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PROFESSION OF ARMS STUDY TRUST REVIEW

Colonel (Retired) Chuck Allen

As part of the Profession of Arms (PoA) study, the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) tasked the U.S. Army War College (USAWC) to examine the key attribute of trust at the institutional level. “The Profession of Arms” White Paper identifies trust as “clearly the most important attribute we seek for the Army.”¹ While TRADOC’s guidance directed the USAWC to focus on specific external environments (e.g., civil-military, media-military), it is equally important to consider trust relationships in the context of interagency, intergovernmental, multi-national, and coalition activities in which the Army and its senior leaders engage. Figure 1 identifies four key attributes—expertise, development, service, and values—that form the basis for establishing and sustaining trust with multiple stake-holders. The lines of operation depicted in Figure 1 give the impression that expertise, development, service, and values are independent and distinctive. In reality, these attributes are overlapping, complementary, and interrelated. Unfortunately, the PoA White Paper does not implicitly address the significance of the codependence of these attributes; consequently, the PoA study must explicitly include these relationships in the overall examination of the profession.

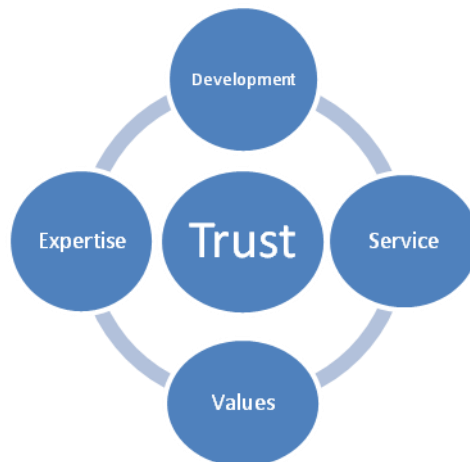


Figure 1. Profession of Arms Key Attributes

A critical omission of the PoA White Paper is a taxonomy that includes a definition of trust. For example, a frequently cited definition of trust is a “willingness to be vulnerable,” which is formed around the “expectation that an exchange partner will not behave opportunistically.”² This definition is consistent with the PoA White Paper because trust should be considered as a multilevel concept existing within individuals, groups, organizations, and within institutions as well as among institutions. Exchange relationships are part of everyday life. “Trust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of intentions and behaviors of another.”³

The exchange relationship of trust exists between the institutional Army as a profession and the Nation it serves. USAWC graduates are very familiar with the charter to confer on “national defense, military science, and responsible command.” Each of these three “great problems” has a trust component interrelated with the four other attributes identified in Figure 1. National defense requires that citizens trust its Army to *serve* and defend against all enemies, foreign, and domestic. Military science conveys the technical *expertise* of trusted professionals to employ violence to secure U.S. national interests and those of its allies. Responsible command embodies the trust that military professionals will be good stewards of people, facilities, equipment, and funds in accordance with the *values* and ethics of the profession of arms. These three great problems are aligned with four important areas of expert knowledge of the military profession (Military-Technical, Human Development, Moral-Ethical, and Political-Cultural).⁴

Since trust is the coin of the realm for an Army in a democratic society, it is important that as the PoA study proceeds that it includes a broad exploration of just what exactly the Army as profession means by the concept of trust.

ENDNOTES

1. *The Profession of Arms*, Fort Monroe, VA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, December 8, 2010, p. 6).

2. P. Puranam and B. S. Vanneste, “Trust and governance; Untangling a tangled web,” *Academy of Management Review*, 2009, pp. 11-31.

3. D. M. Rousseau, S. B. Sitkin, R. S. Burt, and C. Camerer, “Not so different after all: A cross-discipline view of trust,” *Academy of Management Review*, 1998, pp. 393-404.

4. R. Lacquement, “Mapping Army Profession Expertise and Clarifying Jurisdictions of Practice,” in D. M. Snider and L. J. Matthews, *The Future of the Army Profession, 2d Ed.*, Boston, MA: McGraw Hill, 2005, pp. 213-235.

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