Building Integrity and Reducing Corruption in Defence

A Compendium of Best Practices

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Chapter 16

The Human in the Loop

Whatever the legislative and organisational framework, it is people who make up the defence establishment. The fundamental objective, therefore, of anti-corruption efforts in defence is to influence human behaviour: to promote professional and ethical behaviour and discourage the use of public office for private gain. Chapter two set out two approaches to doing that. The first dissuades corrupt action by increasing the moral cost or "moral burden" of corruption. The second aims to deter corruption by increasing the perceived risks, through a combination of increasing the probability of detection and increasing the probability of punishment. Three specific tools were introduced to help achieve these goals: building integrity, increasing transparency and improving accountability.

This chapter will expand on these approaches and tools. In considering how best to understand and influence the actions of particular individuals, it will consider the drivers of behaviour as well as the broader organisational contexts in which those drivers exert their influence. It will also consider how organisations can best reinforce positive ethical and professional behaviours, as well as discourage unethical behaviour. Finally, it will consider how to help shape the organisational environment in which individuals make ethical decisions.

Drivers of Human Behaviour

Behaviour encompasses all human actions or, in scientific terms "the combination of observable and describable responses of an agent to internal and external stimuli." Ethical actions are a subset of overall behaviour. Behaviour can be conscious or subconscious, overt or covert, voluntary or involuntary, and include any externally visible action that a person can take like talking, moving and expressing emotion. Behaviour is conditioned both by internal drivers (within the person) and by the environment. Internal drivers include heredity, knowledge, personality, attitude, values, abilities and needs. Environmental drivers include social drivers (derived from other people), physical drivers (climate, topography, infrastructure, objects) and events.

Specific behaviours are humans' effort to influence our environment to meet our needs. These needs are manifested in our consciousness as desires but described scientifically in both their conscious and unconscious forms as "drivers." The consequences, both intentional and unintentional, of behaviours create feedback, either directly, through our perception that a need was (or was not) met, or through social cues – the messages we receive from other people. That feedback then becomes an external driver influencing subsequent behaviour. Feedback is reinforced through consistency and can be internalized, for example through the adoption of societal norms.

Behaviours often have unintended positive or negative consequences, which can be in relation to the need targeted, as well as tangential or completely separate areas. Perceiving feedback in these latter circumstances may be difficult, since the logical connection between the behaviour and the feedback may not be so obvious. For example, on receiving a prestigious award, a person may accurately perceive that it was the result of many hours of voluntary after-hours work. Yet the same person may not perceive that co-workers resent the award and fear the expectation that they, too, should put in unpaid overtime.

All needs are not created equal. In the mid-twentieth century, psychologist Abraham Maslow noted that certain needs, when unmet, are more powerful drivers of behaviour than others. When humans are thirsty, we look for water before we search for food; when hungry, the search for food overshadows concerns about job satisfaction; when feeling insecure (physically, emotionally, financially) we find it difficult to focus on realizing our full human potential through "self-actualisation." Maslow suggested a five-layer "hierarchy of needs" in which it was essential to meet the needs of each lower layer before proceeding to higher ones.[1] Once lower order needs are met, however, they lose relevance as drivers of behaviour and the person increasingly looks to meet higher order needs. Maslow's hierarchy is still widely used today and is worth a closer look (see Figure 16.1 for a graphical representation). The hierarchy includes the following elements:

Physiological

The need for oxygen, food, water and a relatively constant body temperature are the most compelling. This layer also includes the need to be active, to rest, to sleep, to eliminate wastes, to avoid pain and to have sex. If deprived of these needs, they take first place in a person's search for satisfaction.

Safety/Security

When immediate physiological needs are satisfied and no longer drive behaviour, the need for safety and security awakens. This includes protection of our physical bodies and our health, as well as the resources that we rely on to meet our physical needs into the future. These can include material resources like money and property, social resources like family and employment, or even a more general desire for structure, order and limits.

Love/Belonging

When the need for physiological well-being and safety/security are satisfied, people become more aware of feelings of loneliness and alienation. These are manifestations

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[1] First set out in Maslow's paper "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* 50:4 (July 1943): 370–396.

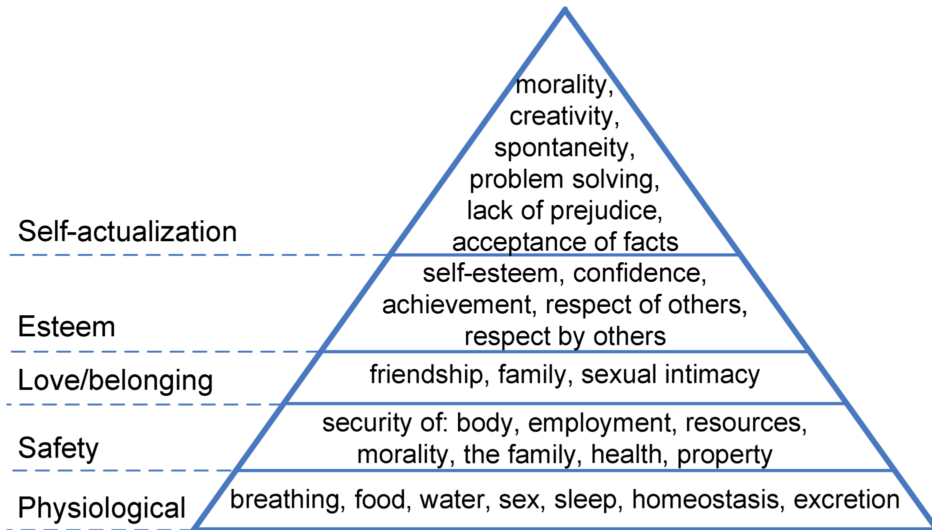

Figure 16.1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.[2]

of a need for love, affection and belongingness (in the same way that hunger is a manifestation of the need for food) and are met by friendship, sweethearts, affectionate relationships and the sense of community. It involves expressing feelings for others, receiving their feelings for us and having a sense of belonging.

Esteem

When needs identified in the first three layers are satisfied, people focus on their desire to feel respected and valuable. Maslow identified two forms of this need. The first form is satisfied by expressions of respect from others, leading to feeling of status, recognition, appreciation, attention, reputation, dignity and even dominance (validated by others' submission). Maslow considered this to be a lower form of meeting the need for esteem because it is dependent on the actions of others. The second form is self-respect, including feelings like confidence, competence, achievement and self-reliance. Maslow considered this the higher form because it is less dependent on actions by other people.

Self-Actualisation

When all lower needs are satisfied, people focus on their need for "self-actualisation" – that is, the desire to express their unique abilities and role as an individual: "A musi-

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[2] Janet A. Simons, Donald B. Irwin and Beverly A. Drinnien, *Psychology – The Search for Understanding* (New York: West Publishing Company, 1987).

cian must make music, an artist must paint, and a poet must write." The responses needed to meet these needs include creativity, self-awareness, ethics and seeking knowledge. In practice, the application of these responses is highly individualistic, in contrast to the clear and fairly universal responses needed to meet needs in the lower four levels.

Understanding the basic dynamics of human behaviour—drivers, behaviour, consequences and feedback—is important to effective management and leadership. Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides a valuable additional tool to differentiate between and understand the various needs that drive workplace behaviour. It can also help in the design and targeting of anti-corruption efforts. For example, traditional deterrence efforts act at the level of security by threatening loss of pay, position, or freedom for those caught in corrupt activity. But these risks may have a reduced deterrent value for those individuals who today feel secure; with their attention focused on higher levels of needs—like relationships or esteem—they may be poorly attuned to risks at the level of security (until they become immanent). For such individuals, deterrents that put at risk relationships or reputation might prove more effective. The same can be said about efforts to build integrity, which in its pure "Kantian" form is most relevant to only that small portion of the population that is focused on moral self-actualisation. In sum, both deterrents and rewards should be designed to appeal to a wide cross-section of needs.

The Organisational Context

Before looking in more detail at promoting ethical behaviour, we will consider the organisational context in which that behaviour takes place. Traditionally, discussions of organisations begin with a structural diagram, move on to responsibilities and interrelationships, and then address key processes. The human element is often underrepresented. More useful for the purposes of countering corruption is an organisational behaviour approach, which focuses on systemic analysis of the interrelationship between individuals, groups, the organisation itself and the social system inside and around it. Some selected aspects of such an analysis are addressed below.

Individual behaviour, seen from the perspective of the relationship to the organisation, falls into three dimensions. A first dimension is *task performance:* the sets of activities and results that must be performed to produce the desired outputs. In most organisations, this dimension receives the most managerial attention, with the principle issue being the motivation of individuals and teams to increase efficiency and effectiveness. A second dimension is *ethical performance:* ensuring that activities are performed in a way that meets standards of ethics. At a minimum, this should be the standard of legality; ideally, it also includes efforts to live according to societal values of right and wrong. This dimension is the central focus of anti-corruption efforts, as well as compliance efforts more widely. The third dimension is *contextual performance:* activities that fall outside strict task performance but contribute to the effectiveness of co-workers, groups, or the organisation – that is, the broader context in which an individ-

ual works. This dimension is often somewhat neglected yet it represents an important long-term investment in shaping the organisational and cultural environment in which tasks are done and ethical choices made.

It is useful to note that anti-corruption efforts are but a piece of a wider ethical environment. Ethical issues are a part of daily business, even where there is little corruption. Common unethical behaviour includes cutting corners on quality control, covering up incidents, abusing or lying about sick days, deceiving customers and putting inappropriate pressure on co-workers. Surveys indicate that those who engage in unethical behaviour most often cite causes linked to management: pressure to meet budgets and quotas, weak leadership, insufficient resources, workload and lack of recognition. Personal financial problems come near the bottom of the list.

Personality consists of stable patterns of behaviour expressed over time. Personality is multi-faceted and varied; yet in terms of the way people accommodate to work, there are only three principle *organisational personality orientations*. These are:

- *Organisationalist*. Strong identification with the organisation for which they work; seek organisational rewards and advancement as important measures of success.
- *Professional*. Strong identification with the substance of work, rather than the organisation for which they do it.
- *Indifferent*. Identification is more focused on things outside of work.

For any given person, these factors coexist in a state of balance, with one usually dominant. They are a key driver of commitment. Other organisational commitment factors include continuance (the job is better than what else is out there), identity (strong belief in common goals and values) and normative (social pressures).

These personality-related factors have direct relevance to anti-corruption programs. Firstly, efforts to build integrity can gain important "psychological allies" if they are focused on positive changes that are aligned with organisational personality orientation. By focusing on a positive agenda of improving the organisation or task performance, rather than simply increasing the "moral burden" of corrupt action, a greater number of individuals can be mobilized to achieve positive systemic results – with the positive "secondary" side affect of reducing corruption. Such efforts will be most effective if they address a variety of the drivers of commitment—organisational loyalty, dedication to task performance, job security, ideology or social pressures—thus appealing to the widest possible group of officials.

Organisational issues can have a significant impact on individuals' susceptibility or resistance to corruption, as well as the success of integrity building efforts. These include issues such as structure and responsibilities, coordination and the decision-making processes. They also touch on motivational efforts and organisational culture, which will be addressed in later sections.

Structure is one of the characteristics of an organisation most visible from the outside and is—probably not coincidentally—one of the favourite targets for change in the

name of reform. Without addressing the merits of any particular structure, several human factors are worth mentioning. First, whatever the structure, it is important that responsibilities are clearly delineated, without overlap or gaps. This helps avoid unnecessary confusion and conflict, particular at the level of managers – a group of individuals that are often naturally competitive and protective of perceived prerogatives. Effective division of responsibilities can also help build integrity by ensuring that multiple stakeholders, each with a distinct institutional perspective and mandate, are involved in decision making. For example, in the area of personnel management, separate staff elements should be responsible for determining personnel requirements for strategic planning to develop human resources, for real-time career management for individual personnel and for program assessment. Similarly, in the area of procurement, separate staff elements should be responsible for requirements, planning, contracting and audit. This creates a system of natural checks and balances.

Effective mechanisms for *horizontal coordination* are vital for ensuring integrity and transparency. The coordination system should allow all stakeholders to share common information, make assessments based on their various institutional perspectives and openly discuss these with their peers in order to build bottom-up solutions. Information should flow freely, ideally using a system that "pushes" it to all relevant stakeholders. Regular inter-departmental meetings help ensure transparency; in their absence, coordination is done through more opaque informal mechanisms. It can help coordination and increase transparency if staff elements with closely related functions have a common senior sponsor (e.g. deputy minister). On the other hand, elements conducting oversight (e.g. audit departments, inspector generals) should not have a common senior sponsor with elements for which they are responsible.

Human factors also play an important role in ensuring integrity of *decision making*. Participants in decision-making processes should be clearly identified and they should have clear direction regarding legitimate inputs, desired outputs and decision criteria. Decision makers should disclose conflicts of interest, recusing themselves when appropriate, and provide transparency on their finances. Box 16.1 shows UN guidelines on conflict of interest for public officials.

Motivating Ethical Behaviour

Motivating sustained performance is a key managerial task in any organisation. The principle challenge in doing this is aligning organisational interests—task, ethical and contextual performance—with the needs of individuals for physiological satisfaction, security, belonging, esteem and self-actualisation. Motivation is best done through a combination of positive feedback mechanisms, such as:

- Praise, recognition and respect (which meet the need for esteem);
- Team-building, loyalty and good communication (which help build a sense of belonging);

Box 16.1. UN Guidelines on Conflict of Interest for Public Officials

II. Conflict of Interest and Disqualification

Public officials shall not use their official authority for the improper advancement of their own or their family's personal or financial interest. They shall not engage in any transaction, acquire any position or function or have any financial, commercial or other comparable interest that is incompatible with their office, functions and duties or the discharge thereof.

Public officials, to the extent required by their position, shall, in accordance with laws or administrative policies, declare business, commercial and financial interests or activities undertaken for financial gain that may raise a possible conflict of interest. In situations of possible or perceived conflict of interest between the duties and private interests of public officials, they shall comply with the measures established to reduce or eliminate such conflict of interest.

Public officials shall at no time improperly use public moneys, property, services or information that is acquired in the performance of, or as a result of, their official duties for activities not related to their official work.

Public officials shall comply with measures established by law or by administrative policies in order that after leaving their official positions they will not take improper advantage of their previous office.

Source: United Nations, *UN International Code of Conduct for Public Officials*, Annex, A/RES/51/59, 82nd plenary meeting (12 December 1996).

- Financial incentives (which meet the need for security and provide resources relevant to activities that meet higher level needs); and
- Advancement (which contributes to a sense of esteem and self-actualisation).

Motivation is increased when feedback is regularly repeated in response to good performance. Significantly, all of the motivators listed above are positive. Used rarely, negative reinforcement can discourage negative behaviours but it loses effectiveness if used too frequently. Negative reinforcement also has serious side affects in terms of morale and motivation, and only very limited usefulness in motivating positive performance. This underlines again the importance of a positive approach to countering corruption, using constructive feedback to link integrity, transparency and accountability to positive organisational and personal agendas.

Systemic corruption is an indication that an organisation's motivation mechanisms have failed and no longer provide sufficient prospects for individuals in the organisation to meet their needs. If the organisation is unable to provide a warm work environment or a wage sufficient to put food on the table then workers will call in absent rather than freeze and steal rather than starve. If the chain of command is unable to prevent threats and bullying from senior soldiers, servicemen will seek security by accommodating with these groups, even if the price of accommodation includes participation in

corrupt or other criminal behaviour. If the system is unpredictable and disorderly, individuals will trust their career development to patrons and friends, rather than the personnel department. If there is weak corporate identity, individuals will develop their sense of belonging in informal groups within the organisation. If the public esteem for the armed forces is low, then the value of "honest service" as a vehicle for esteem is diminished and the value of economic success "at any cost" comes to the fore. Finally, if the system is sufficiently dysfunctional, even dedicated professionals might see no alternative to illegal (but in their view ethical) action in order to get the job done.

The challenge, therefore, for building integrity in systems with entrenched corruption is not just motivating ethical behaviour; rather, it is helping re-establish functioning motivation mechanisms in a way that will re-align individual and organisational incentives (see Box 16.2 for suggested guidelines). This requires particular attention to the issue of organisational culture.

Organisational Culture

In addition to structures, regulations and processes, each institution has its own organisational culture. This is "the way business is done here" – a pattern of shared basic assumptions and approaches that the group considers valid for meeting internal tasks and relating to external actors. It is actively taught to new members of the group as the correct way to perceive and act on those issues. It consists of three layers:

Box 16.2. Guidelines for Establishing Motivational Mechanisms

1. Establish clear expectations for performance in all areas: task, ethical, contextual. Publish clear policies and standards; establish a code of conduct for civil and military officials.

2. Establish procedures that are clear, accurate and work smoothly. Assessment, promotion and assignment procedures are seen as fairness issues and should be high on the agenda. Introduce incentives targeted to individuals at various levels on Maslow's hierarchy.

3. Train managers in the new policies and procedures. Make it clear that the goal is improving quality and performance by doing business in new, more effective ways.

4. Build ownership in efforts to create a new, functioning system through personal commitment by leadership, including frank (closed-door) discussions with civil and military managers and unit visits.

5. Use information efforts to reach out to servicemen, defence officials and the public. Outreach to families can be an important tool in acceptance of the new standards (and any resultant loss of income).

6. Have clear, proportional sanctions for violations. Conserve resources by focusing on administrative punishment for procedural violations, rather than criminal proceedings. Nevertheless, a few well-publicized (and well-deserved) cases of punishment early will raise awareness of the new expectations.

7. Regularly review progress with all major stakeholders.

- Those visible to the outside world, including the way the organisation presents itself in facilities, furnishings and dress codes, as well as how it conducts its external interactions;
- The professed internal culture, including mission statements, slogans, codes of conduct and personal values widely expressed throughout the organisation;
- Tacit assumptions, which are unseen and assumed, not generally identified in everyday interactions inside the organisation; some "unspoken rules" may exist subconsciously, and others may be taboo (or discussed only during smoke breaks).

While the first level can be observed, and the second identified through surveys and interviews, it is difficult for outsiders (including new leadership) to understand culture at the third level. This is one of the reasons why organisational culture is the most difficult organisational attribute to change, outlasting organisation, processes, leadership and all other physical attributes of the organisation. Another reason for its resilience is that organisational culture is driven by the personality of the managers in what is known as the dominant coalition – the group of effective and essential managers and leadership that collectively control the organisation's resources and set its goals.

Organisational culture is found not only in the formal organisation but also in the informal organisation – the unofficial working and social relationships that exist in parallel with every formal organisation. The informal organisation has several important functions:

- Perpetuate the group's cultural and social values;
- Provide social status and satisfaction through close personal interaction;
- Promote communication among members about management actions;
- Provide social control by influencing and regulating behaviour inside and outside the group.

Informal organisations exhibit high resistance to change; they seek to perpetuate the values and lifestyle that they hold in common and have effective social control tools to maintain conformity inside the group and coordinate the group's external influence. Where the informal organisation intersects with the dominant coalition, resistance to change can become powerfully entrenched.

Organisational Culture and Motivation: Friend or Foe?

Organisational culture is nested in an iron triangle of formal organisation, informal organisation and the dominant coalition, giving it a powerful effect on influencing behaviour. When an employee meets the same assumptions and approaches in daily business, in social interactions and in contact with senior managers, these are quickly assimilated as social norms and become an internal driver of behaviour.

Where this culture remains predominantly ethical and professional, it can be harnessed by leadership as a powerful driver for positive behaviour. Positive social tools to reinforce behaviour that builds integrity can include peer awards, publication of articles or mention at senior level meetings. Negative tools can include peer review boards, naming and shaming, social shunning and dismissal/suspension. In order to be effective, however, the group must perceive ownership of these tools, and that they are being wielded in the interest of the group and its social norms.

In situations where corruption has become the norm, the role of organisational culture may not be so positive. Corruption networks form their own informal organisation(s). In cases of extreme systemic dysfunction, defence professionals many have turned to these informal networks to achieve results that the official organisation could not – even in professional matters. Indeed, through corruption and influence peddling, the informal organisation may have been able to consistently provide stronger and more consistent behaviour incentives than the formal system. The result can be a de facto shift in the "dominant coalition" to the informal organisation; in effect, *institutional capture* by a shadow elite.

In this case, reform-minded leadership will be faced with an organisational culture, propagated through powerful informal networks, that actively encourages corrupt behaviour. If not addressed, it risks undermining all other changes; structures and processes will change, but not "the way business is done here." A number of strategies have been developed to overcome this resistance (Box 16.3 provides an example).

Efforts to change organisational culture can consume enormous resources in terms of leadership time and significantly disrupt the organisation's daily operations. In countries where corruption is endemic in society, defence leadership will face additional challenges in creating a culture with norms that differ from society at large. In determining their level of ambition for cultural change, a key question for leadership is whether a critical mass of senior managers (who form much of the dominant coalition) will support the effort. Without their clear support, or the ability to find supportive and competent replacements, other scarce resources like leadership time and political capital will likely prove insufficient to push through broad cultural transformation throughout the entire defence establishment.

A two-level approach can help moderate the level of ambition without abandoning the goal of cultural change. On one level, an extensive information campaign ensures that new standards of behaviour and new deterrents are understood throughout the entire defence structure. Paired with modest enforcement efforts, the goal of this effort is to have a real (but likely modest) quantitative reduction in corruption. At the same time, working with a small group of professionals, a more intensive effort has the goal of qualitatively transforming "the way things are done" in one area of the defence establishment. Success in this area can become a model for others and can also provide a supply of committed personnel with relevant experience who can act as internal change agents in other parts of the defence system.

Box 16.3. Organisational Culture Change Strategy

Changing organisational culture is a long-term project. At a minimum, employees need time to get used to new ways of doing business. In companies with a very strong and specific culture, there will likely be strong resistance. The following guidelines for cultural change can serve as a basis on which to develop an implementation strategy:

Formulate a clear strategic vision
A clear vision of the firm's new strategy, shared values and behaviours is needed to provide the impulse and direction for implementing cultural change.

Display top-management commitment
Cultural change must be led from the top, since the willingness of senior management to change is a prerequisite for success and an important indicator for the rest of the organisation.

Model cultural change at the highest level
Senior management's commitment to change must be noticeable in new values and behaviours that model those to be introduced in the rest of the company. It is also useful for management to show continuity of current culture in a way that calms fears about radical change.

Modify the organisation to support organisational change
This could be a minor adjustment to accommodate a new element of culture or a shift to a different model (e.g. autocratic to collegial) to help drive change.

Select and socialize newcomers and terminate deviants
Modifying organisational membership can help implement cultural change; people can be selected and terminated based on their fit with the new culture.

Develop ethical and legal sensitivity
Change in people's rights, roles and responsibilities may have ethical and legal implications.

Source (adapted from): Thomas G. Cummings and Christopher G. Worley, *Organisation Development and Change*, 8th Ed. (Thomson South-Western, 2005).

Within the civilian defence ministry, logical areas for such a targeted effort include policy departments, audit departments or a selected cadre of reform-minded mid-level and senior managers. Within the armed forces, operational officers with international experience may have the right attitude and position to link ethical behaviour to a military ethos that considers integrity to be an important component of operational success.

A useful concept to support such an intensive effort is the idea of a *community of practice*. This is a group of people who share a profession and actively interact to exchange relevant knowledge. By sharing knowledge and social interaction, they naturally develop a sense of joint enterprise—the thing that binds them together—and create their own informal organisation. This can help counterbalance the influence of corrupt informal organisations and provide a mechanism for introducing cultural change

even if there is insufficient support by mid-level managers. The group's informal interactions also help its members build social capital that is useful for task fulfilment and career advancement. Box 16.4 provides some guidelines on developing a successful community of practice.

Box 16.4. Cultivating a Successful Community of Practice

A community of practice succeeds depending on its purpose and objective, as well as the interests and resources of its members. These seven actions can help a community of practice be successful:

- Welcome and cultivate members with different levels of participation, forming a core (leadership) group, an active group and a peripheral group;
- Find and nurture a regular rhythm for the community; members should regularly meet, reflect and evolve;
- Combine familiarity and excitement; offer both expected and innovative learning opportunities;
- Develop both public and private community spaces;
- Create opportunities for open dialogue within as well as with outside perspectives;
- Focus on the value of the community and provide explicit opportunities to discuss it;
- Design the community to evolve naturally.

Source: Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott and William M. Snyder, *Cultivating Communities of Practice* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press, 2002).

Summary

Even in systems with high levels of corruption, most people face the question "to be or not to be corrupt" relatively rarely. On the other hand, they make a myriad of daily decisions that influence the corruption climate by impacting integrity, transparency or accountability. Motivating those constructive decisions should be the principle objective of anti-corruption efforts. This will be most successful when individual, organisational and social interests align and receive positive reinforcement. Individual needs should be targeted with full understanding of their diversity and the hierarchy in which they operate. Organisational needs can be supported by ensuring clear institutional responsibilities, effective horizontal coordination and decision-making integrity. If an organisation's culture is ethical, it can serve as a powerful motivator, mobilizing social feedback across formal processes, the informal organisation and the managerial group. If organisational culture is not ethical, then its transformation becomes a top priority for defence leadership; unchanged, it will undermine all other reforms. This is a long-term effort but can be achievable with political will, ingenuity in developing allies inside the system and patience.