The Profession of Arms

Student Preparation:
• Read the attached reading and Chapters 1 and 2 of *The Armed Forces Officer*.

Cognitive Lesson Objective:
• Comprehend the professional attributes and qualities of the Air Force officer.

Cognitive Samples of Behavior:
• Explain what constitutes a profession.
• Describe the three characteristics of a profession according to Samuel P. Huntington.
• Differentiate between an institution and an occupation.
• Explain why the United States has its officers take an oath to support and defend the Constitution.
• Explain the country’s expectations of its officers.

Affective Lesson Objective:
• Value the military as a profession.

Affective Sample of Behavior:
• Defend the profession of arms.
Since the dawn of recorded time, war has been an integral part of human history. There are many different theories that search to explain why war has played such a dominant role in mankind’s history. Some argue that war is an aberration in human character, while others contend that it’s a natural part of human behavior. Regardless of their personal convictions on war, all social scientists agree that military force has played an important role in human development. While we may wish for a world of eternal peace, we must be prepared to face enemies who may threaten our national security.

To ensure the protection of national interests, our government has created the most powerful military force in the history of humanity. The United States military establishment—composed of four services: the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force—is capable of projecting immense power throughout the world. If this military strength was misapplied, it could easily destroy the very fabric of our society.

As you begin your training, there may be some uncertainty about what it means to be a member of the Profession of Arms. In a very fundamental way, serving as an officer represents a special calling. The essential purpose of an organized military force is to defend the interests of the state, by force of arms if necessary. This task is unique to the military profession. There are those who have tried to compare the responsibilities of military officers to business executives. To be sure both occupations call for leadership abilities and involve the management of human and material resources. But what civilian corporation expects its executives to be available for work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and be ready to risk their lives on behalf of its stockholders? Most assuredly, executive job descriptions do not include the responsibility to lead others to their deaths. At its heart, the military profession is a calling that requires a devotion to service and willingness to sacrifice at levels far removed from the values of the marketplace.

The unique nature of our profession starts to become more clear as you read the following comments by Martin E. Dempsey, General, US Army, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff 2012, in his paper America’s Profession—A Profession of Arms:

The seriousness of our profession was most vividly explained by General Douglas MacArthur in his farewell speech to West Point Cadets in May of 1962 when he said, “Yours is the profession of arms, the will to win, the sure knowledge that in war there is no substitute for victory, that if you lose, the Nation will be destroyed, that the very obsession of your public service must be Duty, Honor, Country.” Our profession is a calling requiring unique expertise to fulfill our collective responsibility to the American people, “provide for the common defense and secure the blessings of liberty.” Our profession is distinguished from others in society because of our expertise in the justified application of lethal military force and the willingness of those who serve to die for our Nation. Our profession is defined by our values, ethics, standards, code of conduct, skills, and attributes. As volunteers, our sworn duty is to the Constitution. Our status as a profession is granted by those whom we are accountable to, our civilian authority, and the American people. All service men and women belong to the profession from the junior
enlisted to our most senior leaders. We are all accountable for meeting ethical and performance standards in our actions and similarly, accountable for our failure to take action, when appropriate. The distinction between ranks lies in our level of responsibility and degree of accountability. We share the common attributes of character, courage, competence, and commitment. We qualify as professionals through intensive training, education, and practical experience. As professionals, we are defined by our strength of character, life-long commitment to core values, and maintaining our professional abilities through continuous improvement, individually and institutionally.

TODAY’S OFFICER:

WAGE EARNER OR PROFESSIONAL?
By Major Richard S. Workman II.

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Does professionalism mean the same thing when applied to different occupations, such as doctors, lawyers, military officers, artists, plumbers, and athletes? The answer, of course, is no. Some of these are considered professional occupations simply because the practitioners are paid for their skills; they are “professionals” instead of “amateurs.” If professional status were defined strictly in economic terms, then a military officer or a physician is a professional in the same way that Michael Jordan is a professional basketball player—all are paid for doing their jobs. This article discusses professionalism in its more profound sense, a professionalism that is an ideal and a goal to be sought among those with superior character and commitment.

Social scientists have long attempted to determine the specific characteristics common to professionalism and professions. The criteria developed have contained anywhere from three to more than a dozen elements and, at first glance, do not seem to approach any common consensus. Two models however are reasonably representative of the diverse characterizations and have been developed by scholars who closely study the military and its relationship with the rest of society. Dr. Samuel Huntington and Dr. Allan Millett have created models of professionalism that are excellent starting points for evaluating the military officer career. After looking at these two models and comparing the officer career to them, the opinions of other scholars with more critical arguments will be examined. The article concludes with a look at a third model, this one developed by Dr. Charles Moskos, that describes the changes in the military’s organizational identity in the last 25 years. His institutional/occupational paradigm helps to clarify how identity and commitment can affect attitudes toward the military career.
HUNTINGTON’S MODEL OF A PROFESSION

Dr. Samuel Huntington, a Harvard professor of political science, developed one of the best known models of professionalism. His book, *The Soldier and the State*, is a classic study of civil-military relations and provides a detailed examination of the military officer career as a profession. Huntington looks at the economic, social, and political relations of the officer corps with society and government and closely examines the nature of the officer corps, what its characteristics are, and what sort of people are military officers. To answer these questions, Huntington begins by defining professionalism: a group of people working in a certain occupation can be considered a profession if the group exhibits three essential characteristics, identified as *expertise, responsibility, and corporateness*.

**Expertise**

A profession centers around a specific set of skills and a body of knowledge that is learned through extensive education and experience. This specific skill and knowledge sets the profession apart from laymen who do not possess them; the expertise also aids in developing universal standards of conduct and performance for the members of the profession. But professional knowledge is more than simply the possession of practical skills; it must also be intellectual and scholarly in nature. Professionals acquire this specialized knowledge through a process of extensive and continued education, usually involving undergraduate and graduate-level study, technical training, and additional professional schools. More specifically, Huntington views professional expertise as composed of three separate components.

**Technical Component.** “The ordinary skill or craft exists only in the present and is mastered by learning an existing technique without reference to what has gone before.” This part of expertise is learning the “tools of the trade.” Professionals learn and practice skills that are beyond the layman’s capacity to apply. In a science and technology-based profession such as medicine, these skills might include operating diagnostic and surgical equipment. In a less-scientific profession such as law, these might mean a knowledge of court procedures, rules of evidence, and elements of proof.

**Theoretical or Intellectual Component.** “Professional knowledge is intellectual in nature and capable of preservation in writing. Professional knowledge has a history, and some knowledge of that history is essential to competence.” The theoretical component involves an understanding of the “how” and the “why” of the technical component. For physicians this might include the philosophy and history of medical practice; for lawyers the theories behind the American judicial system; for military officers, the theory and history of military operations. This component of expertise also enables and requires professionals to understand and to apply new developments by remaining in contact with the academic side of their professional knowledge, through journals and conferences, and with their movement through practice, teaching, and research. The theoretical component separates the professional from the technician: the technician only needs to master a particular skill, but the professional needs to know why their skills accomplish the necessary task.
Broad-Liberal Component. “Professional expertise also has a dimension in breadth which is lacking in the normal trade. It is a segment of the total cultural tradition of society. The professional man can successfully apply his own skill only when he is aware of this broader tradition of which he is a part.” Perhaps the most complex component of expertise, the broad-liberal component may also be the most important for the professional. It involves the ability of professionals to understand the role of their profession in the economic, social, political, and cultural milieu of their society. Professionals must have an understanding of human behavior, relationships, standards of conduct, and organizational structures so their professional expertise can be best used to achieve desirable results.

Professional Responsibility

“The professional is a practicing expert, working in a social context, and performing a service, such as a promotion of health, education, or justice, which is essential to the functioning of society. The client of every profession is society.” Because of the complex nature of professional expertise, laymen are usually not fully capable of understanding what professionals do or how they do it so that professionals have a “monopoly” over a particular skill. Society is also not generally capable of determining whether a professional is acting competently or ethically, only another professional can make such a judgment. Hence, society and those needing professional expertise place great trust in the professional. For this reason, a special relationship exists between the professional and the client that is different from the standard relationship of the marketplace. It is called the “professional-client relationship.” Clients must accept the professionals’ “monopoly on expertise” by accepting their definition of, and solution to, the problem, which requires professional service.

On the other hand, just as professionals expect clients to place affairs completely in their hands, clients expect professionals to abide by certain ethical norms and by high standards of professional conduct. Society requires professionals to perform their service when needed and to fulfill at least three obligations. First, the professional must not exceed the bounds of competence. This means two things. For one, professionals must never perform service outside the bounds of their specific expertise. It would be unethical, for example, for a tax attorney to defend an individual accused of murder, even though as a lawyer he may have access to the court system. And two, a professional must not exert personal prejudices or nonprofessional beliefs and judgments upon the professional-client relationship. A physician, for example, should not refuse treatment to a patient addicted to drugs, merely because of personal bias against the patient’s past conduct.

Secondly, the professional should always act in ways that are wholly in the client’s best interest. For example, lawyers should defend clients because they intend to work conscientiously for the client’s interest, not because they stand to profit from selling transcripts of private interviews with their clients. Similarly, surgeons are expected to perform procedures only because they are really needed, not because they can make more money from them. Huntington says that financial gain cannot be the primary goal of a professional person when performing in the character or capacity of a professional.
Third, the professional always acts with absolute integrity toward the client. Lawyers may use legal tricks, courtroom theatrics, and can argue over technicalities; they can fight their client’s cause as far as conscience and the practice of their profession will allow. However, they must never lie, cheat, or steal from their clients—integrity is an absolute necessity in the professional-client relationship. These obligations to clients are what Huntington calls “professional responsibility.”

Corporateness

“The members of a profession share a sense of organic unity and consciousness of themselves as a group apart from laymen. This collective sense has its origins in the lengthy discipline and training necessary for professional competence, the common bond of work, and the sharing of a unique social responsibility.” This shared sense of belonging among professionals can be called “corporateness.” It results first from their common bond of work. Professional people are likely to associate with one another, both during work and socially. Physicians may work together at a hospital or medical complex and lawyers may frequently see each other in court; they may also share the same leisure activities, symbols, private interests, and lifestyles. Second, professions desire autonomy. Professionals believe they should be able to provide their specific service to society in the way they think best—without undue influence from those “outside” the profession.

Last, professionals desire to communicate with one another to share experiences, new techniques, and knowledge. This often manifests itself in “professional organizations.” For the medical profession in the United States, the professional organization is the American Medical Association (AMA); for the legal profession it is the American Bar Association (ABA). Other professions have similar institutions. These organizations often perform essential services for the profession and for the society it serves: they police the profession by ensuring a certain level of competence, often through examinations and specific input to licensing authorities; they control recruitment by setting standards for entrance into the education and training programs necessary for membership in the profession. They also promote professional knowledge through journals such as the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) and through periodic conferences. In addition, the organization often represents the profession as the spokesperson for its members in public debates.

The Military Profession

Given Huntington’s model of professionalism, the question remains: does the military officer corps qualify as a profession? Huntington seems to answer this unequivocally: “The vocation of officership meets the criteria of professionalism.” Nonetheless, each of his criteria should be examined more closely.
Does the military officer corps possess a specific expertise separate from civilian groups? Even though the military has many different specialties and branches of service, Huntington believes the officer corps has a specialized skill, best summed up by Harold Lasswell’s phrase, “the management of violence.” More formally, Huntington states “The direction, operation, and control of a human organization whose primary function is the application of violence is the peculiar skill of the officer.”

Quite obviously, officers at different levels of rank and experience possess this expertise in differing amounts. Huntington says the bigger and more complex the organization officers are capable of directing, and the greater the number of situations and conditions under which they can serve, the more professional they are. Officers assigned to, or capable of directing only minor military efforts may be at such a low level of expertise as to call into question their professional status. Officers who can lead the operations of an aircraft wing or of an aircraft carrier battle group are certainly at a highly professional level, and those who can combine the use of land, sea, and air forces in an effective joint operation are at the top of the military profession.

Officer skills are neither primarily mechanical, meaning based upon the techniques and science of particular tasks, nor just an art, meaning a unique talent with which a person is born. Officership is, according to Huntington, “…an extraordinary complex intellectual skill requiring comprehensive study and training.” The specific skill of the officer is the management of violence, not the violent act itself. Flying an F-16 fighter, for example, requires background knowledge of warfare to be sure, but is primarily a mechanical skill. Directing an F-16 fighter squadron, however, requires far greater knowledge, leadership, and management ability. These can only be gained through continuous education and application of the theory and past lessons of organizing, training, equipping, and directing military forces.

The specific expertise of the officer carries with it special social responsibilities. With the military power at their disposal, officers could conceivably use their expertise for their own personal or service advantage and might coerce or disobey the society they are pledged to serve. Huntington tells us officers have a profound responsibility—to maintain the military security of society—their client. Everyone in a society has an interest in its security and, while the government as a whole has a concern for national security along with other social values, “the officer corps alone is responsible for military security to the exclusion of all other ends.”

Unlike physicians or lawyers, whose responsibilities are to individual patients or clients, military officers are responsible to society as a whole as “expert advisors.” Like other professions, however, officers can only serve their clients in the realm of their specific expertise. Professionals identify the needs of their clients and recommend a course of action, then apply their professional knowledge and experience once a decision is made with the client.
Membership in any profession is limited to a carefully chosen group; the commission is to the officer what a license is to a doctor. Entrance is restricted to only those with the required education and training. According to Huntington, the structure of the officer corps includes “not just the official bureaucracy but also societies, associations, schools, journals, customs, and traditions.” Officers tend to work and to live apart from society, although this has been steadily decreasing over time, and probably have less contact with society outside of the officer corps than do members of other professions. “Heroic murals and status, customs, uniforms, and reveille and taps—all these things faithfully teach new leaders that they have entered a profession.”

But what about the enlisted force? Today when we use the term professional soldier, sailor, marine, or Airman we think of every member of the military regardless of rank. Huntington says, however, that: “The enlisted personnel have neither the intellectual skills nor the professional responsibility of the officer. They are specialists in the application of violence not the management of violence. Their vocation is a trade not a profession.” This was perhaps true in 1957 when Huntington wrote *The Soldier and the State*, but the military of today is quite different. Enlisted personnel are entering the service with a higher education level than ever before and sometimes earn graduate-level degrees during their careers. With recent drawdowns of personnel in the entire force, many positions once manned by officers are now filled with noncommissioned officers (NCO). While it is still true that the enlisted corps cannot generally claim professional status, the higher NCO ranks may be individually qualified because of their high levels of education, responsibility, and career motivation.

The military officer, as an abstract concept, fits well into Huntington’s model of a profession. Yet individuals make up the military service, not paper concepts or theoretical models. Meeting Huntington’s three criteria of professionalism should be an individual concern; perhaps more than other occupations, the professional ideal should be a specific goal of each military officer.

**MILLET’S MODEL OF A PROFESSION**

Dr. Allan Millett, a retired US Marine Corps colonel, was a professor of history at Ohio State University and is currently a professor at the University of New Orleans. He is a prolific writer on the military and society. In his paper, *Military Professionalism and Officership in America*, Millett states that, “A profession is an occupation that has assumed all or some of the attributes generally regarded as typical of professions.” It then falls to the definition of these characteristics to determine the essence of professions. Millett admits there is no consensus, but goes on to list six attributes he believes are found in most professions—a list that closely parallels Huntington’s ideas.
According to Millett, a profession is first “a full-time and stable job, serving continuing societal needs.” Professionals provide a vital service to society even though every member of society may not feel they need that particular service. The medical profession helps to ensure the health of everyone in society through both prevention and treatment of illness and injury. Some members of society served by these medical professionals may not feel they need doctors because they are blessed with good health or perhaps base their health on particular religious beliefs. Physicians, however, are ever ready to provide their professional service to those in need, whether during office hours or after the end of their working hours. Most would agree that the level of health, well being, and the quality of life provided by medical professionals is vital to society’s ability to function effectively.

The second attribute requires the profession to be “a lifelong calling by the practitioners, who identify themselves personally with their job subculture.” Much of the lives of professionals, both public and private, revolves around their work. In our society, members of the clergy are held to a high esteem for their expertise, dedication, and morality. Joining the clergy means devotion to religious beliefs and service to the church’s congregation. Members of the clergy are presumed by the rest of society to have a lifelong commitment and must possess all the expertise of their profession. They are treated with the same respect, whether preaching in front of a congregation or having dinner with a family in a private home.

Millett’s third attribute notes that professions are “organized to control performance standards and recruitment.” This means professionals have a monopoly of expertise. They consider themselves the only group qualified to judge whether a member of their profession is living up to the profession’s standards and code of ethics and whether applicants to the profession can meet the qualifications for membership. Standards of professional performance are usually determined by professional organizations such as the American Bar Association (ABA), which regulates the legal profession. College graduates who wish to become lawyers must meet certain standards to be admitted to law school and then must pass a bar examination to be able to practice law. A lawyer who fails to maintain professional standards of conduct or ethics can be disbarred and prevented from practicing law by the other members of his profession.

Fourth, the profession requires “formal, theoretical education.” Professionals must have more than training in the practical aspects of their craft. Physicians need to have a foundation in the basic sciences to truly understand their profession, separating them from those who may only be skilled at first aid, the operation of medical diagnostic equipment, or the administration of medication. These are vital functions to be sure, but knowledge of these skills does not make practitioners members of the medical profession. Millett says, “professions are based on some system of specialized knowledge which is continually enlarged by academic research and experience.” For example, doctors go to medical conferences and read and submit papers to professional journals; they try to enhance both their profession and their own professional expertise and reputation.
Fifth, Millett says professions must have “a service orientation in which loyalty to standards of competence and loyalty to client’s needs are paramount.” Clients requiring professional help must depend upon the judgment of a professional; they are layman and do not possess the expertise required to understand the professional service requested. A client requesting help from a tax attorney cannot on competent grounds contest the attorney’s opinion about whether or not a certain tax adjustment is valid. Because of the client’s vulnerability in the professional-client relationship, professionals have a society-imposed obligation to act only in the client’s behalf and never in their own self interest. This “service orientation” is a complex issue and recalls a contemporary controversy about the two primary examples of professions, doctors and lawyers. Do people join these professions to serve humanity or to make money? No doubt the motives for most are mixed, but the professional ideal set by this attribute provides a clear standard for conduct.

The final attribute, according to Millett, is that the profession “is granted a great deal of collective autonomy by the society it serves, presumably because the practitioners have proven their high ethical standards and trustworthiness.” It is this last attribute that Millett says most separates a profession from other occupations. Autonomy is the right of self-government. Society grants autonomy to professions because they perform society’s most necessary, difficult, morally ambiguous, and unpleasant jobs. Lawyers must ensure the individual rights of even violent criminals are not violated during the judicial process; physicians must make life or death decisions about their patients and must deal with ambiguous moral issues.

Professions desire autonomy so that those who lack the professional’s expertise will not have undue influence in the affairs of the profession. Millett warns, however, “the professional’s relative freedom is conditional and ultimately depends on continuous social approval.” If professionals do not police their colleagues adequately and if they abuse their privileged role, the entire profession could lose its freedom and “destroy trust as rapidly as it gained its relative autonomy.”

The Military Profession

According to Millett, an occupation’s claim to professional status depends on having some or all of the six attributes listed in his model. His attributes can be looked upon as a relative scale, the fewer attributes an occupation possesses, the less professional; the greater number of attributes, the more professional. As with Huntington’s model, the military officer corps seems to fit Millett’s professional model quite well.

The military is a full-time job serving the needs of society. The days are long-gone when the defense of the nation could be put in the hands of a citizen-soldiery who would grab their muskets and powder horns from atop the mantel and rush out to meet the enemy. The technology and complexity of today’s warfare demands a full-time military that provides continuous deterrence and is prepared to fight when called upon. This is a need even in the post-Cold War world: from nuclear proliferation and terrorism to regional conflicts, from famine relief to peacekeeping, American society continues to need an organization to maintain its security.
The military is a lifelong calling for people who identify themselves with their job. The key word in this attribute is “calling,” a word normally associated with the clergy but deemed necessary for all professionals. Colonel Lloyd Matthews, US Army (Ret), writes, “On entering the Army, true professionals don’t simply ‘take a job.’ Instead, they ‘profess to a sacred calling,’ one that totally immerses them, along with their band of professional brethren, in a career dedicated to a single transcendent cause.” The American military’s calling is to defend the United States and the freedom of its citizens against any and all aggressors.

Procedures and policies within the military control members’ performance, set standards, and regulate recruitment. Control is exercised within the profession by its members because those outside the profession do not possess the expertise needed to judge whether applicants have met the standards and whether members already in the profession are performing well. Matthews notes that the military regulates itself and its members to a higher degree than any other calling. Selection boards for commissioning, professional schools, promotions, performance reports, awards and decorations, and courts-martial panels are all well entrenched facts of military life.

The military officer requires formal theoretical education. While no doubt highly educated, a question remains as to whether or not the officer has been given a distinct and unique body of knowledge, theory, and history beyond the normal undergraduate degree that can be taught by the military education system. Does the military have an equivalent medical or law school? Stated another way, some believe that officers lack a single defined specialty because society requires them to fill so many different roles. In addition to being a war fighter, military officers are peacemakers, advisors, managers, and many other things. Matthews recognized that officers must be versatile and adaptable, but stresses the critical role that comes above all others and that must not be forgotten—to lead soldiers into battle in defense of the country. This requirement can emerge at any time and without a distinct break from the other function. The officer may at one moment be feeding a starving nation and in the next be fighting against those that were starving. The events in Somalia in 1991 and 1992 are a reminder of why the military must be flexible and responsive to changes in the environment surrounding its operations.

Others believe that military schools should concentrate more on the practical aspects of employing violence and should teach officers more about the latest technology for the modern battlefield. Matthew’s response to this is that military schooling, like other professional training, should maintain a tension between theory and practice. Physicians cannot practice medicine if they only know the theory of medicine: they must also be able to diagnose and treat patients. Trial lawyers cannot function in front of judges and juries unless they have mastered knowledge of laws practiced in mock trials, and served in apprentice courses. Thus it is in the military school system, where theory provides the foundation upon which practical skills are built.
The military is service-oriented, where loyalty to standards of competence and the client’s needs are paramount. The officer’s clients are the people of the nation. Because the United States can no longer rely on the security of a force of part-time volunteers, the American people have placed their trust in the professional judgment of military officers. Officers swear to defend the Constitution, national values, and the American way of life. They advise their civil authorities and fight when necessary. According to Matthews, altruism is nowhere stronger than in the military, “where the incentive of a day’s hardtack and the chance to be of use stand in stark contrast to the opportunities for enrichment offered by some of the other professions.”

Society grants the military a great deal of autonomy because of its members’ high ethical behavior and trust. The uniformed chain of command is in control within the military. During peacetime, military officers are given authority to organize, train, and equip the nation’s forces with little outside influence. Recruitment, promotion, and military justice are also handled within the profession. During war, military professionals are given authority to use the military resources of the nation much as they deem appropriate. Officers command not only expensive weapon systems but are also in charge of the most precious national resource, the lives of its soldiers, sailors, marines, and Airmen. No other profession can claim a responsibility of this magnitude.

While the military does not possess a single, unified code of ethics, there is no shortage of ethical guidance. The Oath of Office; the Air Force Core Values of Integrity, Service, and Excellence; the US Air Force Academy and Officer Training School’s Honor Code against lying, stealing, cheating, and tolerating; and the Uniform Code of Military Justice all set ethical standards for the military profession. Standards that all members, if they wish to be a part of the Profession of Arms, must make a part of their very being. Hence, in accordance with Millett’s model, the officer corps seems to meet all six criteria and can claim professional status.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE MILITARY AS A PROFESSION

Going beyond the military profession and the scholars who have studied civil-military relations closely, such as Samuel Huntington, Allan Millett, and Charles Moskos, one finds a good deal of discussion about why the military should not be considered a profession. Matthews cites several examples in the article Is the Military Profession Legitimate? A.M. Carr-Saunders and P.A. Wilson, in their article The Professions, excludes the military from professional status “because the service which soldiers are trained to render is one which it is hoped they will never be called upon to perform.” In his article Attributes as a Profession, Ernest Greenwood lists nineteen occupations as professions, from accountant to teacher, but does not mention the military. The US Census Bureau reports the military separate from its list of managerial and professional specialties statistics. Zeb Bradford
and James Murphy, while active military officers, wrote, “The military is not a profession in the way that certain other groups are, such as law and medicine.” They claim the military has no expertise it can call its own and that officers are merely paid “jacks-of-all-trades.”

Even theories which have developed models that demonstrate officer professional status seem to agree that the military profession is different. Huntington noted that “the public, as well as the scholar, hardly conceives of the officer in the same way that it does the lawyer or doctor, and it certainly does not accord to the officer the deference which it gives to the civilian professional.” Janowitz writes: “In contrast to the public acclaim accorded individual military heroes, officership remains a relatively low-status profession. Similarly, Moskos says that in describing the military, the main hypotheses is that the profession has been moving away from an “institutional value” format “to one that increasingly resembles that of an occupation.”

These statements can be reduced to three critical impediments to officer professional status, according to Matthews. First, since the military is a government bureaucracy, officers lack real autonomy and do not have interaction with a genuine client in the traditional sense of profession. The officer’s client is a collective (the American people) and is usually at a distance, instead of being individual and in a close personal relationship. Moreover, professional discretion in the exercise of expertise is often threatened by the hierarchical and authoritarian nature of military and civilian government bureaucracies.

Matthews answers this point by noting that technology and society are changing rapidly and that bureaucracies are a fact of life everywhere. All professionals are adapting their organizations to move into the future. Physicians are moving from small private practices into larger institutional settings and lawyers are taking their expertise into other occupations, such as business and law enforcement. While not practicing their profession in the traditional sense, are those doctors and lawyers any less professional than before? Are Air Force officers less professional because they work for an organization of almost 400,000 men and women? Matthews believes the answer is clearly “no” in both cases.

Second, officers are not a member of a profession because their skills are used to kill and destroy. Unlike the physician, for example, who strives to preserve life. Moreover, the “management of violence” is a skill that most hope will never have to be used hence officers rarely practice their professional expertise. Matthews points out that the military provides a critical service of “deterring war and maintaining a secure peace.” to society that we all hope it performs. He also says that all professions deal in human frailty and disaster. Doctors, lawyers, and clergy all possess expertise, which most hope will never have to be practiced. The doctor deals with injury and disease, the lawyer with crime, the minister with sickness of spirit, and the officer with armed conflict. Because the world is imperfect, professionals are required to answer the call to deal with the results of these imperfections.

Officer’s primary aim is to ensure security and peace in an ever-changing world, but he/she can only accomplish this task by always being ready to fight when called upon. Matthews drives this point home by quoting General Douglas MacArthur’s address at West Point on 12 May 1962.:
Being prepared for war does not mean that you are warmongers. On the contrary, the soldier above all other people prays for peace, for he must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war.

Prevention is a major tenet of all professions, whether the aim is peace, health, or justice; those who practice it deserve respect.

The third argument against officer professional status is that the need for a “profession of arms” has passed now that the Cold War has ended and that more countries have converted to democratic and free market ideals. With only one superpower left in the world, no one can challenge the United States militarily and the need for a large professional force has abated. Some believe the United States only needs a force large enough to provide a contingent to the United Nations, since war is obsolete in this new era of peace. While other professional skills like medicine and law are still required, they suggest that the military officer corps should be denied professional status.

If only this were so! Many have prophesied the end of warfare, but none have been correct. In the twentieth century alone, the United States has fought in two major world wars, the first of which was hailed as the “war to end all wars,” over four decades of the Cold War, and three major regional conflicts; Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf. No matter how principled the desire for peace in the calm of the classroom, a country must sometimes give way to higher interests. In the complexity and confusion of the international contingent, the American military profession continues to serve an essential societal need.

THE MILITARY:
INSTITUTION VERSUS OCCUPATION

The models examined thus far have looked at the armed forces as institutions in which professional military officers practice their occupational expertise, assuming a common definition of the character and motivation of individual officers. In the 1970s, however, some scholars perceived a notable decline in the relevance, legitimacy, and prestige accorded the military profession by society. The same period also identified a possible change in the value orientation of military officers from “selfless service to society” to “self-interest.” Charles Moskos defined this process as a shift from an institutional orientation to an occupational orientation.

Moskos’ institutional-occupational (I/O) model assumes a continuum of civil-military arrangements ranging from a military entirely separate from society to one contiguous with civilian structures. “An institution is legitimated in terms of value and norms, that is, a purpose transcending individual self-interest in favor of a presumed higher good.” According to Moskos, members of an institution are seen as following a calling (meaning a profession) and are described by words such as integrity, service, and excellence.
Members of a military institution perceive themselves and are regarded by society as separate; they hold notions such as self-sacrifice and define themselves as military officers. Consequently, they are held in high esteem by society. Officers with this orientation stress factors in their job that relate to military competence and to their responsibility to serve society.

On the other hand, Moskos notes that, “An occupation is legitimated in terms of the marketplace. Supply and demand, rather than normative considerations, is paramount.” In modern society, employees have input in determining the appropriate salary and work conditions. These rights are balanced by their responsibility to meet the obligations of a contract. This implies that the interests of the individual come before the interests of the employer. Officers with this orientation stress factors such as salary, job security, and perhaps working conditions.

Moskos believes both models exist simultaneously within the military, while the military itself has traditionally tried to avoid becoming an occupational organization. The pay system continues to be broken down into pay and allowances for housing and food, despite pressures to institute a single salary. Yet the military has made some “occupational” changes to ensure it retains specific skills. Physicians, pilots, submarine officers, and expensively trained enlisted technicians receive bonuses and other incentives to join and to remain in the military service. The pay and allowance system reflects the entire military to a certain extent. People in an occupation tend to identify with others that possess the same skills and receive similar pay, which are typical outside of the organization. Identity in an institution comes from the shared experiences of living and working together. The process of accomplishing the mission is more important than the individual work output itself. Individuals in the military put more emphasis on being a member of a particular unit than on their specific task in that unit. For example, the members of a bomber wing, whether pilot, security policeman, finance clerk, or cook would identify their mission as “bombs on target.”

In an institutional military, individuals are on duty 24 hours per day and are expected to take on a variety of roles that may not be limited to their particular military specialty. In an occupational military, the roles are job specific, and as long as the job gets done no one cares what an individual does when not at work. In an institutional military, members work and live on base, and frequent moves are a fact of life. The on-base club is the center of social life. In an occupational military, one’s home and work locations are separate and more value is placed on staying in one location. Societal activity takes place off the installation.

Membership in the institutional military even extends to spouses. They often take part in various organizations such as the Officers’ Spouses Club (OSC) and volunteer in activities supportive of the military community. Military families support and take part in institutional activities. In an occupational military spouses are reluctant to take part in traditional social activities and, since many of them now work outside the home, often lack the time or inclination to do so.
In an institutional military, performance evaluations are qualitative and subjective. In an occupational military, performance is measured quantitatively against the “contract.” The more institutional the military, the greater the use of the UCMJ system; the more occupational the military, the more likely an individual will be tried by a civilian court. In a society with an institutional military, veterans retain their status and receive preferences over non-veterans. This would be much less true with an occupational military.

The differences in how an officer views the profession of arms, whether as a calling or a job, can drastically affect the way he leads. How does a leader inspire his troops to do the right things and more than expected without appealing to virtues such as integrity, loyalty, and service? With only contractual inducements and sanctions, can a leader inspire his people to the high standards of appropriate conduct expected—demanded—of the profession? Malham Wakin says there is a moral aspect to being called “professional” as well as a competence aspect.

The military leader who views his oath of office as merely a contractual arrangement with his government sets the stage for a style of leadership critically different from the leader who views that oath as a pledge to contribute to the common good of his society. For the former, “duty, honor, country” is a slogan adopted temporarily until the contract is completed; for the latter, “duty, honor, country” is a way of life adopted for the good of all and accepted as a moral commitment not subject to contractual negotiations.

Wakin goes on to say that if professions do not control members’ standards of fitness and inculcate the idea of service they invite controls from the government or the marketplace. Leaders of professions must develop a sense in their members that virtues are critical for success.

**US Air Force Institutional-Occupational Trend**

The US Air Force officer corps is a unique example of the institutional-occupational (I/O) model. Frank Wood, a retired Air Force colonel and military sociologist, believes that, “Because of their extensive use of technology, the Air Force and the Air Force Officer Corps tend to be most susceptible to increasing specialization and a diffused sense of purpose.” To describe this change at the individual level, Wood concentrates on professional identities and the commitment patterns of officers.

Wood cites four studies conducted from 1979 to 1984 where the attitudes of junior officers were surveyed. He found that approximately 40–50 percent of them reported consistently that they “normally think of themselves as specialists working for the Air Force rather than as professional military officers.” What was surprising to Wood was that this ratio of 60 percent officers and 40 percent specialists was true even among Air Force Academy graduates. Another surprise in several surveys was that pilots showed the greatest tendency to view themselves as specialists. They were professional pilots who happened to fly for the military. This finding contradicted Wood’s assumption that most institutional characteristics would be found near the flightline.
From these surveys, Wood was able to determine consistent differences in attitudes. For instance, those who identify themselves as professional officers reported as follows:

- They view military experience as a way of life, not as a job.
- Their air force careers provide opportunities for interesting and challenging jobs (in terms of importance) that would be very difficult to replace if they left the air force today.
- The air force does not require them to participate in too many activities not related to their job.
- Personal interests must take second place to operational requirements for military personnel.
- Airmen are special.
- They live on base rather than in the civilian community.
- They plan to continue their military service for 20 years and beyond.

By contrast, those who identified themselves as specialists disagreed with many of the above statements.

These trends toward occupationalism in the Air Force can and should be reversed, according to Wood. Programs such as Project Warrior and an increased emphasis on “leadership” versus “management” can help institution building in the Air Force. Leaders at every level of the organization must communicate what is distinctive about the military to people both inside and outside the organization. The US Air Force’s vision statement is a good attempt to point the diverse elements of the organization toward a common goal: “Global vigilance, reach, and power.” The core values of integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do help define what is special about being an Airman. Wood sums up these ideas well:

> The ultimate concern of every officer should be binding subordinates to the organization and to the mission. They must exemplify the values of mission over self and of devotion to the corporate body, even at the risk of their careers. Actions say more than words, and the troops know what is real and what is lip service.

Air Force leaders cannot take for granted that officers will consider themselves part of an institution but must actively try to shape these identities and commitments.
Conclusion

If being recognized by your organization and society as “professional” military officers is to mean anything, the term must be carefully applied and sparingly used. If this term is bestowed on you only for meeting some academic prerequisite or receiving payment for a specific skill, then it is meaningless. The word “professional” should inspire prospective and serving officers with an ideal of service and expertise. Huntington reminds us that: “In practice, officership is strongest and most effective when it most closely approaches the professional ideal; it is weakest and most defective when it falls short of that ideal.”

This lesson has examined where the military stands as a profession when measured against the criteria of prominent experts, such as Huntington and Millett, and against the comments of less favorably inclined critics. Overall, the officer corps seems to fit strongly into the professional category. But at what point can the individual claim professional status in the military? When is a young officer a full member of the profession of arms? Professional status comes to people at different times in their lives and careers. It is achieved through continuous study, practice, and experience in “managing violence.” It is expressed by attitudes and commitments and by the internalization of the values of military service.

In Moskos’ institutional-occupational (I/O) model, the motivation in an institution is based on values, whereas in an occupation it is based on cost-benefit analysis. Moskos and Wood found the performance of organizations with members who have an institutional identification exceeded the performance of those that had only an occupational identification. A society needs both types of organization to serve its varying needs. Certainly “real” organizations have elements of both. In the defense of the nation, however, “effective armed forces must be predominately institutional because they require commitment that cannot be bought.”

Efforts to bring a greater degree of institutionalization to the Air Force does not mean going back to the traditional way of organization. Military sociologist Charles Cotton tells us that we must not think of the I/O model as a zero-sum game when determining our future direction:

A cohesive and committed military does not have to be kept away from the ‘contamination’ of civilian values and images; dedicated members who have internalized the military ethic need not pursue their careers in splendid isolation on posts and bases, supported by their spouses. Similarly, we need not assume that attempts to strengthen links between the military and society lead always and irrevocably to weakened commitment and operational effectiveness within the military.
The task of future military officers is to educate themselves by study, experience and observation of the officers around them. They must learn to accept responsibility for their actions and those of their subordinates and to take appropriate action, never hiding behind excuses. Their focus must be on devoted service to the nation, not on pay, working conditions, or their next assignment. Only then will they move toward achieving the ideal of professionalism.

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