadership-specific joint doctrine. However, Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations*, emphasizes that leadership should be “commander-centric and network-enabled to facilitate decision making at the lowest appropriate level.”<sup>7</sup> Commander-centric leadership rests heavily on the concept of “mission command,” which is central to purpose-driven, rather than task-based, operations.

Mission command requires disciplined initiative at every level of command.<sup>8</sup> Former Chief of Staff of the Army and current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark A. Milley, emphasized the importance of mission command in future warfare.<sup>9</sup> For over a decade, operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have pushed Army leaders to become “over-centralized, overly bureaucratic, and overly risk-averse.”<sup>10</sup> Preparing for multi-domain and large-scale combat operations of the future will require innovative leaders comfortable with complexity at the tactical to strategic levels.<sup>11</sup> General James McConville, current Chief of Staff of the Army, is aggressively pursuing transformational change from linear, industrial-aged processes to embrace the complexity and speed of the Knowledge Era.<sup>12</sup> This

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<sup>5</sup> James N. Mattis, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military’s Competitive Edge* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2018), 1.

<sup>6</sup> US Department of Defense, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Description of the National Military Strategy 2018* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2019), 4.

<sup>7</sup> US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, *Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), II-1.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> C. Todd Lopez, “Future Warfare Requires ‘disciplined Disobedience,’ Army Chief Says,” US Army, May 5, 2017, accessed February 20, 2020, [https://www.army.mil/article/187293/future\\_warfare\\_requires\\_disciplined\\_disobedience\\_army\\_chief\\_says](https://www.army.mil/article/187293/future_warfare_requires_disciplined_disobedience_army_chief_says).

<sup>10</sup> Atlantic Council, *Commanders Series Event with Chief of Staff of the Army General Mark Milley*, May 4, 2017, accessed 20 February 2020, <https://atlanticcouncil.org/commentary/event-recap/commanders-series-event-with-chief-of-staff-of-the-army-general-mark-milley/>.

<sup>11</sup> Esper, “The Army Vision.”

<sup>12</sup> James C. McConville, “40th Chief of Staff of the Army Initial Message to the Army Team,” US Army, August 12, 2019, accessed March 11, 2020, [https://www.army.mil/article/225605/40th\\_chief\\_of\\_staff\\_of\\_the\\_army\\_initial\\_message\\_to\\_the\\_army\\_team](https://www.army.mil/article/225605/40th_chief_of_staff_of_the_army_initial_message_to_the_army_team).

industrial-aged capability gap holds true for the Army's acquisition processes as well as its leadership doctrine.

More specifically, traits and contingency theories underpin current Army leadership doctrine. Briefly, traits theories reflect Newtonian-style, reductionistic approaches to leadership, and contingency theories are based on a set of situational paradigms that affect leader behaviors (explained in the section, "Theoretical Foundations for Army Leadership Doctrine"). While both traits and contingency theories do offer some utility in the short term, they are leader-focused theories that fail to account for complexity. In the Army, traits and contingency theories meet their potential at the most basic, tactical levels of leadership. Consequently, traits and contingency theories are inadequate for modeling strategic and operational level leadership in a complex environment. The Army will need strategic and operational level leadership that empowers subordinates to exercise mission command and embrace complexity.

For most of the early twentieth century, leadership studies at large have become increasingly rational, alternating between centralized and decentralized paradigms. The dynamic social, cultural, and political landscapes of the twentieth century have shifted the direction of leadership studies.<sup>13</sup> Now in the Knowledge Era, the field of leadership is undergoing a paradigm shift as it strives to account for complexity.<sup>14</sup> One new theory, Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT), has the capacity to bind multiple leadership theories into a single framework that embraces the complex dynamics of requisite administrative and adaptive organizational functions. Transformational leadership theory is a leader-centric theory, but idealized for followers in the context of morality and purpose. It parallels the Army's requirements for mission command, especially at tactical echelons. Another useful theory is Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory. Leader-member exchange theory links the quality of leader-member relationships to organizational effectiveness.

Complexity leadership theory, transformational leadership theory, and LMX theory suggest far

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<sup>13</sup> Keith Grint, "A History of Leadership," in *The SAGE Handbook of Leadership* ed. Alan Bryman, et al. (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2011), 10-13.

<sup>14</sup> Mary Uhl-Bien and Russ Marion, "Complexity Leadership Theory," in *The SAGE Handbook of Leadership*, 468.

better solutions for leadership in large scale combat and multi-domain operations than traits and contingency theories. Coping with political and human dynamics of war in complex and uncertain environments requires complex leadership dynamics. Army leadership doctrine is an industrial-aged, traits-based framework that is inadequate to meet the challenges of conflict in the Knowledge Era. Complexity leadership theory provides a far better framework for Army leadership doctrine.

## Urgency for Change

Carl von Clausewitz described war as a violent clash of human emotion and wills.<sup>15</sup> War is a human endeavor, requiring constant interaction between its agents. War, like leadership, is a complex phenomenon—not a list of traits. Exhaustive lists of leader traits will never adequately provide an answer to the complex requirements of Army leaders in the contemporary strategic environment. Leadership theories can be divided into three broad categories: leader-centric, follower-centric, or team-centric theories or approaches. The Army’s doctrinal approach to leadership is exclusively leader-centric. The institution expects its leaders to act in the best interest of the mission and the organization—not the individual members of that organization. With such an emphasis on the team, it befits the Army to adopt a leadership paradigm that is team-centric, as opposed to its current leader-centric doctrine and approaches. Also, future large-scale combat operations will present a significant degree of complexity as the world becomes increasingly interconnected and urbanized. Rudimentary paradigms and doctrine that do not comprehensively address the complexity associated with large-scale combat or multi-domain operations will make Army leadership largely irrelevant in the Knowledge Era.

Large-scale combat and multi-domain operations in the Knowledge Era will require Army leaders to manage linear combat operations while maintaining an entirely separate operational approach in the complex consolidation areas.<sup>16</sup> Within the Army’s tactical formations, units’ abilities to rapidly transition

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<sup>15</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 75.

<sup>16</sup> US Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), 1-4.

from counterinsurgency or stability operations to offensive or defensive decisive operations, and across multiple domains, constitutes a significant organizational challenge. No amount of materials, planning, or leader traits will ever mitigate these challenges. Complex challenges require leadership that enables emergent solutions, but the Army's current leader-centric, top-down approach perpetuates risk-averse, zero-defect cultures. The Army must change its leadership doctrine. Transformational change to leadership doctrine will allow leaders at all levels to embrace complexity and team-based approaches, fostering emergent solutions to complex problems. The trait-based leader-centric approach is archaic, inefficient, and promotes a risk-averse culture that will not prevail in large scale combat or multi-domain operations.

## Army Leadership Doctrine

The purpose of Army doctrine is to provide a common foundation for Army operations. Army doctrine generally provides a vision for the conduct of warfare and aims to increase operational efficacy. Army doctrine also provides a common vocabulary, references, and cultural perspectives; defines desirable traits of its members; and discusses the Army's general role in the national context. There are three categories of Army doctrine—Army doctrine publications (ADP), field manuals (FM), and Army technical publications (ATP). Army doctrine publications provide fundamental principles to guide actions. Field Manuals are closely linked to ADPs and describe how to execute operations with more descriptive principles, tactics, procedures, or other doctrinal information.<sup>17</sup> In terms of the specific subject of leadership, Department of the Army personnel primarily concern themselves with ADP 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, and FM 6-22, *Leader Development*. Army leadership doctrine is grounded on the centrality of influence and the potentiality of leader development.<sup>18</sup> Gaining an appreciation for Army leadership doctrine requires understanding five concepts: the Army leadership

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<sup>17</sup> US Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 1-01, *Army Doctrine Primer* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2019), 1-2.

<sup>18</sup> US Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2019), 1-3.

requirements model (ALRM), the dynamics of leadership, the roles of leadership, the levels of leadership, and Army leader development.

## ADP 6-22: Army Leadership and The Profession

Army leadership is a diverse activity that influences people in all organizational operations. *Army Leadership and The Profession* provides the following definition of “leadership”:

Leadership is the activity of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization. Leadership as an element of combat power, coupled with information, unifies the warfighting functions (movement and maneuver, intelligence, fires, sustainment, protection and command and control). Leadership focuses and synchronizes organizations. Leaders inspire people to become energized and motivated to achieve desired outcomes. An Army leader is anyone who by virtue of assumed role or assigned responsibility inspires and influences people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization.<sup>19</sup>

The first leadership concept is the ALRM, which is an experience and history based model for leadership. The Model defines three leader attributes and three leader competencies which, based on history and experience, Army leaders may apply at all echelons, regardless of rank or position. The three leader attributes include character, presence, and intellect. The Army’s three leader competencies include leads, develops, and achieves. For simplicity, one might refer to these leader attributes and competencies simply as the desired traits of all Army leaders, which represent the broader context of the Army’s “be, know, do” culture of influencing people. The *character* and *presence* attributes represent what an Army leader should “be;” *intellect* denotes what an Army leader should “know;” and *leading, developing, and achieving* represents what Army leaders should “do.”<sup>20</sup> Attributes refer to the internal characteristics that influence Army leaders’ behaviors, thoughts, and abilities to learn under various conditions. These attributes further indicate the physical, mental, social, moral, and ethical qualities of leaders. Competencies generally refer to the actions of leaders and how they influence, motivate, build teams, and develop organizational culture to achieve desirable results.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> US Department of the Army, ADP 6-22, 1-3.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 1-6.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 1-7.

Leveraging these traits, Army leaders consider the second Army leadership concept, which are the three dynamics of leadership—the leader, the led, and the situation. Understanding the balance and use of both formal and informal leadership is critical to understanding one’s role as a leader in any capacity. As such, self-awareness is a critical component for the leader. The main difference between formal and informal leadership, however, is that formal leadership derives its influence from a position of legal authority, tied to both rank and experience, and guaranteed by the Uniform Code of Military Justice.<sup>22</sup> Informal leadership is not necessarily tied to rank or position, typically drawing its influence from expert or referent power. “The led” is indicative of the Army’s followership culture, and may also be a component of “the situation.” The hierarchical structure of the Army demands the simultaneity of leadership and followership in daily operations.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the dynamics of Army leadership merely contextualize leadership as a component of human interactions across the organization in a variety of situations.

Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, and Army Civilians fill roles as Army leaders. Together, they fulfill the third Army leadership concept, which is roles of leadership. Army leaders fulfill roles across three levels of Army leadership—strategic, organizational, and direct—the fourth leadership concept. Direct level leaders are task-oriented, typically influencing a few individuals or smaller groups.<sup>24</sup> Organizational level leaders influence larger organizations through systems and processes rather than through direct engagement. Strategic level leaders are globally or regionally focused and lead at the national and societal levels. Army leaders in all roles apply the ALRM at all three different levels of leadership.<sup>25</sup>

This section covered the first four critical concepts covered in Army leadership doctrine: the ALRM, the dynamics of leadership, the roles of leadership, and the levels of leadership. ADP 6-22, *Army*

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<sup>22</sup> US Department of the Army, ADP 6-22, 1-8.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-10.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-13.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-14.

*Leadership and the Profession*, is a traits-based doctrine that exhibits a rudimentary understanding of human dynamics. Elaborated more thoroughly later, traits theories date back to the Industrial Era. The Industrial Era's perceptions that organizations can mass-produce good leadership by treating any one dynamic of leadership as an interchangeable part does not promote learning, creativity, or adaptability. Industrial aged processes suggest that if one dynamic is unsuitable for desired outcomes, then organizations can replace or fix that dynamic with another interchangeable part. The capability of leadership in general, let alone leadership in large-scale combat or multi-domain operations, is limited when treated as an exercise in reductionism.

## FM 6-22: Leader Development

Field Manual 6-22 addresses leader development, which is the fifth concept of Army leadership doctrine. Army doctrine's time-honored answer to the question of whether or not leaders are born or made would be that leaders are always made.<sup>26</sup> Making Army leaders requires a leader development strategy, which is comprised of education, training, and experience. This strategy must be grounded in all five tenets of Army leader development. Furthermore, successful implementation of leader development strategy requires the application of the Army's fundamentals of leader development. These fundamentals must apply for developing all traits in the ALRM. Finally, self-development is of foundational importance in this strategy.

The Army leader development strategy, which involves education, training, and experience, encompasses both formal and informal processes.<sup>27</sup> Some examples of formal education, training, and experience are professional military education, military schools, structured and mandated self-development programs, and broadening assignments. Informal processes may occur as a byproduct of formal education, training, and experiences in the form of peer interaction or opportunistic development activities. These are generally external to the scope or specific goals of formal leader development events.

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<sup>26</sup> US Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 6-22, *Leader Development* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2015), 1-1.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.



Whether formal or informal, there are five tenets of Army leader development that support the Army leader development strategy.

The first tenet of Army leader development consists of a strong commitment to development by the Army, superiors, and the individual. Simply stated, the Army, the superiors, and the individual must all engage in the process of leader development. Disengaged efforts will fail to produce quality leaders. The second tenet of Army leader development consists of purpose-driven programs. Leader development activities must be intentional, rather than fortuitous, targeting the ALRM's specific traits. The third tenet demands a supportive environment that encourages leader development. The Army enterprise provides the fourth tenet, allowing development to occur in three different domains: institutional, operational, and [structured] self-development. The fifth tenet demands an iterative feedback loop that involves leaders and the developing individuals.<sup>28</sup>

The fundamentals of Army leader development are extensions of the five tenets of leader development. The four fundamentals of Army leader development are setting conditions, providing feedback on a leader's actions, enhancing learning, and creating opportunities. Setting conditions is a process that consists of the other three fundamentals of development.<sup>29</sup> It requires leaders to develop a learning environment and to know their subordinates. Providing feedback on a leader's actions requires planning, accurate observations and assessments of leader behaviors, and effective feedback delivery. Enhancing learning requires effective mentorship, guided discovery learning, coaching, and professional study. Lastly, creating opportunities consists of providing challenging experiences, leader selection, leader succession, and career development and management. Application of these four fundamentals start with self-development.

Self-development is a structured process consisting of four phases that bridge the gap between the operational and institutional—training and education—domains of leader development. These four phases

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<sup>28</sup> US Department of the Army, FM 6-22, 1-1.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-1.

are the determination of strengths and developmental needs, goal setting, self-enhanced learning, and learning in action.<sup>30</sup> Self-development is the essence of Army leader development. Leader development starts with the individual and his or her desire to seek a targeted development process. Operationally and institutionally, the Army provides development based on self-developmental goals that target specific elements of leader attributes and competencies.

Field Manual 6-22 provides a description of the elements of each leadership attribute and competency, as well as instructions on how to develop each of these elements. The “character” attribute measures leaders’ ability to demonstrate the elements of discipline, the warrior and service ethos, empathy, and Army values: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. Elements of the “presence” attribute include professional bearing, fitness, confidence, and resilience. The “intellect” attribute elements include mental agility, sound judgement, innovation, interpersonal tact, and expertise.<sup>31</sup> Elements of competencies are more quantifiable in nature than the qualitative properties of attributes. The “leads” competency measures leaders’ ability to lead others, build trust, extend influence beyond the chain of command, to lead by example, and communicate with others. The “develops” competency measures leaders’ ability to create positive environments, prepare self, develop leaders, and steward the Army profession. Finally, the “achieves” competency measures leaders’ ability to get results.<sup>32</sup>

Each element listed above are “leader performance indicators.”<sup>33</sup> For example, leader performance indicators of “presence” are professional bearing, fitness, confidence, and resilience. These leader performance indicators are desirable *leader behaviors*. Army leaders achieve desirable standards of behavior when they display these leader performance indicators through some quantifiable action. Then, the Army evaluates leaders on both the quality and quantity of their actions in different *situations*. In

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<sup>30</sup> US Department of the Army, FM 6-22, 4-1.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-3.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-5.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-1.

other words, the quantity and quality of leader behaviors in different situations are measures of *leadership effectiveness*. For example, one leader behavior of the “presence” trait is “fitness.” To measure a leader’s level of fitness, the Army can use the leader’s Army Combat Fitness Test score to assign a quantifiable value to the leader’s fitness level. Additionally, the Army may consider the instances in which members of the organization observed the leader displaying “confidence” while speaking publicly to subordinates or superiors. The number of displays of confidence and the leader’s Army Combat Fitness Test score gives the Army quantifiable data to evaluate a leader’s effectiveness in the “presence” trait.

Army leader development mimics contingency theories. In contingency theories (which the following section addresses in detail), leader behaviors and leadership effectiveness are the independent and dependent variables, respectively, and situations are the constants. Since traits are unable to holistically measure leadership effectiveness, the Army uses situationally modified leader behaviors to assess it. Nevertheless, like trait theories, contingency theories are also linear, reductionistic, and fail to account for complexity.

## Theoretical Foundations of Current Army Leadership Doctrine

Overall, Army leadership publications provide descriptive expectations for the standards and the development of desired traits and behaviors in its leaders. One core assessment of Army leadership doctrine is that the Army views leadership as a generally linear process. Examining the intricacies of Army leadership doctrine, it is abundantly clear that the Army understands its application of leadership as a response to situations, as well as a product of leader traits. This supports contingency and traits theories as the two dominant and broad categories of leadership that underpin Army leadership doctrine. Although it is unnecessary for doctrine to enumerate the theories it draws from, understanding those supporting theories can illuminate what the Army values in regards to leadership. Furthermore, reviewing the inferred theories that underpin Army leadership doctrine will help identify some of its fundamental capabilities and limitations.

Traits theories are the simpler of the two theories that underpin Army leadership doctrine. Dating

back to the 1920s, traits theories highlight the differences between attributes and qualities of leaders as opposed to followers. Trait theorists attempted to identify traits in organizational leaders that invoked favorable responses from subordinates.<sup>34</sup> They lean on positivist reasoning that anyone capable of efficiently soliciting desired responses from individuals or groups is capable of leading. Modern remnants of trait theories have evolved to contextualize attributes according to social or organizational requirements—much like the ALRM’s leader attributes and competencies.<sup>35</sup> The Army’s desired leader traits are not arbitrary; rather, they reflect historical and experiential lessons over the course of over two centuries of armed conflict.

A better way to understand the deeper dynamics of traits theories is to study leadership as an individual-level construct. By having leaders conduct self-evaluations, it is possible to examine why, how, when, and where effective leaders developed their traits, behaviors, and styles.<sup>36</sup> Such evaluations have implications for leader development, which characterizes the core assumption in Army leader development doctrine that leadership is a learnable skill. Several studies also show some correlation of leadership as a hereditary trait.<sup>37</sup> To the credit of early trait theorists, extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience, neuroticism, and agreeableness—known as the “Big-Five Traits”—have accounted for up to 25 percent of variance in leadership effectiveness and emergence.<sup>38</sup> In a diverse organization such as the Army, there is utility in some level of leader-centric analysis; still, leader traits, behaviors, and styles are largely contingent on organizational or follower variables.<sup>39</sup>

Trait theories precede popular leadership theories such as charismatic and transformational

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<sup>34</sup> Raymond Gordon, “Leadership and Power,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Leadership*, 196.

<sup>35</sup> Peter Case, Robert French, and Peter Simpson, “Philosophy of Leadership,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Leadership*, 243.

<sup>36</sup> Songqi Liu, Mo Wang, and Le Zhou, “Multilevel Issues in Leadership Research,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Leadership and Organizations*, ed. David V. Day (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 148.

<sup>37</sup> Joyce E. Bono, Winny Shen, and David J. Yoon, “Personality and Leadership: Looking Back, Looking Ahead,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Leadership and Organizations*, 201.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>39</sup> Liu, Wang, and Zhou, “Multilevel Issues in Leadership Research,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Leadership and Organizations*, 152.

leadership. Contrary to the primitive beginnings of traits theories, the recent surge of social media platforms still proves its relevance. Followers, organizations, and society still expect very specific attributes and behaviors of leaders today. This is highly suggestive of the seemingly irrevocable nature of traits theories. They will likely survive even the most novel paradigm shifts in leadership science in the future.<sup>40</sup>

Contingency theories are the second set of theories that support Army leadership doctrine. They formed in response to a lack of universal qualities eliciting consistent outcomes with trait theories. Instead of evaluating leader traits, contingency theories evaluate leader behaviors, and how different situations influence and moderate those leader behaviors towards goals of leadership effectiveness. Therefore, there are three variables to consider in contingency theories: leader behaviors (independent variable), situational variables (constants), and leadership effectiveness (dependent variable).<sup>41</sup>

Contingency theories categorize leader behaviors into four broad categories: task-oriented behavior, relations-oriented behavior, participative leadership, and contingent-reward behavior. Task-oriented behaviors attempt to accomplish tasks efficiently. When leaders develop procedural structure by way of plans, delegating tasks, writing policy, or establishing systems, they exhibit task-oriented behaviors. Relations-oriented behavior develops relational aspects such as mutual trust, cohesion, or commitment to the organization. Participative leadership involves others, which makes the role of leadership more of a democratic process. Finally, contingent reward behavior refers to the more transactional aspects of leadership that uses formal or informal rewards to increase motivation or job satisfaction. These four broad categories of leader behavior fluctuate under different situational variables.<sup>42</sup>

Situational variables have three degrees of causal effects on leader behaviors. Situational

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<sup>40</sup> Ketan H. Mhatre and Ronald E. Riggio, "Charismatic and Transformational Leadership: Past, Present, and Future," in *The Oxford Handbook of Leadership and Organizations*, 237.

<sup>41</sup> Gary Yukl, "Contingency Theories of Effective Leadership," in *The SAGE Handbook of Leadership*, 286.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

variables may directly affect the dependent variable, moderate the effects of leader behavior, or directly influence follower behavior.<sup>43</sup> Situations that directly affect leadership effectiveness (dependent variable) are referred to as “substitutes.”<sup>44</sup> Substitutes circumvent leader behaviors (independent variable) entirely, making the leader irrelevant. Situational variables that moderate the effects of leader behavior drive leaders to be task-oriented, relations-oriented, participative, or transactional. Lastly, situational variables that directly influence follower behaviors circumvent leader-follower interactions entirely.

Evidence suggests that effective leadership in different situations may require multiple categories of leader behavior.<sup>45</sup> As such, contingency theories offer a wide-array of possible leadership paradigms in a multitude of situations. However, contingency theories are conceptually weak in several areas. First, from a theoretical perspective, contingency theories do not necessarily explain relevant or specific leader behavior responses with respect to situational variables. For example, when a leader exerts relations-oriented behavior based on a situational variable, contingency theories do not specify whether a leader should target aspects of job satisfaction, organization commitment, or mutual trust. The leader behavior categories are so broad that they provide limited utility for use in theories. Perhaps the most significant limitation of contingency theories is their lack of consideration for the compounding effects of multiple situational variables.<sup>46</sup> When multiple situational variables start to interact with each other and create complexity, leader effectiveness becomes increasingly more difficult to quantify. The consequence for failing to account for complexity results in systemic inconsistencies. Depending on the levels of qualitative analysis used—leader centric, dyadic, or group level—research showed inconsistent results with respect to leader influence and situational moderators across all levels. In other words, the effectiveness of contingency theories was inconclusive.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Yukl, 288.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

Despite traits and contingency theories being proven as linear, ineffective, and unable to account for complexity, they are the dominating theories that underpin Army leadership doctrine. However, as the Army prepares for multi-domain and large-scale combat operations, leaders must be able to embrace complexity and anticipate emergent properties. Traits and contingency theories are diametrically opposed to General McConville’s efforts to modernize the army from Industrial Age processes. In fact, these linear theories only exacerbate General Milley’s criticism of the Army’s overly bureaucratic, centralized, and risk-averse leadership cultures. The Army must reframe its approach to leadership, particularly its doctrinal publications.

## Evaluating Army Leadership Doctrine for Large-Scale Combat and Multi-Domain Operations

Leadership traits and behaviors are both relevant and necessary in doctrine—especially those traits and behaviors that leave room for development and encourage leaders to be open to learning and self-help. From a practical perspective, these foundational traits and behaviors are important for developing professional relationships with peers, subordinates, superiors, interagency partners, and civilian leaders. Furthermore, these traits and behaviors should inform moral and ethical decisions in every possible situation. And regardless of military echelon, Army leaders require some common pool of traits and behaviors that make them effective and desirable leaders. But when the focal point of leadership becomes leaders’ traits and behaviors, it is easy to forget that leadership is a relational process between multiple parties.

The leader-centric approach is self-limiting. Leader-centric theories amplify notions of authority, which is highly indicative of centralization.<sup>48</sup> Centralization can work counter to the Army’s conception of mission command or decentralized decision-making.<sup>49</sup> Army doctrine attempts to account for this by

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<sup>48</sup> Mary Jo Hatch, *Organization Theory: Modern, Symbolic, Postmodern Perspectives*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 111.

<sup>49</sup> US Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2019), 1-3.

listing additional subcomponents of attributes and competencies. For example, a critical subcomponent of the “leads” competency is “builds trust,” an essential consideration for the mission command concept.<sup>50</sup> But trust is inherent in the Army’s culture, rank, and social structure. Servicemembers develop institutional trust in their instructors, Drill Sergeants, and command teams from initial entry. In other words, trust is somewhat formalized and disingenuous in the Army. Therefore, in addition to some range of formal trust between leaders and members of an organization, *likeability* would strengthen that trust and improve the greater organization. For example, just because a servicemember trusts his leaders to care for him formally does not mean the servicemember necessarily likes his leaders to the extent that he would go above and beyond his baseline requirements. But like trust, likeability is beneficial only when leaders and subordinates have a mutual relationship. Incorporating LMX theory into Army leadership doctrine will help improve mutual relationships for organizational effectiveness.

Army leadership doctrine comprises a series of self-defeating documents. Despite its own claims regarding the multiple levels of leadership, the ALRM is mostly applicable for direct-level leadership. The Army’s leadership levels are unnecessarily binding. They force traits and circumstances—in the form of attributes and competencies—into the realm of responsibilities of leaders at all levels of Army leadership. This militates against the kind of leadership required to lead organizations through the complexity of the Knowledge Era at all levels of leadership, especially in the context of large-scale combat and multi-domain operations. Simplistic lists are typically unqualified in complexity.<sup>51</sup> That strategic or organizational leadership is bound by attributes and competencies fails to appreciate the leadership competencies required at the increasingly complex strategic or operational levels of war.

More importantly, the Army levels of leadership assume complexity as an objective factor. However, complexity is subjective.<sup>52</sup> Leaders at the current strategic and operational levels face

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<sup>50</sup>US Department of the Army, ADP 6-0, 1-6.

<sup>51</sup> Robert Axelrod and Michael D. Cohen, *Harnessing Complexity: Organizational Implications of a Scientific Frontier* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2001), 22.

<sup>52</sup> Dietrich Dörner, *The Logic of Failure: Recognizing and Avoiding Error in Complex Situations* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1997), 39.



fundamentally different challenges than tactical leaders. Leaders with less experience might see problems as complex, whereas those with more experience may see them as complicated, or simple. For this reason, it is necessary to reject the notion that one's cognitive ability to abstractly layer tactical solutions in if-then-what-if assessments warrants classification as less-than complex. There are several underlying issues here. As ADP 3-0, *Operations*, highlights, war represents a human endeavor and always involves some level of human interaction.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, the operational environments of multi-domain and large-scale combat operations are complex adaptive systems, and leaders at all levels will experience their own degree of subjective complexity.<sup>54</sup> However, Army leadership doctrine asserts the assumption that complexity resides exclusively at the strategic and organizational levels, undermining complexity, systems theory, and the complex dynamics of human interactions in future multi-domain and large-scale combat operations.

Army leadership doctrine accounts for, recognizes, and even appreciates complexity, but it does little to harness it from an organizational leadership perspective. In the Knowledge Era, information and human interactions move at unprecedented rates and in unpredictable vectors. Current Army leadership doctrine does little to prepare the enterprise and its subordinate leaders to lead in the face of such complexity across multiple domains—land, maritime, electromagnetic, air, space, cyberspace. Incorporating transformational leadership, LMX theory, and CLT into leadership doctrine will help the Army address significant gaps as it faces a future of near-peer competition and conflict.

### Transformational Leadership: For a Better Leader

Transformational leadership theory is a multidimensional leader-centric theory that focuses on follower development.<sup>55</sup> It is the antithesis of transactional leadership, which is based on primitive

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<sup>53</sup> US Department of the Army, ADP 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), 2; Clausewitz, 75.

<sup>54</sup> Axelrod and Cohen, 30; FM 3-0, 1-5.

<sup>55</sup> Philip M. Podsakoff et al., "Transformational Leader Behaviors and Their Effects on Followers' Trust in Leader, Satisfaction, and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors," *Leadership Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (1990): 107–42, 112; Bernard M. Bass and Ronald E. Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 2nd ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2006), 3.

reward-and-consequence methods of influence. Transformational leadership recognizes that followers have needs that exceed basic compensation for their services.<sup>56</sup> Transformational leadership also depends on the centrality of purpose and morals. In practice, transformational leadership transcends beyond the values and needs of the follower, exploiting tensions between personal and organizational value structures.<sup>57</sup> The ultimate goal of transformational leadership is to spark a mutually stimulating relationship between leaders and followers, which turns followers into leaders, and leaders into moral agents.<sup>58</sup>

The two most prevalent models that measure transformational leadership behaviors are the multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) and the Transformational Leadership Inquiry (TLI).<sup>59</sup> These models are useful tools for understanding the most salient aspects of transformational leadership. The MLQ measures idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, the TLI measures six behaviors: identifying and articulating a vision, providing an appropriate model, fostering the acceptance of group goals, high performance expectations, providing individualized support, and intellectual stimulation.<sup>61</sup> Army leadership doctrine should combine elements of the MLQ and TLI to measure the degree of transformational leadership in an organization.

## Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire

The MLQ measures four components of transformational leadership against two components of transactional leadership. It also considers the prevalence of laissez-faire leadership in an organization. When measuring transactional leadership, the two components in question are contingent reward and

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<sup>56</sup> Bass and Riggio, 3.

<sup>57</sup> James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 42.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>59</sup> Hector R. Diaz-Saenz, "Transformational Leadership," in *The SAGE Handbook of Leadership*, 301.

<sup>60</sup> Mhatre and Riggio, 231.

<sup>61</sup> Diaz-Saenz, 301

management-by-exception. Contingent reward represents incentives-based practices. Management by-exception is the practice of elevating only specified issues to higher management levels, which allows leaders to be somewhat hands-off. Laissez-faire leadership is completely hands-off, and while it does not denote the absence of leadership, it describes leadership that does not take necessary action when required.

The first component of transformational leadership, idealized influence, attempts to measure leaders' ability to lead by example.<sup>62</sup> Leaders displaying idealized influence act as positive role models and issue visions that provide followers with a sense of organizational purpose. Positive role models are grounded in high moral and ethical codes, which earns followers' respect and trust. Followers typically abandon self-interests and achieve collective goals when idealized influence is high. Idealized influence includes two subsets that measure leaders' attributional and behavioral qualities. These are based on followers' perception of the leaders' charismatic traits or behaviors.<sup>63</sup>

Inspirational motivation is the second component of transformational leadership, and it attempts to measure the leaders' ability to motivate and inspire their followers through purposeful and challenging work. Indicators of inspirational motivation include followers' optimism, enthusiasm, and camaraderie.<sup>64</sup> Leaders with a high measure of inspirational motivation encourage followers to share and contribute to the organization's goals and vision. Together, idealized influence and inspirational motivation comprise the charismatic attribute of transformational leaders.

The third component of transformational leadership is intellectual stimulation. This component measures leaders' ability to generate creativity and innovation. Intellectual stimulation not only encourages followers to approach problems, but allows followers to question the approach itself in order to reframe problems and find novel solutions when necessary. Allowing followers to think innovatively forges trust and empowerment in achieving organizational goals.

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<sup>62</sup> Bass and Riggio, 6.

<sup>63</sup> Mhatre and Riggio, 231.

<sup>64</sup> Bass and Riggio, 6.

The fourth component of transformational leadership is individualized consideration.

Transformational leaders are personable and capable of displaying their distinction between general employees and individual persons.<sup>65</sup> Individualized consideration measures leaders' ability to provide for followers' needs.<sup>66</sup> Leaders with a high degree of individualized consideration promote two-way communications with followers. Leaders' personalized interactions with followers result in a teaching, mentoring, and coaching relationship.

The multifactor leadership questionnaire carefully examines leaders' behaviors that are consistent with each of these four components of transformational leadership. According to the MLQ model, leaders that exhibit all four components of transformational leadership establish mutually beneficial relationships with their followers based on deeply rooted needs and desires. The four components of transformational leadership in the MLQ exist in contrast to transactional or laissez-faire leadership behaviors. Though still a part of the MLQ, the contingent-reward and management-by-exception components highlight the centrality of followers' actions in exchange for specific consequences; in other words, these components indicate transactional leadership. On the other hand, the laissez-faire component highlights the lack of action of leadership.<sup>67</sup>

## Transformational Leadership Inventory

Recall the six behaviors of transformational leaders according to the TLI: identifying and articulating a vision, providing an appropriate model, fostering the acceptance of group goals, high performance expectations, providing individualized support, and intellectual stimulation. The TLI model challenges the MLQ's measurement of exclusively in-role follower responses to transformational leadership.<sup>68</sup> Similar to the MLQ, however, the TLI measures transactional behavior using contingent

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<sup>65</sup> Bass and Riggio, 7.

<sup>66</sup> Mhatre and Riggio, 231.

<sup>67</sup> Bass and Riggio, 7-9.

<sup>68</sup> Podsakoff et al., 109.

reward behavior.<sup>69</sup> Philip Podsakoff, clinical professor at the University of Florida's College of Business, asserts that followers' extra-role behaviors are critical indicators of the effects of transformational leadership.<sup>70</sup> Most importantly, the TLI model suggests that both trust and followers' satisfaction mediate the impact of the six leader behaviors on followers' extra-role behaviors.

Behaviors associated with the TLI are similar to the MLQ. Transformational leaders must identify and articulate a vision. A well-developed and articulated vision inspires new opportunities within the organization. Providing an appropriate model requires leadership by example. To foster the acceptance of group goals, transformational leaders promote cooperation amongst followers to achieve common goals. Transformational leaders also have high expectations of followers' performance, which they commonly communicate by providing individualized support—showing respect and concern for followers' personal feelings and needs. Lastly, the TLI measures intellectual stimulation, which cultivates creativity and innovation.<sup>71</sup>

“Faith in and loyalty in the leader” best conceptualizes Podsakoff's definition of trust as it mediates these six behaviors. Additionally, intrinsic, extrinsic, and general satisfaction define the three dimensions of follower satisfaction. In concert, trust, satisfaction, and both transformational and transactional leadership behaviors directly influence followers' extra-role behaviors, or “organizational citizenship behaviors.” These behaviors, which followers exhibit, include altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy, and civic virtue. Although not formally required, these discretionary follower behaviors empower the organization to function effectively. Altruism promotes teamwork, effectively bringing followers together to solve relevant organizational problems. Conscientiousness is the degree to which followers will go above and beyond minimum requirements. Sportsmanship correlates to resilience and healthy toleration of unideal circumstances. Willingness to work with other followers to prevent organizational problems is indicative of courtesy. Lastly, civic virtue is a measure of participation or

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>70</sup> Podsakoff et al., 109.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 112.

involvement that indicates a followers' commitment to an organization.<sup>72</sup>

Despite being a leadership theory focused heavily on influencing followers, transformational leadership theory relies too heavily on the leader's charisma and behavior. Transformational leadership theory also does not consider the contributions of procedure, the situation, or followers' interactions with the leader.<sup>73</sup> Rather than taking a systems approach to leadership, transformational leadership is highly dependent on leader characteristics and behaviors, which cedes itself to the broader category of traits theory. For a theory that focuses more on the symbiotic relationship between leader and follower, it is necessary to analyze LMX theory.

### LMX Theory: For a Better Team

Leader-member exchange theory is based on the idea that leader-follower relationships vary across different members and leaders in an organization. It is not a leader-centric theory, rather a dyadic theory that emphasizes the affective aspects of leader-follower relationships. As a result, there is a strong correlation between the level of mutual trust, likeability, and respect that leaders and followers share and larger organizational outcomes such as behaviors, job satisfaction, performance, and employee turnover. Understanding LMX theory requires knowledge of its theoretical underpinnings, as well as leader and member behaviors or characteristics that typically result in higher quality relationships.

Leader-member exchange theory is rooted in social exchange theory, where one party initiates with a favor and another party reciprocates. Conducting favors for one another results in a habitual relationship. The relationship transforms from a mere economic exchange to more of a social exchange. The LMX theory does not submit that leaders intentionally differentiate between followers, but it does acknowledge that differentiation occurs naturally. In terms of organizational efficacy, the social exchange theory asserts that the exchange of favors between partners establishes reasonable norms with respect to the time that it takes to reciprocate favors. Furthermore, high-quality relationships result in motivated

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>73</sup> Diaz-Saenz, 307.

exchanges without either party keeping count. Essentially, increasing the quality of LMX results in better organizational results.<sup>74</sup>

Some member personality traits contributed noticeably to LMX development. Conscientiousness, goal orientation, empathy, proactiveness, affectivity, agreeableness, extraversion, and high emotional intelligence all provided at least some correlation to higher-quality relationships with leaders. Notably, member citizenship returned higher LMX quality than performance. In exchange, leaders that exhibit transformational leadership traits such as ethical leadership, communicating vision, and charisma resulted in higher quality LMX with their subordinates.<sup>75</sup>

Organizations that exhibit high quality LMX also display healthy levels of mutual influence, access to resources and information, conflict management, and learning and growth opportunities.<sup>76</sup> This further translates to better job attitudes and behaviors that promote organizational citizenship behaviors and creativity.<sup>77</sup> Studies show that employee turnover rates decreased while early career success rates increased as a result of higher qualities of LMX.<sup>78</sup>

The limitations of LMX applied as an organizational construct stem largely from its difficulty to quantify the quality of a relationship.<sup>79</sup> Additionally, LMX is best suited to complement other theoretical approaches—or vice versa.<sup>80</sup> The two most popular measurements for LMX are LMX-7, which consists of 7 questions, and LMX-MDM (Multidimensionality of LMX), which consists of 12 questions. Both the LMX-7 and LMX-MDM attempt to add quantitative values to leader-member exchange intangibles such

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<sup>74</sup> Berrin Erdogan and Talya N. Bauer, “Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory: The Relational Approach to Leadership,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Leadership and Organizations*, 407-409.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 411-412.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 414-415.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 418.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 420-421.

<sup>79</sup> David V. Day and Darja Miscenko, “Leader-Member Exchange (LMX): Construct Evolution, Contributions, and Future Prospects for Advancing Leadership Theory,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Leader-Member-Exchange*, ed. Talya N. Bauer and Berrin Erdogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 23.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

as loyalty, mutual respect, trust, support, and reciprocity.<sup>81</sup> Perhaps the most significant challenge with any LMX process model is that they more effectively measure the model itself rather than the actual quality of LMX—which identifies the core challenge of any leadership survey. In other words, leadership surveys do not necessarily measure leadership.<sup>82</sup>

## CLT: For a Better Framework

Complexity leadership theory harnesses complexity rather than traditional bureaucratic paradigms.<sup>83</sup> Most bureaucratic paradigms assert that the role of the leader is to manage or reduce conflict. On the other hand, CLT embraces organizational conflict, exploiting the friction between multiple systems to encourage innovation and adaptability.<sup>84</sup> According to CLT, leadership represents more than position and authority; leadership is a dynamic with emergent and interactive properties. In the context of the contemporary Knowledge Era, leadership must be rooted in complexity science, and leadership theories must account for the contemporary work environment as interactive complex adaptive systems.<sup>85</sup> McKelvey and Boisot’s law of requisite complexity asserts that increasing a system’s complexity idealizes its capacity to pursue complex challenges—essentially, complexity defeats complexity.<sup>86</sup> Leadership that harnesses complexity is the type of leadership required for the Army to win in large-scale combat and multi-domain operations.

There are three broad types of leadership in complexity leadership theory: administrative, adaptive, and enabling. CLT intertwines the complex interactions between the administrative, adaptive,

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>82</sup> Day and Miscenko, 23.

<sup>83</sup> Russ Marion and Mary Uhl-Bien, “Complexity Leadership Theory,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Leadership*, 473.

<sup>84</sup> Michael J. Arena and Mary Uhl-Bien, “Complexity Leadership Theory: Shifting from Human Capital to Social Capital” 39, no. 2 (March 2016), 24.

<sup>85</sup> Russ Marion, Bill McKelvey, and Mary Uhl-Bien, “Complexity Leadership Theory: Shifting Leadership from the Industrial Age to the Knowledge Era,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (August 2007): 298–318, 299.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 301; Max Boisot and Bill McKelvey, “Complexity and Organization-Environment Relations: Revisiting Ashby’s Law of Requisite Variety,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Complexity and Management* (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2011), 279.



and enabling types of leadership. CLT also requires four critical presumptions: the context or persona of leadership or complex adaptive systems, responsiveness to adaptive challenges, the distinction between leadership and leaders, and between leadership and managerial positions.<sup>87</sup> In summary then, CLT provides a descriptive framework between the three broad types of leadership—administrative, adaptive, and enabling—that provides for interaction between internal complex adaptive systems and bureaucracy.

## Administrative Leadership

It is important to note that in formal organizations, some bureaucracy is both inevitable and unavoidable. Generally, administrative leadership categorizes these traditional bureaucratic leader functions. Administrative leadership roles occur at all hierarchies of the organization, including the strategic, organizational, and individual levels. Furthermore, it describes the actions of individuals or groups in formal roles associated with the planning and coordination of organizational activities.

Top-down driven and largely based on notions of position and authority, administrative leadership empowers decision making in organizations. Administrative leadership also associates with vision building, task management, crises management, time management, and acquiring resources to achieve goals. As a component of CLT, administrative leadership should exercise positional authority to solicit innovation and adaptability. When administrative leadership decisions to bolster efficiency come at the cost of adaptability, it impedes the organization's capacity for relevance in the contemporary environment.<sup>88</sup>

## Adaptive Leadership

Adaptive leadership is “emergent change behaviors under conditions of interaction, interdependence, asymmetrical information, complex network dynamics, and tension.”<sup>89</sup> It is the catalyst

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<sup>87</sup> Marion, McKelvey, and Uhl-Bien, 299.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 305-306.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 309.

for organizational change.<sup>90</sup> Adaptive leadership is neither a person nor a position, but adaptive leadership does involve people. Broadly, adaptive leadership occurs at multiple levels of leadership and requires two critical concepts: network dynamics and emergence.

Adaptive leadership measures the interaction or degree of asymmetry between authority and preferences. Adaptive leadership seeks to embrace the interactive dynamics associated with asymmetry of preferences as opposed to asymmetry of authority. Examples of preferences are knowledge, skills, norms, and values. Asymmetry of authority usually results in traditional top-down leadership, which is typical of most organizations.<sup>91</sup> This constrains individuals' behaviors towards the organization's core purpose, and is particularly useful in relatively stable environments. This type of asymmetry creates advanced operational systems that maximize efficiency and internal efficacy. However, these operational efficiencies militate against adaptability, agility, and innovation.<sup>92</sup> On the other hand, asymmetry of preferences results in a clash of perceivably incompatible concepts, ideas, and knowledge, which yields more adaptive and innovative organizations.<sup>93</sup> Adaptive leadership not only exploits these clashes, but seeks to generate even more of them.

Adaptive leadership is rooted in these clashes, particularly between agents of multiple complex adaptive systems.<sup>94</sup> These agents interact through network dynamics, which are dynamics that generate the desirable organizational traits of adaptability, learning, and creativity. Network dynamics consist of contexts and mechanisms. Simply put, contexts refer to a wide array of circumstances. Mechanisms refer to patterns of behavior. Examples of contexts can be environmental demands that change quickly, rules or procedures, feedback loops, or symbiotic relationships. Within these particular circumstances, mechanisms, or patterns of behavior occur such as aggregating ideas, flow of information, or easing of

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 306.

<sup>91</sup> Marion, McKelvey, and Uhl-Bien, 306-308.

<sup>92</sup> Michael J. Arena, *Adaptive Space: How GM and Other Companies Are Positively Disrupting Themselves and Transforming Into Agile Organizations* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2018), 11.

<sup>93</sup> Marion, McKelvey, and Uhl-Bien, 307.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 309.

tensions. The interaction of contexts and mechanisms themselves exist in two categories. One category involves the interactions that produce ideas and knowledge, and the other category involves the interaction of those ideas and knowledge themselves. This process results in the production of even more complex ideas and knowledge, while some ideas and knowledge cease to exist.<sup>95</sup> This process is adaptive leadership.

Emergence refers to the spontaneous organizing process of these new complex ideas and knowledge.<sup>96</sup> This process involves two mechanisms: reformulation and self-organization. Reformulation refers to unpredictable and nonlinear change on a fundamental level. Reformulation typically occurs as a result of a feedback loop. On the other hand, self-organization is internally driven by agents or complex adaptive systems, usually with some degree of preference due to common purpose. In CLT, adaptive leadership perpetuates emergence and network dynamics of complex adaptive systems across multiple levels of an organization—the result is more adaptability, learning, and creativity.<sup>97</sup>

## Enabling Leadership

If adaptive leadership develops organizational adaptability, learning, and creativity, enabling leadership acts as its catalyst. Enabling conditions that catalyze adaptive leadership requires interaction, interdependency, and tension. The other function of enabling leadership is to manage the intermingling between adaptive and administrative leadership. In that sense, enabling leaders are brokers that blend the administrative and adaptive systems. Enabling leadership accomplishes this by creating conditions that allow adaptive leadership to exist, and to disseminate the innovative results throughout the formal system.<sup>98</sup>

Enabling leaders are organizational architects that promote interactions between complex

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<sup>95</sup> Marion, McKelvey, and Uhl-Bien, 307.

<sup>96</sup> Zachery T. Brown, “A Crude Look at the Whole: A Simple Guide to Complexity for National Security Professionals,” *The Strategy Bridge*, January 29, 2019, <https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2019/1/29/a-crude-look-at-the-whole-a-simple-guide-to-complexity-for-national-security-professionals>, accessed January 18, 2020.

<sup>97</sup> Marion, McKelvey, and Uhl-Bien, 307.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 308-309.

adaptive systems. At the organizational level, scheduling, creating rules, and organizing the physical work space all help promote interaction. At the strategic level, developing conditions to aid the interaction of complex adaptive organizational systems and complex adaptive environmental systems help expand the capacity of strategic leadership. Interdependency helps codify the products of interaction by inciting pressure to act. Interdependency also promotes the coordination of efforts of enabling leadership. Lastly, enabling leadership promotes or injects tension. Both internal and external tension are impetuses for action. Enabling leadership promotes dynamics that tolerate free thinking, are receptive to more judiciously added tension, and allows individuals to solve problems at the lowest levels. These dynamics all foster more tension, but with desirable characteristics like risk aversion and toleration of dissent against some imperative to create organizational solutions.<sup>99</sup>

Enabling leadership also manages the intermingling between adaptive and administrative leadership. A critical role of enabling leadership is the proper use of authority to ensure that adaptive and administrative systems are not working counter to each other's efforts.<sup>100</sup> Some practitioners of enabling leadership recommend creating adaptive spaces to enable more agile organizations.<sup>101</sup> Adaptive spaces are essentially social spaces that facilitate positive disruptions between individual workers at multiple levels of the organizations.<sup>102</sup> Adaptive spaces concentrate stock in the social capital of organizations rather than solely the human capital.<sup>103</sup> This dynamic, which enables the interplay of multiple entities, results in the creation of new ideas built beyond the typical assumptions of one particular level of the organization. To that purpose, enabling leadership also ideally shields complex adaptive systems from additional authoritative preferences or policies that might stifle creativity.<sup>104</sup> Enabling leadership works by embracing the tensions between the adaptive and administrative systems through brokerage networks.

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<sup>99</sup> Marion, McKelvey, and Uhl-Bien, 309.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 310-311.

<sup>101</sup> Arena, 8.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>104</sup> Marion, McKelvey, and Uhl-Bien, 312.

These brokerage networks allow the contexts of adaptive systems to gain formal recognition from the administrative systems without inhibiting bold creativity.<sup>105</sup> Proper allocation of organizational resources—physical and intangible, like time—is paramount to the learning and creativity of complex adaptive systems. This may require some extent of planning, which further impedes the emergent dynamic of complex adaptive systems. However, even in CLT, unfettered adaptive behaviors lacking any sort of order can compromise organizational strategy.<sup>106</sup>

Once innovation occurs, enabling leaders champion the ideas throughout the organization and further select which components move forward into the formalized bureaucratic system. To accomplish this, enabling leadership requires a direct link to and the support of the highest level of management. This allows enabling leaders to maintain interest in new ideas and solidify the support throughout all levels of the organizations. Furthermore, support from top management comes with the necessary power to keep new ideas functioning, ensuring no critical components of innovation are lost in translation in other complex adaptive systems.<sup>107</sup>

In summary, CLT offers a dynamic, complex, and diverse approach for organizational leadership. Complexity leadership theory challenges traditional notions of leadership that suggest leadership should be top-down, or bottom-up, or somewhere in balance. While acknowledging bureaucratic necessities, CLT further takes into account the interplay of complex adaptive systems in the Knowledge Era and provides a framework for becoming strategically relevant in the increasingly complex world.

### CLT as a Framework for Army Leadership Doctrine

Complexity leadership theory should be the foundational framework for Army leadership doctrine. The Army's current leadership doctrine is a collection of situational paradigms and traits that are inadequate to meet the demands of complexity. Complexity leadership theory welcomes additional

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<sup>105</sup> Arena and Uhl-Bien, 24.

<sup>106</sup> Marion, McKelvey, and Uhl-Bien, 312.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

paradigms, such as transformational leadership and LMX theories, while addressing complexity to provide the most complete framework for leadership. Complexity defeats complexity. Complexity leadership theory is thus capable of meeting the complex challenges of future large-scale combat or multi-domain operations.

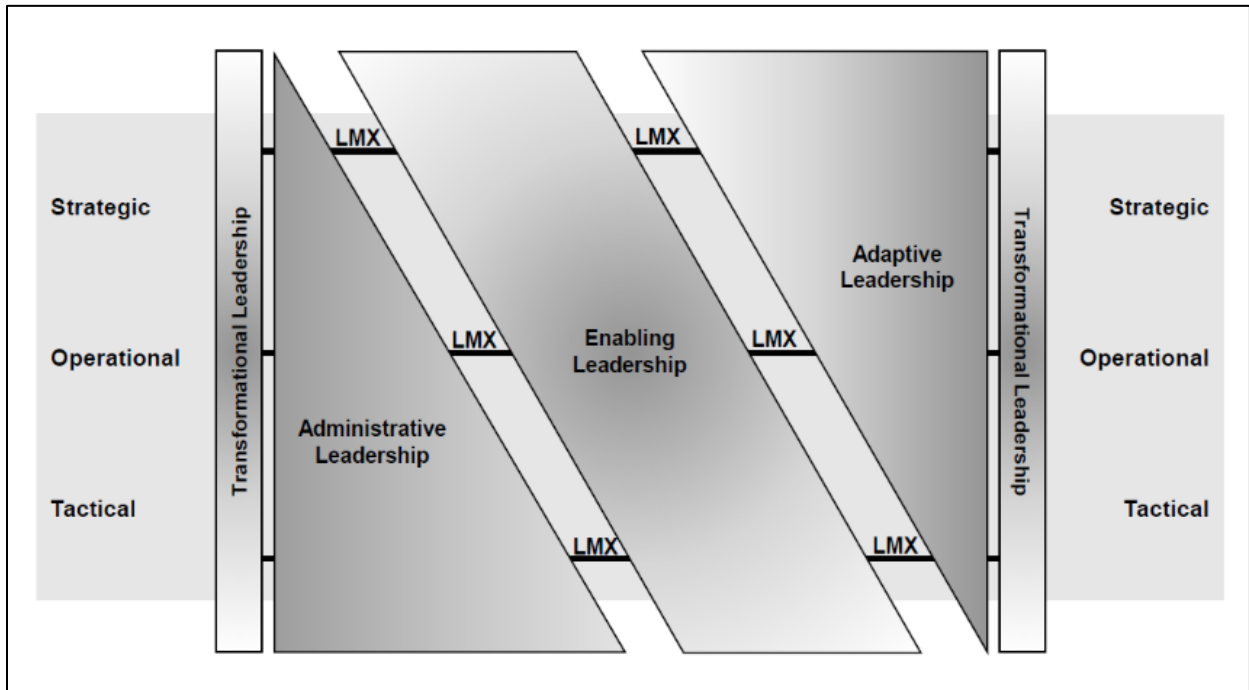


Figure 1: Proposed Framework for Army Leadership Doctrine

Large scale combat operations are associated with war against a peer or near-peer adversary. Historically, large scale combat operations, even those fought in World War II, have always been characterized as intense, lethal, complex, and full of fear, violence, and uncertainty. In the Knowledge Era, adversaries will employ conventional tactics, terrorism, cyber activity, criminal activity, and information and electromagnetic warfare to further complicate operations. Notably, ground combat operations will be increasingly inseparable from the information environment. Social technology exponentially amplifies the speed and frequency of human interaction, which further increases the complexity of the future operational environment.<sup>108</sup> Previously complicated tactical engagements have

<sup>108</sup> US Department of the Army, FM 3-0, 1-2.

become complex as a result of increasingly urbanized and interconnected population centers.<sup>109</sup> As a part of the Joint Force, the Army must be able to anticipate emerging challenges in the strategic and operational environments. The future characters of war will demand that Army leaders be morally and ethically grounded, adaptive, and creative at an unprecedented pace.

One of the most significant flaws in Army leadership doctrine is its levels of leadership model. The Army's levels of leadership model underestimates the complexity of the current operational environment across the range of military operations on the conflict continuum.<sup>110</sup> Complexity exists at all levels of leadership, especially in the Knowledge Era. The Army already has a complex structure for command echelons that can vary based on types of military operations. It is absolutely unnecessary to add more layers of category and bureaucracy to such a fluid system. Specialization and bureaucratic models are vulnerable to complexity and will lead to organizational collapse.<sup>111</sup> Nassim Taleb warns that layers of bureaucracy only force decisions based on abstract constructs, while wishfully hoping that agents make only rational and accountable decisions.<sup>112</sup> The rational-and-accountable-actions trap results in attempts to categorize leadership into a finite list of words, or traits, with some correlation to influence. It is the genesis of zero-defect leadership, which is a common symptom of toxic leadership.<sup>113</sup>

The paradox of Army leadership is that the most common and plausible response to toxic leadership, or any form of counterproductive leadership for that matter, becomes more traits, more models, more accountability, more bureaucracy, and more top-down directives to serve as a firewall.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> US Department of the Army, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1, *Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028* (Fort Eustis, VA: TRADOC Administrative Publications, 2018), D-6.

<sup>110</sup> US Department of the Army, FM 3-0, 1-1.

<sup>111</sup> Nassim N. Taleb, *Antifragile: Things That Gain From Disorder* (New York, NY: The Random House, 2012), 34.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>113</sup> Brock Young, "8 Symptoms of a Toxic Command Climate," *Task and Purpose*, November 3, 2015, accessed January 18, 2020, <https://taskandpurpose.com/8-symptoms-of-a-toxic-command-climate>.

<sup>114</sup> William LaFalce, "Handling Toxic Leadership," *Army University Press: NCO Journal*, October 25, 2017, accessed January 18, 2020, <https://www.Armyupress.Army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/Archives/2017/October/Handling-Toxic-Leadership/>.

ADP 6-22 recommends “positive behaviors and influence” for offsetting counterproductive leadership in complex operational environments.<sup>115</sup> The Army will continue to add more traits to compensate for the inevitable weak leader or to highlight the actions of the leader that successfully combats poor leadership. In the process of adding more caveats to attributes or competencies, the Army has to further extrapolate definitions of common English words. Recently, the Army added “humility” to its list of attributional traits.<sup>116</sup> This type of intervention provides symptomatic solutions and highlights the Army’s reductionist approach to leadership. Rather than delineate the difference between strategic, organizational, and direct-level leadership, the Army needs to recognize the complexity of the operational environment in the Knowledge Era. *Direct* and *organizational* level decisions can have both strategic and even political implications.<sup>117</sup>

The argument is not that humility or other traits in the ALRM are unnecessary, but that even the most exhaustive lists of traits, attributes, and competencies only address the characteristics of agents involved in the process of influence, or the human capital. Complexity leadership theory takes into account human capital, but also incorporates the medium for leadership as a process that prizes social capital. Complexity leadership theory provides a more comprehensive framework for Army leadership, especially for complex future operations. However, CLT alone is inadequate for governing the manner of administrative leadership—the necessary bureaucratic functions required of any organization. Specifically, CLT does not address the moral or ethical qualities of interactions between agents and other complex adaptive systems.<sup>118</sup> It only addresses the output quantities of adaptability, learning, and creativity. The ideal paradigm to address this limitation found in CLT is transformational leadership.

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<sup>115</sup> US Department of the Army, ADP 6-22, 8-8.

<sup>116</sup> US Department of the Army, ADP 6-22, 2-11; Corie Weathers, “The Army Has Introduced a New Leadership Value. Here’s Why It Matters,” *Military.com*, December 27, 2019, accessed January 18, 2020, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2019/12/27/Army-has-introduced-new-leadership-value-heres-why-it-matters.html>.

<sup>117</sup> Emile Simpson, *War From the Ground Up: Twenty-First-Century Combat as Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 125.

<sup>118</sup> Deborah Ancona, Elaine Backman, and Kate Isaacs, “Nimble Leadership: Walking the Line between Creativity and Chaos,” *Harvard Business Review* 97, no. 4 (August 7, 2019): 74-83, 80.



Transformational leadership emphasizes moral and ethical standards. It also gives purpose to not only the followers but the organization as a whole. Transformational leadership must complement the administrative leadership system of the complexity leadership theory framework to be applicable in Army doctrine (see Figure 1). Recall that administrative leadership occurs at all levels of the organization. However, administrative leadership is more prevalent at the lower, task-management levels of leadership. The current Army leader requirements model is most applicable to administrative leadership systems. However, suggesting a situational approach to leadership underestimates the complexity of the operational environment of the Knowledge Era. Despite being an order of semantics, transformational leadership, as opposed to situational leadership, answers the requirement to understand the greater purpose of military operations—be it strategic, operational, or tactical. Therefore, the dynamics of Army leadership must change.

Rather than the dynamics of Army leadership being the leader, the led, and the situation, they should be the leader, the led, and the *purpose*, rooted in higher moral and ethical codes required of military professionals.<sup>119</sup> By restructuring the leadership dynamic to consider the leader, the led, and the *purpose*, Army design teams at all levels will start to broaden their perspectives beyond situational and temporary circumstances, embracing the complexity of the contemporary operational environment. This change will also allow Army leaders to be more predisposed to better anticipate the future, because leaders that embrace complexity are more adaptive. This transformational change to the dynamics of Army leadership will set the military up for success in the complexity of the operational environment in the Knowledge Era.

Adaptive leadership is applicable across tactical, operational, and strategic levels of conflict. However, adaptive leadership systems are more prevalent in higher echelons because systems become increasingly complex and adaptive along with the physical quantity of interactions (see figure 1). The Army embraces adaptive leadership systems, and leader development in the Army generally aims to allow

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<sup>119</sup> US Department of the Army, ADP 6-22, 1-10.

subjectively complex concepts to become easier to comprehend for inexperienced leaders.<sup>120</sup> The Army design methodology further provides Army leaders with a process that generates adaptive dynamics.<sup>121</sup> However, designing military operations for large-scale combat or multi-domain operations will require embracing complex network dynamics to maximize the emergence of adaptive and innovative ideas at all echelons. This requires better enabling leadership systems.

Enabling leadership is the crux of CLT. Enabling leadership systems provide clear distinctions between organizations that embrace complexity as opposed to organizations that merely acknowledge or even attempt to mitigate and avoid complexity. Enabling leadership creates adaptive space—the social or physical space that permits emergence (see Figure 1).<sup>122</sup> Embracing complexity requires creating the adaptive space in which adaptive leadership can thrive. Certain traits do predispose leaders to excel as enabling leaders—for which the ALRM is sufficient. But in light of the limitations of traits theories, organizations must place more emphasis on the quality of relationships. For that, the Army must consider LMX theory to complement enabling leadership systems (see Figure 1).

Leader-member exchange theory suggests that leadership is the product of a relationship between leaders and followers. The same relational perspectives extend to lateral relationships outside the chain of command.<sup>123</sup> The cooperative relationship is a valuable source of power.<sup>124</sup> The challenge with this relational approach in the Army is the taboo of partiality and, as John Kotter suggests, naïve and cynical assumptions about selfish or political gain.<sup>125</sup> Furthermore, the relational approach is perceivably exclusive, which is a problem for the Army because it excludes bosses and superiors with incompatible

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<sup>120</sup> US Department of the Army, FM 6-22, 5-7.

<sup>121</sup> US Department of the Army, Army Technical Publication (ATP) 5-0.1, *Army Design Methodology* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2015), 1-3.

<sup>122</sup> Arena, 9.

<sup>123</sup> Mary Uhl-Bien, “Relational Leadership Theory: Exploring the Social Processes of Leadership and Organizing,” *The Leadership Quarterly Yearly Review of Leadership* 17, no. 6 (December 2006): 654–76, 656; John P. Kotter, *Power and Influence: Beyond Formal Authority* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 60; US Department of the Army, ADP 6-22, 5-1.

<sup>124</sup> Kotter, 41.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

personalities which could cause some concerns for fairness.<sup>126</sup> The Army attempts to mitigate incongruencies in personal preferences with the traits “builds trust” and “interpersonal tact.” In other words, trust is valuable, but to avoid impartiality, the ability to forge trust with interpersonal skills is the desirable trait. The wholesale intent of these traits means well, but for enabling leadership systems, lists of desirable traits attempt to manage the complex dynamics of conflict that actually promote learning, adaptation, and creativity.

In large-scale combat and multi-domain operations, it is impossible to overstate the significance of requisite emergence. Designing and implementing complex operations that are capable of overcoming the Knowledge Era’s complex operational environment will require both internal conflict and strong relationships. Leader-member exchange theory highlights an exploitable opportunity in adaptive spaces that result from strong relationships between agents of multiple complex adaptive systems. While internal conflict is imperative for emergence, final design products will require direct support for organizational implementation. In the context of military operations, this means that commanders should have the latitude to preferentially select champions for design implementation. From an enterprise perspective, this has human resource and talent management implications. It adds a layer of complexity to the current bureaucratic model of military assignments that are deeply rooted in leader development and promotion trends. For example, the Army’s newly commissioned Talent Management Task Force, intended to update talent management from Industrial Age to Information Age systems, still uses an attrition-based model for officer promotions.<sup>127</sup> Some servicemembers across the enterprise might feel disadvantaged by a human resource management system that assigns personnel based on a model that emphasizes “right people, right time, and right relationships.”<sup>128</sup> However, placing organizational performance ahead of personal interests should be leadership doctrine’s highest priority.

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>127</sup> Bob O’Brien, “Talent Management Army Staff LPD,” *US Army*, February 2, 2020, accessed March 9, 2020, <https://talent.army.mil/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/TMTF-LPD-Slides.pdf>.

<sup>128</sup> Mary Uhl-Bien, George B. Graen, and Terri A. Scandura, “Implications of LMX For Strategic Human Resource Management Systems: Relationship as Social Capital for Competitive Advantage,” *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management* 18 (2000): 137–85, 144.

Most importantly, enabling leadership requires a degree of immunity from administrative leadership to shield adaptive leadership systems from “necessary” bureaucracies (see Figure 1). The counterproductive approach would be to create more bureaucracy and sub-entities. Then, enabling leadership itself would become engulfed by the administrative system which is counterproductive to adaptive leadership. Without radically altering the current career structure, enabling agents require nearly unfettered support and access up and down the administrative bureaucracy of the complexity framework. Otherwise, agents in enabling leadership systems will be unwilling sacrifice their reputations.<sup>129</sup> In the corporate sector, enabling leaders are often chief executive officers.<sup>130</sup> Considering the organizational structure of the Army, senior leaders across multiple echelons are best situated to act as brokers for their respective organization in large scale combat and multi-domain operations. However, this type of empowerment requires fundamental change and support through the formal command structures.

## Conclusion

Using CLT as a framework for Army leadership doctrine will promote restructuring leader functions, human resource management and organizational structures, and the Army’s operations process. Transformational leadership paradigms will regulate the nepotistic undertones of relational theories, including LMX theory, further reinforcing the narrative that the Army is unwilling to compromise its organizational values. Applying the framework of CLT as an iterative process in the context of training for or operating in complex large-scale combat and multi-domain operations will help the Army towards confronting, and in turn defeating, complexity.<sup>131</sup>

The Knowledge Era will continue to bring about radical changes to the way political agents approach great power conflicts. Future studies should examine how CLT as a framework for Army

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<sup>129</sup> Marion, McKelvey, and Uhl-Bien, 313.

<sup>130</sup> FIU Center for Leadership, *The Leadership Lectures: Mary Uhl-Bien, Ph.D*, filmed [April 2019], YouTube video, 1:10:52, posted [April 2019], accessed March 36, 2020, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_T0tR43xSzy](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_T0tR43xSzy), 58:50.

<sup>131</sup> Jamshid Gharajedaghi, *Systems Thinking: Managing Chaos and Complexity: A Platform for Designing Business Architecture*, 3rd Edition (Amsterdam: Morgan Kaufmann, 2011), 92.

leadership doctrine can redesign an enterprise that tolerates and embraces uncertainty and complexity to best anticipate the future. Crises act as agents for change, but in future conflicts, crises with the speed of information and innovation presents existential threats to national security. The US Army needs to reconsider how it establishes organizational structures, functions, and processes that promote network dynamics for the emergence of military strategies and operations to maintain relevance in operational environments that resemble complex adaptive systems.

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