

**Professional Military Ethics Monograph Series**

**THE ARMY'S PROFESSIONAL MILITARY ETHIC  
IN AN ERA OF PERSISTENT CONFLICT**

**Don M. Snider  
Paul Oh  
Kevin Toner**

**October 2009**

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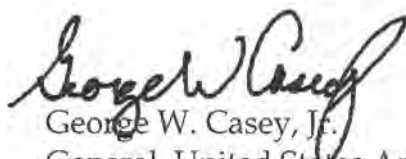
## FOREWORD

I am honored to introduce the inaugural issue of this series on the Professional Military Ethic. Our PME is central to everything we do. It articulates what we believe and value as a profession and serves as the moral compass that guides us as we strive to live out those beliefs. Our ethic is as old as the Army itself. Forged throughout our history, it remains relevant – even indispensable – in today’s era of persistent conflict.

As the character of conflict in the 21st century evolves, the Army’s strength will continue to rest on our values, our ethos, and our people. Our Soldiers and leaders must remain true to these values as they operate in increasingly complex environments where moral-ethical failures can have strategic implications. Most of our Soldiers do the right thing – and do it well – time and again under intense pressure. But we must stay vigilant in upholding our high professional standards – ever mindful of the strains that accompany repeated combat deployments in the longest war our country has fought with an all-volunteer force. We must think critically about our PME and promote dialogue at all levels as we deepen our understanding of what this time-honored source of strength means to the profession today.

This series will be one way the Army sponsors such spirited, constructive discourse. Every few months, new monographs will be published as part of this series, a joint endeavor of the Army’s Center of Excellence for the Professional Military Ethic at West Point and the Strategic Studies Institute of the Army War College. I encourage the submission of thought-

provoking monographs as we seek to capture the Army's imagination on this vital subject – one at the very heart of our profession.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "George W. Casey, Jr.", with a stylized, cursive script.

George W. Casey, Jr.  
General, United States Army  
Chief of Staff

## FOREWORD

In the opening epigraph, Dr. Don Snider and his colleagues Major Paul Oh and Major Kevin Toner immediately ground the reader in an excerpt from *Army Field Manual (FM) 1, The Army*,: “*Professions create their own standards of performance and codes of ethics to maintain their effectiveness.*” This statement challenges Army professionals to define, articulate, and take stock of both the profession, as well as the canon of values, beliefs, morals and codes that comprise the profession’s Ethic – the Professional Military Ethic (PME).

In the series forward, General Casey challenges us to deeply study the richness of the Army professional Ethic formed over our 234 year history, the last 35 years of which comprised as an all-volunteer professional force. Dr. Snider and his fellow authors take on General Casey’s challenge and engage in vibrant and thoughtful dialog about our profession and our PME. They call us toward a deeper understanding of what it means to be a professional, to be part of a professional body, and our responsibilities to that body and to the nation it serves in continuing to advance our Ethic.

Further, Dr. Snider and colleagues offer language, definitions, and categorizations for consideration that if made common may help the Army pursue professional dialog with a greater level clarity and preciseness. Importantly, they offer implications for developing leaders, those that promulgate our Ethic, to become moral exemplars.

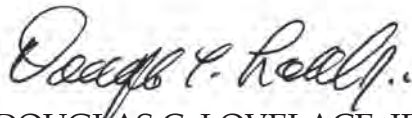
Dr. Snider is one the Army’s great soldier-scholars with military experience ranging from leading infantrymen during three combat tours in Vietnam to service on the Army, Joint, and National Security

Council Staff. As a scholar he served with distinction at West Point where he championed scholarship about the profession, professional identity, and the PME. We are pleased to offer Dr. Snider and his colleagues' monograph as the first in this series focusing on the PME.

We hope this monograph engenders spirited dialog, motivating Army professionals to contribute to future papers in this series. We are also honored for SSI and the ACPME to partner in this important ongoing effort—this foundational dialog of our professional code.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. T. Hannah", with a stylized, cursive script.

SEAN T. HANNAH  
Director  
Army Center for the Professional  
Military Ethic

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Douglas C. Lovelace, Jr.", with a stylized, cursive script.

DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.  
Director  
Strategic Studies Institute

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## SUMMARY

The purpose of the Army's Ethic is stated clearly in *Field Manual* (FM) 1, *The Army*. It is "to maintain [the Army's] effectiveness." The implication is as clear as it is true—without such an ethic, the Army cannot be effective at what it does. As is well-documented in the literature of professions, their ethics provide the primary means of social direction and control over their members as they perform their expert duties, often under chaotic conditions. For the Army profession, its evolving expert knowledge in the moral-ethical domain is what enables the profession to develop individual professionals—Soldiers and their leaders—to fight battles and campaigns "effectively and rightly," as expected by the client the profession serves. Without such good, right, and just application of its expertise, the Army will lose its lifeblood—the trust of the American people.

But how do the leaders within the Army profession think about their Ethic? With what language, models, and pedagogy is it discussed and taught in Army schoolhouses and units? And how is the ethic understood to relate to Army culture, both to the culture's functional and dysfunctional aspects? When professionals dissect their ethic, for example, are they analyzing the ethic of the profession or that of the individual professional; is the ethic they are discussing defined in legal or moral terms, etc.? Lastly, how, and how well, do the individual professionals within the Army—officers, noncommissioned officers, and civilians alike—internalize the Ethic in their daily lives such that the Army's leadership is seen consistently on duty and off duty, 24 hours a day, to "walk the talk?"

This essay, then, is a first attempt to look into

this largely unresearched field. Such research cannot proceed without a modicum of theorizing and setting forth of models for the Ethic, some common understandings from which to hypothesize and then test such propositions. Current Army doctrine, however, does not provide even a construct for examining the Ethic, nor does it analyze how the Ethic changes with society's cultural shifts, evolving wars, or other external shocks.

This essay offers a proposal for the missing constructs and language with which we can more precisely think about and examine the Army's Professional Military Ethic, starting with its macro context which is the profession's culture. We examine three major long-term influences on that culture and its core ethos, thus describing how they evolve over time. We contend that in the present era of persistent conflict, we are witnessing dynamic changes within these three influences. In order to analyze these changes, we introduce a more detailed framework which divides the Ethic into its legal and moral components, then divide each of these into their institutional and individual manifestations.

Turning from description to analysis, we also examine to what extent, if any, recent doctrinal adaptations by the Army (FM 3-0, 3-24, and 6-22, etc.) indicate true evolution in the essential nature of the profession's Ethic. Then, we present what we believe to be the most significant ethical challenge facing the Army profession—the moral development of Army leaders, moving them from “values to virtues” in order that they, as Army professionals, can consistently achieve the high quality of moral character necessary to apply effectively and, in a trustworthy manner, their renowned military-technical competencies.

Surely, as FM 1 reminds us, unless the profession's Ethic is manifested integrally in the personal lives and

official actions of its leaders, and through them its Soldiers, the Army is simply not a profession at all, and its effectiveness even as a bureaucracy will be greatly impaired.

## THE ARMY'S PROFESSIONAL MILITARY ETHIC IN AN ERA OF PERSISTENT CONFLICT

The purpose of any profession is to serve society by effectively delivering a necessary and useful specialized service. To fulfill those societal needs, professions – such as medicine, law, the clergy, and the military – develop and maintain distinct bodies of specialized knowledge and impart expertise through formal, theoretical, and practical education. Each profession establishes a unique subculture that distinguishes practitioners from the society they serve while supporting and enhancing that society. **Professions create their own standards of performance and codes of ethics to maintain their effectiveness.** To that end they develop particular vocabularies, establish journals, and sometimes adopt distinct forms of dress. In exchange for holding their members to high technical and ethical standards, society grants professionals a great deal of autonomy. (Emphasis added by authors.)

*Field Manual 1*, June 14, 2005,  
para. 1-40

Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. If you must be without one, be without the strategy.

General H. Norman Schwarzkopf  
U.S. Army, Ret.<sup>1</sup>

### **Introduction.**

The epigraphs above frame very well this monograph on the Army's Professional Military Ethic. At least four aspects of the Ethic<sup>2</sup>—each within the focus of this monograph—are clearly noted in them.

First, we should note from *Field Manual* (FM) 1, the Army's capstone doctrinal manual, the purpose of the

Ethic. It is “to maintain [the Army’s] effectiveness.” The implication is as clear as it is true—without such an ethic, the Army cannot be effective at what it does. As is well-documented in the literature of professions, their ethics provide the primary means of social direction and control over their members as they perform their expert duties, often under chaotic conditions.<sup>3</sup> For the Army profession, its evolving expert knowledge in the moral-ethical domain is what enables the profession to develop individual professionals—Soldiers and their leaders—to fight battles and campaigns “effectively and rightly,” as expected by the client the profession serves.<sup>4</sup> Without such good, right, and just application of its expertise, the Army will lose its lifeblood—the trust of the American people!

Second, we must note that the Ethic is uniquely that of a profession, the Army profession, which produces sustained land power for use under joint command and is one of three military professions currently serving the Republic.<sup>5</sup> Thus, it is *not* the ethic of a bureaucracy or of a business, though the Army has aspects of bureaucracy within it and employs many, many contractors to do its nonprofessional work.

This distinction highlights a major challenge currently facing the strategic leaders of the profession, the colonels and general officers: how to lead the Army in such a manner that its culture, ethic, and behavior are those of a profession, even though it is organized in many aspects as a hierarchical bureaucracy. The most insightful question drawn from over 4 years of study of the Army as profession (2000-04) is as pregnant today in the latter stages of the Iraq deployments as it was when published initially in 2002. It is the lament of middle grade soldiers and their leaders when their strategic leaders do not conform the Army and its

subcultures to the behavior of a profession: “How can I be a professional, if there is no profession?”<sup>6</sup>

Reflecting on this lament, we should all be reminded of what at least one articulation of the Ethic currently states: “I am an expert and I am a professional” (the ninth statement of The Soldier’s Creed). But how can that Soldier be “an expert and a professional” if there is no profession; but just a bureaucracy? Clearly, then, the maintenance of the profession’s Ethic is one of the most precious and vital privileges of those who are the stewards of the Army on behalf of the Republic.

Third, FM 1 makes clear that the Ethic is about culture—in fact, the Ethic is integral to culture. It is the core of moral principles, values, and beliefs at the center of the profession’s culture “that distinguishes practitioners from the society they serve while supporting and enhancing that society.” But Army culture is a topic little understood and even less studied by the Army.<sup>7</sup> So we will treat Army culture in some detail, both to inform about its basic character and to open a professional discussion as to its dysfunction, as well as, in the case of the Ethic, its absolutely vital aspects.

And fourth, the comment by General Schwarzkopf is a succinct reminder that the Ethic is ultimately about individual character as manifested in the decisions and actions of all who are considered leaders within the profession, be they commissioned, noncommissioned, or civilian. Unless the profession’s ethic is manifested integrally in the personal lives and official actions of its leaders, and through them its soldiers, the Army is simply not a profession at all, and its effectiveness even as a bureaucracy will be greatly impaired.

The purpose of this monograph, then, is to provide a framework within which scholars and practitioners can discuss the various aspects of the Army’s Ethic.

Such discussion is especially challenging because we lack common models and language for such a dialogue. Current Army doctrine and scholarly research do not provide a construct for examining the Ethic, nor do they analyze how the Ethic changes with society's cultural shifts, evolving wars, or other external shocks. When professionals dissect their ethic, for example, are they analyzing the ethic of the profession or that of the individual professional; is the ethic they are discussing defined in legal or moral terms, etc.? To preclude such "talking past each other," this monograph offers a proposal for the missing constructs and language with which we can more precisely examine the Army's Professional Military Ethic.

This monograph contains four sections. The first section locates the Army's Ethic in its macro context, which is the profession's culture. It examines three major long-term influences on that culture and its core ethos, thus describing how they evolve over time. We contend that in the present era of persistent conflict, we are witnessing dynamic changes within these three influences. In order to analyze these changes, we introduce in the second section a more disaggregated framework which divides the Ethic into its legal and moral components, then divides each of these into their institutional and individual manifestations. This arrangement provides four quadrants of the Ethic within which to discuss the shaping influences: legal-institutional, moral-institutional, legal-individual, and moral-individual. In the third section, turning from description to analysis, we examine to what extent, if any, recent doctrinal adaptations by the Army (FM 3-0, 3-24, and 6-22, etc.) indicate true evolution in the essential nature of the profession's Ethic. In the fourth and concluding section, we present what we believe



to be the most significant ethical challenge facing the Army profession—the moral development of Army leaders, moving them from “values to virtues” so that they, as Army professionals, can consistently achieve the high quality of moral character necessary to apply effectively and in a trustworthy manner their renowned military-technical competencies. Also in this final section, we set forth a specific set of issues with which we believe Army professionals should urgently come to terms.

## **I. The Army’s Professional Culture and Ethic: A Macro View.<sup>8</sup>**

For purposes of this monograph, the most useful starting point is the classic definition offered by Edgar Schein for any organizational culture:

We must first specify that a given set of people has had enough stability and common history to have allowed a culture to form. This means that some organizations will have no overarching culture because they have no common history or have frequent turnover of members. Other organizations can be presumed to have strong cultures because of a long shared history or because they have shared important intense experiences (as in a combat unit). But the content and strength of a culture have to be empirically determined. They cannot be presumed from observing surface cultural phenomena. Culture is what a group learns over a period of time as that group solves its problems of survival in an external environment and its problems of internal integration. Such learning is simultaneously a behavioral, cognitive, and an emotional process. . . .

Culture can now be defined as (a) a pattern of basic assumptions, (b) invented, discovered, or developed by a given group, (c) as it learns to cope with its problems

of external adaptation and internal integration, (d) that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, (e) is to be taught to new members as the (f) correct way to perceive, think, or feel in relation to these problems.<sup>9</sup>

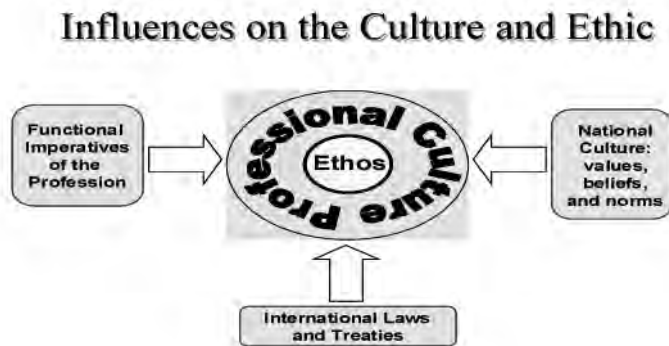
Schein's classic definition accords with the implications drawn from FM 1 in the introduction of this monograph. Military culture is the deep structure of organization drawn from the Army's past successes and from its current interactions with the environment. It is rooted in the prevailing assumptions, values, and traditions which collectively, over time, have created shared individual expectations among the members of the Army profession. Meaning is established through socialization to a variety of identity groups (e.g., Army branches and components, etc.) that converge in the operations of the organization. Professional culture includes both attitudes and behavior about what is right, what is good, and what is important, often manifested in shared heroes, stories, and rituals that promote bonding among the members. It is, in short, the "glue" that makes the profession a distinctive source of identity and experience that, in turn, informs the character in its individual members. Thus, a strong culture exists when a clear set of norms and expectations—usually as a function of leadership—permeates the entire organization. It is essentially "how we do things around here."<sup>10</sup>

Closely associated with an organization's culture is its climate. In contrast to culture, organizational climate refers to environmental stimuli rooted in the organization's value system such as rewards and punishments, communications flow, and operations tempo, which determine individual and team

perceptions about the quality of working conditions. It is essentially “how we feel about this organization.”<sup>11</sup> Climate is often considered to be alterable in the near term and largely limited to those aspects of the organizational environment of which members are consciously aware.

Climate and culture are obviously related in complex ways, climate being one observable and measurable artifact of culture, and considered by many to be one of the major determinants of organizational effectiveness. For the purposes of this monograph, however, we will focus on culture per se, for it is at this level that we discover the richest insights to the Army’s Ethic.

Figure 1 depicts the three major categories of influences on the Army’s professional culture: (1) the functional imperatives of the profession, 2) America’s culture, values, beliefs, and social norms, and 3) international laws and treaties of which the United States is a party. We contend that operating in the era of persistent conflict has and will continue to bring about changes within all three of these influences on the Army’s culture and ethos.



**Figure 1. Influences on Army Culture and Ethic.**

In this new era, we are witnessing globalization, widespread environmental changes, the rise of nonstate actors, and the regionalization of persistent conflict—all trends that have already profoundly impacted America’s security posture and strategy for confronting evolving threats. The U.S. Army, for its part, will most likely continue to undertake expeditionary-type missions in extremely hostile and unstable environments. It will likely operate “among the peoples” in areas where government is either weak or failed and where nonstate adversaries have access to increasingly destructive weapons, while exploiting asymmetric advantages such as language and cultural awareness. Operating in such an environment has already placed new demands on the Army and its ethic, and we anticipate that this will continue for the foreseeable future.

For example, the functional imperatives that inform the profession’s Ethic are already changing. Whereas “we don’t do nation-building, we only do BIG wars” was commonly declared a decade ago as a long-standing cultural norm,<sup>12</sup> the Army has recently sought aggressively to remaster the competencies of counterinsurgency and nation-building. Such is reflected in the equal footing now given to stability operations in the Army’s new FM 3-0.

Second, our national culture, values, beliefs, and norms are evolving, partially owing to September 11, 2001 (9/11), but also due to generational change within our increasingly immigrant population. For example, the relatively high priority for domestic security vis-à-vis that of securing civil liberties is far more pronounced now than a decade ago. Though debate and court rulings continue to evolve for the classification of enemy combatants, increases in government surveillance, and

use of military tribunals, such activities are on-going and tolerated. Lastly, prevailing views of international laws and treaties are evolving. The use of harsh interrogation techniques and assignment of enemy combatant status with respect to those we capture are evolutions from the norms followed throughout the pre-9/11 era.

Understanding how these changes in operating environment, type of warfare, and nature of the threats will affect the Army's Ethic is a daunting undertaking, one well beyond the scope of this brief monograph. It is, however, an essential task to be tackled before the Army can determine how best to develop moral leaders capable of dealing with the ethical challenges imposed by this new era of persistent conflict. One question this macro framework does raise for Army professionals is: What is the boundary between the Army's culture and its Ethic? In other words, just what aspects of Army culture are truly ethic—i.e., the distinguishing moral character or disposition of a calling—so revered for its positive influence on mission effectiveness that it must be documented and passed on to future generations of professional leaders? Clearly “taking care of your Soldiers and their families” is part of the Ethic; but what else qualifies? And how many slogans of bygone eras—“Bigger is Better”—still hold the position of ethic in the minds of the officer corps? This would appear to be an area for urgent research in any future effort to explicate the Army's Ethic.

We believe one way to get at this question, and others, is a framework that examines the actual constituent elements within the Army's Ethic. The section that follows introduces such a framework.

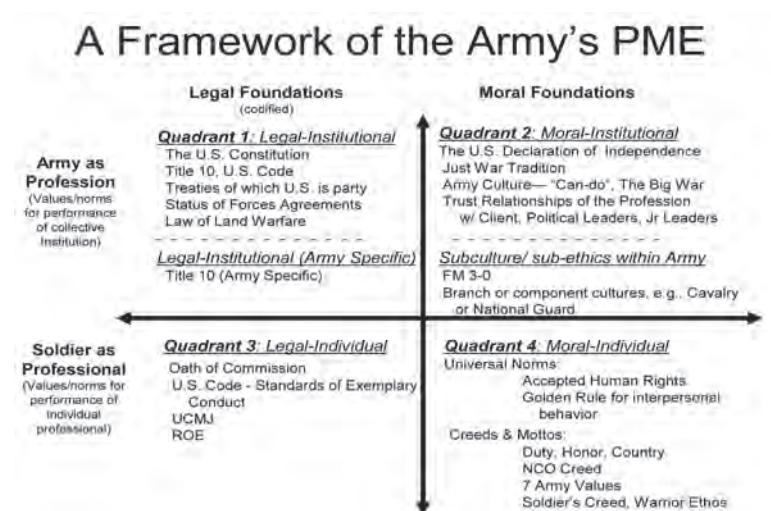
## II. A Framework for Dialogue on the Army's Ethic.

Here we present a common framework and language for the study of the Army's system of ethics. We submit that the Army's professional military Ethic is a shared system of beliefs and norms, both legal (codified) and moral, which define the Army's commitment to serve the nation. There are multiple sources for the Army's Ethic, derived from documents as diverse as our founding Constitution, the Just War traditions, oaths of office, the Army's Seven Values, and the NCO Creed. The beliefs and norms of behavior stemming from these documents guide the performance of our service as a profession as well as the performance of individual professionals.

This framework first makes a delineation between legal and moral foundations. The legal foundation is codified, stemming from various legal documents starting with the Constitution. The moral foundation has no legal basis, but has been learned over time as providing for mission success and for fulfilling service within a "social trustee" profession."<sup>13</sup> In one sense, the separation of the Ethic into these components reflects the importance of adherence by the profession and its leaders to the higher Western ethic of avoiding evil (by not doing those things proscribed by law) *and* doing good (as defined in terms of interpersonal relations and behaviors by which humans can flourish—one definition of what is moral). In the murky environment of persistent conflict, what is legal may not necessarily be moral, and our leaders may, on occasion, have to rely on moral guidelines, irrespective of the law, to conduct good and right actions.

Second, as shown in Figure 2, the Ethic can be further divided into values and norms that guide the

performance of the collective Army as an institution versus those that are more clearly directed at the decisions and actions of the individual professional. These two divisions produce four different quadrants we can use to analyze the Army's Ethic: the legal-institutional, moral-institutional, legal-individual, and the moral-individual.



**Figure 2. Framework of the Army's Professional Military Ethic.**

Quadrant 1 is the legal-institutional, the legal and codified foundation of our ethic that guides the behavior of the Army as a profession. Without doubt, the primary source of this component of our Ethic is the U.S. Constitution, which institutionalizes the aptly described "invitation to struggle" among the branches of our government.<sup>14</sup> The constitutional placement of the military under the equal purview of both Congress and the President is a basic feature of American civil-military relations and, as noted in the previous

section, strongly influences the norms that the Army has adopted for participation in such relationships, particularly by senior officers. As noted in Figure 2, other legal codes influence the Army's Ethic, including the various treaties to which the United States is a party, Status of Forces Agreements, and the evolving laws of armed conflict that apply to the Army in joint operations.

Those legal-institutional ethics that apply only to the Army also exist in this quadrant. The section of Title 10, U.S. Code, which applies directly to the Army, for example, stipulates that the Army be "organized, trained, and equipped primarily for prompt and sustained combat incident to operations on land." The code states that the Army is primarily "responsible for the preparation of land forces necessary for the effective prosecution of war." This emphasis on sustained land combat and prosecution of war has over the years influenced Army culture towards large, conventional, army-on-army conflicts. But is that cultural bias appropriate for the future of persistent conflict?

Quadrant 2 is the moral, nonlegal foundation of the Ethic that is applied to the Army as profession. Sources of the moral-institutional ethic include the spirit of the Declaration of Independence and the Just War traditions, to mention only two. One example of this type of component of our Ethic is the traditional Army cultural preference to fight the "Big War." Another is the understanding that the real lifeblood of the Army is its relationship of trust held with the American people and their leaders. Still another example is the Army's "can-do" attitude. While a positive cultural norm that has enabled the Army to prevail repeatedly over adversity, the "can-do" attitude, when applied at other times with overbearing micro-management,



has had an adverse impact on the effectiveness of the profession.

We also suggest that within this quadrant lie the subcultures and subethics of different portions of the Army. The Army has accepted these subcultures, both branches and components, as necessary for the conduct of the unique missions that the various subelements of the Army must perform for the effective combined arms battle. The culture of the U.S. Cavalry is a case in point. With its own initiation rites performed during the spur ride; its regalia in the form of Stetsons and spurs; and its unique *élan* built around dash, daring, and decisive action, the U.S. Cavalry has carved out a unique niche within the profession. However, how well such a subculture, or those of other branches and components, meshes with the mindset advocated for stability operations as described in FM 3-0 is currently an unresearched question.

Quadrant 3 is the legal-individual component, setting forth foundations of the Ethic that apply to a Soldier as a professional. Legal documents that form the foundation within the quadrant include the officer's oath of commission, the Standards of Exemplary Conduct, the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), and Rules of Engagement (ROE). A more recent item is The Soldier's Rules (Table 1), from AR 350-1 and FM 3-0, which distills the Law of Land Warfare to the ethical and lawful conduct required of each Soldier. Such guidelines have been useful to help prevent Soldiers from "doing evil." Recently, however, as we will discuss in the next section, Soldiers have found it more difficult to apply such seemingly straightforward guidelines.<sup>15</sup>

- Soldiers fight only enemy combatants.
- Soldiers do not harm enemies who surrender. They disarm them and turn them over to their superior.
- Soldiers do not kill or torture enemy prisoners of war.
- Soldiers collect and care for the wounded, whether friend or foe.
- Soldiers do not attack medical personnel, facilities, or equipment.
- Soldiers destroy no more than the mission requires.
- Soldiers treat civilians humanely.
- Soldiers do not steal. Soldiers respect private property and possessions.
- Soldiers should do their best to prevent violations of the law of war.
- Soldiers report all violations of the law of war to their superior.

**Table 1. The Soldier's Rules.**

Lastly, Quadrant 4 is the moral-individual component, the nonlegal foundations that apply to a Soldier individually as a human being and as a professional. Such may include the universal understandings of human rights and widely accepted norms for moral behavior (the Golden Rule, for example). Though at times more amorphous and difficult to analyze, the various creeds and mottos that make up this component – West Point's "Duty, Honor, Country," the NCO Creed, and the Seven Army Values—are potentially the most inspirational and powerful motivators of individual action. The short declarations of the Warrior's Ethos—"I will always place the mission first; I will never accept defeat; I will never quit; I will never leave a fallen comrade"—have been courageously exemplified by countless heroes such as Master Sergeant Gary Gordon and Sergeant First Class Randy Shughart in Modagishu.

These four quadrants are by no means mutually exclusive. The components of the Ethic are deeply

integrated with changes in one quadrant directly influencing the other quadrants as well. As the operating environment continues to increase in complexity, however, it seems to us that the foundations within Quadrants 2 and Quadrant 4 call most urgently for analysis and renewal by the Army. Fortunately, they are also the foundations over which the Army, given its limited professional autonomy, has the most control.

Admittedly, there has been reluctance in the past to articulate sharply these moral foundations of the Army's Ethic. One reason is the fear that precise articulation of such a moral ethic, particularly for officers, may lead to moral minimalism that seeks more to "avoid evil" than to "do good." A second reason is the recognition that these values are not neatly separable and efforts to provide too precise a formulation risk excessive legalism and scholastic hair-splitting.<sup>16</sup> A third reason may have to do with the continued disagreement in our society and armed forces on the use and utility of force in the contemporary operating environment.

Whatever the case, the question becomes whether we now need a more precise rearticulation of the Army Ethic to better influence the moral behavior and development of individual professionals in the future. With regard to the recent moral failings of Army leaders, did those leaders violate the Army's Ethic simply because they did not know what it was, or because they as individuals were insufficiently dedicated to following it? Do we need further articulation of individual ethics to include additional mottos and creeds to guide individual action—an Officer's Creed, for example? Or is the more important question how and how well Army professionals internalize just the current Ethic?

### III. Does the Recent Evolution in Army Doctrine Indicate an Evolving Ethic?

In this section we seek to describe the evolution, if any, in the Army's Ethic. One way to do so is to look at how the Army speaks to itself about its Ethic. For example, the 2001 version of FM 3-0, *Operations*, contains only one instance of the word *ethic* or any of its cognates: "All Army leaders must demonstrate strong character and high ethical standards."<sup>17</sup> Contrast that with the 2008 version which contains six instances (all within two paragraphs).<sup>18</sup> The 2008 version goes well beyond the simple mandate of the earlier version to helpfully explain *why* sound ethics are necessary to mission success. It elaborates even further by setting forth The Soldier's Rules (refer again to Table 1) describing how ethical Soldiers and their leaders behave.

The Army has also progressed in emphasizing the ethical necessity for leaders to be more culturally aware. The 2001 version of FM 3-0 discusses the importance of culture, but only in the sense that the Army must understand the culture of allies in unified operations. But, even here it is only mentioned in a few short paragraphs. The 2008 version addresses culture quite differently. In the first paragraph of the first chapter, the new doctrine stresses the need to understand the complete operational environment: "While they [conditions, circumstances, influences of the operational environment] include all enemy, adversary, friendly, and neutral systems across the spectrum of conflict, they also include an understanding of the physical environment, the state of governance, technology, local resources, and *the culture of the local population*."<sup>19</sup> The remainder of the 2008 version repeats

the need to understand local culture as a variable significant to mission success, clearly an ethical implication.

A review of new counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine (FM 3-24) by Major Celestino Perez provides similar insights. As noted earlier, the Army's new capstone doctrine (FM 3-0) describes the new era of "persistent conflict" during which our military professionals must apply their skills and talents in environments that are "complex, multidimensional, and increasingly fought" among the people."<sup>20</sup> But if this era's complexity has multiplied the variables that our young leaders must consider while planning missions, so too has it complicated the ethical environment in mission execution. For example, FM 3-24 now puts forward two separate "ethics of force"—most force permissible and least force possible. While adding the latter distinction greatly increases the Army's ethical "tool kit" and makes it a more adaptable institution, it demands increased discretionary judgment on the part of Army leaders at the point where force is applied. As Major Celistino Perez recently noted, as written below in an unpublished manuscript:<sup>21</sup>

The ethics of war and nation-building "among the people" is much more complex than the ethics of performing consolidation and reorganization on a desert objective after a tank battle. The majority of our fine young leaders have adapted well—local populations often bequeath the title of "mayor" onto these talented noncommissioned officers, lieutenants, and captains. Such agility today in Army leaders is, by doctrine, a military obligation: "Soldiers and Marines are expected to be nation builders as well as warriors."<sup>22</sup>

Nonetheless, release in May 2007 of a Military Health Advisory Team (MHAT-IV) survey of fewer than 2,000 soldiers and Marines who had served in units with "the

highest level of combat exposure" in Iraq found that: "approximately 10 percent of soldiers and Marines report mistreating noncombatants or damaging property when it was not necessary. Only 47 percent of the soldiers and 38 percent of Marines agreed that non-combatants should be treated with dignity and respect. Well over a third of all soldiers and Marines reported that torture should be allowed to save the life of a fellow soldier or Marine. And less than half of soldiers or Marines would report a team member for unethical behavior."<sup>23</sup>

Although Army doctrine (FM 3-24) specifies an embedded ethic that "preserving noncombatant lives and dignity is central to mission accomplishment" in counterinsurgency, the survey reported *that between one-third and one-half of soldiers and Marines who answered the survey dismissed the importance or truth of non-combatants' dignity and respect* (italics added by Major Perez).<sup>24</sup>

There are two ways to understand the Army's newly embedded ethic that "preserving noncombatant lives and dignity is central to mission accomplishment." In one sense, this norm of counterinsurgency is utilitarian; i.e., a means to an end. That is, we ought to preserve lives and dignity because "it pays," or "it is in our interest," or "it conduces to mission success." The other way is to view this moral scruple as one of ends rather than means. That is, it requires that Soldiers seek to preserve the dignity of *the other* during deployments as a virtue for its own sake. More specifically, the enemy's dignity is equal to that dignity possessed individually by the Army warrior's own friends and loved ones back home. According to Major Perez, the American warrior must come to accept no difference in moral worth between the old taxi driver who lives in the village where he patrols and the warrior's own father back home. This putative moral equivalency raises the obvious question of how the Army should address the moral develop-

ment of warriors who must now have a sufficiently integrated worldview and strength of personal character as to be able consistently to abide by and enforce this newly embedded ethic. Turning to FM 6-22, *Army Leadership*, we find the challenge is accurately stated: how to develop leaders that “demonstrate strong character and high ethical standards.” The Army recognizes that “new challenges facing leaders, the Army, and the Nation mandate adjustments in how the Army educates, trains, and develops its military and civilian leadership.” However, FM 6-22 provides little guidance about how such “mandated adjustments” are to occur.<sup>25</sup> Again, FM 6-22 is very clear on what leaders are, but it hardly discusses at all how to develop them:

Character, a person’s moral and ethical qualities, helps determine what is right and gives a leader motivation to do what is appropriate, regardless of the circumstances or the consequences. An informed ethical conscience consistent with the Army Values strengthens leaders to make the right choices when faced with tough issues. *Since Army leaders seek to do what is right and inspire others to do the same, they must embody these values.*<sup>26</sup> (italics added by authors)

In fact, current Army doctrine leaves character development to the individual, specifying no role at all for the institution save for its leaders:

Becoming a person of character and a leader of character is a career-long process involving day-to-day experience, education, self-development, developmental counseling, coaching, and mentoring. While **individuals are responsible for their own character development**, leaders are responsible for encouraging, supporting, and assessing the efforts of their people.<sup>27</sup> (bold added by authors)

Thus, in our view, unlike the evolving training programs stemming from the requirements for cultural awareness set forth within FM 3-0, the Army takes a “hands-off” approach to the moral development of its Soldiers and their leaders. Is this good enough in the present era of persistent conflict, or does the Army have an institutional need and responsibility to take a more active role in the character development of its Soldiers and their leaders?

#### **IV. The Army’s Challenge – Developing Leaders Who Are Moral Exemplars.**

This monograph has been crafted to stimulate thought and to facilitate discussion on the effects of the new era of persistent conflict on the Army’s Ethic and on its efforts to develop its Soldiers and their leaders. In essence, the Army has initiated the process of rethinking and redocumenting the profession’s moral-ethical expert knowledge, one of four such domains and the one that is clearly the least well-defined to date.<sup>28</sup> In fact, the Army does not have a capstone “moral-ethical” manual, or anything close to it.

We should also note that much research and published scholarship have been devoted to this new era and its ethical complexities,<sup>29</sup> but most of it is highly theoretical and for practical purposes, inaccessible.<sup>30</sup> The Army and, in an analogous manner all professions, must recreate their own expert knowledge by selecting from research and scholarship and then filtering those ideas through the sieve of battlefield experiences and other expert practices to arrive at understandings that can be considered doctrinal. Only then is new doctrine ready for dissemination to the troops.



To assist in that process, we offer the following five conclusions to focus the reflection and subsequent discussions within the officer corps and to assist the Army in the development of needed ethical doctrine.

1. The influences on the Army's Ethic generated by the era of persistent conflict are largely unexplored and unanalyzed. This has been for some time essentially an unresearched field, yet one resting squarely within the moral-ethical domain of expert knowledge of the Army profession, an internal jurisdiction for which the Army alone is responsible. With the sole exception of the recently completed *Study of the Human Dimension of Full Spectrum Operations* (Training and Doctrine Command [TRADOC], 2008), this has been particularly true of research on the moral, versus the legal, components of the Ethic. Even the Army's Federally Funded Research Center, RAND Arroyo, was apparently directed to omit any analysis of the moral aspects of Army leadership when studying the future leader competencies needed for full-spectrum operations.<sup>31</sup> It is clear that continued reliance on the legal/codified portions of the Ethic can take the Army only so far in the development of its leaders, and thus in the effectiveness of its professional practice. More important in the new era will be the moral development of individual leaders to better deal with the increasing complexity of land combat "among the people," coupled with the reduced clarity of effects and outcomes of leader/unit actions.

2. The legal components of the Army's Ethic evolve by a process that is more pluralistic and external to the profession than do the moral components, which reside more exclusively within the Army's jurisdictional control. In other words, the Army can make a lot more progress, and do so faster, if it focuses on the moral components of its Ethic and their assimilation by

Army Soldiers and their leaders. Examples of the legal components include the recent changes in the legal codification of rules for incarceration and interrogation of enemy combatants. As to the moral components of the Ethic (determining, beyond what is legal, what the Army believes to be “right” as depicted in the right two quadrants of Figure 1), they can be changed by the strategic leaders of the Army profession without significant external interference, so long as the Army is viewed by the public and its civilian leaders as a profession and not just a governmental bureaucracy. Currently, the Army has immense latitude and autonomy to effect such changes.

3. Of course, as we discussed in Section I, for the Army’s Ethic to be viable and accepted, it must remain grounded on values that are fully supported by the American people and which, in turn, support an effective military profession. Thus, the Army must remain a values-based institution. But it is not clear that the Army currently espouses the right set of values that are sufficiently justified for deep legitimacy, particularly among budding junior professionals.<sup>32</sup> For example, there is the prevailing absence of candor as an Army value, which junior professionals rightfully expect to be manifested by all ranks in the virtue of “speaking truth to power.” Nor, more importantly, is it clear that continued optimistic reliance on “values clarification” is the most effective method for the profession to create an ethical culture and to morally develop its Soldiers and their leaders. As is noted in the literature of moral education in high schools and beyond, values clarification “has largely disappeared from the scene, in part due to generally ineffective scientific evidence.”<sup>33</sup> If this is true, then why is the Army still using this approach?

What are the alternatives and how carefully has the Army recently investigated them?

Further, beyond the set of values and methodology the Army currently uses is the more fundamental question of what school(s) of philosophy underlie the Army's Ethic and the pedagogy by which it will be taught, inculcated, and practiced. Is the Army's Ethic really best thought of as "a set of deontic constraints applied to the fundamentally utilitarian imperative of "mission accomplishment?"<sup>34</sup> Or better, what mixture of principle-based, utilitarian, *and* virtue ethics is to be taught to Army leaders in preparation for ethical decisionmaking?<sup>35</sup> Is this foundation influenced in any way by the existence of the new era of persistent conflict? Again, much research is to be done, and urgently so!

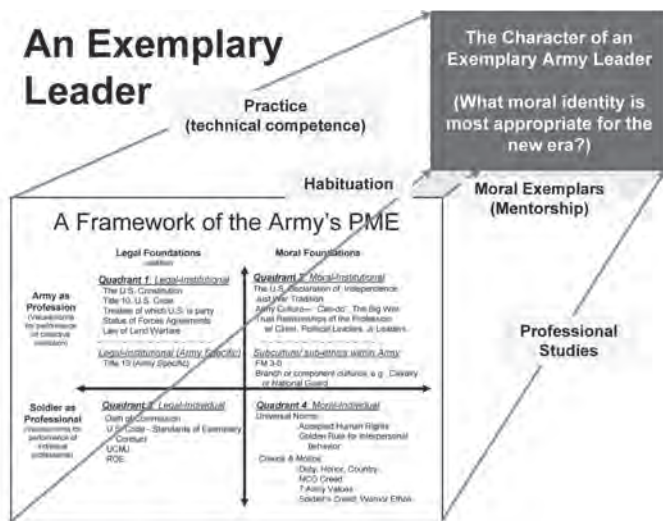
4. As has been noted many times in the past decade, both in internal Army studies and in external reviews, the Army does not have a single, internally consistent and holistic model of human development to use across its doctrines and schoolhouses.<sup>36</sup> As depicted in Figure 3, the "values to virtues" transition is a vast gap, for which there are, to be sure, isolated programs (e.g., leader mentorship as prescribed by FM 6-22). But there is no overall Army model of human development, and particularly of individual character or of the moral component. Thus, in particular, the Army simply cannot have internally a well-informed dialogue on how Soldiers and their leaders assimilate the profession's Ethic and develop over time into leaders who are moral exemplars. This void in understanding the critical "values to virtues" developmental process must be corrected very early in any institutional effort to focus on the Ethic.<sup>37</sup>

In addition to lack of a model, the Army lacks an effectively communicable identity of an Army leader as

a moral exemplar. Thus far “Warrior” has not worked effectively for individual moral development. This is a second void in the Army’s vital effort to “move” Soldiers from mere intellectual acceptance of a set of values to a personal lifestyle, a heart and soul embodiment of those values in everyday decisions and actions, which authentically “walks the talk.” Currently the Army relies on such statements as “living out the Army’s Seven Values in one’s life,” and offers in doctrinal manuals short vignettes of physically and morally courageous Soldiers, etc. While helpful to a degree, such an approach does not provide a specific moral identity according to which Soldiers and their leaders can develop themselves in the same sense as they do under the physical and military-technical identity of “Warrior.” Accession level leader development institutions (U.S. Military Academy, Reserve Officer Training Corps, etc.) historically have used the identity of a “leader of character,” which does move the discussion forward to what moral “character” is, then to its role in human decisionmaking and actions, and finally on to how those capacities are developed. This has allowed some consideration of newer paradigms of moral development such as self-awareness or human spirituality.<sup>38</sup> But the larger Army profession has no such vision of the developmental end-state representing the personal identity of a morally exemplary Army leader.

5. Lastly, discussion and analyses of the Army’s Ethic and its effective implementation are fraught with boundary issues of a type that often go unnoticed. The most basic boundary issue centers on the question of “ethic for whom?” If it is to be a “professional” ethic, then the boundary is established by who is certified as an “Army professional.” But the Army has not answered that question. Is it, then, to be one ethic for

all—Soldiers, civilians, contractors, families? Or is the Army to have ethics by oath (those commissioned),



**Figure 3. The Exemplary Leader.**

by rank (e.g., the NCO Creed), by component (e.g., the Civilian Creed), or by branch (e.g., the “Cav” or Special Forces), etc. Obviously, the codified portions of the Ethic can be of assistance specifying as they do the specific applicability of each law. But the larger problem of boundaries for the application of the moral components of the Ethic remains open and must be addressed forthrightly in any effort to evolve a current and relevant Ethic, and then to instill it in the hearts, minds, and consciences of our Soldiers and their leaders.

We are confident that serious reflection and debate on the ideas and conclusions set forth in this monograph will help the Army to rethink its Ethic, its implementation as a means of social direction and control, and its role in maintaining the profession’s future effective-

ness. In the era of persistent conflict, Army leaders and their Soldiers will continue to conduct operations “among the people,” practicing the profession’s art by the repetitive use of their discretionary judgment. But is the Army preparing them as well as it can to manifest the Army’s Ethic while doing so?

## ENDNOTE

1. James Charlton, *The Military Quotation Book*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2002, p. 83.

2. To avoid confusion with the acronym PME, which in Army doctrine is the short form of Professional Military Education, we will capitalize Ethic when referring specifically to the totality of the Army’s professional military ethic.

3. For the role of a system of ethics in the performance of military professions, see Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard Belknap Press, 1957; and Andrew Abbott, “The Army and the Theory of Professions,” Chapter 24, in Don M. Snider and Lloyd J. Matthews, eds., *The Future of the Army Profession*, 1st Ed., New York: McGraw Hill, 2002, pp. 523-536.

4. The four domains of expert knowledge of military professions are: (1) the military-technical—how to conduct military operations, (2) the moral-ethical—how to conduct military operations rightly as the client expects, (3) the political-cultural—how to operate in nonmilitary environments, and (4) the domain of human development—how to develop individual professionals capable to practice with the other three fields of abstract knowledge. See “The Army as Profession,” Chapter 1 in *The Future of the Army Profession*, 2d Ed., New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005, pp. 3-38.

5. The other two are the maritime profession and the aerospace profession, entities roughly conterminous with the Departments of Navy and Air Force. There is also being observed now the emergence of a fourth military profession, the Joint Military Profession. See Don M. Snider and Jeffrey D. Peterson, “Defense Transformation and the Emergence of a New Joint Military

Profession," Chapter 10 in *The Future of the Army Profession*, 2d Ed., pp. 237-250.

6. See Gayle L. Watkins and Randi C. Cohen, "In their Own Words: Army Officers Discuss Their Profession," in *The Future of the Army Profession*, 1st Ed., pp. 77-100. For an excellent discussion of the negative impact of that issue on the Army Officer Corps, see Mark Lewis, "Army Transformation and the Junior Officer Exodus," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 31, No. 1, Fall 2004, pp. 63-74.

7. For a new effort, see TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-7, *The U.S. Army Concept for the Human Dimension in Full Spectrum Operations*, 2015-2024, coordinating draft, April 18, 2008.

8. Portions of this section appeared earlier in Don M. Snider, "The Uninformed Debate on Military Culture," *ORBIS*, Vol. 43, No. 1, Winter 1999, pp. 11-26.

9. Edgar H. Schein, "Organizational Culture," *American Psychologist*, Vol. 45, No. 2, February 1990, pp. 109-119.

10. See Walter F. Ulmer, Joseph J. Collins, and T. O. Jacobs, "Introduction" to *American Military Culture in the 21st Century*, Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2000, pp. 3-4.

11. *Ibid.*

12. See William M. Hix and John D. Winkler, *Assessment of OPMS XXI*, a draft, annotated briefing prepared by Rand Arroyo for the U.S. Army, study AB-160-1-A, July 1997, copy in possession of Dr. Snider.

13. "Social trustee" professions are those which, on a trust basis, provide for the client (society) that which they cannot provide for themselves. The American people trust the Army to provide security to an otherwise defenseless nation. In fact, they trust it so much that they send their sons and daughters for service within it, with unlimited liability.

14. See Chapters 2-4 of Anthony E. Hartle, *Moral Issues in Military Decision Making*, University Press of Kansas, 1989.

15. See Office of the Surgeon General, U.S. Army Medical Command and Office of the Surgeon General, Multinational Force-Iraq, *Mental Health Advisory Team (MHAT) IV Operation Iraqi Freedom 05-07, Final Report*, November 17, 2006, accessed online September 5, 2008, at [www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/attack/consequences/2006/1117mhatreport.pdf](http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/attack/consequences/2006/1117mhatreport.pdf).

16. This is also an argument for an ethos that emphasizes the role of individual character—good people instantiating the right traits to deal with the ambiguities and uncertainties of applying rules.

17. *FM 3-0, Operations*, Department of the Army, June 14, 2001, para. 4-18.

18. *Ibid.*, February 27, 2008, para. 1-86 and 1-87.

19. *Ibid.*, para 1-1.

20. *Ibid.*, Foreword.

21. Major Celistino Perez, Ph.D., former Assistant Professor, Department of Social Sciences, USMA, currently serving in Iraq, unpublished manuscript, “The Warrior Morality Embedded in *FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency*, undated.

22. *FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, December 2006, Foreword.

23. Gale Pollock, DoD News Briefing with Assistant Secretary Casscells from the Pentagon, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Defense (Public Affairs), News Transcript, May 4, 2007, accessed online on July 8, 2008, at [www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=3958](http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=3958).

24. *FM 3-24*, para. 7-25.

25. *FM 6-22*, para. 1-6.

26. *Ibid.*, para. 4-1.

27. *Ibid.*, para. 4-55.



28. Each of the other three domains of the Army profession's expert knowledge has recently received newly published doctrine: the "military-technical" domain has a new *FM 3-0, Operations*; the "political cultural" domain as the new *FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency*; and the domain of "human development" has a new *FM 6-22, Leadership*.

29. See, for just one example, Tony Pfaff, "Military Ethics in Complex Contingencies," in Snider and Matthews, eds., *The Future of the Army Profession*, 2d Ed., New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005, pp. 409-429.

30. See Christopher R. Paparone and George Reed, "The Reflective Military Practitioner and How Military Professionals Think in Action," *Military Review*, Vol. 88, No. 2, March/April 2008, pp. 66-77.

31. See Henry A. Leonard *et al.*, *Something Old, Something New*, Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2006.

32. For a critique of the core values approach, see Charles A. Pfaff, "Core Values: The Problems of Justification and Motivation," paper presented at the 1999 JSCOPS Conference, accessed September 5, 2008, at [www.usafa.edu/isme/JSCOPE99/jscope99.html](http://www.usafa.edu/isme/JSCOPE99/jscope99.html).

33. See Marvin W. Berkowitz, "The Science of Character Education," in William Damon, ed., *Bringing in a New Era of Character Education*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2002, p. 56.

34. Major Charles Pfaff, "Teaching Military Ethics," undated, unpublished manuscript prepared for instructors in the Department of English and Philosophy, USMA (in possession of Dr. Snider).

35. For a cogent argument for using multiple frameworks, see Sean T. Hannah and Patrick J. Sweeney, "Frameworks of Moral Development and the West Point Experience: Building Leaders of Character for the Army and the Nation," Chapter 4 in Don M. Snider and Lloyd Matthews, eds., *Forging the Warrior's Character*:

*Moral Precepts from the Cadet Prayer . . .*, 2d Ed., New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008, pp. 65-89.

36. For the history of this study, see Joe LeBoeuf, "The Army Training and Leader Development Panel," chapter 22 in *The Future of the Army Profession*, 1st Ed., 2002, pp. 487-504.

37. For a new attempt to fill this void, see the first six chapters of *Forging the Warrior's Character*.

38. For a newly developed model of the role of human spirituality in the development of moral character, see Patrick J. Sweeney, Sean T. Hannah, and Don M. Snider, "The Domain of the Human Spirit," Chapter 2 in *Forging the Warrior's Character*, pp. 65-90.

## Army Center for the Professional Military Ethic



West Point serves as the Army Center of Excellence for the Professional Military Ethic (ACPME) and the Force Modernization Proponent to perform all doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership, education, personnel, and facilities (DOTMLPF) functions for the Army associated with the Professional Military Ethic (PME) and character development.

The mission of the ACPME is to increase Army-wide understanding, ownership, and sustain development of the Army's Professional Military Ethic through research, education, and publication.

The ACPME's four major objectives are:

- assess, study, and refine the PME of the force
- create and integrate PME knowledge
- accelerate PME development in individuals, units, and Army culture
- support the socialization of the PME across the Army culture and profession

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