



The human dimension

The foundational investment

By Lt. Col. Todd Schmidt

It is terribly difficult for military men to keep their methods adapted to rapidly changing times. Between wars, the military business slumps. Our people lose interest. Congress concerns itself more with cutting down the Army than with building it up. And the troops... find a large part of their time and energy taken up with caring for buildings, grounds and other impediments. In view of all the inertias to be overcome, and in view of the fact that our lives and honor are not in peril from outside aggression, it is not likely that our Army is going to be kept in an up to the minute state of preparedness.

1929 Officer's Diary

Introduction

Alarm bells are ringing. Warfighting readiness is suffering. The Army is confronted with a political-economic environment challenged by limited resources, continued rotational deployments and persistent conflict, the grinding gray zone between war and peace.¹ As a whole, the Army is facing continued down-sizing and is perched upon, if not tumbling down, the proverbial "fiscal cliff" of sequestration, funded by an unpredictable Continuing Resolutions process. There appears to be no strategic pause in conflict on the horizon, either in the international or domestic political arenas.

During interludes of peace or even while engaged in the gray zone between war and peace, it is important to remain focused on ensuring a balanced investment portfolio considering both short-term, as well as, and more importantly, long-term gains. History admonishes this balanced strategy. Unfortunately, too often the "quick win," the short-term gain, is sought at the cost of the prudent long-term investment, particularly when it relates to investments in organizational, operational and individual agility and adaptability – the human dimension.

Both short- and long-term gains and advantages must be taken into account. Investments in modernization initiatives are critical to maintaining our technological advantage. However, investing in the training and education of our Soldiers is the most important long-term investment that can

be made. And, although the pay-offs and returns may not be readily visible, quickly realized or may even be diluted by poor talent management, the training and education of the force is the foundational requirement enabling technological and modernization programs.

Recently, the Commandant of the Air Defense Branch, Brig. Gen. Randy McIntire, took the leadership reigns of the branch and immediately communicated his approach and priorities moving forward during his tenure. Underpinning his top priorities was the imperative recognition that success hinges on the human dimension. "We must invest in our most precious resource, people," he stated. Continuing to create technical and tactical experts in our craft and on our equipment is critical to enabling modernization. For the air defense branch to transform, for organizational change to be successful, and to fully leverage future technology and modernization requires, as McIntire argues, an "educational shift ... ensuring Soldiers are well positioned to be flexible and adaptive leaders prepared to meet future requirements."

Fires Soldiers must be able to lead and adapt against a skilled and determined enemy under any environmental condition. To fulfill this imperative requirement and duty demands significant investment in the human dimension. However, this takes a comprehensive approach and significant and dedicated intellectual involvement.

Opposite page: Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 41st Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division stand in formation during the opening ceremony of the exercise Flaming Thunder, Aug. 1, 2016 at Pabrade, Lithuania. The Soldiers from 1-41 FAR are training with their Baltic allies in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve, a U.S. lead effort being conducted in Eastern Europe to demonstrate U.S. commitment to the collective security of NATO and dedication to enduring peace and stability in the region. (Pfc. James Dutkavich/24th Press Camp Headquarters)

Capitalizing on the human dimension is a continuous investment over time, providing professional development, education and career experiences required to be technically and tactically proficient, as well as creative, adaptive and agile thinkers and leaders.²

Excessive invest in major technological advancements and modernizations or organizational structure changes, at the cost of investing in the training and education of Soldiers, can have unfortunate, sometimes tragic, consequences. In a state of constant conflict, coupled with the current seemingly complete disarray of the federal budget process and defense appropriations, how investments of limited resources are made is, once again, a topic of discussion and debate. Recent history, however, may offer some guideposts for a way ahead.

Past investment strategy

Following World War I, under the banner of “Return to Normalcy,” the Army’s personnel strength and budgetary resources had both fallen by nearly 95 percent. The national economy was government’s primary focus and consideration, and the Army did not have enough money to modernize, train and maintain warfighting readiness

and authorized end-strength.⁴ Following WWII, defense spending as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) fell from a high of 43 percent to below eight percent of the GDP. From 1968 to 1977, as the Vietnam War was drawing down, the military’s budget declined nearly 38 percent.⁵

Fast-forward to the 1990s. The Army was a Soviet-focused, Cold War-era force, having just achieved victory in the Gulf War. The Soviet Union soon collapsed, however. Recognizing this change, the 1990 U.S. National Security Strategy stated, “change in the international landscape was breath-taking in its character, dimension and pace,” requiring a strategic transformation that would be challenged by political turbulence, uncertainty, unknown sources of instability, and an “advance into historically uncharted waters.”⁶ To face this uncertain, complex and chaotic future, the military would be required to implement policies to achieve drastic reductions and restructuring.⁷ There was a prevalent expectation of a “peace dividend.”

Congress and Department of Defense mandated budget cuts of four to six percent from 1991 to 1994.⁸ The Joint Chiefs of Staff, advocated significant reductions of 11 to 17 percent in the size of the military in “The Base Force Study” and the “Bottom-Up Re-

view.” The burden of these manpower reductions would fall disproportionately on the Army, resulting in a downsizing from 18 to 10 active-duty combat divisions.⁹ Senior leaders generally agreed that it was imperative the Army transform during this period.¹⁰ The transformation envisioned would weigh heavily on organizational structure, modernization and technology investments.

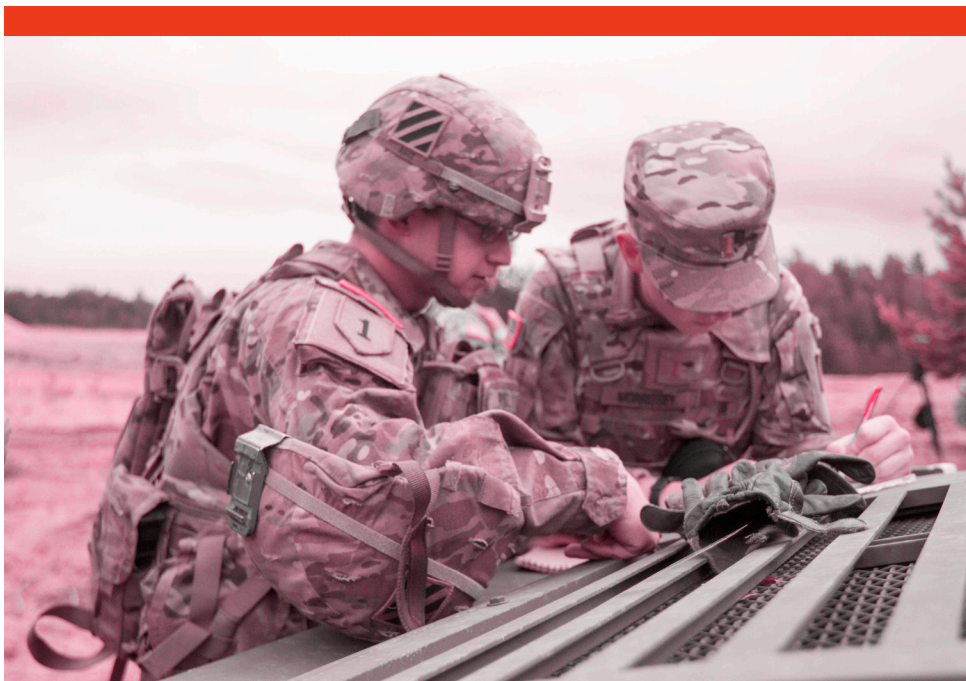
The Army adapted its organizational structure through several evolutionary initiatives. These organizational adaptation initiatives included “Force XXI,” “Army After Next,” and “Army Transformation.” Underpinning the logic and rationale for this transformation effort were lessons learned from recent conflict and combat operations in the Gulf War; perceived organizational shortfalls; assessments of future threats and operational environments; technological and informational advancements; and prescribed changes based on the political and fiscal environment.¹¹

The Army of the 1990s placed a premium on investing in and transforming the Army’s organizational structure, as well as revolutionary technological advances and capabilities that would change the character of how future wars would be waged. This revolution in military affairs, as it was dubbed, came at the cost of billions annually, and led to the important developments of precision-guided munitions and GPS, all enabled by networks of datalinks sharing information in increasingly larger volumes and increasingly faster speeds.¹² These investments, however, came at a price. The “bill payers” were the human dimension, development of the Army profession, education, and evolving the Army’s organizational culture to be better intellectually, mentally and psychologically prepared for the types of warfare the Army would face in a post-9/11 world.

Post 9/11 investment strategy

In the late 1990s and at the turn of the century, there was a great deal of thinking, analysis and writing on the subject of organizational adaptation in relationship to the individual. In 1996, Harvard business consultant John Kotter began proposing the idea of “first who, then what.” In “Leading Change,” Kotter wrote that in order to lead successful organizational change, a guiding team and coalition must first be established and built on mutual respect and trust. One

U.S. Army Fire Support Specialists assigned to Company C, 3rd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment, 1st Armor Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, prepare to call for fire during Exercise Flaming Thunder at Pabrade, Lithuania Aug. 4, 2016. The Soldiers of 3rd Battalion are training with their Baltic allies in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve, a U.S. led effort being conducted in Eastern Europe to demonstrate U.S. commitment to the collective security of NATO and dedication to enduring peace and stability in the region. (Pfc. James Dutkavich/24th Press Camp Headquarters)



of the top reasons for failure in organizational change, and an organization's ability to adapt, is neglect in first educating, developing, and building an organization of professionals.¹³

A few years later, in 2001, Jim Collins, author of "Good to Great," wrote about the difference between good and great leaders and good and great organizations. Good leaders focus foremost on creating an organizational vision and a procedural roadmap, followed by building and developing the team necessary to accomplish the mission. Great leaders focus foremost on building and investing in their people. He advocated that great organizations invest, first and foremost, in the development of the workforce, identifying exceptional talent, and ensuring a culture and environment in which they could succeed. This was postulated as the recipe for achieving greatness and successful achievement of long-term organizational vision, mission and values.¹⁴

Studies and analysis of large private sector businesses, organizations and corporations were beginning to demonstrate that leaders and organizations fail to learn and adapt because culture and leadership put more emphasis on treating symptoms versus understanding and solving limiting factors and underlying problems. These organizations perform inconsistently over time, focusing on symptomatic versus fundamental issues and on short-term versus long-term metrics of success. They tend to have a culture of compliance, reward for pleasing superiors and management by fear. They value uniformity of thought versus diversity and detailed planning in an effort to achieve predictability and controllability. Finally, they promote excessive competition in an effort to improve performance.¹⁵

In 2004, one year into his tenure as the 35th Chief of Staff of the United States Army, Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker reflected on professional development, the human dimension and the ability to successfully adapt as an organization in relationship to the first years of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. He stated, "I have thought for years that the Army needed to ... change the way we develop leaders ... transformation is not about equipment. It's about intellect; it's about judgment; it's about the development of leaders and Soldiers. You've got to make that intellectual transformation before you can make the visible transformation."¹⁶

Establishing a sense of continuity in the Army's infant human dimension initiative, particularly with an emphasis on the Army

profession and ethic, Schoomaker's successor, Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., established the Army Center of Excellence for the Professional Military Ethic in May 2008. This Center later migrated to the Army's Training and Doctrine Command, redesignated as the Center for the Army Profession and Ethic in August 2010. After a decade at war, Army leadership understood that the organization needed to revisit, rediscover and more fully comprehend its own culture and the human dimension in the context of that organizational culture.

Simultaneously, in 2010, the Army War College published a study on Army organizational culture. It investigated Army organizational culture in relationship to the professional development of future strategic leaders and the potential divergence between how Army leaders see themselves and how they are trained, developed and educated, versus how they expected to best survive in a future operational environment. The study proposed "the ability of a professional organization to develop future leaders in a manner that perpetuates readiness to cope with future environmental and internal uncertainty depends on organizational culture." This hypothesis was based on the assumption that organizational culture enables growth in the human dimension, investing in education and professional development, and, particularly, in the ability to adapt; an organizational culture that emphasizes education and professional development perpetuates adaptability and promotes relevance and continued existence. The conclusion was alarming - Army leadership "may be inadequately prepared to lead the profession toward future success."¹⁷

Army War College students who participated in the study were asked to characterize the Army's current organizational culture. These students generally believed that the Army, as an institution, valued stability, caution and control; rigid formality, rules and policies; coordination and efficiency; short-term goal-setting and results-oriented performance; and hard-driving competitiveness. However, when these future strategic leaders were asked to characterize what the Army's organizational culture should be, in the context of a complex and chaotic future operational environment, values they found to be imperative to success included flexibility and discretion, collaboration, innovation and creativity, risk-taking, long-term emphasis on professional growth and human resource development. This incongruence and disconnect is cause

for concern.¹⁸ If the Army is to continuously and relentlessly develop the human dimension, adapt to survive, to remain relevant and ready, and to win our nation's wars, it requires an organizational culture that values and self-perpetuates organizational adaptation and development and education of its human resources.¹⁹

In a resource constrained environment, the Army's ability to adapt and implement change is significantly inhibited. The Army must increasingly compete and lobby for political favor and support in order to secure funding and resources.²⁰ As previously noted, how funding and resources are invested is clearly a complicated balancing act. The risks of getting it wrong are uniquely high when failed investments may lead to future loss of Soldiers' lives.²¹

To this end, the Army must make balanced investments. In the complex debate on how resources are invested, readiness, modernization and quality of life programs and initiatives are all competing interests.²² Within this portfolio, training and education of Army professionals must be at the top of the list. This is critical because for leaders to be successful, they require the education, experience and ability to understand the context of the problems and challenges they face, historically, politically, diplomatically, socially, militarily, strategically, operationally and tactically.²³

Moving forward

The 2012 Army Capstone Concept (ACC) describes the future operational environment and the roles, responsibilities and capabilities the Army, as part of the joint force, will be required to fulfill and provide in order to maintain a position of continuous advantage over potential adversaries. To be successful in this challenging environment, Army leadership understood, more than any technological modernization program or organizational structure change, it must improve how it manages in the human dimension, how it approaches and conducts accessions, initial training, career management and personnel policies. It is critical the Army improve its talent management to ensure maximization of individual potential in order to maximize its investments in the human dimension over the long term.²⁴

Just as Americans expect a "peace dividend" in times of relative peace, so the Army must not squander the true "war dividend" of the past several years - the combat experience of our Soldiers and leaders. Ensuring that we retain their irreplaceable experience

and precious lessons learned, paid for by national treasure and tragedy, is critical to success and continuity. The Army's best and brightest combat veterans must be retained as the backbone that will soon become the next generation of strategic leaders.²⁵

The Army's Statement on the Posture of the United States Army 2016 echoes and reinforces the 2012 ACC, describing an operational environment of persistent conflict and ever-increasing uncertainty, unpredictability, complexity and disorder.²⁶ Adversaries in the operational environment include peer competitors; non-state, transnational terrorist and criminal organizations; super-empowered individuals; or networks and coalitions made up of a combination.²⁷ They threaten and challenge U.S. security conventionally and unconventionally in every element of our national power. These hybrid threats are diverse, dynamic and adaptive combinations of conventional, unconventional and criminal elements acting in full concert, with unrestricted violence on unrestricted targets, within failed and un-governed regions of the world.²⁸

Given this challenge, the Fires community must advocate for an institutional and operational force consisting of organizations, leaders, Soldiers and civilians trained and educated, exhibiting and imbued with the principles of organizational, operation-

al and individual adaptability.²⁹ Gen. David G. Perkins, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command commander, echoes and reinforces Schoomaker's previous statement in 2004, stating that people – Soldiers and civilians – are the number one capital investment of the Army. The Army succeeds because of “well-trained, well-educated, well-led professionals dedicated to the Army Profession.”³⁰ Organizational and operational adaptability are dependent, first and foremost, on developing the human dimension.

Still, there remains entrenched cultural hurdles within the Army that hinder, impede or detour priorities in training and education. These investments do not provide high visibility, short-term gains. Successful development of the human dimension and organizational adaption is a continual, constant requirement and commitment to recurring reappraisal and quest for understanding of a changing environment, changing threats and changing international landscape. It involves constant, comprehensive internal auditing of core competencies, approaches to problem-solving, and key requirements, capabilities and resource allocations required to lead and achieve successful change. For the Army, units and Soldiers, it requires a vigilant and dedicated commitment to directing organizational

inertia towards constant innovative evolutions in how the Army thinks, talks, writes, fights, equips, resources, organizes, trains, bases, houses, mans and deploys.³¹ It is hard intellectual work, increasingly imperative, particularly in the context of the Army's commitment to empowering leaders through “mission command,” a core operational concept the Army has adopted moving forward into the future.

A “mission command” philosophy and approach requires the Army to educate, develop and train adaptive leaders. Through “mission command,” adaptive leaders are trusted, encouraged and empowered to exercise initiative and judgment in how they carry out their assigned task.³² “Mission command” designates the adaptive leader as the essential building block. Given this concept, the military education and professional development system become immensely important.

The focus of education and professional development must be on developing the organizational and individual's ability to learn from past experience, anticipate the future and adapt to unexpected circumstances. Today's tactical leaders and tomorrow's operational and strategic leaders must be engaged and possess a greater ability to communicate and react to their understanding of the human dimensions in war.

An officer from the 308th Brigade Support Battalion, 17th Field Artillery Brigade jumps from a CH-47 Chinook during a Mungadai July 22, 2016 on Joint Base Lewis-McChord. The Mungadai tested Thunderbolt leaders during 17 events spread across 11 hours of competition. (U.S. Army photo by Capt. Pete Mrvos, 17th Field Artillery Brigade Public Affairs)



Focusing on individual-level education and professional development is the sine qua non building block for developing adaptive leaders that exercise initiative, adapt to fluid circumstances and exercise “mission command.” Adaptive leaders are the cornerstone in building and developing learning organizations that are organizationally and operationally adaptive.³³

Conclusion

Building and developing the human dimension as the foundational investment must be the approach. Priorities that do not first consider the human dimension are doomed to fail. It may seem naïve to suggest building the Army’s investment portfolio founded on this however, without that foundational tenet behind any capital investment, short-term gains are quickly overcome, if not lost. Leading successful efforts in the human dimension and in organizational adaptation, requires understanding that the most difficult challenges are

internal. Changing the way an organization thinks, learns and acts takes the greatest intellectual, bureaucratic and political skill, effort, discipline and leadership.

For the Fires community, responsibility for intellectual preparation for future conflict is, foremost, on the individual, the professional Fires Soldier. It is the Soldier’s duty to prepare, study, demonstrate intellectual curiosity and embrace self-development. Soldiers must be professionals, possess a sense of belonging to a profession, and actively contribute to the betterment of the profession.³⁴ Soldiers must consistently seek to learn, share, collaborate, and improve themselves, each other, their unit and the Army organization as a whole. In return, the Army enables the Soldier. The Army provides the resources, requirements and opportunities and the long-term investments in training, education and professional development.

The future, more so than in the past, demands a human dimension made up of

Soldiers, civilians and leaders that adapt swiftly in fluid environments.³⁵ The greater the uncertainty the Army faces in the future operational environment, the greater range of skill sets Soldiers will be required to possess. For the Army to achieve adaptability at the organizational and operational levels requires adaptive leaders and an organizational culture that places emphasis, priority, and investment in training, education and learning.

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