

Chapter 3

OFFICERSHIP AND THE PROFESSION OF ARMS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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INTRODUCTION

The military medical officer (MMO) is distinct from other medical professionals because of his or her unique role as an *officer* in the profession of arms. While most of an MMO's training, and indeed most of this book, concentrates on the development of MMOs as medical professionals, this chapter describes their unique position as military officers and the added roles and responsibilities they accept as commissioned officers in the US armed forces.

This chapter builds on the history of the origins of the officer, which was introduced in Chapter 1, The History of the Military Medical Officer, by explaining

the importance of officership, which is derived from the military commission. It then explains the four roles of an officer and how those roles distinguish military officers from others in society. Given this understanding of officers, the chapter briefly describes some of the particular challenges in civil-military relations that affect an officer's role in the profession of arms in the 21st century. Finally, the chapter discusses the distinctive nature of the specialized expertise of each of the "subprofessions" within the profession of arms—the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and Special Operations Forces.

THE OFFICER'S OATH AND COMMISSION

Examining the profession of arms begins with the commissioning oath of the armed forces officer and the meanings of that commission. The commission is the encapsulation and embodiment of the long history, theories, and core value-based guiding and governing principles of the armed services professional ethos and the professional practices of the commissioned officer. The oath that all officers take upon commissioning is:

I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office upon which I am about to enter; So help me God.¹

Several aspects of the oath are distinctive, including both what is included and what is omitted. This is probably best illustrated by comparing the oath with that which is taken by enlisted members of the armed forces, which is:

I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God.¹

The focus of both oaths is the support and defense of the Constitution—not service to the president, any political party, and certainly not a monarch, as it might be in other nations. The oaths require "true faith and allegiance," to the Constitution, which may seem obvious today, but was less so during the Revolutionary War and the American Civil War.

The officer oath is distinctive in three important ways. First, unlike the enlisted oath, it does not mention "that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations . . ." Officers are selected and commissioned because they have specialized expertise to make decisions in the profession of arms, which is the application of violence on behalf of the nation. The commission explains that the president of the United States has reposed "special trust and confidence in the patriotism, valor, fidelity, and abilities" of each officer to use those abilities to act with discretion on behalf of the nation.

Second, officers state they "take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion." Enlisted soldiers have no such requirement. When America had a military draft, many draftees performed their service, but may not have done so freely or without mental reservation. Officers who could not accept their obligation "freely without any mental reservation" could resign their commission and serve in the enlisted ranks to fulfill their military obligation.

Finally, officers affirmatively state that they "will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office upon which I am about to enter." This requires a specialized knowledge of and training for the "duties of the office" so that they can be "well and faithfully" discharged. Officers must act in unclear and uncertain situations where there may not be specific orders about what to do from the president or the chain of command; at these times they must be able to serve in the best manner possible to support and defend the nation.

Military historian S.L.A. Marshall wrote the first and classic edition of *Armed Forces Officer* in 1950, reflecting his thoughts and philosophical guidance on the attitudes, conduct, standards, and duty for officers of the United States. He explained (at the time, women

comprised only 1.5% of the military, and it was common to use only the masculine pronoun):

Upon being commissioned in the Armed Services of the United States, a man incurs a lasting obligation to cherish and protect his country and to develop within himself that capacity and reserve strength which will enable him to serve its arms and the welfare of his fellow Americans with increasing wisdom, diligence, and patriotic conviction.

This is the meaning of the commission. It is not modified by any reason of assignment while in service, nor is the obligation lessened on the day an officer puts the uniform aside and returns to civilian life. Having been specially chosen by the United States to sustain the dignity and integrity of its sover-

ign power, an officer is expected so to maintain himself, and so to exert his influence as a worthy symbol of all that is best in the national character.²

This obligation is what distinguishes an officer in the armed forces from other members of society. Once an officer has received the trust of the nation through the commission, executing this special responsibility in practice is what is meant by officership. This practice, unique and even peculiar in its expertise and functions, is inspired by a unique professional identity that is further shaped by what an officer must BE, KNOW, and DO. In this sense, officership is a matter of both personal *identity* (character) and *specialized expertise* (knowledge and experience).

THE ROLES OF AN OFFICER

In 2007, the Department of Defense published an updated version of *The Armed Forces Officer*.³ This effort was the culmination of nearly a decade of research, study, and discussion about officership and the profession of arms that took place at the service academies, at war colleges, and within the joint staff.³⁻⁵ This book captured and described four key roles for the military officer: (1) warrior-leader in the profession of arms, (2) member of a profession, (3) servant of the nation, and (4) leader of character. Understanding each of these roles is important because together they comprise the key aspects of officership.

Warrior-Leader in the Profession of Arms

The primary reason to commission officers is because the nation needs individuals with specialized expertise to selectively and discriminately administer violence on behalf of the state. "The defining mission of the armed forces is the preparation for and the conduct of war, which includes securing military victory until peace is restored politically."^{3(p12)} Regardless of the specific branch of service or role within that branch, the preeminent role of an officer is that of a warrior-leader in the profession of arms. It is this unique role that distinguishes officers from members of all other professions and places particular responsibilities on them.

The profession of arms is unique because of the lethality of the organizations officers lead and the ultimate responsibility they have over life and death, which can affect success or failure for American national security. As James Toner wrote, "The preeminent military task, and what separates [the military profession] from all other occupations, is that soldiers are routinely prepared to kill. . . . In addition to killing and preparing to kill, the soldier has two other

principal duties. . . . Some soldiers die and, when they are not dying, they must be preparing to die."⁶ By serving in the military, all soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines have committed to unlimited liability in service on behalf of the nation, even to the point of dying for their country. General Sean MacFarland explained, "The words 'to kill and die' are as central to the profession of arms as 'to serve and protect' are to the law enforcement profession, or 'equal justice under the law' are to the legal profession."⁷ Military officers are leaders of the profession that prosecutes violence on behalf of the nation and whose members may die as a tragic, but normal, consequence of their professional calling.

The fact that officers' decisions may ultimately affect life and death reinforces the paramount importance of developing and maintaining specialized professional expertise. For an officer, this is not merely being proficient on a specific skill such as firing a weapon, flying an aircraft, or operating a naval vessel; rather, it means actively pursuing greater understanding of the broader, abstract knowledge of the profession. The essence of warfighting is engagement with a dynamic, uncertain enemy, and the study, discussion, and practice of warfare is the responsibility of the professional officer, so that he or she is prepared to make critical decisions upon which life or death and victory or defeat may depend. This is equally important for officers in all specialties. The logistics officer who determines supply rates, transportation options, and maintenance practices, and the medical officer who coordinates illness prevention, casualty care, evacuation procedures, and hospital locations—each must do so from a depth of expert knowledge of warfighting and their own specialty, honed from a career of study and professional practice.

Officership includes not just being a member of the profession of arms, but also being a leader in the profession. Chapter 4, Military Medical Leadership, discusses leadership in more detail, but in the context of the warrior ethos, military officers must be capable of providing not only effective decisions, but also the inspirational winning spirit for their unit in combat. To do so requires significant preparation in all aspects of the human experience—physically, intellectually, and morally.⁸ The essence of warrior-leadership is to inspire others to action, frequently doing things that are challenging, dangerous, and perhaps against their own personal interest and safety. “Organizing, mobilizing, motivating, justifying, indeed inspiring others are essential talents for the officer in the profession of arms.”^{3(p17)}

With the high-quality service members who comprise the all-volunteer force, it is not enough to give a rousing speech like a coach before a big game. Soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines must be convinced that their officers have:

- the intellectual skills to properly understand war’s complexity and assiduously evaluate courses of action;
- the physical courage and stamina to lead them at the most challenging times; and
- the moral courage to always make the best possible decisions that maximize the chance of mission success.

Member of a Profession

An officer is not only a warrior-leader, but also has responsibilities as a member of a profession. Samuel Huntington explained that, “The modern officer corps is a professional body and the modern military officer [is] a professional The distinguishing characteristic[s] of a profession as a special type of vocation are its expertise, responsibility, and corporateness.”⁹ MMOs are simultaneously members of both the military profession and the medical profession, and the attributes of expertise, responsibility, and corporateness apply to both professions. All three elements must be present for practitioners to be members of a profession. Expertise without the other two components is a specialized occupation without ethical standards or self-enforced accountability. Each of these characteristics will be discussed in turn. It is useful to think about the implications and challenges of being members of two professions simultaneously.

Expertise is important to professions because society collectively determines that it must trust a body of individuals—a profession—to develop, promote,

learn, and practice a specific body of knowledge on behalf of all citizens. *The Armed Forces Officer* explains:

Working as a professional involves responding to diverse and highly contextual problems requiring continued delivery of a quality service of a discretionary character. This contrasts sharply with the bureaucrat’s routine response by rule to generally similar tasks. Application of an educated discretionary judgment is the real skill of the professional.^{3(p22)}

The specialized expertise for the military officer is warfighting or one of its subspecialties, such as ground combat, air combat, naval combat, or amphibious warfare (discussed later in this chapter). For the medical doctor, the specialized expertise is medicine, including preventive medicine, primary care, cardiology, or orthopedics. In each case, the profession and professionals commit significant resources to developing new expert knowledge in their respective areas, maintaining or updating that knowledge in a dynamic scholarly environment, and promulgating that knowledge through professional journals, professional education, and professional associations. Society defers to medical doctors and military officers the life-and-death decisions. Their environment ranges from an operating room to the battlefield, and the expectation is that, as members of a profession, they have been certified in their abilities to practice medicine and are continually striving to improve their expert knowledge to apply to new, complex, and uncertain situations.

Just as professions are granted discretionary authority to act on behalf of society in their professional practice, they have a responsibility to do so in a way that continues to sustain the public trust. These responsibilities are generally codified by the profession in a written canon of ethics or code of conduct. For a doctor or officer to violate their professional responsibility is normally considered much more serious than if they make a reasonable error in judgment in applying specialized expertise, or when a known complication ensues from accepted therapeutics. The widespread public outcry when a scandal occurs at a service academy, or when an officer violates their professional responsibilities, reflects the seriousness with which the public regards an officer’s dereliction of duty. It is a violation of the trust society has placed in the profession. Ultimately, if the profession continues to fail in its professional responsibility, society, often through its elected leaders in Congress, will investigate and curtail some of the discretion previously granted to the profession. For example, Congress recently reviewed military law and justice after a series of sexual assaults in the military. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand proposed a law to limit the professional jurisdiction of

military commanders and prevent them from deciding whether to prosecute in cases of sexual assault. Her proposed law would have changed this jurisdiction to military lawyers—another distinct profession—to address the perceived problems in judgment among military commanders.¹⁰

Finally, members of a profession share a sense of corporate self-identity and think of themselves as a group set apart from other groups and society at large. “Professions are exclusive, self-conscious, functional collectivities or subcultures entrusted by society to perform or regulate performance of important functions.”^{6(p26)} This is because of their specialized expertise and specific responsibilities, as well as the long period of education and stringent requirements for admission into the profession. Each profession establishes and maintains the standards of the profession among its members, promotes education about the guiding ethos of the profession, and takes responsibility to discipline or expel any member who has violated professional standards. Indeed, officers are generally trained, educated, mentored, socialized, evaluated, and eventually promoted by other officers within the profession. This distinctiveness of being a member of a profession, characterized by expertise, responsibility, and corporateness, is a fundamental part of officership.

As a member of two professions, the MMO has an interesting challenge. Assuming they meet the standards of each profession and can maintain their requisite specialized expertise, MMOs are often wrongly presumed to face a choice between whether the medical or military profession will dominate their self-identity. In reality, the two professions are rarely in conflict, and astute members of both professions strive to shape professional jurisdictions so that they do not come in conflict. However, there are occasions when an MMO must choose the self-identity that is appropriate to an unusual situation: the medical profession when caring for the individual patient, or the military profession when planning battles or putting the health and welfare of the whole unit over the welfare of the individual service member. Sometimes the choice is not obvious, and MMOs must ask themselves, “Who am I?”

Servant of the Nation

An officer in the US armed forces has particular responsibilities as a servant of the nation. These are based on the US Constitution and the unique national history that has evolved and developed since the American Revolution. Although it can conjure up images of slavery or subordination, the self-abnegating concept of “servant” is essential to officership: officers

voluntarily choose to subordinate their own personal desires to that of the nation. This fiduciary obligation is the foundation of the professional ethos of the military officer—and of the physician. It is not about the officer, it is about their unit, and ultimately about the nation. This concept has several formulations. The Air Force describes it as “Service before self.” The Navy describes it as “Ship, shipmate, self.” The US Military Academy’s motto is “Duty, honor, country.” The role as a servant of society is reinforced when members of a grateful nation say, “Thank you for your service.” Officers must recognize that they are servants in a cause greater than themselves.

This cause is based on the oath of office and the Constitution, as discussed previously. Although officers work for the president as commander-in-chief, the Constitution specifies that officers must be confirmed by Congress, which is also given the duty “To raise and support Armies; To provide and maintain a Navy; To make rules for the government and regulation of the land and naval forces.”¹¹ When officers testify before Congress during confirmation hearings, they are nearly always asked and respond affirmatively to the question, “Will you always provide your personal and honest opinion directly to Congress, even if it is in conflict with that of the president and the administration?” As a servant of the nation, officers are responsible to all branches of government and indeed to the nation as a whole.

This role is particularly *American* because its history dates to George Washington. As commander-in-chief of the Revolutionary Army that defeated the British, and with the widespread respect throughout the colonies that eventually made him America’s first president, George Washington had immense popularity and power. In the waning days of the American Revolution, Congress had failed to provide sufficient funds for the Army. A group of officers encamped in Newburgh, New York, threatened to deliver an ultimatum to Congress with a thinly veiled threat of a military takeover. Washington certainly had his challenges with Congress, and he could easily have ridden the Army’s passions and power to an unparalleled position of domination in the fledgling nation. Instead, he quelled the potential mutiny with a famous speech that properly placed the military subordinate to civilian authority in Congress:

Let me entreat you, Gentlemen, on your part, not to take any measures, which viewed in the calm light of reason, will lessen the dignity, and sully the glory you have hitherto maintained; let me request you to rely on the plighted faith of your Country, and place a full confidence in the purity of the intentions of Congress; . . . [I implore you] to express your utmost

horror and detestation of the Man who wishes, under any specious pretenses, to overturn the liberties of our Country, and who wickedly attempts to open the flood Gates of Civil discord, and deluge our rising Empire in Blood.¹²

Washington set the preeminent example of why and how the American military must be subordinate to civil authority.

The officer's role as a servant of the nation is enshrined in both law and practice. For example, federal law requires that an officer must be retired for 7 years before becoming secretary of defense or 5 years before becoming a service secretary.¹³ This minimizes the likelihood that a general or admiral would assume a civilian leadership position in the Department of Defense, or at least requires congressional exception for them to do so. (This law has only been waived in the cases of General George Marshall in 1950 and General Jim Mattis in 2017.) These provisions help guard against the temptation for popular and powerful military leaders to subvert civilian control amid a public crisis or otherwise.

Subordination to civilian control is fulfilled in practice when military leaders are removed from office. In 1951, General Douglas MacArthur challenged President Truman's policies in the Korean War, sending his objections in a letter to Congress. MacArthur's letter directly violated the president's directives and led to President Truman's relieving MacArthur from command on April 11, 1951. "The issue at stake was no less than the continuation of civilian supremacy and of the President's authority as commander-in-chief."¹⁴ More recently, in 2010, when a magazine article about General Stanley McChrystal, commander of US and international forces in Afghanistan, included disparaging statements about Obama administration officials, President Obama asked General McChrystal to resign. It is interesting to note that:

McChrystal and his staff were not criticized for their lack of military competence, for their dissent over policy, or for failure to implement strategy. Their professionalism—especially those professional competencies related to understanding the roles and responsibilities of military leaders vis-à-vis the civilian political leadership in the context of democratic civil-military relations—was found wanting.¹⁵

Both cases led to debate about whether the actions justified the president's relieving a senior commander in wartime, but nearly all civilian and military analysts agree that professional officers have a special responsibility as a servant of the nation to conform to the standards and traditions of civilian control of the military.

Leader of Character

Officers must be leaders of character because their most important actions are frequently performed with limited oversight. They must have ingrained the internal ethical standards to make the right decisions every time. Character is inextricably linked to decision-making because the choices officers make often reveal their underlying character. Every pre-commissioning source is replete with examples for cadets and midshipmen to understand and internalize to help them develop a moral core as officers. *The Armed Forces Officer* examined the themes emphasized in each branch of service and found that several common themes emerged: honor, respect, duty, service, excellence, courage, commitment, loyalty, and integrity. While the specific terminology may vary, these attributes must become part of an officer's self-identity so that they have the moral compass to lead themselves and their subordinates.

Individually, officers must have the character to understand, confront, and overcome challenging moral/ethical decisions because of the position of trust they are in. Decisions can be as inconsequential as "fudging" the numbers on a bothersome report to higher headquarters or as important as deciding which of several bad options will minimize the risk of death to subordinates in combat. Being a leader of character means not only making the right decision, but also being able to do so without becoming paralyzed by the situation. Officers are in a special position of trust and responsibility because they have the specialized skills to gather and evaluate critical information needed for decision-making, coupled with the character to make difficult decisions on behalf of their client—the nation that has commissioned them.

Collectively, subordinates are not likely to follow officers who eschew their moral compass when things get tough. Being a leader of character sets the example and establishes a culture for an officer's unit. Having the physical courage to lead a platoon on a route strewn with roadside bombs is important, but so is standing up for what is right in the Pentagon, even if it contradicts conventional wisdom or bureaucratic politics. Character includes recognizing and respecting the value of all members of the team and striving to maximize the contribution of each individual, while enforcing the standards of military training and behavior. Character is also involved in refraining from engaging in partisan political activities or publicly expressing political opinions that undermine the authority of elected civilian leaders. Officers are always "on parade," with subordinates assiduously watching to identify a lapse in character. This is why officers must

be vigilant against threats to their integrity. Integrity may be difficult to maintain, but it is immensely more difficult to regain if it is lost.

Character must be internalized as officers are preparing to be commissioned. It was therefore appropriate that, in 1924, the US Military Academy codified many aspects of an officer's character in the words of the Cadet Prayer. These words were spoken weekly by nearly all cadets (at least until mandatory chapel ended in 1972) and reflect a nondenominational recitation of moral precepts that are important to officership:

Strengthen and increase our admiration for honest dealing and clean thinking, and suffer not our hatred of hypocrisy and pretense ever to diminish.

Encourage us in our endeavor to live above the common level of life.

Make us to choose the harder right instead of the eas-

ier wrong, and never to be content with a half-truth when the whole can be won.

Endow us with courage that is born of loyalty to all that is noble and worthy, that scorns to compromise with vice and injustice and knows no fear when truth and right are in jeopardy.

Guard us against flippancy and irreverence in the sacred things of life.

Grant us new ties of friendship and new opportunities of service.

Kindle our hearts in fellowship with those of a cheerful countenance, and soften our hearts with sympathy for those who sorrow and suffer.¹⁶

Having officers recite many of the attributes they need to become leaders of character is an important developmental activity, irrespective of religious affiliation or nonaffiliation.

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND SOCIETY TODAY

As part of the military profession, officers must be aware of many of the perennial discussions concerning the appropriate role of the military in society. This section surveys some of the most important issues officers will confront throughout their careers. The American polity was conceived by statesmen who deeply mistrusted standing armies, were suspicious of any insufficiently bridled aggregation of power, and believed in the power of citizens as the ultimate authority.¹⁷ Effective arrangements of shared power through the design of separate and separable institutional structural ways, means, and mechanisms are essential to American citizens' relationship with power and governance.¹⁸ American civil-military relations are no different.

The history of American civil-military relations, like many things American, is rife with paradox. While maintaining a baseline anti-military undertone throughout its history, the country has often turned to the military as a touchstone for core national ideals in times of ambiguity, has periodically considered military heroes as presidential candidates, and has occasionally used the military as a laboratory for social change. Society has celebrated the military model of fair treatment of ethnic and racial minorities, for the advancement of women, and most recently for the fuller inclusion of homosexual and transsexual individuals.

For the United States, the central problem of American civil-military relations is not about preventing a military takeover of the state. Rather, it is about finding the proper relationship between civilian and military leaders as they determine the preparation and use of force on the one hand, and the ends of policy on

the other. Several scholars have posited alternative formulations for how this dialogue between civilians and military leaders should take place. In 1957, Samuel Huntington argued that the healthiest and most effective form of civilian control of the military is that which isolates the military from politics and require officers' judgment only on military matters. Civilian leaders should set clear but general strategic objectives and then leave the military as much latitude as possible to achieve these goals. This is what he described as a system of "objective control."¹⁹ This view is in contrast to that of Morris Janowitz, who contemporaneously argued for "subjective control" through greater citizen involvement with the military, especially the use of citizen-soldiers, who might provide an ability to control the military through multiple points of influence throughout society.¹⁹

More recently, the American political scientist and scholar Eliot Cohen updated these perspectives in his book *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime*. Contrary to conventional wisdom, which tends to coincide more with Huntington's "objective control," Cohen concluded that the highest political authority should be very much engaged with the details of war and war planning. He argued that civilian leaders were most effective when they had an "unequal dialogue" with military leaders, in which "both sides expressed their views bluntly, indeed sometimes offensively, and not once but repeatedly—and unequal, in that the final authority of the civilian leaders was unambiguous and unquestioned."²⁰ This more engaging relationship between civilian "master" authority and military subordinated

“servant” has been reinforced with the advent of nearly constant communications and meetings that take place between commanders and civilian leaders. This “unequal dialogue” with ongoing engagement between presidents and their military leaders has generally characterized supreme command under the administrations of George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump.^{20,21}

The “Unequal Dialogue” and the All-Volunteer Force

Since the advent of the all-volunteer force in 1973, an increasingly fewer number of Americans have served in the military. While over 70% of Congress had served in the military when the draft ended in the 1970s, now less than 20% have served.²² In the 2016 presidential election, no competitive candidates of either party had any military experience. In spite of the decreasing military experience among elected officials, there is an increasing tendency to appoint military leaders to senior government positions that do not require, nor have been routinely filled by, senior military officers. For example, upon his inauguration, President Obama appointed three retired four-star generals to cabinet-rank positions: General Eric Shinseki as secretary of veterans affairs, General Jim Jones as national security advisor, and Admiral Dennis Blair as director of national intelligence. Appointment of retired senior officers has continued in the Trump administration, with General Jim Mattis as secretary of defense, General John Kelly as secretary of homeland security (and later White House chief of staff), and Lieutenant General Mike Flynn as national security advisor (later succeeded by an active duty officer, Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster).

The increasingly routine appointment of former senior military officers to traditionally “civilian” positions has been the subject of significant commentary.^{23,24} In policy deliberations, these officers provide advice in their personal capacity, which may or may not agree with the best professional military advice from the uniformed military leaders charged with providing that advice. In addition to potential conflicts among leaders at the pinnacle of the profession, the presence of current or former military officers in civilian positions can raise suspicion about the aggregation of power in the military as an institution. If a smaller elite military force of “volunteers” becomes increasingly separate from the society it serves, yet increasingly powerful in determining government decisions, it may put at risk the critically important relationship between society and the military profession.²⁵

The Military Profession and the Defense Bureaucracy

Budget stringency affects strategy and force modernization, including decisions on: “why we fight,” “how we fight,” and “what we fight with.” As Bernard Brodie elegantly explained, “strategy always wears a dollar sign.”²⁶ However, the ultimate imperative and obligation facing national security policy makers is not how much of the federal budget is spent on defense or a particular service, but how federal spending should be used to best provide national security. While the military is a profession, and officers lead the profession, the Department of Defense is also a large bureaucracy, and the bureaucratic tendencies of the organization can sometimes dominate the characteristics of a profession. Military officers must both provide their best professional military advice and fulfill their role as leader of and advocate for their particular part of the defense bureaucracy. Understanding the

EXHIBIT 3-1

“PROFESSION” VERSUS “BUREAUCRACY”

Profession	vs	Bureaucracy
Expert knowledge	vs	Non-expert knowledge
Accepts life-long learning	vs	“You develop me”
New situations	vs	Routine situations
“Practice” by humans	vs	Work done by all
Unlimited personal liability	vs	Little personal liability
Invests in humans first	vs	Invests in SOPs; hardware
Measure = effectiveness	vs	Measure = efficiency
Trust relationship with client	vs	Public transactional relations
Granted some autonomy	vs	Closely supervised
Develops worldview	vs	No imposed viewpoint
Maintains ethos, self-policed	vs	Externally imposed rules
Intrinsic motivations	vs	Extrinsic motivations
A life-long “calling”	vs	A “job”

SOP: standard operating procedure

distinction between the characteristics of a profession and those of a bureaucracy are important, as reflected in Exhibit 3-1.

There are times when the military should act as a bureaucracy — when it performs routine things routinely, such as the annual budget process. Just as the medical profession should guard against arguing for doctors' parochial interests (instead of the interests of patients and overall healthcare) in the national healthcare debate, military officers must guard against wrongly using their specialized expertise merely to advance a bureaucratic agenda. To do so could sacrifice the value of professional advice and relegate the military to being considered as just another interest group.

As the United States grapples with the post-9/11 conditions of new enemies, new battlespaces, and new kinds of wars, military officers should avoid at least three traditional pitfalls typically associated with times of geostrategic ambiguity, budget stringency, and force reductions: (1) becoming overcommitted to the latest technological trends at the expense of historical military challenges; (2) being tempted to rename, oversell, and fetishize new war concepts, especially in support of single-service parochial interests; and (3) overplaying the "hollow force" card, asserting that any reduction will irreparably degrade national security. Instead, military effectiveness needs to be seen, understood, appreciated, and approached from a comprehensive, multiservice perspective. Military professionals need to focus on maximizing national security while recognizing the fiscal impact that military spending has on overall national power.²⁷

Role of Professional Officers—Even After Retirement

In his farewell speech to Congress, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur said, "Old Soldiers never die, they just fade away."²⁸ If MacArthur were correct, there would be far less confusion about the proper role of military officers in political debates and presidential campaigns. As an example of the former, there were significant conflicts among military professionals concerning the strategy for the war in Iraq. An April 13, 2006, front-page [Washington Post](#) article described a small but significant number of retired US military general officers who publicly objected to current US strategy toward Iraq and called for the resignation of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.²⁹ Dubbed the "generals' revolt," these objections challenged US intelligence, planning for postwar Iraq, counterinsurgency strategy, and the [effectiveness of Secretary Rumsfeld](#). The generals' protests did not cause Secretary Rums-

feld to resign, but did exacerbate civil-military tensions and raised questions about the relationship between the American military and the American state, and the proper role and limits of military officers in affairs of politics and war.

In political campaigns, especially since 1992, it has become common for each major candidate to "round up the military vote" by securing endorsements of senior officers. Prior to 1992, most presidential candidates had military experience, so military endorsements were not as important. Admiral William Crowe's endorsement of candidate Bill Clinton is generally regarded as the beginning of the era of military endorsements of presidential candidates.³⁰ While this tactic may be useful for winning a campaign, it has negative implications for officership. Although officers may be retired, they have not broken their lifelong commitment to their profession. This is especially the case with flag officers, whose rank is broadly recognized and respected. In the 2016 presidential campaign, teams of retired flag officers were led by retired Marine General John Allen for Hillary Clinton and by retired Army Lieutenant General Michael Flynn for Donald Trump. The former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General (retired) Martin Dempsey, rebuked these public political performances in an open letter to the *Washington Post*:

The military is not a political prize. Politicians should take the advice of senior military leaders but keep them off the stage. The American people should not wonder where their military leaders draw the line between military advice and political preference. And our nation's soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines should not wonder about the political leanings and motivations of their leaders.³¹

While military officers have the right to speak, just like any other citizen, it may not be right for them to do so, especially in a way that sullies the profession and could cheapen the value of military advice in the future.

The difference between a military in the service of the United States and a praetorian guard in the service of an empire and emperor teeters on a thin line of legal, ethical, and professional principles that define the proper limits of the military's jurisdictions in affairs of war, peace, and politics. The American public's skepticism of a standing military is a historic and healthy one; it is rooted in experiences under military occupation in the years prior to 1776. A mix of legal statutes and professional conventions within US military services restrict the military from engaging in issues deemed "political."³² Whether what American

society witnesses in terms of the “unequal dialogue” between civilian authorities and their subordinated military professionals reflects more of the Huntington “objective control,” or more of a relative and perhaps

cloudy “subjective control” civil-military relationship as described by Janowitz, is a function of the circumstances at hand, the civilian leaders, and the military leaders of the profession.

TYPES OF SPECIALIZED EXPERTISE

This chapter has discussed officership in the context of the “profession of arms,” which might cause an incorrect conclusion that there is only one military profession. Just as the medical profession has subspecialties (eg, cardiology, family medicine, orthopedics, aviation medicine, dermatology), each of the military’s specialized professions operates somewhat independently, with their own standards, norms, and cultures. If America’s profession of arms is like a tapestry or quilt, the semi-independent service arms are the separate panels and patches that, knitted together, form and sustain the overall profession. While any generalization is made with great trepidation because there are certainly many exceptions, the following is a broad attempt to depict the general culture of each military service.³³

The Army: Obedient Servant Emphasizing People

RAND Corporation senior analyst and service culture scholar Carl Builder described the US Army as “first and foremost, the Nation’s obedient and loyal military servant.”³⁴ The Army focuses on the readiness and preparation of its personnel and emphasizes that the Army’s “boots on the ground” in an area is the ultimate expression of American national will and power. At the US Military Academy at West Point, cadets spend 4 years walking past statues of Washington, MacArthur, Eisenhower, Patton, and other leaders, reinforcing the criticality of the human dimension of the profession. The Army hallways of the Pentagon are adorned with division and regimental flags, pictures of battles that focus on images of soldiers, and tributes to individuals from the Army’s history. The Army emphasizes cooperation and coordination both within and between services because success in battle requires the effective coordination of all arms and services. While officers from some maneuver branches—particularly the infantry and armor—still tend to dominate leadership positions, no battle can be won without transportation support; fire from artillery; close air support from aviation; data from intelligence sources; communications from signal units; mobility from engineers; security from military police; sustainment from logisticians; field sanitation, preventive medicine, and casualty care from medical personnel; and myriad other functions based on the

requirements of individual dynamic engagements. The need for the complex coordination and independent synchronization of all units leads to a great emphasis on fairness, inclusiveness, and, to the extent possible, decentralization among all branches and units in the Army.

As difficult as it is to characterize service culture, it is even more difficult to generalize about the intellectual progenitors of a profession’s doctrine or thinking, or to summarize a comprehensive body of thought about military power in a few sentences. However, making such generalizations is important because they provide a window through which the specialized expertise of a profession can be understood. For the US Army, if officers were asked to identify an intellectual godfather, many would name Carl von Clausewitz, who wrote *On War*³⁵ in the 19th century. Clausewitz’s dictum that “war is an extension of politics by other means,” resonates well with the Army as the obedient and loyal military servant of political masters. His emphasis on the “fog and friction in war” reinforces the need for military judgment, what Clausewitz calls “military genius.” Army leaders are comfortable with his emphasis on the human dimension of warfare and the need for consistent yet constrained linkages between political leadership and military decision-making. They strive to develop the specialized expertise in land warfare that supports effectiveness in battle.

The Air Force: Victory Through Technology

As the youngest service, spun off from the Army in 1947, the US Air Force sees itself as the service that best embodies the modern American way of war—use of decisive technological superiority to overwhelm and defeat any potential foe while avoiding risk of American casualties. From General Billy Mitchell’s use of airpower to sink battleships in 1921, to the World War II air raids over Europe and the nuclear bombs dropped in Japan, to the shock and awe at the opening of the Iraq War, the Air Force continues to emphasize the use of high technology to deliver decisive military victory. At the Air Force Academy, cadets hold formation in a quadrangle surrounded by airplanes on pedestals and gaze at the cold-metal roof of the academy chapel that sweeps up toward the heavens. The Air Force halls in the Pentagon, like most

Air Force headquarters and the Air Force monument near the Pentagon, emphasize sleek, functional, modern designs, much as might be seen in the corporate offices of a high-technology firm. In contrast to the Army's pictures where the soldier is the centerpiece, the pictures and murals in the Air Force section feature aircraft from different eras, with fewer depictions of the airman. Also in contrast to the Army's general equanimity with regard to all branches, the Air Force prioritizes the pilot as the focus of its human capital strategy because it is the pilot who commands the sophisticated and expensive technology and renders the decisive power in combat.

Air Force proponents will often point to several strategists who have recognized the decisive nature of air power in warfare, including Giulio Douhet, Billy Mitchell, Hap Arnold, and Curtis LeMay. Recently, John Warden, who helped design and implement the use of air power in Desert Storm, has been an influential strategist. Expanded information technology has enhanced centralization and prioritization of precision technology so that the Air Force can provide more effective, efficient, and decisive effects on targets anywhere in the world. This centralized control is embodied in two mainstays of Air Force operations—the single integrated operational plan (SIOP) for nuclear weapons and the air tasking order (ATO) for conventional engagements. Both plans are developed by dynamically assimilating all possible intelligence and environmental information and then precisely allocating virtually every weapon of each plane or each warhead of each missile against an optimal target. With its penchant for precision application of technology, the Air Force has also pushed for leadership in the development of cyber warfare capabilities as well. With increasingly sophisticated intelligence and network connectivity, air power can become an even more decisive element of modern warfare.

The Navy: Independent Exercise of National Sovereignty

The US Navy is “the supranational institution that has inherited the British Navy’s throne to naval supremacy . . . sea power [is] the most important and flexible kind of military power for America as a maritime Nation.”^{34(p32)} The Navy is quick to point out that “70 percent of the earth is covered by water, 80 percent of the world’s population lives in close proximity to the coast, and 90 percent of the world’s international commerce is transported via the sea.”³⁶ The Navy can exert American sovereignty throughout the globe and literally show the flag without the inconvenience of placing US soldiers in harm’s way on another nation’s

soil. Moreover, the Navy is its own complete joint force with air power through naval aviation, land power through the Marines, and Navy SEAL teams providing special operations.

At the Naval Academy, the midshipmen’s lives are dominated by Bancroft Hall—a single imposing dormitory that houses all midshipmen. Like a large ship, it subordinates the accomplishments of any single individual to the overall success of the institution as a whole. In the Pentagon, the Navy hallways exude tradition and imposing dignity with dark wooden walls, brass door hardware, and impressive model ships that reflect the extension of naval influence across the globe. In spite of modern communications that can impede the previously cherished independence of sea operations, great autonomy is still provided to a ship’s captain or a fleet admiral. Being accustomed to giving orders that cause a ship full of sailors and marines to change course, Navy leaders are more deferential toward senior-ranking officers, who, in turn, are more likely to act autonomously and be somewhat less concerned with inclusiveness of all components in their decision-making.

Most Navy leaders would point to Alfred Thayer Mahan as the grand theoretician who established the Navy’s view toward global warfare. Mahan’s belief that a state’s power and sovereignty is inextricably linked to its sea power reinforces the Navy’s self-image and importance.³⁷ This view is consistent with the Constitution, which, as noted above, requires Congress “to provide and maintain a navy” but only to “raise and support armies,” reflecting the nation’s intended permanence of the naval service for the United States as a maritime power.¹¹ The US Navy, like the other services, has leveraged information technology to exploit network-centric warfare and increased the effectiveness of its ships while reducing the overall size of the Navy.

The Marine Corps: The Nation’s Force of Choice

The US Marine Corps’ organizational culture is summed up in their recruiting motto: “The few. The proud. The Marines.” Completely dependent on the Navy for budgetary, administrative, and logistics support and competing with the Army for many land power missions, the Marine Corps best represents the challenge that all services face in the continuous reexamination of service roles and missions, despite their successes in past conflicts. The Air Force had to demonstrate its contribution to the ground war following its introduction in the early 20th century as an arm of the Army Signal Corps. The Doolittle raid on Tokyo served this purpose, as did strategic bombing

in Europe. The Navy's addition of aircraft and submarines extended its utility beyond the iron ships of the early 20th century. The Army's experimentation with missile- and artillery-delivered tactical nuclear weapons at the outset of the Cold War and its more recent transition into dispersed forces across an expansive and often austere battlespace represent similar efforts at reengineering.

Although the dismantling of the US Marine Corps is unlikely, Marine Corps leaders at all levels act as if it could happen any day if they fail to forcefully and publicly demonstrate its continuous relevance to US national security. This is why Marine Corps documents advertise the service as "the nation's 911 force," or "the expeditionary force of choice," and its leaders endeavor to be recognized as the lead force in nearly any global engagement. The Marine Corps makes every individual marine believe that the fate of the Corps (and the nation) is in their hands, and they must make the Corps proud. Every marine is first a rifleman and will endure any burden and suffer any sacrifice "to do what must be done 'in any clime and place' and under any conditions . . . to respond quickly and win."³⁸

The Marine Corps does not have its own academy, but derives many of its traditions from the Navy. In the Pentagon, the marines maintain a relatively small presence, with much of their headquarters in nearby Henderson Hall. However, any time marines are near any headquarters, just like the Marine guards at every US embassy, they are highly visible and exemplify spit-and-polish service standards that are second to none.

Marine Corps officers read widely and benefit from both Army and Navy strategic thought to develop their own professional identity and specialized expertise. If pressed to name an individual who drives their thought, marines might identify heroic individuals such as Lieutenant General Lewis "Chesty" Puller, whose five Navy Crosses for heroism epitomize the marine's can-do attitude.³⁹ It is more likely, however, that they would identify the current or a recent commandant of the Marine Corps as the source of their intellectual thought. In contrast to the other services, which frequently have from eight to eleven four-star generals or admirals each, the Marine Corps is much smaller and typically has only three or four four-star generals. Consequently, the commandant is truly supreme within the Corps, facing little pushback to directives because, other than the assistant commandant, there is no other four-star general within the service proper. (Other Marine four-star generals may command combatant commands or serve as chairman or vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs.) When General Dunford issued his initial planning guidance as com-

mandant of the Marine Corps, for example, he cited no outside authorities other than five quotes from four previous commandants.³⁸ The ability to carefully construct and then focus the Marine Corps on a single, compelling, and consistent message is important to the Corps' organizational culture and professional identity.

Special Operations: The "Quiet Professionals"

Although technically not a service, the United States has created essentially a fifth branch of the military—those involved in US Special Operations, who increasingly operate with each other and separately from their original services. All uniformed personnel in special operations are originally recruited and trained by their specific service (Army, Air Force, Navy, or Marine Corps) and then must volunteer and be selected by special operations organizations. Special operations personnel address unique, specialized, and difficult military problems that require exceptionally trained, exquisitely equipped, and tremendously supported warfighters. While other services can overwhelm enemies with massive combat power, special operations provides discreet, sometimes covert, precision military capabilities that have become increasingly relevant in modern warfare. Special operations missions include direct action, counterterrorism, special reconnaissance, civil affairs, psychological operations, unconventional warfare, supporting indigenous forces on their internal defense, and countering proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Although the lineage of special operations dates to work with the Office of Strategic Services in World War II, President Kennedy described the environment that gave rise to special operations forces in his 1962 West Point graduation speech:

This is another type of war, new in its intensity, ancient in its origin—war by guerrillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins, war by ambush instead of by combat; by infiltration, instead of aggression, seeking victory by eroding and exhausting the enemy instead of engaging him . . . [It requires] a whole new kind of strategy, a wholly different kind of force, and therefore a new and wholly different kind of military training.⁴⁰

With President Kennedy's emphasis and the needs of Vietnam, services expanded their own special organizations forces: Army Rangers, Army Special Forces, Navy SEAL teams, Navy Special Boat squadrons, and Air Force Special Operations squadrons. These units operated under service control and cooperated with each other, but were certainly not integrated. The

failed mission to rescue American hostages in Iran in 1980 and the lack of coordination among services in Grenada in 1983 reflected significant shortcomings. In response, the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act created the US Special Operations Command (SOCOM) with special status and authorities. SOCOM operates as both a military service that provides forces, in that it organizes, trains, and equips special operations forces, as well as a combatant command that employs forces throughout the world. This unique status, with its own funding authorities and ability to report directly to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, has distinguished special operations personnel from their parent service and contributed to their development as a separate and distinct profession.

Members of special operations forces undergo rigorous selection and training, which sets them apart from their parent service and creates a greater bond among special operators, who often identify first as being part of special operations and second as having originally joined their specific service. In this regard, if they sought a single personification of special operations, many might identify John Wayne in his classic depiction of a Special Forces officer in the Vietnam-era movie, *The Green Berets*. This movie emphasized the

exceptional small unit teamwork, precision action, cultural understanding, innovation, and problem-solving ability of elite special operations forces. In the current environment, SOCOM has integrated those elite small units with exceptional intelligence capabilities to empower and enhance their effectiveness. This integrated intelligence-operations linkage, known as the “find, fix, finish, exploit, and analyze” or the F3EA concept, has allowed SOCOM to expand and execute more systematic actions against high value targets in Iraq and Afghanistan. The most noteworthy example was the May 2011 raid that killed Osama bin Laden. These expanded, high-profile operations have raised the visibility of special operations, even leading some members to write books or grant interviews about previously highly secret operations. Navy Seal Mark Bissonette wrote a book about the “the Mission that Killed Osama Bin Laden,” and was eventually forced to pay \$6.6 million to the US government and forfeit any profits, royalties, and movie opportunities for violating nondisclosure agreements.⁴¹ While proud of the work that all special operations teams do, most special operations professionals would prefer that their stories remain largely untold, reinforcing their ethos as the “quiet professionals.”

CONCLUSION

It is appropriate to conclude by reiterating the importance of the professional armed forces officer’s commissioning oath. Returning to S.L.A. Marshall’s classic work, *The Armed Forces Officer*, both Marshalls—S. L. A. Marshall and George C. Marshall, secretary of defense at that the time—emphasized the linkage of the officer corps with service to nation:

Thereafter, [the officer] is given a paper which says that because the President as representative of the people of this country reposes “special trust and confidence” in his [or her] “*patriotism, valor, fidelity, and abilities,*” he [or she] is forthwith commissioned.^{2(p4)}

S.L.A. Marshall went on to highlight one quality in particular: fidelity. Fidelity is commonly considered “faithfulness to something to which one is bound by pledge or duty.”⁴² In spite of all the formal rules and

legal statutes obligating the commissioned officer to the Constitution, and through it, to the American people, officers’ fidelity has proven to be the most enduring tie that binds officership and the profession of arms to the nation. This bond has helped the nation weather many storms, both foreign and domestic. Similar to the medical profession’s code of medical ethics, which traces its origins to the historic Hippocratic oath, the fidelity of the military professional has always found its strongest roots in the rich soils of American history. Examples set by leaders from General George Washington to General Martin Dempsey reinforce the principle of subordination of the military practitioner to the “patient needs,” in this case, to civilian authority, and through that authority, to the defense of the nation. It is this ultimate duty and obligation that unites the medical profession and the profession of arms.

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