

# TRUST

## Implications for the Army Profession



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PHOTO: U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Ray Odierno, commander of Multi-National Corps - Iraq, center, is flanked by Lt. Col. Kenneth Adgie, commander of the 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team (BCT), 3rd Infantry Division (ID), left, and Col. Terry Ferrell, commander of the 2nd BCT, 3rd ID, at Patrol Base Hawkes in Arab Jabour, Iraq, 21 October 2007. (U.S. Army, Staff Sgt. Curt Cashour)

**T**RUST IS AT the heart of the Army Profession. As the Army transitions from an era of substantial operational deployments to an era characterized by training and preparing the force for the next series of conflicts, it will face several threats to trust. An environment of reduced force structure and fiscal austerity will accompany the transition. How the Army profession fares in the coming decade will be based on the trust the institution engenders among its members (uniformed and civilian) and with the American people.

The Department of the Army-directed Profession of Arms (PoA) campaign reemphasized trust as an essential characteristic of the Army Profession along with military expertise, honorable service, esprit de corps, and stewardship of the profession.<sup>1</sup> The PoA campaign had its official kickoff in January 2011 under the leadership of Gen. Martin Dempsey, commander of Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), and was later renamed the Army Profession (AP) Campaign. When Dempsey subsequently became the 37th chief of staff of the Army, his initial guidance to the force stressed Trust, Discipline, and Fitness as the three areas that he would discuss with commanders during visits around the Army. His successor, Gen. Ray Odierno, in his “Initial Thoughts” and “Marching Orders” communications, appropriately called trust “the bedrock of our honored Profession.”<sup>2</sup>

Trust is manifested in two interrelated but distinct realms. The campaign focused much of its effort on trust internal to the Army Profession. The other domain is external public trust, which is the trust held between the Army profession and the American people. The maintenance of internal trust among members of the profession, and between members and institution, is critical to the effectiveness of the Army. Maintenance of trust between the Army profession and the American people is critical to its legitimacy within our democratic society. While the Army profession currently enjoys a high level of public trust, that trust relationship is intensely fragile. The loss of either internal or public trust would constitute a major threat to the profession.

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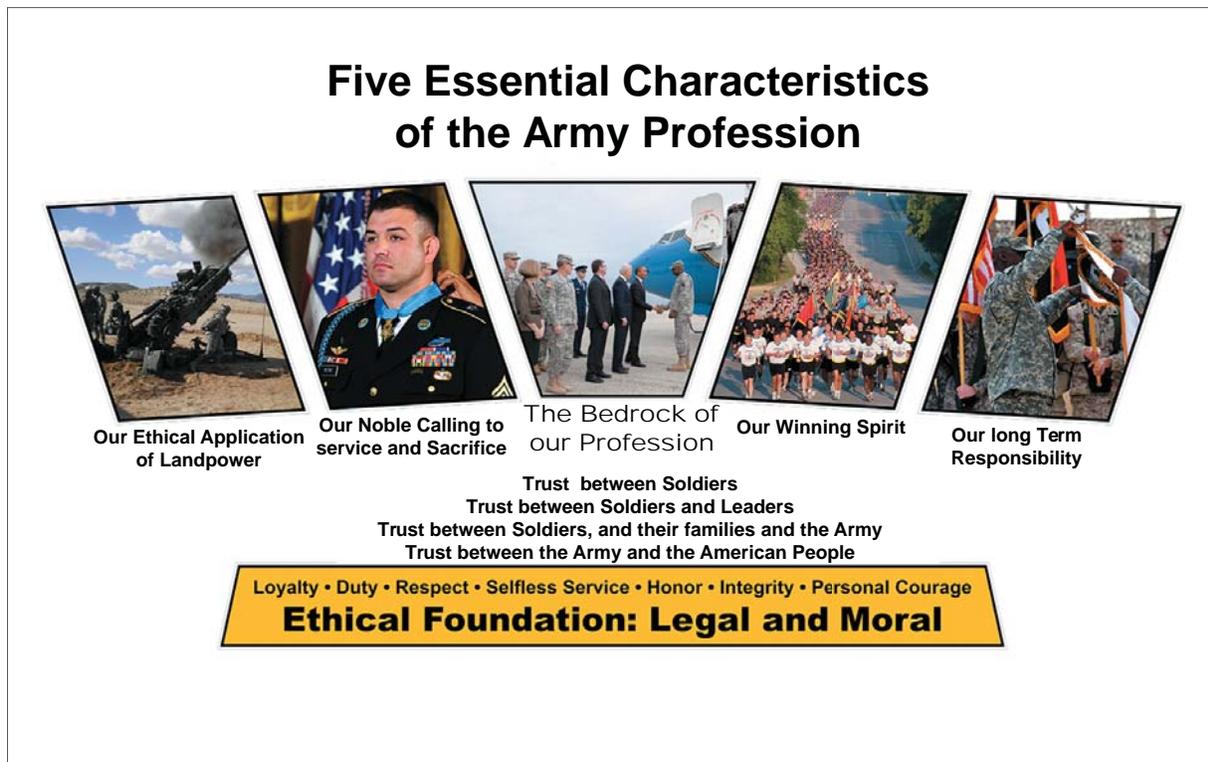
This paper examines three fundamental threats to the Army profession related to trust. The first threat to the profession is that leaders are not familiar enough with the frameworks to understand trust and do not have the language to discuss it effectively. The lack of understanding is most acute when examining differences in the nature of trust at the interpersonal, organizational, and public trust levels. Exploring the nature of trust and enabling Army senior leaders to guide professional dialogue about trust are among the principal purposes of this paper. The second threat to the Army profession is represented by the interpersonal trust findings identified during the 2011 Army Profession campaign. The campaign study effort included two Army-wide surveys, a survey of senior leaders, focus groups of Army personnel, and multiple senior leadership forums. The paper will present study findings about trust among various cohorts within the profession, and between members and the Army as an institution. The paper then examines the third threat to the profession, posed by perceived violations of

public trust. The public trust section of the paper will explore the nature of public trust, sources of public trust violations, and offer recommendations to address damage posed by various forms of public trust violations.

## The Army Profession Campaign

Following the publication of The Profession of Arms White Paper that identified trust as “clearly the most important attribute we seek for the Army,”<sup>3</sup> researchers identified five essential characteristics of the Army profession to represent the basis for establishing and sustaining trust. The themes depicted in Figure 1 give the impression that each is independent and distinct. In reality, these characteristics are overlapping, complementary, and interrelated

A critical omission of the original PoA White Paper was a taxonomy that included a definition of trust. A frequently cited definition of trust in literature is a “willingness to be vulnerable,” based on the “expectation that an exchange partner will



**Figure 1  
The Army Profession**

not behave opportunistically.”<sup>24</sup> This definition is consistent with the PoA White Paper since trust is considered a multilevel concept existing between individuals and within groups, organizations, and institutions as well as among institutions. Exchange relationships are part of everyday life. As organizational researchers assert, “[t]rust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of intentions and behaviors of another.”<sup>25</sup>

The concept of trust is most easily grasped at the interpersonal level—internal to the profession—the trust between leaders and followers and between soldiers within units, which are perhaps the most important for unit cohesion and effectiveness. Another important contributor to cohesion and effectiveness is the trust that exists between members of the Army profession and the bureaucracy, which should serve the Profession. These relationships help refine the definition to one more appropriate for the Army Profession (AP), so we adopt: “trust leads to a set of behavioral expectations among people [uniformed and civilian], allowing them to manage the uncertainty or risk associated with their interactions so that they can jointly optimize the gains that will result from cooperative behavior.”<sup>26</sup> Stated plainly, interpersonal trust is based on predictable behavior resulting in an individual’s perception and feeling that the gains associated with cooperation outweigh the uncertainty and risk inherent in the relationship.

## Trust In and Of the Profession

Consistent with a 2011 U.S. Army Center for Army Leadership report which concluded, “Trust is currently a strategic advantage” for the Army,<sup>7</sup> further analysis and deliberation over the course of the campaign established trust as an essential characteristic of the Army Profession. To achieve trust in the profession by its members requires a sustained relationship of trust among the members of the profession and its cohorts. Member trust in the Army as an institution is based on the relationship between members and the profession’s senior strategic leaders, as well as perceptions of the organizational bureaucracy that operationalizes those senior leaders’ choices.

The PoA/AP campaign surveys assessed trust across three dimensions: Trust Climate (within

units and organizations; trust in Army leaders), Institutional Trust, and Public Trust (of the American public, civilian authorities, and the media). The campaign findings reported members’ perceptions of trust toward internal constituents and external groups. Trust Climate is generally positive within organizations and at one level up or down, but not necessarily with respect to Army senior leaders. Institutional Trust findings are consistent with past studies conducted in the 1970s and 1990s, when the Army faced eras of transition and the attendant uncertainties.<sup>8</sup> Then as now, soldier and civilian members of the Profession have a degree of skepticism (i.e., questionable trust) in Army-level decisions affecting them.

Recent fiscal requirements of the Budget Control Act of 2011 and the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance have driven senior leaders to reduce end-strength and restructure the force, thus shifting resource prioritization and allocation to align with national civilian leadership guidance. Accordingly, perceived violations of commitments to Army Family and Community Covenants as well as to retirement programs are sources of concern and potential distrust within the institution.<sup>9</sup> While military leaders report trusting their subordinate leaders

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and the Army as an institution,<sup>10</sup> there were some qualifications. These same members expressed less trust in elected or appointed civilian leaders.<sup>11</sup>

The Army Profession study concluded this section of the report, saying:

Despite these concerns, Soldier surveys indicate that they overwhelmingly believe Army senior leaders will act in good faith and

do what is best for the Army. Even with this continuing trust, this is not an area in which the Army can ever relax its vigilance. Similarly, senior officers must be ever watchful of their actions, so as to never put at risk the trust soldiers place in them; for once lost, it could take years to re-build.<sup>12</sup>

This conclusion reinforces the findings of the Center for Army Leadership which reported Army leaders are perceived as competent professionals who trust each other and believe their unit will accomplish its mission. However, there appears to be less trust in institutional level leaders' ability to manage the future of the Army. Both interpersonal trust and institutional trust increase with rank—the more senior the individual, the more positive are assertions of trust and confidence in others and the Army as an institution.<sup>13</sup>

## The Trust Challenge

Interviews with commander (O-5/O-6 level) and senior enlisted (E-9) focus groups revealed a perceived lack of trust and confidence in subordinate leaders' expertise (knowledge, skills, and abilities) for garrison (home station) operations. They cited a lack of experience among midgrade officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) required for competence in the home station environment. These factors reinforce the concept that competence and expertise are major components of trust at the individual and organizational level.<sup>14</sup>

Within the Army, but especially among these mid-grade leaders, lack of trust is related to the perception of a culture that fails to exhibit candor, does not permit honest mistakes, and where top-down loyalty is perceived as weak (i.e., loyalty to subordinate members is disproportionate or lacking). In addition, the perception exists among soldiers that senior leaders are not candid with their superiors, military or civilian. Such perceptions are characteristic of poor leadership environments and were cited in two *Army Times* articles in 2011 related to toxic leadership, which were based on Center for Army Leadership data and reports.<sup>15</sup>

Lack of trust in civilian officials as well as significant distrust of the media by members of the profession pose additional risk.<sup>16</sup> Distrust of elected officials and the media can exacerbate the Army's separation from the society it serves. These indicators of mistrust

point to potential challenges for civil-military relations and the trust placed in the U.S. military by society.

At the turn of the 20th century, former Secretary of War Elihu Root, identified three great problems of “national defense, military science, and responsible command,” with each having a trust component inter-related with the four other characteristics identified in Figure 1.<sup>17</sup> Applying Root's framework, national defense requires that citizens trust their Army to *serve* honorably and defend against all enemies, foreign and domestic. Military science conveys the technical *expertise* of trusted professionals to ethically employ military power to secure U.S. national interests and those of its allies. Responsible command embodies the *trust* that military professionals will be good *stewards* of people, facilities, equipment, and funds placed under their care.<sup>18</sup>

## Trust Reexamined

At the organizational level, researchers have categorized trust as behavioral (predictive), cognitive-based (perceptions) or affect-based (feelings).<sup>19</sup> In reviewing literature, we offer four components of trust that reflect the behavioral, cognitive and affective nature of trust:

- Credibility of *competence*.
- *Benevolence* of motives.
- *Integrity* with the sense of fairness and honesty.
- *Predictability* of behavior.

These components apply not only to individuals, but also to organizations and systems within the Army. That organizations have the ability to accomplish tasks and missions in an efficient, effective, and ethical manner is important to people. Also critical is the perception that organizational procedures (policies and regulations) are established for the common and greater good. Further, an essential element of trust is the feeling and belief that members behave according to a set of values that apply to all within the profession. Finally, trust builds on consistent achievement of moral objectives that advance both stakeholder and member feelings of good will. Violation of these conditions may lead to a lack of trust or, more destructively, a sense of distrust.

## Public Trust

The construct of public trust toward the Army is a critical relationship that needs further explication. Business scholars Laura Poppo and Donald J.

Component (Element)	Based on perceptions of:	Likely causes of violations	Remedy
Benevolence (affective)	Good will & Kindness	Civil-military cultural gap; Legitimate claims of victimization	Increased external control & monitoring
Integrity (cognitive)	Honesty & fairness; Adherence to commitments	Self-Serving or opportunistic behavior	Characterize the behavior as an anomaly; Create Organizational distance; or correct misperception/attribution of motive
Competence (cognitive)	Skills & Knowledge -especially in core functions	Failures	Acknowledge, then proactively & visibly take steps to correct
Predictability (behavior)	Repetitive precedent setting behavior	Inconsistent, contradictory or deceptive behavior	CANDOR- Immediately acknowledge and remedy inconsistent behavior; correct misperceptions, explain apparent incongruence

*Creating trust takes a lifetime; losing it takes a moment.*

**Figure 2**  
**Public Trust: Violation-Remedy Matrix**

Schepker offer the definition that public trust is “the degree to which the general public as a stakeholder group holds a collective trust orientation toward an organization.”<sup>20</sup> For the Army, this represents the aggregate perception of trust held by the American public in the Army, as a profession, distinguishable from both interpersonal and organizational trust.

Through examination and understanding of the nature of public trust, the profession’s leadership might avoid the general commentary offered by organizational scholars Kouzes and Posner.

Many wonder if there are any leaders left who have the strength of character to sustain their trust. Substantial numbers of people believe that leaders lack the capability to guide business and governmental institu-

tions to greatness in this intensely turbulent and competitive global marketplace. There is the gnawing sense in many corridors that leaders are not competent to handle the tough challenges; that they are not telling us the truth; and that they are more motivated by greed and self-interest than by concerns for the customer, the employees, or the country.<sup>21</sup>

Drawing from a variety of disciplines, political scientist Seok-Eun Kim conceptualized trust as the multifaceted integration of behavioral, cognitive, and affective elements. These three elements merge “into a mutually supporting construct that is collectively called *trust*” [italics in original].<sup>22</sup> Poppo and Schepker extended previous trust literature by developing a more nuanced multifaceted construction of public

trust. Consistent with the works of other scholars, they operationalize public trust across three components: benevolence, integrity, and competence. The addition of the predictability (reliable, consistent performance) component captures the role repetitive successful performance plays over time in building public trust.

There are two particular elements of public trust that differentiate it from the personal and organizational constructs. First, the public does not have (or does not take) the opportunity to become intimately aware of the Army's structure, processes, operations, activities, and information. The public's lack of a direct experience with the Army does not support first-hand assurances or the predictability associated with personal or organizational trust. Second, given the collective nature of public trust, the Army cannot appeal to an individual or a collective of like-minded stakeholders to explain or remedy breaches of trust, as it can with internal members. Except for the broadest constructs of good will, social commitment, or competence shared by the American public, aggregating individual perceptions of trust is largely rendered moot.<sup>23</sup> Actions taken to appease one group or individual will likely be viewed and weighed differently by other individuals or elements of the society.

Public trust determinations are therefore based on a collective perception of the Army's organizational legitimacy gained primarily through limited knowledge of the organization and impersonal observations of the institution in a variety of contexts. Knowledge and observations of the Army as an organization are typically filtered through the interpretive lens of the media, and often complicated by the perspectives of multiple stakeholders. These intermediary conduits provide symbolic substitutes for the intimate knowledge and relational observations associated with personal and organizational trust determinations.

Counter-intuitively, an informed American public can make valid judgments despite information flowing through these intermediaries.<sup>24</sup> Citing Samuel L. Popkin's reasoning voter model, authors Cooper, Knotts, and Brennan suggested "that citizens are surprisingly adept at making good decisions with limited information," despite arms-length relationships devoid of direct inti-

mate knowledge.<sup>25</sup> The issue for the Army is to determine how much influence it should exert to shape public perceptions through its official messaging.

This fundamental issue links closely to the role public trust plays in reconciling civil authorities' desire for formal accountability balanced against the Army's desire to achieve effectiveness through the exercise of discretionary professional judgments.

Public trust is required for the Army to retain the flexibility inherent in using professional discretion, and to avoid costly and often rigid bureaucratic controls and excessive external monitor-

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ing.<sup>26</sup> Retaining public trust is especially important as the United States finds itself in an austere fiscal environment. Previously, such post-conflict periods have been accompanied by a heightened public distrust and fear of (1) maintaining a fiscally burdensome large standing army, and (2) a wasteful and opportunistic "military-industrial complex" (a phrase coined by President Eisenhower in 1961). This distrust generates resistance to Army professional judgment and increased demands for higher accountability through surveillance and monitoring by those outside of the profession, among them are Congress, the media, and the American public.

The integrity, competence, predictability, and benevolence components of trust provide a useful framework to examine violations of public trust. Integrity and competence are cognitive assessments, predictability is associated with patterns of behavior, and benevolence assessments are personal-relational (affective) determinations. To

achieve consensus regarding what benevolence means at the collective level is difficult. Since benevolence-based trust is inherently relational and idiosyncratic, synthesizing consensus at the aggregate level of public trust is not easy. However, public consensus may coalesce over time around legitimate claims of victimization to an individual (or a group sharing some common identity). Such incidents may negatively impact public trust linked to benevolence.<sup>27</sup> Public trust violations based on benevolence are generally remedied by increased external control and monitoring, limiting managerial flexibility, and suspending professional discretion.<sup>28</sup>

Determinations of public trust associated with integrity, competence, and predictability are arrived at through reason. People often base these on incomplete knowledge informed by the public's perception of the practices or principles on which the organization has agreed to abide. Integrity determinations reflect perceptions of an organization's adherence to implicit or explicit commitments, and normative assessments of its honesty and fairness in meeting those commitments. Lack of integrity can easily lead to perceptions of opportunism.



Members of the 30th Civil Engineer Squadron participate in a squadron-organized run to raise funds for the Pat Tillman Foundation in honor of fallen service member Cpl. Pat Tillman, Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., 17 April 2010 (U.S. Air Force, Tech. Sgt. Herman Ybarra)

## Benevolence Violations

Mishandling of contemporary cultural issues could lead to violations of benevolence-based public trust. Benevolence violations are most likely to occur over issues associated with the difference between U.S. civilian and military cultures. The benevolence component of public trust is dependent on affective notions related to feelings and emotion triggered when normative values associated with kindness or goodwill are violated.

When the Army gets ahead of or lags behind social norms, it provides fertile ground for perceived benevolence violations of public trust. The Army's assessment of the role of women in combat is a contemporary example of the Army's culture evolving at a faster pace than American society. Despite reports of sexual assaults that challenge public trust, people perceive the Army's culture as more progressive and tolerant of women in combat and mixed-gender training than American society.<sup>29</sup> Conversely, despite the transparency and limited number of adverse incidents associated with the policy change, the repeal of "don't ask don't tell" is a case where the public perceived the Army's culture as lagging behind American society's normative assessment of homosexual service in the military.<sup>30</sup>

Operational needs dictate the Army's position in these cases. To the Army, the realities inherent in maintaining the most effective all-volunteer force, not issues grounded in normative goodwill or kindness considerations, motivate policy choices. In both cases, the Army thought its policies were just and aligned with maintaining good order and discipline. In other words, Army policy positions aligned with the Army's cultural values.

In benevolence violation cases, the public perceives the Army's behavior as victimization of service members, and Army professionals do not interpret their actions as a benevolence issue (they see it in terms of effectiveness and discipline), corrective actions to remedy perceptions of victimization are unlikely to come from within the Army. Therefore, benevolence-based violations, by their nature, will most often resolve through externally imposed accountability controls and monitoring.

The Army can take action to avoid benevolence-based violations. Such action stems from classic civil-military relations theory. The military profession approach is to subordinate professional culture

to civil authority, willingly accepting societal direction and limits while maintaining an autonomous culture rooted in military effectiveness. The civil-military relationship entails the Army's leadership exercising professional discretion and autonomous action consistent with the values of the society it serves.

Counter intuitively, the subjective control or industrial-occupational civil-military relations models may offer the Army the best chance of preserving autonomous professional discretion. These models suggest that the best means of avoiding benevolence-based violations may be through policies and practices that more closely align military and civilian cultures (e.g., increased Reserve Officer Training Corps commissioning, broadening experiences, and Army leader development in a civilian setting). Maintaining a professional culture that differs from society in significant ways to achieve imagined greater military effectiveness, under this model, is counterproductive.

## Integrity Violations

The PFC Bradley Manning trial (WikiLeak's informant) and the Cpl. Pat Tillman incident are two cases of perceived integrity violations linked to perceptions of opportunism at the individual and institutional levels of analysis respectively. With PFC Manning, the opportunism and integrity violations were at the individual level.<sup>31</sup> In the CPL Pat Tillman case, the institutional integrity of the U.S. Army was called into question. Many in the public believed the U.S. Army exploited the patriotism and celebrity of Cpl. Pat Tillman for opportunistic reasons. The Army's leadership was accused of withholding details of Tillman's death until after the highly publicized memorial service, to protect the Army's professional reputation.<sup>32</sup>

Public perception of Army officers violating the long-standing tradition of avoiding partisan politics is another potential threat to integrity violation. The line delimiting a violation in this area is evolving; the stigma associated with an officer voting or affiliating with a political party has all but disappeared. However, perceptions of partisan politics manifested in command climate, professional advice, and public communications are widely viewed as integrity violations of the Army's professional ethic. The firing of General Stanley McChrystal is a recent example

of a uniformed officer being held accountable for a perceived violation. He was perceived by the public as condoning, if not fostering, a politicized command climate.<sup>33</sup>

The collective and complex nature of the Army as an organization offers some bureaucratic protection against individual level integrity violations that are perceived as non-systemic by the public. In such incidents, the Army must acknowledge the violation, take action to distance itself from the behavior, and demonstrate a history of consistent behavior that suggests that the violation is an anomaly. Addressing an organizational level integrity violation is more difficult, especially if it is perceived to have been sanctioned by the Army's senior leadership.

## Public Misperceptions—The Non-Violation Violation<sup>34</sup>

When it comes to public trust, perceptions of trust violations can be as damaging as an actual violation. Varying degrees of bias and limited contextual understanding among stakeholders within the general public can lead to faulty attribution of motive and distrust in any of the component categories that frame a trust relationship. The perception of deception is an example of an integrity-based public trust non-violation.

Adherence to the Army's professional ethic precludes Army leaders from intentionally deceiving subordinates, the American public, or legitimate civil authority; however, several situations could result in the perception of deception, which would have the same effect as a violation if not countered immediately. The perception of an integrity violation may be based on any number of factors. Incorrect attribution of motives and misinterpretation of the communication based on individual or group bias are among the most common factors contributing to misperception.

Bob Woodward reported one such perceived violation in his book, *Obama's Wars*. Woodward claimed that the Obama administration did not trust its military leadership to offer viable military options to advance the administration's desired strategic agenda to rapidly draw down forces and end the war in Afghanistan. The administration's distrust of senior Army leaders, and the perception that their advice was politicized or insubordinate, is popularly reported as the reason President Obama

replaced five senior commanders in Afghanistan during his first term.<sup>35</sup>

Accommodation of various audiences and stakeholder perspectives is a challenging task for senior leaders offering testimony at public hearings or conveying messages to support executive branch policy decisions. They need to guard against perceptions of deception in these highly politicized contexts. Public communications appearing to lack candor or driven by political correctness could be perceived as deceptive.

As empowered professionals, senior officers are expected to balance the obligations of loyalty to civilian authority with the candor and personal courage expected by members within the Department of Defense and with the American public. Army senior leaders' ability to communicate complex messages to multiple diverse audiences in these contexts has met with mixed success. The virtues of loyalty and candor must be closely guarded and balanced in highly politicized settings, where statements can unintentionally lead to perceptions of deception.<sup>36</sup> The service chiefs engagements in budget and posture hearings for fiscal year 2014 indicate whether senior military leaders are up to the challenge of navigating the potential mixed-message minefield of these budget battles.

Public statements by retirees and veterans present an integrity-based vulnerability to the Army's hold on public trust, especially if those statements appear to be motivated by political or ideological agendas.<sup>37</sup> The retiree or veteran might be an Army critic or advocate. In either case, the retiree or veteran is perceived as a credible intermediary informing the public about the Army. As civilians with intimate knowledge of the military, these retirees and veterans are entitled to their opinion and their right of free speech; but the perceived politicizing violates the Army's tacit professional code of ethical conduct.

As advocates or critics, retirees and veterans who politicize Army equity issues present a unique and largely uncontrollable vulnerability to the Army's public trust.<sup>38</sup> The Army profession can suffer at the hands of soldiers transitioning back into society as well. Soldiers re-entering American society risk integrity violations if they are perceived as flagrantly displaying an attitude of entitlement.<sup>39</sup> In addition, public criticism of the nation's civilian

leadership by retired generals, dubbed "the revolt of the Generals" by the media, was a high visibility example of a violation that crossed the line.<sup>40</sup> Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff General Dempsey clearly stated his concern, "If someone uses the uniform, whatever uniform, for partisan politics, I am disappointed because I think it does erode that bond of trust we have with the American people."<sup>41</sup>

Internal fractious bickering is another threat to integrity-based public trust. During periods of reduced conflict, the American public may perceive the Army as an opportunistic component of a self-serving civil-military industrial complex, behaving more as a political interest group than a military profession. This perception can be reinforced when the services or Army components disagree regarding budget reduction or resource prioritization choices in the public arena. The last round of infighting between Army components over reduced defense spending occurred in the mid-1990s.<sup>42</sup> Perhaps a harbinger of things to come, Senator Patrick J. Leahy, commenting on the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012, stated that "entrenched bureaucratic interests still resist what most Americans now accept as an accomplished fact. The Joint Chiefs fought our efforts to bring the chief of the Guard Bureau into the 'Tank' not because they misunderstand the value the Guard and Reserve, but precisely because they fear that value proposition may threaten the size and budget of their active components in the years to come."<sup>43</sup>

To the public, who seldom have a direct role in resolving these disagreements, this bickering may

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appear to be self-interested opportunism. Inter-service and component infighting is unseemly of a profession. Internal squabbles appear to violate the leadership principles of stewardship and the Army value of sacrifice in the national interest. Not engaging in the public quarrels is the best

way to avoid this perceived violation of trust. In a democratic system, however, civilian decision authorities are informed by robust public debate; silence is not always a viable option. Therefore, the most effective means of retaining public trust is to address accusations of opportunism directly, counter misrepresentation of motives, and present resource prioritization choices based on societal good, founded on empirical evidence, and not motivated by parochial service or Army component interests.

## Competence Violations

Competence-based public trust depends on the public's perception that an organization possesses the requisite skills and knowledge to perform the functions society expects of it, and to do so in a manner the society approves. "When competence violations threaten the legitimacy of an organization's core function and *raison d'être*, they are more damaging to firm performance than integrity violations," which can be attributed to the aberrant behavior of individuals or small groups.<sup>44</sup> Unlike integrity violations, which do not transfer to the institution if the violation is acknowledged, dealt with, and perceived as non-systemic by the public, competence violations do transfer to the institution.

The U.S. Army and its leaders currently enjoy the public's trust as warriors and combat leaders. Army leaders are generally trusted to competently and ethically represent the American people, solve tactical problems, and achieve operational objectives in combat and other challenging environments. Public confidence does not automatically translate to the domains of strategy-policy leadership<sup>45</sup> or strategic management and force development responsibilities.<sup>46</sup>

The public's impression that Army senior leaders do not think or act strategically or that they lack the skill and knowledge to effectively manage the Army's bureaucracy at the strategic level may be disputed. Army leaders have made significant and effective changes to organization, training, recruiting, and modernization policies and programs, while simultaneously engaging in two demanding theaters of war over the course of a decade. Regardless, the perception persists that Army senior leaders are weak at the strategy-policy interface, and are challenged with the

complexities of strategic level force development and management.

The Army's ethos and culture feed into these public perceptions. During military operations, Army leaders focus their efforts on effectiveness over efficiency when it comes to decisions that put soldiers or the mission at risk. Army culture lauds leadership and eschews management descriptors in the cultural idioms used in performance appraisals, awards, citations, etc. Accordingly, the culture rewards preference for leadership duty with troops over institutional level management and Army staff assignments.

Army leaders are fluent in the language, imagery, and narrative necessary to explain Army doctrine and campaigns at the tactical and operational levels. Yet they appear challenged in offering a compelling Landpower narrative to guide prioritization of capabilities and resourcing decisions in the national security discourse. To bolster public confidence, senior leaders need to convey the strategic relevance of the institution they are leading, and develop a vision and a lexicon that permits them to engage effectively in policy and resource debates.

These debates will determine how the Army will balance, link, and make choices among force structure, modernization, and readiness to manage risk across components. On a grander level of government analysis, Kim suggests that "declining competence of agency members, in response to increasing demands related to complex problems causes distrust of government."<sup>47</sup> To encourage the development of senior leader management skills and knowledge, the Army should find ways to embrace the role strategic management plays in the language of the profession.

## Predictability Violations

The predictability component of public trust captures the role of repetitive behavior in creating and maintaining institutional legitimacy. Predictability is founded on a common understanding of what constitutes "desirable, proper, or appropriate" behavior between the American people and the profession. It establishes what the Army should do, and how it should go about doing it as a generalized construction across Army and society collectives. As with other forms of trust, public trust "...is extremely hard to develop between the public and organiza-

tions, [and] it is much easier to destroy.”<sup>48</sup> The predictability component of public trust is developed through consistent repetitive behavior; but it only takes one confirmed violation to damage that trust.

The Army’s vulnerability to the predictability component of public trust is related to action horizons and strategic patience. Action horizons are the timelines on which leaders expect their actions to produce definitive results or trends. Army leaders are habituated to making quick decisions to effect change within action horizons based on command tour lengths; but strategic decisions to effect organizational and cultural change may require years, if not decades, before they produce results. The strategic patience required to manage complexity has a corollary in the operational mission sets of security cooperation, stability operations, and security force assistance. Senior Army leaders appreciate the importance of patiently maintaining a strategic vision while adapting to the immediate demands of a changing operational environment during these missions.

Army leaders need to apply the same patience and adaptability to organizational issues. Civilian lead-

ers retain the authority to direct short-term actions based on austere resource conditions and political considerations outside the Army’s professional jurisdiction. Yet Army senior leaders need to maintain a focus on the service’s strategic vision (aligned with civilian policy and direction) and persist in the face of resource challenges. The Army Profession’s senior leadership has a duty and stewardship obligation to clearly and publically articulate the strategic risks associated with landpower management and employment choices, thereby informing civilian decision-making.

## Conclusion

Generally, the Army has sustained a tradition of trust at the individual and organizational levels, and is held in high regard by the American public. While this trust is a strategic advantage, it is fragile and the Army needs to guard against complacency. To maintain internal and public trust in the Army and its leaders, there are a number of areas that require the profession’s constant vigilance (See Figure 2).

At the individual and organizational levels, trust



(U.S. Army, Spc. Ken Scar)

**U.S. Army 1st Lt. Graham Hatch walks the site of a traffic checkpoint near Forward Operating Base Super FOB, in Paktika Province, Afghanistan, 13 March 2012.**

is most closely associated with competency to lead and manage. In operational theaters, junior leaders are empowered and make decisions based on minimal guidance to take action within the intent of mission command. In the home station environment, junior leaders fear being stripped of their authority, autonomy, and freedom of action, which could undermine the trust relationship developed with their superiors.

Organizational trust is related to perceptions of senior leader competence in managing service-level processes and establishing priorities for the force (e.g., personnel, training, acquisition, sustainment, family programs). These perceptions are particularly acute in light of the projected austere resource environment, impending end strength draw-downs, and trade-offs in resourcing. Breach of trust perceptions based on prioritization decisions could undercut the strong perceptions of trustworthiness between cohorts within the Army.

Currently, the Army enjoys the public's trust and the profession is held in high-esteem by most Americans. Public trust is the most fragile echelon of trust; it has to accommodate a broad range of stakeholders, indirect access to information, and various motivations and interpretations of leader behavior.

Potential areas of concern for the Army Profession, exacerbated by the current economic environment and pending strategic choices, include:

(a) Perceptions that end strength and budget cuts will render the Army incapable of responding to threats and defending the nation's interests in a flexible and reliable way. (Competence and Predictability)

(b) Perceptions of the Army as self-serving, exploiting soldiers, exhibiting poor stewardship (fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement), or lacking a spirit of burden sharing as the society shoulders economic hardships to reduce national debt. (Benevolence and Integrity)

## Future Research

Several areas are rich for further research to better understand, build and sustain trust of the Army Profession. Leaders of the profession should seek better understanding of trust internal to the Army. Research efforts need to assess and track the trust relationship among Army leader and subordinate cohorts as the institution transitions from a deployed force at war to a regionally aligned, home station-based force.

Researchers should evaluate the effectiveness of professional military education systems to develop Army leader competency with regard to strategic management of the profession. They should conduct and publish empirical studies—drawing on academic theory and practitioner experience—to contribute to senior service college curricula. Such topics necessarily include strategic decision making, strategic force development decision process analysis, and strategic management to support national strategy-policy interfaces.

A detailed examination of trust between the Army and its external stakeholders—public trust—is equally important for senior leaders of the Army Profession. Cross-disciplinary longitudinal studies could help identify antecedent factors and trends associated with public trust of the Army profession across several domains (business organizations, civic bodies, government agencies, and other nations).

This article examined inter-personal, organizational, and public trust of the Army profession. An aspiration of the Army Profession should be the development of professionals who trust in one another and in the institution's ability to serve the Nation, while caring for its people. The Army Profession must exemplify essential characteristics to be trusted by its soldiers and civilians members as well as the American public and international partners. **MR**

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## NOTES

1. See "The Army Profession" in ADP-1, *The Army with Change 1* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 7 November 2012).

2. See Raymond T. Odierno, "Initial Thoughts—Chief of Staff, U.S. Army" (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 7 September 2011) and Raymond T. Odierno, *America's Force of Decisive Action: Marching Orders* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, January 2012).

3. *The Profession of Arms* (Fort Monroe, VA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command 8 December 2010).

4. Phanish Puranam and Bart Vanneste, "Trust and governance: Untangling a tangled web," *Academy of Management Review* (2009), 11-31.

5. Denise M. Rousseau, Sim B. Sitkin, Ronald S. Burt, and Colin Camerer, "Not so different after all: A cross-discipline view of trust," *Academy of Management Review* (1998), 393-404.

6. Gareth R. Jones and Jennifer M. George, "The experience and evolution of trust: Implications for cooperation and teamwork," *Academy of Management Review* (1998), 531-46.

7. James P. Steele, *Army Trust: A Multi-level Review* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Center for Army Leadership, U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, 2011).

8. *USAWC Study of Professionalism*, known as *The Westmoreland Study* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 1970), and *Army Training and Leader Development Panel Officer* (Fort Monroe, VA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 2002).

9. See Alex Keenan, "U.S. Military (Ret.): Commission could cut benefits, but talks will take years, at least," *Army Times* (29 June 2012), <<http://www.armytimes.com/money/retirement/offduty-military-retired-commission-could-cut-benefits-talks-take-years-070212/w/>>.

10. *U.S. Army Profession of Arms Campaign 2011: Interim Report* (Fort Monroe,

VA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, August 2011). Survey respondents expected senior uniformed Army leaders to make the right decisions (77.3 percent); trust their unit/organization's leaders to make right decision (85.9 percent); are confident in the Army as a profession that will sustain the trust of the American people (93.9 percent) and will accomplish the mission (93.2 percent); and there was an expressed belief that US society trusts the Army to do what is right in defending the Nation (93.7 percent).

11. Ibid. Responses were varied with regard to the statement "I trust senior civilian leaders within the Army to make right decisions," with 16.5 percent choosing "disagree or strongly disagree," 27.1 percent "neither disagree or agree," and 56.3 percent "agree or strongly agree."

12. *Army Profession Campaign Annual Report* (Fort Eustis, VA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 2 April 2010), 8.

13. Steele, *Army Trust*.

14. Don M. Snider, *Once Again, The Current Challenge to the US Army During a Defense Reduction: To Remain a Military Profession* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 8 February 2012).

15. Michelle Tan, "Leading vs Leaving: Lack of development up the chain prompts many soldiers to get out," *Army Times* (23 May 2011), 16-17; Michelle Tan and John Gould, "Toxic Leadership: Army wants to rid top ranks of toxic leaders," *Army Times* (2 August 2011); and Steele, *Antecedents and consequences of toxic leadership in the U.S. Army*.

16. Charles D. Allen, "Assessing the Army Profession," *Parameters* (Autumn 2011), 81-82.

17. Elihu Root, "The Army War College, Address at the Laying of the Cornerstone, Washington, D.C., February 21, 1903," and "The Army War College, Address at the Dedication, November 9, 1908," in *The Military and Colonial Policy of the United States: Addresses and Reports* by Elihu Root (1916), collected and ed. Robert Bacon and James Brown Scott (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), 121-29.

18. This paragraph is based on the author's work in Charles D. Allen, "Assessing the Army Profession," *Parameters* (Autumn 2011), 83.

19. Kurt L. Dirks and Daniel P. Skarlicki, "Trust in leaders: existing research and emerging issues," in R.M. Kramer and K.S. Cook, *Trust and Distrust in Organizations: Dilemmas and Approaches* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004), 21-40.

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21. James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, "Introduction—On Credibility and the Restoration of Trust and Confidence," in *Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It*, 2nd Edition. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011).

22. Seok-Eun Kim, "The role of trust in the modern administrative state: An integrative model," *Administration and Society* (2005) 37:5, 621, 611-635.

23. Poppo and Schepker, 127.

24. See James Surowiecki's *The Wisdom of Crowds* (2005), for an excellent analysis of this phenomena, and a useful taxonomy of when crowd wisdom has purchase.

25. Christopher A. Cooper, H. Gibbs Knotts, and Kathleen M. Brennan, "The importance of trust in government for public administration: The case of zoning," *Public Administration Review* (2008) 68:3, 460.

26. Cooper, Knotts, and Brennan, 459-68.

27. Poppo and Schepker, 127.

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

29. See "DOD Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military FY2011," from <[http://www.sapr.mil/media/pdf/reports/Department\\_of\\_Defense\\_Fiscal\\_Year\\_2011\\_Annual\\_Report\\_on\\_Sexual\\_Assault\\_in\\_the\\_Military.pdf](http://www.sapr.mil/media/pdf/reports/Department_of_Defense_Fiscal_Year_2011_Annual_Report_on_Sexual_Assault_in_the_Military.pdf)> (30 December 2012); see also: House Armed Services Committee Chair Duncan Hunter's comments during a 21 April 2004 hearing before the HASC, which clearly articulate the congressmen's belief that as recently as 2004, the American public was not ready to accept congressional sanction of women in combat, from <[http://www.archive.org/stream/performanceofdep00unit/performanceofdep00unit\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/performanceofdep00unit/performanceofdep00unit_djvu.txt)> (20 December 2011).

30. Crosby Burns and Alex Rothman, "The Repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell—1 Year Later," Center for American Progress, from <<http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/report/2012/09/20/38764/the-repeal-of-dont-ask-dont-tell-1-year-later/>>.

31. Julie Tate and Ellen Nakashima, "Bradley Manning court-martial opens," *The Washington Post*, June 3, 2013 (on line) from <[http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/bradley-manning-court-martial-opens/2013/06/03/9c65ea48-cc51-11e2-8f6b-67f40e176f03\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/bradley-manning-court-martial-opens/2013/06/03/9c65ea48-cc51-11e2-8f6b-67f40e176f03_story.html)>.

32. Neil A. Lewis, "Retired General is Censured for Role in Tillman Case," *The New York Times*, 1 August 2007 (on line) from: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/01/us/01tillman.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/01/us/01tillman.html?_r=0)>.

33. Kimberly Dozier, "McChrystal takes blame for 'Rolling Stone' article" (Associated Press, 5 January 2013), from <<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2013/01/05/mcchrystal-rolling-stone-article-memoir/1811171/>>.

34. The authors are not implying that Army's senior leaders do not speak candidly or that they do not balance stewardship of the profession with national interest. We are saying, this is a tough business. Senior leader communications must account for trust relationships with multiple stakeholder audiences.

35. Daniel Greenfield, *Obama's War on American Generals* (19 February 2013), from <<http://frontpagemag.com/2013/dgreenfield/obamas-war-on-american-generals/>>.

36. As with any communication cycle, the public and other audiences share a responsibility for effective communication. They must listen with care to the whole message offered by senior leaders and they must consider the context in which it is delivered. In some cases, they must listen to several communications of the message in several contexts to gain a full appreciation for the nuance of the message, or challenge the comment in feedback exchanges to grasp the full meaning. This may be an unrealistic expectation. So the burden of clear communication rests with the senior leader delivering the message.

37. Several ideas expressed in this section were inspired by conversations between the authors and Dr. Lenny Wong of the U.S. Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute. To further examine the national debate on retired officers speaking out, see—

Responsibility to speak-out:

Martin L Cook, "The Revolt of the Generals: A Case Study in Professional Ethics," *Parameters* 38.1 (Spring 2008): 4-15, <<http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA485882>>.

John Rupp, *Armchair Generals or Concerned Patriots: The Revolt of 2006*. U.S. Army War College USAWC Program Research Paper (9 May 2008), 1-25.

David Wood, "Military Officers Chafe for Bigger Role in Policy Decisions," *PoliticsDaily.com* (4 October 2010), <<http://www.politicsdaily.com/2010/10/04/military-officers-chafe-for-bigger-role-in-policy-decisions/>>.

David H. Gurney and Jeffrey D. Smotherman, "An Interview with Michael G. Mullen," *Joint Force Quarterly* 54 (Third Quarter 2009): 7-11, <<https://digitalndulibrary.ndu.edu/u?ndupress.21107>>.

Responsibility to remain subordinate:

MacKubin Thomas Owens, "Rumsfeld, The Generals, and the State of U.S. Civil-Military Relations," *Naval War College Review* 59.4 (Autumn 2006): 68-80, <<http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA519804>>.

David Margolick, "The Night of the Generals," *Vanity Fair* 560, April 2007, 246.

Matthew Moten, "The Army Officer's Professional Ethic—Past, Present, and Future," Carlisle Barracks: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, February 2010, <<http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA514082>>.

Joseph J. Collins, "What Civil-Military Crisis?" *Armed Forces Journal* 147.6 (February 2010): 18-21, <<http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2010/02/4419089/>>.

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

39. Thomas E. Ricks, "Sure, You're a Vet, but that doesn't mean you have license to act like a jerk," 17 June 2011, from <[http://ricks.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/06/17/sure\\_you\\_re\\_a\\_vet\\_but\\_that\\_doesn\\_t\\_mean\\_you\\_have\\_license\\_to\\_act\\_like\\_a\\_jerk](http://ricks.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/06/17/sure_you_re_a_vet_but_that_doesn_t_mean_you_have_license_to_act_like_a_jerk)>.

40. David S. Cloud, Eric Schmitt, and Thom Shanker, "Rumsfeld Faces Growing Revolt by Retired Generals," 13 April 2006, *New York Times* from [http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/13/washington/13cnd-military.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/13/washington/13cnd-military.html?_r=0).

41. Jennifer Griffin, "Dempsey 'disappointed' by anti-Obama campaign by ex-military members," *Foxnews.com*, 21 August 2012, from <<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2012/08/21/dempsey-disappointed-by-anti-obama-campaign-by-ex-military-members/>> (30 December).

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

43. Patrick J. Leahy, "Sen. Leahy issues statement on final passage of national defense authorization act for Fiscal Year 2012," *US Federal News Service* (Washington, DC: HT Media Ltd, 2011).

44. Poppo and Schepker, 132.

45. See intro, in Charles D. Allen and Stephen J. Gerras, "Developing Creative and Critical Thinkers," *Military Review* (November-December 2009): 77-83.

46. See, HASC Chair, Duncan Hunter's scathing remarks to LTG Joseph L. Yakovac, MG Buford C. Blount III and the acting Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics) the Honorable Michael W. Wynne, during a 21 April 2004 hearing before the HASC Committee on the Armed Services, <[http://www.archive.org/stream/performanceofdep00unit/performanceofdep00unit\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/performanceofdep00unit/performanceofdep00unit_djvu.txt)> (20 December 2011). At one point he told these soldiers, "You guys" can't tie your shoe laces!"

47. Kim, 626.

48. Poppo and Schepker, 130.