

MEETING ABSTRACTS

WHOM DO PEOPLE IN THE MILITARY TRUST? INTERPERSONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL TRUST IN THE MILITARY SETTING

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Trust – both interpersonal and institutional – is a foundational element of social cohesion and effective functioning in any organization, including the armed forces. Drawing on key theories of trust, this study explores the dynamics of trust among military personnel using data from a large-scale, representative survey conducted across the armed forces in 2023. The findings reveal a marked contrast: while interpersonal trust among people in the military is generally high, institutional trust in the domestic and foreign political institutions is comparatively lower. Using multivariate analysis, we identify key predictors of both trust types and compare the military results with civilian population benchmarks. Interestingly, differences between military and public trust levels are low for most indicators. The paper concludes by discussing the dual implications of this trust configuration. While high interpersonal trust supports unit cohesion and operational effectiveness, relatively low institutional trust may undermine strategic resilience, especially in the context of hybrid threats and disinformation targeting the armed forces.

Keywords: trust; interpersonal trust; institutional trust; social cohesion; military personnel

References

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