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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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THE ARMY ETHIC:
THE UNITED STATES ARMY'S DOCTRINAL MISHAP

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Executive Summary

Title: The Army Ethic, the United States Army's Doctrinal Mishap

Author: Major Christopher S. Housel, United States Army

Thesis: The United States Army needs to consolidate and revise its *Army Ethic* to posture an efficient and shared understanding of ethics within its organization.

Discussion: Per Army Doctrinal Reference Publication (ADRP) 1 and Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 6-22, the *Army Ethic*, is categorized by two key fundamental points. The first is "The Heart of the Army," which argues that moral principles guide decisions, and its ethics expressed through laws, values, and shared beliefs within American and Army cultures. Its historical and prophetic motto centralizes the grassroots of this fundamental premise: This We'll Defend. The second fundamental focuses on being trusted Army professionals who honorably serve the nation while epitomizing good character, being competent, and epitomizing stewardship of the Army profession. However, the two fundamental points fail to identify simplistic character traits that echo the *Army Values*. It is essential to derive a more precise approach within the *Army Values* that is easily digestible and understood by today's leaders. The United States Army places minimum emphasis on the aspects of ethical climate, and this paper strives to find gaps in the current construct and provide a recommendation to revamp what the publication demands.

Conclusion: The *Army Ethic* covers a broad range of traits it desires of its Soldiers; however, it requires Soldiers to read a myriad of chapters to digest what it means. Additionally, it does not place enough doctrinal emphasis (on ethics) to steer, mentor, build, grow, and develop its formation through clearly defined character traits. Identifying essential ethical character traits and demanding top tier excellence will benefit leaders, peers, and subordinates alike.

DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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Preface

The research on the *Army Ethic* occurred due to the author's ignorance of what the Army demands of ethical leaders. This is not to say the author does not understand ethics, it shows that the author did not grasp what the Army wants of its team. Through tabletop and sidebar discussions, some superiors, peers, and subordinates had difficulty defining what the Army expects of ethical leaders (previous to research). Many Soldiers involve themselves in dilemmas and temptations, and it would have been great to reference a better-articulated *Army Ethic* to help steer, guide, and collaborate on potentials resolutions. The current *Army Ethic* lacks succinctness and is missing character traits.

The following individuals have contributed significantly to the success of this research thesis:

- Dr. Rebecca Johnson – Marine Corps University, Vice President of Academic Affairs
- Dr. Paul Gelpi – Marine Corps University, Professor of History
- LtCol Christopher Curtin – Marine Corps University, Military Faculty
- LtCol Dennis Katolin – United States Marine Corps, MARFORPAC
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Introduction

Unethical behavior within the United States Army is troubling, ethics—the study of attributes associated with morality and standardization of a profession—are not easily understood or adhered to in the absence of clearly delineated lines of efforts. The combination of moral attributes or ideals that strengthen a community is essential when driving a community to a collective good,¹ and the United States Army’s inability to adjust its ethic will continue to result in periods of dismay or cohesion. Typically, unethical leaders get exposed via mass information sharing (social media); and this level of public alienation has single-handedly driven Army leaders to adapt, adjust, and implement corrective training, non-judicial punishment, and judicial punishment to reactively correct its force. Unbeknownst to the American population, the Army has an apparent identity crisis recruiting, retaining, and developing ethical leaders because it conflicts with American norms and values, and the ill-defined *Army Ethic*.

The *Army Ethic* covers a broad range of traits it desires of its Soldiers; however, it requires Soldiers to comprehensively read a myriad of chapters—across multiple doctrinal publications—to digest what it means. Additionally, it does not place enough doctrinal emphasis on ethics to steer, mentor, build, grow, and develop its formation through simplified character traits, attributes, and virtues. Identifying desirable ethical virtues and attributes will benefit leaders, peers, and subordinates alike. The Army needs to consolidate and revise its *Army Ethic* to posture an efficient and shared understanding of ethics within its organization.

The United States Army defines ethics in multiple separate publications—*Army Doctrinal Reference Publication (ADRP) 1*, *Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 6-22*, and the Center for the Army Profession’s white paper on the *Army Ethic*—as opposed to being addressed in a single publication. With the *Army Ethic* broadly defined stance across multiple publications, the white paper aimed to address the following:

¹ Rebecca Johnson. “Moral Decision Making” (lecture, USMC Command and Staff College, Quantico, VA, October 3, 2019).

...the absence of an articulated, accessible, and understandable expression of the *Army Ethic*. The *Army Ethic* does exist and emanates from our foundational heritage, beliefs, traditions, and culture. The intent, therefore, is not to invent the *Army Ethic*, but rather to glean its fundamental nature. Doing so is of urgent importance and is worthy of our collective wisdom and judgment. As the Army Profession prepares for the environment that lies ahead, we must anticipate the unique ethical challenges the future will present and remain committed to developing Army Professionals of Character, Competence, and Commitment. Clearly articulating our ethic will help us do just that.²

This paper defines character as a grouping of desired traits that are sound in ethics and are in line with sociological values; competence as one's ability to complete a given task to standard; and commitment as one's ability to dedicate themselves to a greater good and profession.

The *Army Ethic* white paper addresses a need for additional emphasis on ethical behavior.³ As a capstone document, the Army introduces the *Army Ethic* at the forefront of *ADRP 1*; however, full-scale digestion of *ADRP 1* is needed to understand the importance of the Army's ethical stance since the Army created a broad approach with the inclusion of the Army Profession. The *Army Ethic* will serve as a focal point of argument for an update due to the Army's inability to communicate its ethics efficiently. See figure 1.

The *Army Ethic*

Within the *Army Ethic*, "The Heart of the Army" is considered the foundation. It outlines that moral principles guide decisions and its ethical posture is expressed in laws, values, and

² Center for the Army Profession and Ethic, *the Army Ethic White Paper*, (West Point, NY: Center for Army Professional Leadership, July 11, 2014).

³ Headquarters Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, ADP 6-22, (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, August 1, 2012), i.

shared beliefs within the American and Army cultures. The fundamental principles cement the Army's motto: "This We'll Defend"⁴ – meaning everything associated with the United States of America. This fundamental principle encompasses the overall character trait of trust. Trust is considered the foundation on which the Army is built upon because, without it, the American populace will lose faith in its ability to deter and win in a manner aligned to national values. Without trust, there will be a clear divide in civil-military relations, and military support will dwindle in the face of society's distrust. The trait of trust encompasses its other doctrinal publications, and it articulates that trust is the bedrock of the Army's existence.

Within its second priority, the Army describes that its soldiers must be trusted Army professionals who honorably serve their nation through character, competency, and commitment. To honorably serve, the *ADRP 1* states that United States Soldiers must serve their civilian authority by law, while simultaneously rejecting and reporting illegal, unethical, or immoral orders or actions.⁵ The military, in this case, the United States Army, must serve public policies, and unethical behavior undermines the Army's ability to serve its people correctly. They must take pride through integrity while demonstrating character in all aspects of life. Treating all people with dignity and respect—while leading by example and demonstrating courage despite risk, uncertainty, and fear—reaffirms aspects of the Army Values. The Army requires competent professionals who lead and follow with discipline, strive for excellence, and place the needs of others before themselves. The Army places emphasis on its Army Values—Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage—and holding one another accountable. These values place extraordinary emphasis on doing what is right to preserve and promote operational readiness. The *Army Ethic* culminates with continuing to strengthen the essential characteristic of the Army profession, reinforcing its bond of trust with each other and

⁴ Headquarters Department of the Army, *The Army Profession*, ADRP 1, (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, June 14, 2015), 2-6.

⁵ Headquarters Department of the Army, *The Army Profession*, ADRP 1, (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, June 14, 2015), 2-6.

the American people. In all, the Army's core values we placed last sequentially, which confuses its ethical priorities. There is a need to clearly articulate a stance that trust will preserve readiness, promote effectiveness, and demand excellence because trust is a shared partnership within a nation and its army.

Trust – An ADRP 1 Follow Through

ADRP 1 provides educational insight to better explain what it means to be an ethical professional. To better understand the *Army Ethic*, the Army needs to clearly outline what it means to be ethical. *ADRP 1* states the *Army Ethic* intends to “motivate and inspire Army Professionals to— “Seek to discover the truth, decide what is right (ethical, effective, and efficient), and demonstrate character, competence, and commitment to act accordingly.”⁶ Furthermore, *ADRP 1* solidifies the Army's stance that trust is “The Bedrock of Our Profession,”⁷ and General Martin E. Dempsey—18th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—stated, “...trust is based upon the fact that the members of our profession remain apolitical and would never betray the principles and intent of the Constitution, even at the risk of their own lives.”⁸ *ADRP 1* breaks down the differences between external trust and internal trust. External trust “is the confidence and faith that the American people have in the Army to serve the Nation ethically, effectively, and efficiently.” In contrast, “internal trust is the reliance on character, competence, and commitment of Army professionals to live by and uphold the *Army Ethic*.”⁹ Additionally, external and internal trust focuses on character, competence, and commitment.

The *Army Ethic* applies throughout the three levels of war—strategic, operational, and tactical—and it provides: “strategic leaders with moral guidance when considering prudent risk,

⁶ Headquarters Department of the Army, *The Army Profession*, ADRP 1, (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, June 14, 2015), 2-9.

⁷ Headquarters Department of the Army, *The Army Profession*, ADRP 1, (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, June 14, 2015), 3-1.

⁸ Headquarters Department of the Army, *The Army Profession*, ADRP 1, (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, June 14, 2015), 3-1.

⁹ Headquarters Department of the Army, *The Army Profession*, ADRP 1, (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, June 14, 2015), 3-2.

disciplined initiative, and the consequences of military operations. Tactically and operationally, Army leaders apply legal principles to determine how their units use lethal force.”¹⁰ Additionally, the *Army Ethic* guides its formation to uphold oaths to support and defend the Constitution, adapt and conform to the Army Values (moral principles), the Geneva Convention, and the Laws of War. According to *ADRP 1*, the *Army Ethic* guides soldiers’ decisions and actions, always. When they uphold the Army Values and live the *Army Ethic*, they strengthen the Army culture of trust, promoting a shared understanding and unity of effort with its civil authorities.

An Ethically Misunderstood Culture

No order, directive, or publication can completely rid United States Army soldiers of ethical character flaws, but there are ways to engage a subgroup to achieve desirable outcomes proactively. For the United States Army, there must be an understanding of the dichotomy of the United States Army soldiers—the individual—and the United States—the state. In Samuel P. Huntington’s *The Soldier and the State*, Huntington argues that there are three viewpoints to the military mind: its quality, characteristics, and substance.¹¹ The most impactful ethical factor discussed by Huntington is a “profession is more narrowly defined, more intensely and exclusively pursued, and more clearly isolated from other human activity than are most occupations.”¹² The aforementioned argues that sociological values and norms within a profession need to conform through isolation.

The Army needs to place more emphasis on ethics; moreover, it must train its organization to conform to its ethics. For example, the Abu Ghraib incident shows that the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and federal regulations did not stop military

¹⁰ Headquarters Department of the Army, *The Army Profession*, ADRP 1, (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, June 14, 2015), 3-5.

¹¹ Samuel P. Huntington, *State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), 59.

¹² Samuel P. Huntington, *State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), 61.

policemen and policewomen from torturing and humiliating Iraqi detainees.¹³ The roles and values of such articles are not being questioned, but this example shows that sociological norms and values—through effective training and revisiting previous ethical violations—challenge the *Army Ethic* due to its lack of succinctness. In addition to conformity, other character traits must be dissected and understood.

Within the *Army Ethic*, is the word integrity. Integrity is vital to the attribute of trust; however, it is represented as a separate desired attribute within the *Army Ethic*. The Department of the Army defines integrity as:

Do what is right, legally, and morally. Integrity is a quality you develop by adhering to moral principles. It requires that you do and say nothing that deceives others. As your integrity grows, so does the trust others place in you. The more choices you make based on integrity, the more this highly prized value will affect your relationships with family and friends, and, finally, the fundamental acceptance of yourself.¹⁴

Integrity is an Army Value, yet the *Army Ethic* does not place it high sequentially. Where does the Army stand on addressing ethical disconnects?

The Need for an Increased Emphasis on Ethics

Throughout the author's military career, the Army has continued to place more emphasis on winning wars than professional, ethical conduct. The *Small Wars Journal* finds, "There is an ethical disparity between the Multi-Domain Battle and the warfighter's ability to conduct land combat in accordance with the Law of War."¹⁵ The ethical disparity is due to the Army's inability to articulate how ethical behavior can promote successes in garrison and abroad—regardless of

¹³ Army University Press, *NCO Journal: The Importance of Ethics Education in Military Training*. November 16, 2018. <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/Archives/2018/November/Ethics/>.

¹⁴ Headquarters Department of the Army, *The Army Profession*, ADRP 1, (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, June 14, 2015), B-5.

¹⁵ First to Fight for the "Right, *The Ethical Dilemma Inherent Within the Multi-Domain Battle Concept*. <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/first-fight-right-ethical-dilemma-inherent-within-multi-domain-battle-concept>.

war scenarios since ethical people do the right thing. The United States Army must codify and teach positive ethical examples at all levels.

It is contradictory that the Army is pushing for more ethical behavior while romanticizing war heroes. The Army must consider debating idolized figures that exhibited unethical character traits. One of the most idolized and historical figures in the United States Army is Sergeant Audie Murphy. Audie Murphy's idolization comes from his actions in World War II for his wartime heroics. Throughout the Army, they have Audie Murphy boards, and only top tier noncommissioned officers can compete and earn a distinctive medallion representing Sergeant Audie Murphy's military service; however, Audie Murphy lacked integrity by lying about his weight and his age to join the Army.¹⁶ Audie Murphy's dishonesty questions his honesty and it serves as an educational tool when discussing ethics within the Army.

Retired General (GEN) David Petraeus is the United States' most renowned experts in counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. GEN Petraeus commanded forces for the International Security Assistance Forces in Afghanistan, Multinational Forces Iraq, and Central Command. He was rumored to be in contention to run for president and was selected to serve as the director of the Central Intelligence Agency. *The Washington Post* found that David Petraeus "pleaded guilty to mishandling classified information that he gave to his mistress—also his biographer— after his resignation as the director."¹⁷ His unethical behavior brings into question his leadership capabilities and his service history. Learning from his expertise is diminished because of his moral dissensions, however, it can provide valuable teaching points to soldiers.

Retired Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Jeffrey Sinclair, a decorated Army veteran, was previously a Brigadier General. Becoming a general officer in the Army places individuals

¹⁶ The New York Times Archives, *Audie Murphy-War Hero-Killed in Plane Crash*, June 1, 1971. <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/06/01/archives/audie-murphy-war-hero-killed-in-plane-crash-audie-murphy-killed-in.html>.

¹⁷ The Washington Post, *How David Petraeus Avoided Felony Charges and Possible Jail Time*, January 25, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/how-david-petraeus-avoided-felony-charges-and-possible-prison-time/2016/01/25/d77628dc-bfab-11e5-83d4-42e3bceea902_story.html

within the top .25% of all army officers. During the final stages of his career, he pled guilty and avoided jail time after being accused of forcible sodomy, adultery, and other charges. He paid a \$20,000 fine and the United States Army reduced him from the rank of Brigadier General to Lieutenant Colonel.¹⁸ Currently, the United States Department of Defense allows its service members to retire at a rank in which they honorably served for three consecutive years. Since Jeffrey Sinclair served honorably at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, he collects retirement benefits with his retirement discharge. With the avoidance of jail time, it appears that the Army sided with LTC Sinclair's family's well-being by protecting his pension and benefits. However, one could argue the Army lacks desire to hold personnel responsible for unethical and immoral behaviors, and LTC Sinclair's retirement provides proof. At a minimum, the decision to allow Sinclair to retire shows a strong need to redefine how the United States Army punishes unethical behavior.

American society accepts some behaviors that the United States Army does not, and this disconnect addresses a dire need to coach, teach, and mentor all soldiers—regardless of rank—to adapt to a code of ethics. Army publications need to emphasize the idea that soldiers are accountable to a different set of standards than the average civilian. Additionally, articles within the Uniform Code of Military Justice are non-negotiable and provide a negative reinforcement example for service members to avoid. Referencing positive ethical examples will promote the proactive messaging the Army needs. Feeding these examples to the lowest level will gain organizational buy-in at the lowest level, at home, and abroad. Future publications that outline Army ethics need to include clear positive and negative examples.

¹⁸ The Washington Post, *How a Disgraced Brigadier General Jeffrey Sinclair's Affair Will Hit Him in the Wallet*, June 22, 2014. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2014/06/20/heres-how-disgraced-brig-gen-jeffrey-sinclair-got-demoted-two-ranks/>

Reinforcing Ethical Behavior

Far too often, the United States Army tends to focus on the negative behaviors to reinforce its desire to build, grow, and develop ethical leaders. Instead of negative reinforcement, this paper intends to provide real-world role models for soldiers to emulate. This author does not believe any single person is pure and without flaws, therefore, there is a need to address how soldiers can emulate anyone. To do this, the United States Army needs to identify people of ethical nature, identify (if there are examples that exist) how him or her had a lapse of judgement at some point in time, and how he or she recovered from it. Exposing ethical strengths, weaknesses, and recovery will promote the Army's desire to build and develop resilient soldiers. Furthermore, using real-world role models will promote the education of soldiers for a newly revised *Army Ethic*.

Identifying well-known leaders that exhibit positive ethical character traits will assist in mentoring soldiers to assimilate to ethical standards. General (Retired) Colin Powell has a rich history of military successes, with limited failure. Colin Powell, a well-respected leader, published his *13 Rules of Leadership*, charges leaders to act ethically. Of these 13 rules, a few are within the current *Army Ethic*:

Rule #4: It can be done! Don't surround yourself with instant skeptics. At the same time, do not shut out skeptics and colleagues who give you solid counterviews

Rule #9: Share credit. Share the credit, take the blame, and quietly find out and fix things that went wrong

Rule #10: Remain calm. Be kind. In the "heat of the battle"—whether military or corporate—kindness, like calmness, reassures followers and holds their

confidence. Kindness connects you with other human beings in a bond of mutual respect.¹⁹

The *Army Ethic* fails to consider the General Colin Powell's core values of humility, kindness, empathy, and care—all absent from the current ethic.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower is another excellent example of an ethical leader. In an essay by Stephen Ambrose, Mr. Ambrose stated that "Dwight Eisenhower is a man of principle and character that used the federal government to break down segregation."²⁰ The breakdown of segregation was referencing Little Rock, Arkansas when Eisenhower's focus was on the enforcement of law and order, and military force was his last resort after several weeks of diplomatic efforts.²¹ Throughout his essay, Mr. Ambrose solidifies how Dwight D. Eisenhower was a man of character, principle, and heart; however, Eisenhower's reputation was not entirely untarnished.

President Eisenhower's had his character brought into question from adulterous allegations. These allegations tarnished his reputation as a leader, and historical reference on how he lived ethically and how allegations tarnished his reputation will show soldiers that there are ramifications to unethical behavior. More importantly, the dissection of Eisenhower's character strengths and weaknesses show how great soldiers can exhibit unethical flaws, and how such behaviors bring into question individual accolades, accomplishments, and originality. Presently, the United States Army questions unethical behavior through Colonel (COL) Denise F. Williams' *Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army*—a reactive approach to correcting its force.

¹⁹ The United States Air Force. *Colin Powell's 13 Rules*, accessed on November 4, 2019, <https://www.airman.af.mil/Portals/17/002%20All%20Products/001%20Book%20Reviews/Book%20Reviews/It%20Worked%20For%20Me--Powell's%2013%20Rules.pdf?ver=2016-09-20-150915-237>.

²⁰ Public Broadcasting Service. *Character Above All-Dwight D. Eisenhower*, accessed on November 4, 2019 <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/spc/character/essays/eisenhower.html>.

²¹ Finney, Nathan K. and Tyrell O. Mayfield. *Redefining the Modern Military: The Intersection of Profession and Ethics* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2018), 45.

Toxic Leadership – Teaching Ethics Through Negative Reinforcement

In 2005, COL Denise F. Williams conducted a strategy research project on *Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army*. This document became a reactive measure on identifying toxic leadership dimensions—particularly dimensions of leaders—within the United States Army and provides substance for removing soldiers from leadership positions or the Army. In COL Williams’ work, she references two types of unethical character traits:

Malfeasance: ...haughty, arrogant, and insecure, toxic leaders sometimes cross the thin border between unethical or unprofessional behavior and illegal behavior that can result in malfeasance. Their perceived self-importance has them convinced that rules and laws do not apply to them. Perceived self-importance can result in behaviors that are internally and externally devastating to an organization, especially in the public sector, where public trust and confidence are greatly valued.

The Corrupt Leader: Power and greed motivate the corrupt leader. He will lie, cheat, or steal to feed his need for power and money. The lying usually feeds the need for power, while the cheating and stealing feed the need for money. It is clear to the followers that the corrupt leader will put his own needs and desires ahead of theirs. It is a matter of self-absorption like that of the narcissistic leader and reminiscent of the ignoring of the needs of others as characterized by the callous leader. The corrupt leader steps further into the immoral, unethical, and often illegal realm. Eventually, the corrupt leader is found in a labyrinth of deceit. Whether it is for power or money, the corrupt leader cannot be trusted, and when subordinates and followers know this, the organization suffers.²²

²² Denise F. Williams, *Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army*, (Carlisle, PA: United States Army War College, March 18, 2005).

The Army needs to counter the above traits to determine what it desires of its soldiers. Two antonyms of malfeasance are obedience and manners,²³ and these two antonyms combine into discipline and respect—both are in the Army’s *Warrior Ethos* and *Army Values*. Respectively, there are 21 antonyms for corrupt: ethical, good, honest, honorable, moral, respectable, trustworthy, clean, pure, decent, helpful, high, kind, noble, principled, purified, sound, truthful, uncorrupt, upright, and wholesome.²⁴ These antonyms combine into the *Army Values* of respect, honor, and integrity. The Army currently relieves individuals based on this non-doctrinal publication, and it needs to refine the *Army Ethic* for future proactive use measures. If the Army does that, it can adapt its current evaluation reports to expose unethical leadership qualities and promote/assign/relieve soldiers based on doctrine.

The identification of shortfalls in behavior is vital for exposing weaknesses in the Army, and COL Williams’ work has surpassed the Army’s needs to identify what it expects from its soldiers and the consequences for not following guidelines. The Army’s current approach to recognizing individual behavior is the good conduct medal—awarded after three years for not getting into trouble; however, commanders are empowered to provide impact awards—Army Commendation Medal and Army Achievement Medal. Commanders at all levels need to be more open in recognizing positive ethical behavior—based on the revised ethic—and award their soldiers. Recognizing an individual for not getting in trouble every three years is like giving an extra ration of food to an inmate for good behavior. It is not enough; behavior modification takes more than being recognized every three years. Identification and recognition of positive character traits, virtues, and attributes will benefit the *Army Ethic*; however, the Army needs to develop a shared understanding of ethics before it can present models for soldiers to emulate.

²³ Thesaurus Dot Com. *Malfeasance*, accessed on March 4, 2020. <https://www.thesaurus.com/browse/malfeasance>.

²⁴ Thesaurus Dot Com. *Corrupt*, accessed on March 4, 2020. <https://www.thesaurus.com/browse/corrupt?s=t>.

Considerations

As the Army looks to articulate a more unified and consistent vision of ethics, it might consider incorporating ideas from theorists like Michael Walzers, Dale Brown, Lloyd Matthews, Nathan Finney, and Tyrell Mayfield. First, Michael Walzers outlines two kinds of military responsibility.

Hierarchal: an officer can look up and down the hierarchy and feel that he is doing what he out to be doing. He is pursuing victory with all the means at his disposal, which is what his superiors want him to do, and what we, as members of the sovereign people, what him to do.

Non-hierarchal (lack of accountability): these responsibilities challenge leaders and subordinates to act with character, perseverance, and reassurance that ethical behavior is rewardable and accountable when identified.²⁵

Leadership knowledge, information sharing, and transparency are three traits that correlate to Walzers' stance and used within the *Army Ethic* revision.

When establishing an ethical approach, Dale Brown and Lloyd Matthews break down four considerations in their book titled *The Parameters of Military Ethics*. The first consideration of an ethical approach is the danger posed by the acceptance of various forms of ethical relativism, or the blurring of right from wrong. The erosion of right and wrong in favor of a "no-fault" society poses a threat to sound ethical judgments. Brown and Matthews suggest identifying the thought process behind a decision or action, as opposed to the thought process behind the decision/action.²⁶

²⁵ C.A.J. Coady and Igor Primoratz, *Military Ethics* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub. Co, 2008), 403.

²⁶ Matthews, Lloyd J. and Dale E. Brown. *The Parameters of Military Ethics* (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, 1989), 75.

Secondly, Brown and Matthews discuss loyalty syndrome—false ethical dilemmas—and how it must be avoided: “Loyalty, an admirable and necessary quality within limits, can become all-consuming. It also becomes dangerous when a genuine, wholesome loyalty to the boss degenerates into covering up for him, hiding things from him, or not differing with him when he is wrong.”²⁷

Brown and Matthews additionally found that image preservation avoidance is necessary. Image: “at times, the obsession with image in the U.S. Army borders with institutional paranoia (leaders that stifle negative feedback, care about their image for promotion).”²⁸

Brown and Matthews fourth consideration recognizes “ethical underscores kill the bids to success. Failing to recognize positive ethical behavior that could lessen the likelihood of success.”²⁹ Identifying critical threats ensures positive reinforcement. This paper considers the four bids—ethical relativism, loyalty syndrome, image preservation, and drives for success—for redefining the *Army Ethic*.

In *Redefining the Modern Military: The Intersection of Profession and Ethics*, Nathan Finney and Tyrell Mayfield found that there are external and internal threats to consider for military ethics. They define that external threats need to ensure “doctrine captures the human element of warfare while adapting to emerging technologies remains a significant challenge for the military profession to ensure the United States remains able to protect its interests.”³⁰

Simultaneously, internal threats are “extremely important for governments to have strict guidelines and maintain oversight...operations must use the minimum necessary force.”³¹

²⁷ Matthews, Lloyd J. and Dale E. Brown. *The Parameters of Military Ethics* (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, 1989), 75.

²⁸ Matthews, Lloyd J. and Dale E. Brown. *The Parameters of Military Ethics* (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, 1989), 76.

²⁹ Matthews, Lloyd J. and Dale E. Brown. *The Parameters of Military Ethics* (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, 1989), 76.

³⁰ Finney, Nathan K. and Tyrell O. Mayfield. *Redefining the Modern Military: The Intersection of Profession and Ethics* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2018), 44.

³¹ Finney, Nathan K. and Tyrell O. Mayfield. *Redefining the Modern Military: The Intersection of Profession and Ethics* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2018), 45.

Understanding that external and internal threats compromise military ethics, there must be a refined focus that addresses positive attributes to combat unnecessary ramifications to excessive negative actions.

Furthermore, Finney and Mayfield identify two moral obligations for the military: “one to the state and its people, the other to their fellow professionals.” This author proposes that when confronted by both moral obligations, conducting oneself within a revised *Army Ethic*, there will not be a point of contention on which moral obligation to follow. Finney and Mayfield conclude with:

The military must ensure the state’s survival from external threats, maintain a monopoly on violence internally, and guarantee the state’s protection from the military itself. Military professionals must be competent in battle, committed to preparing for the test of combat, and prepared for a life of sacrifice during their time serving in the military. The absence of this professional mindset has the potential to be gravely injurious both to their subordinates and to themselves.³²

Collectively, the state and its people must be held accountable by strict guidelines. The newly proposed ethic shows a more precise approach when directing soldiers to obey and act per applicable laws.

Ethical Posture

The Army’s ethical foundation is based on the Army Values while upholding moral and legal obligations, while trust is the bedrock of the *Army Profession*; however, the previous statement oversimplifies the issue.

One value that is essential to ensuring ethical conduct is empathy. This value is missing within *ADRP 1*. Empathy is too often confused with sympathy. When leaders are overly sympathetic to their subordinates, peers, and superiors, leaders are weak, and they lose face

³² Finney, Nathan K. and Tyrell O. Mayfield. *Redefining the Modern Military: The Intersection of Profession and Ethics* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2018), 51.

amongst their teams. The stigma of sympathy is that it emboldens substandard performance and bolsters a lack of confidence. To attack this dilemma, the Army needs to adapt to empathetic behaviors. Empathy defined is the appreciation, compassion, community understanding of shared interests.³³ The Army needs to coach, teach, and mentor its formation to consider all variables in each situation, and react accordingly with a holistic understanding.

Maintaining an ethical posture can be directly correlated to the impacts that positive leaders have. In the author's experience, leaders who are honest, forthright, caring, and accurately balance firm and fair leadership tend to get the most out of their subordinates. Additionally, there is a competition pendulum when a group of quality ethical leaders surrounds each other. Toxic leaders could self-alienate, and they could receive punishments, non-promotions, or discontinued service. On the contrary, those who are ethically bound need to be on the positive side of recognition and awards.

Analysis of the Army Ethic

Comparatively speaking, the United States Army is consistent within its doctrinal fundamentals of ethical leadership. Ethical leadership is inherent throughout the *Army Values*, the Profession of Arms, and overall leadership values instilled throughout a soldier's career. The gaps with the *Army Ethic* are apparent with its lack of doctrinal efficiency and knowledge management. Surprisingly, the *Army Ethic* fails to correlate how commitment and competence are ethical characteristics, and soldiers need to consult other chapters and publications to get a full explanation of how commitment and competence correlate with ethics. There is a prolific need to consolidate, reorganize, and disseminate a clear approach to ethics. Without a clear, well-articulated stance on ethics, there will be dissension, and a failure to get to the root cause of unethical behavior-knowledge and clarity.

³³ Thesaurus Dot Com. *Malfeasance*, accessed on March 4, 2020. <https://www.thesaurus.com/browse/empathy>.

When developing a comprehensive, all-inclusive model of ethics, it should be relatable across the United States Army through doctrinal consolidation. The character traits, attributes, virtues, and collective reasoning are not original in thought, but are a derivative of the research conducted.

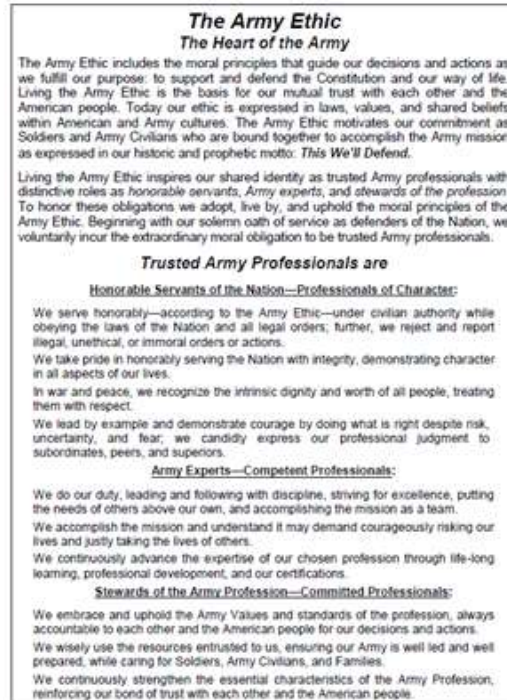


Figure 1. The Army Ethic.³⁴

As noted, a United States Army Soldier can read this single page summation of the *Army Ethic* in *ADRP 1*, but it requires more research in *ADRP 1*, *ADP 6-22*, and the Army White Paper on *Army Ethic* to gain a real understanding of the expectations set forth. The following is an conglomerate assessment of what the Army has outlined in its various publications; therefore, it is within the proposed Army Code of Ethical Conduct:

How to Do It (Be)

- Army Experts – Be Experts within your Military Occupational Specialty
- Stewards of the Army Profession – Preach it, Embody it, Live It
- Committed – Everything comes before you

³⁴ Headquarters Department of the Army, *The Army Profession*, ADRP 1, (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, June 14, 2015), 2-6

- Disciplined – Structured, easily focused
- Adopt, Live by, and Uphold Moral Principles within the *Army Ethic*

What to Embody (Know & Do)

- Trustworthiness – Do What is Right, Even When Nobody is Looking
- Share American and Army Culture Beliefs – It is who Soldiers are
- Honorable Servants – Live with Distinction and Code
- Soldiers of Character – Be a Good Person
- Army Values – Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage
- Lead and Prepare Soldiers – You Know Your Mission, Do It
- Professional Development – Be a Learner, Continue to Get Better Every Day
- Follow Laws

The current *Army Ethic* fails to simplify and consolidate its expectations of its soldiers. The above analysis is a reorganization into a collective thought. The gaps in the *Army Ethic* annotated throughout this paper are addressed in the proposed Army Code of Ethical Conduct below:

The Army Code of Ethical Conduct

Our Bedrock

The *Army Values* of *Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage* will always be enforced on and off duty. These values are the bedrock of our Army culture from the day you become a United States Army Soldier. Failure to uphold these values in everything you do places your character and trust in jeopardy and provides the enemy with an insurmountable advantage. We [Soldiers], regardless of rank and Military Occupational Specialty, are responsible for inculcating, maintaining, and preaching our profession ethically and morally.

Character

Being a Soldier of character is an easy feat when embodying the *Soldiers' Creed*, the *Warrior Ethos*, and the *Army Values*. Nevertheless, you are charged with ensuring you lead and follow with empathy, dignity, humility, and kindness. Non-negotiable: you must share the beliefs of our country and our Army. At all times, you will follow the U.S. Constitution, Geneva Conventions, *Manual for Courts Marshal (MCM)*, federal, state, local, and military laws; ensuring your morality and ethics are never in question. When in doubt, follow the *MCM*.

Trust

The building, maintaining, and expectation of trusting those around you is vital in preserving our readiness. Trust is the combination of the following characteristics: morality, shared credit, humility, sympathy, empathy, competence, and commitment. Be a good person and care for those around you. Competence is not inherently ethical; however, it builds the trust of the American people and those with whom you serve.

The Army Profession: A Promotion of Trust

Be a part of something bigger than yourself! Attitude is everything! Lead and follow with your heart. To be included amongst the greatest land fighting force in the world is an incredible accomplishment. It is a responsibility that should not be taken lightly. At all times, refine your expertise, remain committed, disciplined, physically and mentally tough, uphold and live by the *Army Values*. Strive to maintain self-accountability, responsibility, quality of life, and core principles. Our Nation and its people need a Soldier who is ethical, moral, character bound, transparent, and most of all, trustworthy.

Conclusion

The *Army Ethic* covers a broad range of traits it desires of its Soldiers; however, it is not easily digestible, nor is it clear and concise. United States Army Soldiers need to read across a spectrum of doctrinal publications, while referring to their *Warrior Ethos*, *Soldiers' Creed*, and *Army Values*. This dissension causes fog and friction, and it does not provide the clarity everyone needs. Providing a succinct, clear, well-articulated ethical code will provide the ethical foundation the Army needs. The United States Army needs to update its *Army Ethic* to posture a shared understanding amongst its ranks, adapting its ethic as the Army Code of Ethical Conduct.

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