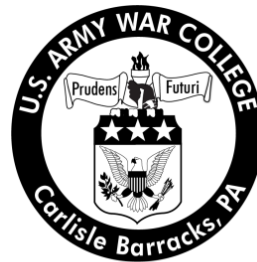


Strategy Research Project

Broadening Army Leaders for the Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous Environment

by

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United States Army War College
Class of 2012

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**BROADENING ARMY LEADERS FOR THE VOLATILE, UNCERTAIN, COMPLEX
AND AMBIGUOUS ENVIRONMENT**

by

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ABSTRACT

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After ten years of continuous conflict, the U.S. Army has withdrawn its forces from Iraq and is reducing force structure in Afghanistan. However, it will still face a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment that will require commitments from joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multi-national (JIIM) partners. As the Army's operational tempo decreases, it has a unique opportunity to 1) develop and implement an officer broadening program through the establishment of a balanced career between time spent with soldiers and JIIM partners, 2) change its cloistered culture from Army centric to multicultural focused, and 3) update its industrial-era officer assignment process to capture the unique capabilities and experiences of individual officers and fill the needs of commanders facing complex challenges. Overcoming these hurdles will result in an adaptive and agile Officers Corps that is capable of effectively integrating JIIM partners and is prepared to fight and win in a VUCA environment.

BROADENING ARMY LEADERS FOR THE VOLATILE, UNCERTAIN, COMPLEX AND AMBIGUOUS ENVIRONMENT

When it comes to predicting the nature and location of our next military engagements, since Vietnam, our record has been perfect. We have never once gotten it right, from the Mayaguez to Grenada, Panama, Somalia, the Balkans, Haiti, Kuwait, Iran, and more – we had no idea a year before any of these missions that we would be so engaged.¹

—Robert M. Gates,
Former Secretary of Defense

The 21st century, most recently characterized as a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment, will continue to challenge U.S. National Security Interests with persistent and evolving threats.² Following September 11, 2001, the U.S. has faced continuous combat in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other parts of the world resulting in enormous costs in lives and financial resources. The military's operational tempo (OPTEMPO) has strained its ability to meet global demands while still being prepared for unpredictable events that may suddenly arise. Today, the Contemporary Operating Environment continues to develop. At the end of 2011, all U.S. military forces departed Iraq leaving behind a fragile democracy. By the end of 2014, most, if not all, military forces will leave Afghanistan. Amidst the winding down of these two conflicts, the U.S. and the world struggle with economies verging on recession or depression and a diminished political and national will to commit military forces to future conflicts. Yet, the world will continue to look to and demand leadership from the U.S.

In the past ten years, the Army has adapted its force structure, doctrine, acquisition, and training programs to resurrect the past lessons of fighting counterinsurgencies. These changes have served the Army well and resulted in a generation of officers who have faced tremendous challenges and honed their

counterinsurgency skills in the crucible of war. The challenge for the Army is how to best inculcate those hard fought lessons learned into the institution and continue to develop adaptive and agile leaders who are prepared for the next fight in an era of constrained resources. One of the key lessons that must not be lost is the ability to understand the culture, integrate, and operate closely with joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) partners in the execution of national policies and strategies.

In order to develop adaptive and agile leaders who are comfortable operating in the VUCA and JIIM dominated environments, the Army must accomplish three things: 1) change its culture of pursuing a narrowly defined operational path to success, 2) implement a broadening program, and 3) revamp an outdated industrial-era assignment process. These important changes, which are the focus of this paper, can be accomplished through the expansion and institutionalization of JIIM assignments that will allow officers to broaden their experiences outside of the Army without penalizing their chances for a rewarding and successful career.

As the Army faces the twin specters of a VUCA Joint Operating Environment and deep cuts to its budget, change will require a delicate balance between leader development, force structure, operations, and modernization. Yet at this time of uncertainty, the Army has a tremendous opportunity to ‘get it right’ and adequately prepare itself for future strife.

According to the Joint Forces Command’s *Joint Operating Environment 2010*, “over the next quarter century, U.S. military forces will be continually engaged in some dynamic combination of combat, security, engagement, and relief and reconstruction.”³

The nature of war will not change; remaining a political act with two forces coming together in a clash of political wills with the winner normally being the one who adapts the fastest to changing circumstances.⁴ Yet the conditions that the Army will face are ever evolving.

The first condition that the world will face is a growing population. By the early 2030s, the world will grow by over a billion people, to eight billion, the majority of which are in developing countries where abject poverty prevails.⁵ The increasingly crowded world will result in a fight for scarce resources. It is estimated that the global demand for energy will be 50% greater than it is today and that energy production will need to rise by 1.3% per year.⁶ China, with a continually growing economy and demand for resources, is already looking to Africa to meet its demand. One example is the presence of Chinese “civilians” in the Sudan to guard oil pipelines underlining China’s concern for protecting its oil supplies.⁷ Between 2005 and 2010, China’s outward investment to the Middle East and Africa was 99 billion dollars or 31.3% of its total outward investment, giving more loans to African governments and business than the World Bank.⁸ In the fight for resources, governments may feel that they have no other option to compete than by the use of force.

The second condition is the continuing pace of globalization. The world is becoming an increasingly connected planet where economies, politics, and cultures crash together. The meeting often occurs in developing countries where natural resources and the abundance of cheap labor offer the ability for continued economic growth. As those developing countries benefit from globalization, their populations begin to experience rising expectations for their own way of life. The technologies that

accompany globalization open the world for the average citizen and they are able to compare their own lives against other countries with higher standards of living. In Africa, between 2003 and 2008, cell phone subscribers rose from 54 million to 350 million with a forecast of almost 80% of the population of 15 African countries using cell phones by 2012.⁹ A growing perception of “haves” and “have nots” will develop and put pressure on the governments to answer the demand. The rise in expectations can overwhelm governments that are not prepared to adapt and meet increasing demands on their infrastructure, culture, and economies. Globalization also brings in multinational corporations and actors that lack strong humanitarian values and see cheap labor and natural resources as an opportunity to exploit these developing nations. Once these corporations and actors deplete the resources, they will leave behind a population desiring to live in the First World but are unable to reach such lofty aspirations, thus leading to internal and regional instability, which will adversely affect U.S. interests.

A third condition, a by-product of globalization and technology advancements, is the specter of pandemics. The world has already experienced the devastating effects of the “Black Death,” bubonic plague, in the Fourteenth Century, which killed off nearly one third of Europe’s population.¹⁰ From 1918-1919, the world was overwhelmed by the “Spanish Flu,” which killed between 20 and 40 million people further crippling international efforts to recover from the massive effects of World War I.¹¹ More recently, the world identified and tackled the 2003 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the 2009 H1N1 flu strain, which threatened global consequences and a repeat of the decimation of the world’s population. Cooperation at the international and local level enabled both threats to be neutralized.¹² However, as the world continues to grow and

the hunt for resources expands into ungoverned spaces, the threat of exposure to new devastating diseases will grow. The resulting breakdown in societal structure and mechanisms through fear and death will require that the military – the one institution with the capabilities, discipline, and doctrine – be called upon to preserve and restore order. Thucydides description of the impact of the plague on Athens portend future challenges “for the catastrophe was so overwhelming that men, not knowing what would happen next to them, became indifferent to every rule of religion or law.”¹³ While pandemics have naturally occurred in the past, violent extremist organizations (VEO) are actively seeking the ability to use disease as a weapon to attack the West.

The fourth condition of the future VUCA environment is the continuing fight against VEOs. The Global War on Terrorism has been a long and bloody fight between believers of an extreme form of Islam and the democratic principles and values of U.S. and other Western nations. This struggle, characterized as a “Clash of Civilizations” by Dr. Samuel Huntington, will continue into the foreseeable future and require continued vigilance and expenditure of resources in order to protect our national interests.¹⁴ According to the 2011 Army Posture Statement, “violent extremism in various forms will continue to constitute the most likely and immediate threat around the world.”¹⁵ The future may hold a more dangerous threat from “emergent hybrid adversaries who combine the agility and flexibility of being an irregular and decentralized enemy with the power and technology of a nation state.”¹⁶

Many more uncertain factors will shape the future global environment such as the continual evolution of the cyber domain, global climate change, and the ever-shifting strength of the international economic system. In each of the current and future

challenges that the military will face, Army officers will be called upon to plan, coordinate, and execute operations in a JIIM environment and within a variety of cultures that exist prior to the officer's arrival in a foreign country. In addition, an officer may experience different organizational cultures among the sister services and interagency.

An understanding of how to define "culture" is important to demonstrate that Army officers need multiple and varied experiences in different cultures to be prepared to operate in the VUCA and JIIM environment. Edgar Schein, noted for writing extensively on corporate culture, lays out a model to examine organizational culture. Schein defines three components of organizational culture: Artifacts, Values, and Basic Underlying Assumptions.¹⁷

Artifacts are the most visible level of culture – "its constructed physical and social environment. At this level one can look at physical space, the technological output of the group, its written and spoken language, artistic productions, and the overt behavior of its members."¹⁸ Values are defined as a group holding a set of certain beliefs and norms "serving as a source of identity and core mission," and "as a guide and as a way of dealing with the uncertainty of intrinsically uncontrollable or difficult events."¹⁹ Basic Underlying Assumptions are defined as "implicit assumptions that actually guide [a group's] behavior"²⁰ and "that if a basic assumption is strongly held in a group, members would find behavior based on any other premise inconceivable."²¹

The Army culture, along with the other military services, is unique among the departments and agencies of the U.S. government and most foreign cultures. The artifacts of the Army are displayed in its uniform, badges, headgear, and medals. Any

member of the Army can quickly identify the rank of another and establish a relationship of superior to subordinate, subordinate to superior, or peer to peer. The Army speaks a unique language filled with acronyms that intends to impart the message as quickly and efficiently as possible. The word “Hooah” is another example of an Army artifact that has many meanings, depending on the situation, and puzzles those not familiar with the Army. The Army’s reliance on PowerPoint slides as a primary form of communication sets it apart from most other organizations. Saluting followed by a unit greeting when one soldier meets a superior is an artifact that imparts respect. The Army has a discrete set of values: Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage that form the acronym: LDRSHIP.²² The Warrior Ethos of placing the mission first, never accepting defeat, never quitting, and never leaving a fallen comrade closely tie each soldier to the other in combat and peace even if they have never met before.²³ Tradition and a connection to the past are instilled in the lowest private to the highest general.

A Basic Underlying Assumption within the Army is a strict adherence to a chain of command structure where a superior officer’s decisions are assumed to be correct and the burden of proving the officer wrong weighs heavily upon a subordinate, potentially to the detriment to the soldier’s career if he challenges the superior. Additionally, superior officers are assumed to have information that the subordinate is not aware of. Military history is full of examples of disastrous operations in which poor decisions by a superior were not challenged and carried out because of this assumption. Soldiers are expected to be “in the right place, at the right time, in the right uniform” offering no excuse but accepting responsibility if they fail to live up their duties.

A 'can do' attitude of exerting all energy possible to overcome any obstacle is the expected norm. These underlying assumptions are inculcated and reinforced from the newest basic entry soldier to the highest general. The artifacts, values, and underlying assumptions within the Army's organizational culture have served it well when it fought wars where the military dominated the operational environment with few JIIM partners.

However, when an Army officer interacts with the interagency organizational culture, he²⁴ soon finds himself a "stranger in a strange land."²⁵ The artifacts of the interagency are not a uniform with rank, name, specialty badges, and short haircuts but rather a conglomeration of suits and dresses. Members of the interagency do not wear nametags, do not display their credentials on their chests, and may have long hair or beards and mustaches. Their prevalent form of written communication is the long single-spaced multi-page brief. They abhor any discussion involving PowerPoint.²⁶ The values of the interagency are as diverse as the number of departments and agencies within the Executive Branch and the individual's personal values and experiences are not subordinated or shaped to those of the organization that they belong. The basic underlying assumptions of the interagency are that most decisions are not final and authoritative but remain open to continued discussion and negotiation. Senior leaders within the interagency are not assumed to know more than the action officer or have made the right decision on a particular issue. The priorities of individual organizations can weigh greater than the pursuit of a collective objective. The Army officer will be confronted with a culture that has no patience for hierarchy but is rather a loose federation of agencies where personal relationships and "who you know" are more important than an individual's rank.

The cultural differences between the Army and interagency are deep and enduring. However, the focus over the past ten years has primarily been on developing an appreciation and understanding of the cultural aspects of the countries that we have operated in while almost ignoring the organizational culture of our governmental departments and agencies.

In 2001, DOD was slow to understand the importance of training its services in cross-cultural competencies. Most often deploying Soldiers, Airmen, Marines, and Sailors were given classes on the “Do’s and Don’ts” of a foreign culture, a brief description of Middle East and Islamic history, and pocket guides that gave the service member a few phrases in the foreign language. There was no analysis along Schein’s model on how the artifacts, values, and basic underlying assumptions of foreign cultures were developed and how they would react when encountering U.S. service members. By 2006, five years after the start of Operation Enduring Freedom and three years into Operation Iraqi Freedom, the military recognized that more in-depth training was required. In 2006, the Army’s Training and Doctrine Command designated the U.S. Army Intelligence Center as the Army’s “culture center” with four main tasks:

1. Developing Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian cultural products (with heavy emphasis on the Middle East)
2. Developing, refining, and assessing training standards
3. Expanding ongoing cyberspace initiatives
4. Building partnerships with military and civilian instructors.²⁷

The Army finally adapted to the importance of training its Soldiers to operate in a complex foreign environment. However, the battle was only half won. While the Army embraced the idea of teaching its soldiers and leaders to understand foreign cultures it did not extend the same attention to developing them to understand the diverse cultures of the JIIM partners fighting side by side with them on the battlefield.

A senior Army leader, when asked what his relationship was with the interagency, the leader responded with one word: frustrating.²⁸ He went on to explain that the interagency was composed of “different tribes with different methods of decision making” and that Army leaders have to understand and respect the different ways.²⁹ He added, that no matter the level of frustration, that if you want to accomplish anything “you have to be a player in the game, you have to participate.”³⁰ He concluded with the advice that Army leaders need to “understand the interagency perspective, that personalities matter, and relationships matter more than ever.”³¹

How is an Army leader able to gain this understanding of dealing with other interagency cultures? Over the past ten years, the Army’s main interaction with interagency partners has been in Iraq and Afghanistan while conducting counterinsurgency, stabilization, and reconstruction operations. This environment has been dominated by the military with the interagency partner interacting, often for the first time, at a disadvantage. As an individual or a member of a small team, the interagency partner is confronted with a large military organization that he relies heavily upon for security, transportation, logistics, information, intelligence, and access to the local population. The Army culture, vastly different from the interagency, dominates the relationship. The interagency partner has the responsibility of selling his value to the

Army organization and forming relationships in the midst of a highly stressful combat environment. On the other hand, the military counterpart is also experiencing a culture shock in determining how to best form an effective relationship with an interagency partner who brings no significant manpower, relies upon the Army for the most basic of needs, and does not understand its organizational climate and cultural nuances. The Army leader is also under the enormous pressures of planning, coordinating, and executing a myriad of combat operations in a VUCA environment. Within the framework of the Army's culture, there is an expectation that the leader will rapidly achieve quantifiable results, 'quick wins', in the short time that his unit is in theater. In addition to the interagency partner's and host nation foreign cultures, the Army leader has a multitude of other cultures in which to adapt: joint, coalition, non-governmental organizations, and the United Nations.

In 2005, our strategic leaders recognized the difficulty that the military was having in Iraq and Afghanistan in executing a coordinated reconstruction effort with its JIIM partners. President Bush signed National Security Presidential Directive-44 (NSPD-44) concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization. NSPD-44 assigned the Secretary of State as the lead Executive Branch agency to:

coordinate and lead integrated U.S. Government efforts to prepare, plan for, and conduct stabilization and reconstruction activities...and to coordinate with the Secretary of Defense to ensure harmonization with any planned or ongoing U.S. military operations across the spectrum of conflict.³²

Despite the fact that unity of effort was established, three years after the invasion of Iraq, the problems of cultural differences on the ground remained.

As the military draws down in Iraq and Afghanistan, it would be easy for senior Army leaders to turn their attention to the numerous challenges of an Army that has

experienced tremendous wear and tear on its equipment, structure, and personnel and “take a knee.” However, the current \$15 trillion National Debt has brought in an era of fiscal austerity and politicians are looking earnestly to the Department of Defense (DOD) to do its part through large budget cuts over the next ten years.³³ In January, 2012, DOD released its budget request for Fiscal Year 2013. While the budget was not broken down by individual services, it does account for a reduction of \$259 Billion in the military budget, over the next five years, in accordance with the Budget Control Act of 2011.³⁴ The impact on the Army is a ‘gradual resizing’ of its numbers from 570,000 to 490,000 and a reduction of eight Army brigades.³⁵ Senior DOD and Army leaders proclaim that its actions to align itself with the realities of fiscal austerity will result in “an adaptable and battle-tested Army that is our nation’s force for decisive action, capable of defeating any adversary on land.”³⁶ Nevertheless, the strategic environment shows no signs of calming: the long-term outcome of the Arab Spring, a changing of the guard in North Korea, the upcoming change in leadership in China, and the U.S.’s new focus on the Pacific Rim all harbor a VUCA environment today and into the future.

In the midst of ongoing and emerging challenges, the Army has the opportunity to inculcate the hard won lessons of the past ten years and better prepare itself for the future. The OPTEMPO of the Army is already declining with the Army reducing the length of unit deployments from twelve months to nine months, down from a high of 15-month deployments that were instituted in 2007.³⁷ With the number of deployments decreasing, Army officers will potentially have an opportunity to reset themselves and their families and focus on continuing to develop themselves as adaptive and agile leaders. The high OPTEMPO of the past ten years and the Army culture stressing and

rewarding officers who have multiple deployments has resulted in a decreased emphasis on professional development outside of the conduct of tactical and operational levels of war. In a 2011 Army Research Institute survey of 26,132 Army officers, 54% of the respondents had not served out of their Branch or Functional Area and 75% of them saw no “positive impact on promotion or command opportunities.”³⁸ In the same survey, 71% of Company Grade (Lieutenants and Captains) and 73% of Field Grade Officers (Majors and Lieutenant Colonels) “had never been formally advised and/or encouraged to seek broadening assignments.”³⁹ Senior Army leaders also have suffered from this narrow focus on the tactical and operational levels of war. A recent survey of 129 current Brigade Commanders found that 18% (23) had not attended Senior Service College (SSC), 46 (36%) had no joint credit, and of the 37 Infantry Branch Brigade Commanders nearly two thirds needed SSC and/or Joint Credit.⁴⁰

The Army has an opportunity but it needs to change its culture to take advantage of this transition. Historically, the Army has believed that it could fight the Nation’s wars with its sister services alone and succeed. However, the past ten years has shown that today’s and future conflicts will be fought side by side with JIIM partners.

In January 2012, President Obama and Secretary of Defense Panetta published new Defense Strategic Guidance, which included significant changes to the way the U.S. will exercise its military power in the future. Two noteworthy changes underscore the need for Army officers to be better prepared to work in the JIIM environment: “we will work with NATO allies to develop a “Smart Defense” approach to pool, share, and specialized capabilities as needed to meet 21st century challenges” and “we will seek to be the security partner of choice, pursuing partnerships with a growing number of

nations.”⁴¹ These two approaches have a major limitation imposed on them: “whenever possible, we will develop innovative, low-cost, and small-footprint approaches to achieve our security objectives, relying on exercises, rotational presence, and advisory capabilities.”⁴² No longer will the Army be the most dominant player in tackling global security challenges. Rather, as we have seen in Operation Odyssey Dawn (the 2011 bombing campaign in Libya), the Army will operate hand-in-hand within a multinational force and develop partner capabilities while minimizing the costs, amount of forces required, and duration of operations. The Army needs leaders who understand and embrace the culture of their partners and can effectively achieve the mission side-by-side with partners rather than leading from the front.

Fortunately, our doctrine and senior Army leaders are recognizing the need for Army officers who can operate in the VUCA and JIIM dominated environment. The Army Capstone Document states:

it [operational adaptability] also requires Army forces that are proficient in the fundamentals and possess common understanding of how to combine joint, Army, interagency, and multinational capabilities to assist friends, to protect and reassure indigenous populations, and to identify, isolate, and defeat enemies under uncertain and dynamic conditions.⁴³

The Chief of Staff of the Army put his emphasis on leader development: “we must ensure our future leaders understand their environment. A combination of socio-economic, political, cultural, and military factors will affect operations at all levels. We must develop leaders who are adaptable and flexible in solving complex problems.”⁴⁴

Finally, the 2011 Secretary of the Army guidance to the Colonel’s promotion board stated that one of the requirements for future senior Army leaders was the ability to “operate in joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational environments and use other capabilities in achieving their objectives.”⁴⁵

It is worthwhile to recognize that there is a need for Army leaders who understand and can operate effectively in the JIIM environment. It is another thing entirely to be able to achieve that capability. It is not enough that Army officers have worked with JIIM partners in combat or on a Combatant Commander's staff. An individual cannot fully grasp the capabilities and limitations of the JIIM cultures by merely talking to one another, taking a class on the subject, or watching a documentary. In order to effectively lead, manage, or work with JIIM partners, Army officers have to leave their comfort zone – “the best way to learn about other worldviews is to go and live in another world.”⁴⁶ The military's culture has been deeply ingrained in Army officers leading to what General (Ret) David Petraeus called a “cloistered existence.”⁴⁷ Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates told West Point cadets:

In addition to the essential troop command and staff assignments, you should look for opportunities that in the past were off the beaten path, if not a career dead end – and the institutional Army should not only tolerate, but encourage you in the effort. Such opportunities might include further study at grad school, working in a different government agency, or becoming a foreign area specialist.⁴⁸

The Army has developed the term “Broadening” to encompass the path to attain those required skills as articulated by Mr. Gates and General Petraeus. It is defined in the Army's Commissioned Officer Professional and Career Development Pamphlet 600-3 (DA PAM 600-3) as:

Developmental positions that provide exposure to experiences outside the officer's core branch or functional area competencies are considered broadening assignments. Broadening assignments develop a wider range of knowledge and skills, augment understanding of the full spectrum of Army missions, promote practical application of language training or increase cross cultural exposure, and expand officer awareness of other governmental agencies, units, or environments.⁴⁹

Broadening is one aspect of the Army's Leader Development Strategy of Training, Education, and Experience.⁵⁰ Sending Army officers to assignments within the JIIM environment is a win for both. The Army brings tremendous cultural capabilities of doctrine, discipline, and the ability to execute deliberate or crisis planning and a deep manpower pool from which to choose. In contrast, the interagency environment is characterized by no standard doctrine for planning, little experience in crisis management, and a chronic shortage of labor.⁵¹ The National Intelligence Council, a strategic thinking center that provides the President and senior policymakers with foreign policy issues⁵² reported "that there is a true hunger for US government-wide coordination on strategic planning and for a true interagency process. All agencies, today, need diverse perspectives."⁵³ Army officers can bring their discipline and experience in planning to partners that are resistant to "surrendering flexibility and ambiguity that many see as necessary."⁵⁴ It is critical that both Army leaders and their JIIM partners understand each other's capabilities, authorities, and limitations. A constant refrain by Army leaders, in Iraq and Afghanistan, has been "where is x department?" The realization that there are only 6,000 State Department foreign service officers in over 250 posts around the world compared to over 500,000 active duty Army soldiers is a shock that highlights the one of the disparities between the two departments.⁵⁵ And yet, the State Department has been designated as the U.S. Government lead for reconstruction and stabilization efforts and has key authorities in the execution of Title 22 funding for building partner capacity – a key tool in counterinsurgency by building host nation security force capabilities.⁵⁶ These cultural differences do not only reside in the interagency but also in joint, intergovernmental, and

multinational cultures. Nor is it the right time to develop this cultural understanding in the middle of a deployment, as a USAID representative, who worked with the 1st Cavalry Division in Baghdad said, “synchronization of efforts is far more difficult when reconstruction, stability, and nation building operations are undertaken in areas where conflict is ongoing.”⁵⁷

Army officers have several competing requirements to obtain the necessary skills to compete in a VUCA environment. As an example, DA PAM 600-3 lays out an Infantry Officer’s career path and required skills and assignments for continued development and promotion (see Figure 1):

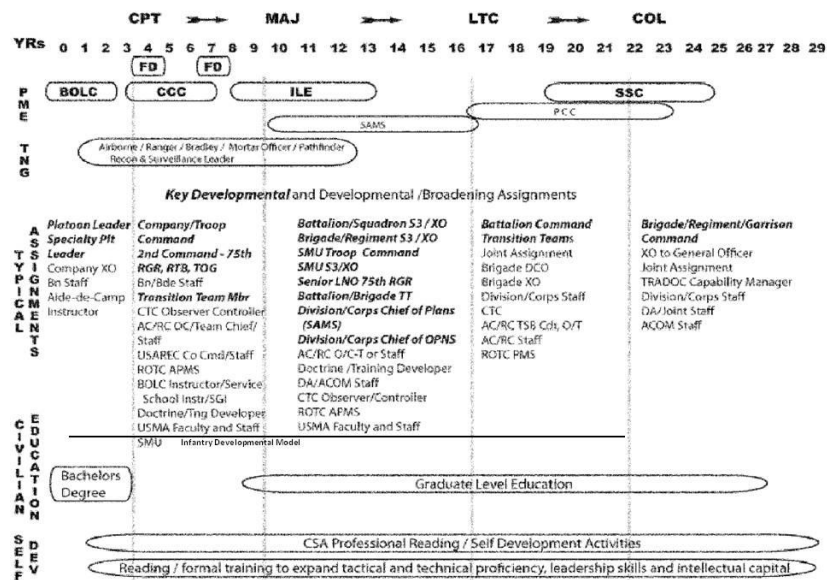


Figure 1: Infantry Officer Developmental Model⁵⁸

However, in order to develop adaptive and agile leaders, the Army needs to build in space to broaden its officers. The Army has stated that it will fight in the VUCA and JIIM environment and has established through its Capstone Concept, Board Guidance, Officer Professional Development, and Senior Leader comments that it needs officers who have the skills to capitalize on the capabilities and authorities that reside within its

JIIM partners. It needs to put its words into action. One way to balance requirements is to start identifying its future key leaders, those who will assume Battalion, Brigade, and higher command positions. Once it has accomplished this, it should build a plan for them to gain specific broadening assignments.⁵⁹ Most opportunities for broadening assignments occur in three areas of an officer's career: post Company Command, post-key developmental jobs as a Major, and post Battalion Command.⁶⁰ This recommendation will have four key benefits: a) it will better prepare officers to operate in the VUCA and JIIM environment, b) it will establish a path to success that will be emulated by the Officer Corps, c) it will change the Army's culture from a sole emphasis on "time with troops" to one that is balanced, and d) finally senior leaders will be better prepared to mentor junior officers on the value of expanding their horizons outside of their branch area.

Once the Army has developed a Broadening program, it still has the challenge of updating an industrial-age talent management system in order to place the right officer into the right assignment, to the benefit of both. The current Army human resource system suffers from four major problems: "it unduly prioritizes 'fairness' when making assignments, has a narrowly defined career path to senior leadership ranks, cannot see the talent it possesses, and suffers from severe principal-agent problems."⁶¹

When an officer contacts his assignment manager, at Human Resources Command (HRC), the conversation starts with a review of the officer's career to date: how many deployments, how long is the "dwell" time (time from the end of his last deployment), whether the last assignment was in the continental U.S. or overseas, and whether or not the officer has meet all the Key Developmental requirements for his rank

as listed in DA PAM 600-3. The conversation then turns to what requisitions (vacancies) that the assignment officer has been mandated by the Army to fill. The assignment manager works hard to fill the “Needs of the Army” and, if possible, the desires of the officer. However, the resulting assignment decision, based on limited information, invariably leads to an assignment that treats each officer as “interchangeable widgets and can therefore be treated identically.”⁶²

The Army also suffers from a narrowly defined pathway to success. Because the Army is the premier land force service, it prizes and cultivates the officer that has the ability to coordinate, synchronize, and employ its firepower to close with and destroy the enemy at the tactical and operational levels of war. It prizes direct leadership and officers who persistently pursue assignments that put them in charge of soldiers and organizations at the lower levels of the Army. The traditional path to success for an officer in the combat arms branch starts as a Lieutenant serving as a platoon leader or executive officer. As a Captain, he actively pursues command of a company, followed by assignments as a Major as a battalion or brigade executive or operations officer. As a Lieutenant Colonel, he pursues the opportunity to be a battalion commander and deputy commanding officer. The pursuit of command continues through Colonel and General Officer where the officer transitions to be one of the Army’s senior leaders. Time “away from troops” or the “muddy boots Army” is discouraged. A major problem with this narrow career path is that officers become stunted to cultures outside of the Army, cloistered within the Army’s culture. Job opportunities in this career path taper as the officer progresses in his career and the Army produces a senior leader who has depth in the tactical and operational levels of war but no breadth to face strategic

challenges. Then the senior leader encounters an environment he is unprepared for where “nearly 80% of the Army’s senior leader assignments require talent in more than just the operational art.”⁶³

However, even if the Army was able to break this culture of a narrow career path, its current system of seeing the skills and experiences that an officer possesses, in order to match the right person to the right job, is stuck in the pre-Information Age. The Army has plenty of information, in an officer’s Record Brief, which categorizes sex, race, marital status, children, birthplace, past assignment locations, number of deployments, awards, qualification badges etc. However, this information is merely “accounting data.”⁶⁴ This information does not provide the assignment officer the ability to distinguish any particular officer from another when trying to match individual skills with a particular assignment. On the other hand, civilian organizations have taken advantage of the Information Age to develop web applications that invite individual employees to volunteer information about their skills and desires through inference technology – “the ability to learn about users through continuous interaction and to provide them with increasingly useful and personalized service.”⁶⁵ To retain quality officers, these officers must feel that they are valued as individuals and are challenged with assignments that not only harness the experience that they possess but develop new skills that will be valuable to them and the Army. A career of job assignments where officers are treated as round pegs to be placed in round holes results in officers who are “jack of all trades master of none,” consumes a large amount of time for the officer to learn his new job, and dissatisfaction with his career that could result in the officer leaving the Army.

Finally, the assignment process has a “principal-agent” problem. Assignment officers serve as the “agent” acting as a go-between the officer seeking an assignment and an organization with a vacancy (principals). The assignment officer is motivated to fill vacancies that are in accordance with the guidance provided by senior leaders – “faces in spaces.” Meanwhile, the officer is looking for a challenging assignment that will allow professional growth and meaningful contributions to the Army. The organization is looking for “ace candidates,” who with minimum effort will maximize their contributions to the organization.⁶⁶ The major challenge with the current system is that the agent does not have the information to meet the needs of the principals. The agent is not able to bridge the gap between the skills or desires that the officer has and the requirements that the organization is looking for.

Fortunately, the Army has recognized the shortfalls of its current assignment process. In the 2009, based upon a request by then Chief of the Engineers Corps, LTG (R) Van Antwerp, the West Point based Office of Economic Manpower Analysis, debuted an online pilot called Green Pages. There is a two-fold purpose for the pilot program: Enable HRC to access officer talent (skills and experiences) and gather a larger amount of information on officers.⁶⁷ The idea is to develop a virtual marketplace where officers and Army organizations can trade information to match the right officer to the right position (see Figure 2).

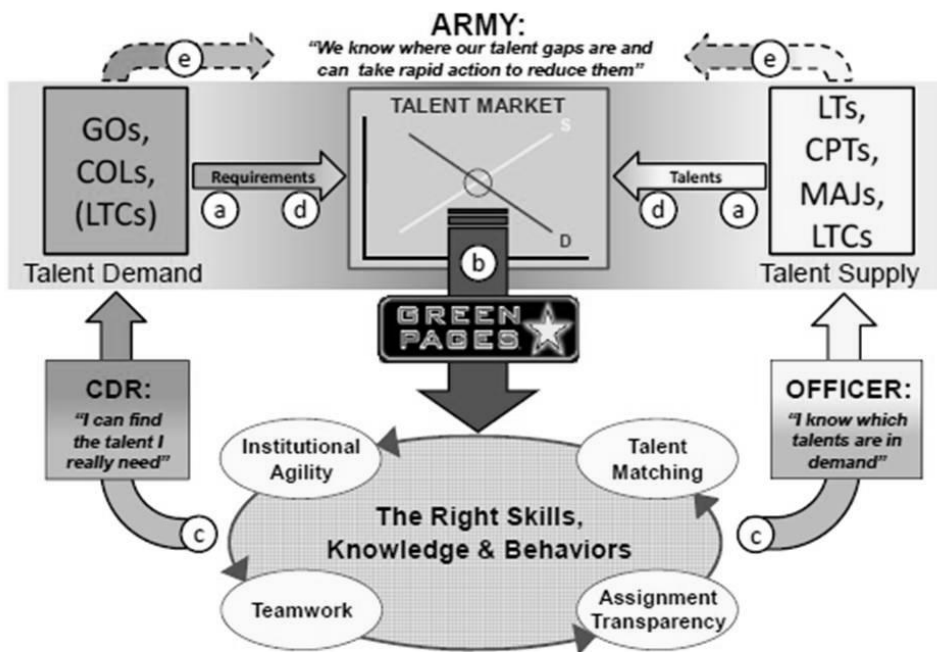


Figure 2: Green Pages Model⁶⁸

The pilot allows Army officers to input their skills and experiences into the Green Pages database. At the same time, Army organizations, with validated HRC requisitions, input the skill sets they desire for their vacant positions. Currently, the pilot has been focused on Engineer Branch First Lieutenants to Lieutenant Colonels during their attendance at their Captains Career Course and Intermediate Level Education. Nine iterations of the pilot have been conducted with Engineer officers. This year, two iterations were conducted with Functional Area 59 officers, Strategist, and one iteration with Adjutant General Corps officers.⁶⁹ Assignment officers act as the agent working between the officer and the unit to match skills and desires. Initial feedback has been very positive. The pilot has collected twice as much data on officers with foreign language experience and foreign countries visited.⁷⁰ A benefit for officers has been added information that has allowed them to make choices that are more informed.

Traditionally, officers have made decisions on their next assignment based on a preferred location or a unit's reputation across the Army. After the officers received input from units, one half to three fourths changed their assignment preferences.⁷¹

Utilizing current technology and connecting both principals, the officer and unit, will ensure that the right mix of skills and experiences are matched to the right officer resulting in the efficient use of the finite talent residing within the Army. The Army needs to institutionalize this method across the Officer Corps and include broadening opportunities that will increase the ability of the Army to develop officers who are prepared to lead in the VUCA and JIIM environment.

The Army has spent the last ten years fighting the Global War on Terror. Its dedicated and disciplined soldiers have answered the Nation's call. As the Army reduces its OPTEMPO and marks the end of operations in Iraq and the continuing drawdown in Afghanistan, it has a unique opportunity to change its culture, implement a broadening program, and update its industrial-era assignment process. By taking advantage of this opportunity, the Army will develop agile and adaptive leaders who are prepared to lead, manage, and work with JIIM partners as it faces an increasingly complex environment filled with continuing and emerging threats.

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