



Sailors man rails on flight deck of USS *George Washington* while underway in Pacific Ocean, July 10, 2024 (U.S. Navy/Julianna J. Lynch)

The Profession of Arms

What Scholars, Practitioners, and Others of Note Have Had to Say

By Gregory D. Foster

It is said the warrior's is the twofold Way of pen and sword, and he should have a taste for both Ways. Even if a man has no natural ability, he can be a warrior by sticking assiduously to both divisions of the Way.

—MIYAMOTO MUSASHI, *THE BOOK OF FIVE RINGS* (1645)

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The so-called profession of arms is both a descriptive label and a normative imperative that has been with us throughout the modern and postmodern eras. Its underlying premise is that those in military

uniform, whose supernal calling it is to prepare for and wage war, to bear arms, to apply force, to manage violence on behalf of the state are part of a profession. This profession is a “calling” both like and unlike medicine, law, or the

clergy, characterized by specialized preparation, expertise, accreditation, and selfless service to higher authority and therefore worthy of unconditional public trust and confidence.

The appellation itself—profession of arms—is, justifiably or not, unique to the military. There is no comparable profession of peace, nor is there an analogous signifier of identity for diplomats, intelligence officers, first responders, or others who, like the military, ply their trade in the field of national security affairs. Because so much of substance and insight has been said before by scholars, practitioners, and other reflective observers about this important field of inquiry, it is altogether fitting and proper that we turn to some of these sources for the most telling treatments of the subject to date. In so doing, we do well to recognize how uncritically wedded to tradition most of us are in adjudging the essence of military affairs and the position of centrality the military continues to occupy in the conduct of statecraft.

Accordingly, this anthology of views presents some of the most heralded canonical statements on the subject, even as it closes with two incisive, if iconoclastic, perspectives that prompt us to ask whether the circumstances of the postmodern moment do not demand that we broaden our conception of the profession to encompass branding more attuned to the times and circumstances we now inhabit. Think “national security professions” for starters.

Doctrinal Foundations

Article II, Section 3, of the U.S. Constitution provides that the President “shall Commission all the Officers of the United States,” including both officers of the uniformed Services and civilian officers. Title 5 U.S. Code § 3331 contains the oath that all officers take when they are commissioned. The commission constitutes documentary authority that the person specified is vested with the powers of office and is empowered to execute official acts. The oath, in turn, is the pledge of allegiance to the principles, precepts, powers, and prerogatives enumerated

and implied in the Constitution. It is precisely *not* a loyalty oath to an individual, an office, or an administration. Any discussion of the profession of arms, accordingly, should properly begin with these two items. Supplementing these two foundational statements is the professional military’s official doctrinal pronouncement on the subject, found in Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*.

From the Officer’s Commission.

Know Ye that, reposing special trust and confidence in the patriotism, valor, fidelity, and abilities of _____, I do appoint [“him” or “her”] a [“Second Lieutenant” or “Ensign”] in the [name of Service] to rank as such from the ___ day of ___. This Officer will therefore carefully and diligently discharge the duties of the office to which appointed by doing and performing all manner of things thereunto belonging.

And I do strictly charge and require those Officers and other personnel of lesser rank to render such obedience as is due an officer of this grade and position. And this Officer is to observe and follow such orders and directives, from time to time, as may be given by me, or the future President of the United States of America, or other Superior Officers acting in accordance with the laws of the United States of America.

This commission is to continue in force during the pleasure of the President of the United States of America for the time being, under the provisions of those Public Laws relating to Officers of the Armed Forces of the United States of America and the component thereof in which this appointment is made.¹

The Oath of Office. I, _____, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that 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 on which I am about to enter. So help me God.²

Joint Publication 1, Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States. A professional is a person of both character and competence. As military professionals charged with the defense of the Nation, joint leaders must be experts in the conduct of war. They must be moral individuals both of action and of intellect, skilled at getting things done, while at the same time conversant in the military art.

Character refers to the aggregate of features and traits that form the individual nature of a person. In the context of the profession of arms, it entails moral and ethical adherence to our values. Character is at the heart of the relationship of the profession with the American people, and to each other.

Competence is central to the profession of arms. Competent performance includes both the technical competence to perform the relevant task to standard as well as the ability to integrate that skill with others.³

Our American Heritage

Concerns about the pros and cons of a standing military establishment—a profession of arms—date to America’s founding. George Washington weighed in forcefully in his May 1783 “Sentiments on a Peace Establishment.” Other founders, notably Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, expressed similar views in *The Federalist Papers*. Later, the estimable French observer of American life Alexis de Tocqueville would have something of relevant import to say in his classical two-volume treatise *Democracy in America*.

George Washington. Altho’ a large standing Army in time of Peace hath ever been considered dangerous to the liberties of a Country, yet a few Troops, under certain circumstances, are not only safe, but indispensably necessary. Fortunately for us our relative situation requires but few. The same circumstances which so effectually retarded, and in the end conspired to defeat the attempts of Britain to subdue us, will now powerfully tend to render us secure. Our distance from the European States in a great degree frees us of apprehension, from their numerous regular



Recruits with Golf Company, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, conduct obstacle course during The Crucible on Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, South Carolina, August 22, 2024 (U.S. Marine Corps/William Horsley)

forces and the Insults and dangers which are to be dreaded from their Ambition.

But, if our danger from those powers was more imminent, yet we are too poor to maintain a standing Army adequate to our defence, and was our Country more populous & rich, still it could not be done without great oppression of the people. Besides, as soon as we are able to raise funds more than adequate to the discharge of the Debts incurred by the Revolution, it may become a Question worthy of consideration, whether the surplus should not be applied in preparations for building and equipping a Navy, without which, in case of War we could neither protect our Commerce, nor yield that Assistance to each other, which, on such an extent of Sea-Coast, our mutual Safety would require.⁴

Alexander Hamilton. Before the Revolution, and ever since the peace, there has been a constant necessity for keeping small garrisons on our Western

frontier. No person can doubt that these will continue to be indispensable, if it should only be against the ravages and depredations of the Indians. These garrisons must either be furnished by occasional detachments from the militia, or by permanent corps in the pay of the government. The first is impracticable; and if practicable, would be pernicious. The militia would not long, if at all, submit to be dragged from their occupations and families to perform that most disagreeable duty in times of profound peace. And if they could be prevailed upon or compelled to do it, the increased expense of a frequent rotation of service, and the loss of labor and disconcertion of the industrious pursuits of individuals, would form conclusive objections to the scheme. It would be as burdensome and injurious to the public as ruinous to private citizens. The latter resource of permanent corps in the pay of the government amounts to a standing army

in time of peace; a small one, indeed, but not the less real for being small.

If we mean to be a commercial people, or even to be secure on our Atlantic side, we must endeavor, as soon as possible, to have a navy. To this purpose there must be dock-yards and arsenals; and for the defense of these, fortifications, and probably garrisons.

It may perhaps be urged that the objects enumerated in the preceding number ought to be provided for by the State governments, under the direction of the Union. But this would be, in reality, an inversion of the primary principle of our political association, as it would in practice transfer the care of the common defense from the federal head to the individual members: a project oppressive to some States, dangerous to all, and baneful to the Confederacy.

As far as an army may be considered as a dangerous weapon of power, it had better be in those hands of which the

people are most likely to be jealous than in those of which they are least likely to be jealous. For it is a truth, which the experience of ages has attested, that the people are always most in danger when the means of injuring their rights are in the possession of those of whom they entertain the least suspicion.⁵

Alexis de Tocqueville. The same interests, the same fears, the same passions which deter democratic nations from revolutions, deter them also from war; the spirit of military glory and the spirit of revolution are weakened at the same time and by the same causes. . . . Amongst civilized nations, the warlike passions will become more rare and less intense in proportion as social conditions shall be more equal. War is nevertheless an occurrence to which all nations are subject, democratic nations as well as others. Whatever taste they may have for peace, they must hold themselves in readiness to repel aggression, or in other words they must have an army.

The equality of conditions, and the manners as well as the institutions resulting from it, do not exempt a democratic people from the necessity of standing armies, and their armies always exercise a powerful influence over their fate. It is therefore of singular importance to inquire what are the natural propensities of the men of whom these armies are composed.

We thus arrive at this singular consequence, that of all armies those most ardently desirous of war are democratic armies, and of all nations those most fond of peace are democratic nations: and, what makes these facts still more extraordinary, is that these contrary effects are produced at the same time by the principle of equality.⁶

Scholars and Practitioners Speak

By near-universal acclaim, the late Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington's classic *The Soldier and the State* remains the gold standard for discussion of the profession of arms and civil-military relations. Not far behind is *The Professional Soldier*, by the late University of Chicago military sociolo-

gist Morris Janowitz. The small volume *The Profession of Arms*, a collection of lectures by the late British General Sir John Winthrop Hackett, is an enduring demi-classic for disciples of the subject. Charles Moskos, one-time military sociologist at Northwestern University and a close colleague of Janowitz, introduced into public discourse a widely discussed 1977 *Armed Forces and Society* article that asked, lastingly, whether the military profession today is more institution or occupation. *The Armed Forces Officer* is a widely referenced volume that first appeared in 1950, under the pen of military journalist and historian S.L.A. Marshall, when George Marshall was Secretary of Defense. It has appeared in several editions since, tailored each time to coincide with the professional circumstances of the moment. General Douglas MacArthur's famous valedictory address, "Duty, Honor, Country," to the West Point corps of cadets in 1962 remains a classic statement on military professionalism that lives on in perpetuity. It in fact was a prefatory inspiration for the white paper on the profession of arms that then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey issued in 2012. The Army's 2010 white paper on the subject foreshadowed Dempsey's thinking and contains its own set of enduring ideas. Seminal passages from each of these sources follow.

Samuel Huntington. The modern officer corps is a professional body and the modern military officer a professional man. A profession is a peculiar type of functional group with highly specialized characteristics. Sculptors, stenographers, entrepreneurs, and advertising copywriters all have distinct functions but no one of these functions is professional in nature. Professionalism, however, is characteristic of the modern officer in the same sense in which it is characteristic of the physician or lawyer. Professionalism distinguishes the military officer of today from the warriors of previous ages. . . .

The distinguishing characteristics of a profession as a special type of vocation are its expertise, responsibility, and corporateness.

Expertise. The professional man is an expert with specialized knowledge and skill in a significant field of human endeavor. His expertise is acquired only by prolonged education and experience. It is the basis of objective standards of professional competence for separating the profession from laymen and measuring the relative competence of members of the profession.

Responsibility. The professional man is a practicing expert, working in a social context, and performing a service, such as the promotion of health, education, or justice, which is essential to the functioning of society. The client of every profession is society, individually or collectively. . . . The essential and general character of his service and his monopoly of his skill impose upon the professional man the responsibility to perform the service when required by society. This social responsibility distinguishes the professional man from other experts with only intellectual skills.

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.

The Expertise of Officership. What is the specialized expertise of the military officer? Is there any skill common to all military officers and yet not shared with any civilian groups?

This central skill is perhaps best summed up in Harold Lasswell's phrase "the management of violence." The function of a military force is successful armed combat. The duties of the military officer include: (1) the organizing, equipping, and training of this force; (2) the planning of its activities; and (3) the direction of its operation in and out of combat. The direction, operation, and control of a human organization whose primary function is the application of violence is the peculiar skill of the officer.

The skill of the officer is neither a craft (which is primarily mechanical) nor an art (which requires unique and



Technical Sergeant Morgan Bainer, 121st Air Refueling Wing in-flight refueling specialist, controls boom of KC-135 Stratotanker during in-flight air refueling of C-17 Globemaster in skies over Columbus, Ohio, June 20, 2024 (U.S. Air National Guard/Alexis Wade)

nontransferable talent). It is instead an extraordinarily complex intellectual skill requiring comprehensive study and training. It must be remembered that the peculiar skill of the officer is the management of violence not the act of violence itself.

The Responsibility of Officership. The expertise of the officer imposes upon him a special social responsibility. The employment of his expertise promiscuously for his own advantage would wreck the fabric of society. As with the practice of medicine, society insists that the management of violence be utilized only for socially approved purposes. Society has a direct, continuing, and general interest in the employment of this skill for the enhancement of its own military security.⁷

Morris Janowitz. Civilian perceptions of the professional officer are not the same as perceptions of the military hero. In contrast to the public acclaim accorded

individual military heroes, officership remains a relatively low-status profession.

The officer corps can be analyzed as a professional group by means of sociological concepts. Law and medicine have been identified as the most ancient professions. The professional, as a result of prolonged training, acquires a skill which enables him to render specialized service.

But a profession is more than a group with special skill, acquired through intensive training. A professional group develops a sense of group identity and a system of internal administration. Self Administration—often supported by state intervention—implies the growth of a body of ethics and standards of performance.

To speak of professionalism clearly means that the conduct of warfare is given over to men who have committed themselves to a career of service, men who are recognized for their “expertise”

in the means of warfare. It implies the decline of the gentleman amateur.

As a result of the complex machinery of warfare, which has weakened the line between military and non-military organization, the military establishment has come more and more to display the characteristics typical of any large-scale organization. Nevertheless, the military professional is unique because he is an expert in war-making and in the organized use of violence. This primary goal of the military establishment creates its special environment and influences its decision-making process.

The military profession is confronted with a persistent dilemma, and this dilemma is deepened by the growth of automated warfare. The profession must recruit and retain officers who are skilled in military management for its elite, but, at the same time, many of its officers, including the most conspicuous ones, must



World War II veteran Dennis Boldt, who landed on Utah Beach during Normandy invasion, is kissed by French girl before concert in Sainte-Mère-Église commemorating town's liberators, June 4, 2024 (U.S. Army/Katherine Sibilla)

be able to perpetuate the traditions of the heroic leader. . . . In tracing the impact of military organization on the political perspectives of its leading professionals, it is insufficient to point out that military managers have grown in number and influence. The martial spirit continues to give the military profession its distinctive outlook, and to mold even its military managers. Modern trends make it difficult to imbue the fighter spirit in the next generation of officers, and the civilian population is often ambivalent about its implications. While civilian leaders may be able to control the strategic policies of the military establishment, they cannot dispense with heroic leadership.⁸

Sir John Winthrop Hackett. The function of the profession of arms is the ordered application of force in the resolution of a social problem. Harold Lasswell describes it as the management

of violence, which is rather less precise. The bearing of arms among men for the purpose of fighting other men is found as far back as we can see. It has become at some times and in some places a calling resembling the priesthood in its dedication. It has never ceased to display a strong element of the vocational.

It has also become a profession, not only in the wider sense of what is professed, but in the narrower sense of an occupation with a distinguishable corpus of specific technical knowledge and doctrine, a more or less exclusive group coherence, a complex of institutions peculiar to itself, an educational pattern adapted to its own needs, a career structure of its own and a distinct place in the society which has brought it forth. In all these respects it has strong points of resemblance to medicine and the law, as well as to holy orders.

It is the business of armed services to furnish to a constituted authority, a government, in situations where force is, or might be, used the greatest possible number of options. A government can have as many options as it will pay for. The greater the strength and variety, the better the equipment and training of its armed forces, the higher will be the number of options which will be open to it.

The military life is lived in order that an authority properly constituted over a significant group of men (such as a tribe, city, nation, state, or federation) may be furnished with professional armed forces. If those bearing arms act in ways not consonant with the interests of the constituted authority, if they usurp its powers or dominate it, or in important ways put their own interests first, we have militarism. The proposition that militarism is suicidal has been described as “almost a truism.”

The military virtues are not in a class apart. . . . They include such qualities as courage, fortitude, and loyalty.

What is important about such qualities as these in the present argument is that they acquire in the military context, in addition to their moral significance, a functional significance as well. The essential function of an armed force is to fight in battle. Given equally advanced military techniques, a force in which the qualities I have mentioned are more highly developed will usually defeat a stronger force in which they are less.

We may well be working towards a position in which the main purpose of the profession of arms is not to win wars but to avoid them; that is to say, by timely warfare to lessen the risk of general war. In my opinion we are there already.

If this is so the chief function of the armed forces maintained by properly constituted authorities, whether these are nation states or something else, now becomes the containment of violence. . . . Within such a concept the function and duty of the military professional remain the same. His function is the orderly application of armed force. His duty is to develop his skill in the management of violence to the utmost and to act as the true subordinate of the properly constituted authority, whatever this may turn out to be.⁹

Charles Moskos. The American military is moving from an institutional format to one more and more resembling that of an occupation.

An institution is legitimated in terms of values and norms, that is, a purpose transcending individual self-interest in favor of a presumed higher good. Members of an institution are often viewed as following a calling; they generally regard themselves as being different or apart from the broader society and are so regarded by others. To the degree one's institutional membership is congruent with notions of self-sacrifice and dedication, it will usually enjoy esteem from the larger community.

An occupation is legitimated in terms of the marketplace, i.e., prevailing monetary rewards for equivalent competencies. . . . The occupational model

implies priority of self-interest rather than that of the employing organization. Traditionally, the military has sought to avoid the organizational outcomes of the occupational model.

A shift in the rationale of the military toward the occupational model implies organizational consequences in the structure and, perhaps, the function of the armed forces. . . . Certain outcomes can be anticipated if the military becomes even more like an occupation. Two changes, in particular, are presently apparent in military social organization: the growing likelihood of unionization and the increasing reliance on contract civilians to perform military tasks. Although seemingly unrelated, both such organizational changes derive from the ascendant occupational model.¹⁰

The Armed Forces Officer. Human societies—from tribes and city-states to empires, organized religions, and nation-states—have regularly established and relied on groups of specialists who, willingly or unwillingly, assumed the burden of fighting, killing, and dying for the larger group. Whatever the formal name or title given to these groups, theirs is the profession of arms.

It is a basic premise of civilized societies, especially democratic ones, that the military serves the state (and by extension, the people), not the other way around. The profession of arms exists to serve the larger community, to help accomplish its purposes and objectives, and to protect its way of life.

The essential task of its members is to fight, individually and collectively; of its officers, to direct and lead those who apply the instruments of destruction to achieve assigned ends. With rare exceptions, a society's government identifies the problems to be resolved with force, and it then turns to and relies on the professionals to handle the always difficult, usually dangerous, often bloody details in a manner acceptable to the citizens and supportive of their goals.

The most basic task of the profession of arms is the armed defense of the society, its territory, population, and vital interests. In its most elemental sense, the profession of arms is all about

fighting and all about *war*. . . . The defining mission of the Armed Forces is the preparation for and the conduct of war, which includes securing the military victory until peace is restored politically. It is the warfighting mission that determines how forces are organized, equipped, and trained.

Like the priesthood, the profession of arms is a vocation, a higher calling, to serve others, to sacrifice self, to be about something larger than one's own ambitions and desires, something grander than one's own contributions and even one's own life. This is a recurring and central theme in discourses on the profession of arms.

Given the stakes, it is no wonder that the profession of arms invokes and requires, in the words of the U.S. military officer's commission, "special trust and confidence."

Four elements . . . are widely accepted as characteristic to any profession: special expertise, a collective and individual responsibility to serve society, a sense of "corporateness," and a professional ethic and ethos.

A profession is an identifiable body of practitioners granted authority (by the larger society) for discretionary practice of a unique and necessary skill. A profession has a body of expertise, built over time on a base of practical experience, which yields fundamental principles and abstract knowledge; which normally must be mastered through specialized education; which is intensive, extensive, and continuing; and which can then be applied to the solution of specific, practical problems. . . . It is important not to think that the primary mission for which the Armed Forces are organized, trained, and equipped [the management of violence] is the only mission society may legitimately give them.¹¹

Douglas MacArthur. Duty, Honor, Country: Those three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be. They are your rallying points: to build courage when courage seems to fail; to regain faith when there seems to be little cause for faith; to create hope when hope becomes forlorn.



Class of 2028 trainees complete Assault Course in Jacks Valley during second phase of Basic Cadet Training on July 16, 2024, at Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado (U.S. Air Force/Dylan Smith)

But these are some of the things they do: They build your basic character. They mold you for your future roles as the custodians of the nation's defense. They make you strong enough to know when you are weak, and brave enough to face yourself when you are afraid. They teach you to be proud and unbending in honest failure, but humble and gentle in success; not to substitute words for actions, not to seek the path of comfort, but to face the stress and spur of difficulty and challenge; to learn to stand up in the storm but to have compassion on those who fall; to master yourself before you seek to master others; to have a heart that is clean, a goal that is high; to learn to laugh, yet never forget how to weep; to reach into the future yet never neglect the past; to be serious yet never to take yourself too seriously; to be modest so that you will remember the simplicity of true greatness, the open mind of true wisdom, the meekness of true strength.

They give you a temper of the will, a quality of the imagination, a vigor of the emotions, a freshness of the deep springs of life, a temperamental predominance of courage over timidity, of an appetite for adventure over love of ease. They create in your heart the sense of wonder, the unfailing hope of what next, and the joy and inspiration of life. They teach you in this way to be an officer and a gentleman.

And through all this welter of change and development, your mission remains fixed, determined, inviolable: it is to win our wars.

Everything else in your professional career is but corollary to this vital dedication. All other public purposes, all other public projects, all other public needs, great or small, will find others for their accomplishment. But you are the ones who are trained to fight. 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.¹²

Martin Dempsey. We must renew our commitment to the Profession of Arms. We're not a profession simply because we say we're a profession. We must continue to learn, to understand, and to promote the knowledge, skills, attributes, and behaviors that define us as a profession.

Values. The Profession of Arms demands its members live by the values described in the "City on the Hill" metaphor. We must provide an example to the world that cannot be diminished by hardships and challenges. This example is based upon the words and intent of the U.S. Constitution that each of us takes a personal oath to support and defend. Our oath demands each of us display moral courage and always do what is right, regardless of the cost. We are all volunteers

in our willingness to serve and to place others' needs above our own. As shared values, our calling cards are Duty, Honor, Courage, Integrity, and Selfless Service. Commitment to the rule of law is integral to our values which provide the moral and ethical fabric of our profession.

The Military Profession. 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.

Trust—Both Internal and External. Trust is earned not given, through deeds not words. It extends laterally and vertically, both ways. Trust is inherent in the strength of our collective character. Internal trust is integral to the chain of command. It is both inherent in and demanded amongst peers, between seniors and subordinates. Followers trust that their leaders will take care of their charges even at their own expense. Leaders set the example and foster a relationship with their subordinates as teacher to scholar.

External trust is the bond with which we connect with those we serve, our leaders in government and the American people. It must be continually earned. Special trust and confidence is placed in military leaders. This trust is based upon the fact that the members of our profession remain apolitical and would never betray the principles and intent of the Constitution, even at the risk of their own lives. Our men and women, who serve, return to society better for their service.¹³

"The Profession of Arms: An Army White Paper." Undoubtedly, the Army is considered a profession today. But, we must remember that the Army is not a profession just because we say so. . . . Our

client, the American people, gets to make the judgment of the extent to which we are a profession, and they will do so based on the bond of trust we create with them based on the ethical, exemplary way we employ our capabilities.

Professions produce uniquely expert work, not routine or repetitive work. Medicine, theology, law, and the military are "social trustee" forms of professions. Effectiveness, rather than pure efficiency, is the key to the work of professionals—the sick want a cure, the sinner wants absolution, the accused want exoneration, and the defenseless seek security.

A deep moral obligation rests on the profession, and its professionals, to continuously develop expertise and use that expertise only in the best interests of society—professionals are actually servants. The military profession, in particular, must provide the security which society cannot provide for itself, without which the society cannot survive, and to use its expertise according to the values held by the Nation.

The U.S. Army's professional Ethic is built on trust with the American people, as well as with civilian leaders and junior professionals within the ranks. That trust must be re-earned every day through living our Ethic. . . . Because of this trust, the American people grant significant autonomy to us to create our own expert knowledge and to police the application of that knowledge by individual professionals. Non-professional occupations do not enjoy similar autonomy. A self-policing Ethic is an absolute necessity, especially for the Profession of Arms, given the lethality inherent in what we do.

Among all professions, our calling, the Profession of Arms, is unique because of the lethality of our weapons and our operations. Soldiers are tasked to do many things besides combat operations, but ultimately, as noted in the quotation above, the core purpose and reason the Army exists is to apply lethal force.¹⁴

Two Iconoclastic Challenges for the Road Ahead

It is infinitely tempting to embrace the foregoing statements on the profession of arms as received or revealed truth for

the ages. The question we should ask ourselves is whether that is in fact valid, or are there developments afoot, and responses to such developments, that prompt us to reconsider the adequacy and robustness of the brand? Two short, relatively recent inquiries—the first by retired Admiral James Stavridis and colleagues, the second by James Locher, former president of the Project on National Security Reform—raise just this question in their own ways.

James Stavridis, Ervin J. Rokke, and Terry C. Pierce. In a democratic society, the military is a profession requiring civilian control. We argue, however, that the Huntington assertion of "management of violence" as the unique expertise of the profession of arms needs to be updated. . . . Members of today's profession of arms are "the managers of effects" while the primary responsibility for defining the desired effects, particularly in the strategic arena, lies with civilian leadership at the national level.

Huntington's model proved useful for half a century, during which security depended largely on national capacities for managing violence in the natural domains of land, sea, air, and space. His model, however, falls short with the emergence of nonkinetic instruments of foreign policy to include those within the cyber domain. Particularly within that domain, nation-states and their militaries are no longer the sole managers for instruments of force. A new assortment of nonkinetic actors using soft power in the cyber as well as the natural domains can achieve hard-power kinetic effects.

Huntington's concept of civilian control, with its emphasis on the professional development of our military, remains vital to a democratic society. Also required is a capability and willingness of our national-level civilian leadership to assume a primary role in determining and articulating desired effects. For its part, the military profession must be capable of managing the full spectrum of capabilities within its purview, both kinetic and non-kinetic, to accomplish the desired effects. This may well require some expansion of the traditional professional development process for military personnel. They will need the expertise for an improved

capacity to manage a broad spectrum of tools for achieving desired effects as well as the less complex challenge of managing violence.¹⁵

James Locher. The national security system that the president uses to manage the instruments of national power, and the manner in which Congress oversees and funds the system, do not permit the agility required to protect the United States and its interests in an increasingly complex and rapidly changing world.

The current national security system was based on lessons from World War II and was designed to enable the president to fight the Cold War. Many of the assumptions underpinning this system are no longer valid. The world has moved on, and the United States needs to adjust commensurately to the new realities impinging on its security. The current system gives the president a narrow range of options for dealing with national security affairs and causes an over-reliance on the military instrument of national power.

Whatever its adequacy in a former era, today's national security system is a clumsy anachronism not suited for the current strategic environment. . . . From global terrorism, cyber attacks, and challenges to the neutrality of space, to armed horsemen in Sudan, transnational religious leaders in Iraq, and ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, the challenges to national security today defy traditional categories. National security now involves a wide array of issues that can be addressed only with a broader set of highly integrated and carefully calibrated capabilities.

While the strategic environment of the future promises to be dynamic and difficult to predict, there is consensus that certain threats are much more likely than others. America has not succeeded in substantially reorienting DOD's main functions toward these probable threats. For instance, even though DOD has increased its attention to planning for missions involving ethnic insurgencies and failing states, most large acquisitions are still focused on a major symmetric foe. While the United States needs to hedge strategically against the emergence of peer competitors, the near-term probability of major symmetrical warfare is

insignificant. On the other hand, the military has assumed—or been forced to assume—some mission areas for which it is ill suited.¹⁶ JFQ

Notes

¹ Heritage Foundation, "Commissions," *The Heritage Guide to the Constitution*, <https://www.heritage.org/constitution/#/articles/2/essays/99/commissions>.

² 5 U.S. Code § 3331—Oath of Office, <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title5/part3/subpartB/chapter33/subchapter2&edition=prelim#:~:text=An%20individual%2C%20except%20the%20President,enemies%2C%20foreign%20and%20domestic%3B%20that>.

³ Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, July 12, 2017), <https://irp.fas.org/doddir/dod/jp1.pdf>.

⁴ George Washington, "Sentiments on a Peace Establishment," Newburgh, NY, May 1, 1783, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-11202>.

⁵ Alexander Hamilton, "The Powers Necessary to the Common Defense Further Considered," *Federalist No. 24*, December 19, 1787, <https://guides.loc.gov/federalist-papers/text-21-30>; and "The Same Subject Continued: The Powers Necessary to the Common Defense Further Considered," *Federalist No. 25*, December 21, 1787, <https://guides.loc.gov/federalist-papers/text-21-30>.

⁶ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. II, book three, chapter XXII, trans. Henry Reeve (1840), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/816/816-h/816-h.htm>.

⁷ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957).

⁸ Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier* (New York: Free Press, 1960).

⁹ Sir John Winthrop Hackett, *The Profession of Arms*, Lees Knowles Lectures, Trinity College, Cambridge, 1962, https://history.army.mil/html/books/070/70-18/cmhpub_70-18.pdf.

¹⁰ Charles C. Moskos, Jr., "From Institution to Occupation: Trends in Military Organization," *Armed Forces and Society* 4, no. 1 (November 1977), 41–50, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45346051>.

¹¹ Richard M. Swain and Albert C. Pierce, *The Armed Forces Officer* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2017), <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/Books/AFO/Armed-Forces-Officer.pdf>.

¹² Douglas MacArthur, Sylvanus Thayer Award acceptance address, West Point, NY,

May 12, 1962, <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/douglasmacarthurtheraward.html>.

¹³ Martin Dempsey, "White Paper: America's Military—A Profession of Arms," February 23, 2012, <https://danieldeubank.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/americas-military-a-profession-of-arms-white-paper.pdf>.

¹⁴ *The Profession of Arms: An Army White Paper* (Fort Eustis, VA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, December 8, 2010), <https://www.moore.army.mil/armor/content/PDF/Profession%20of%20Arms%20White%20Paper%208%20Dec%202010.pdf>.

¹⁵ James G. Stavridis, Ervin J. Rokke, and Terry C. Pierce, "Crafting and Managing Effects: The Evolution of the Profession of Arms," *Joint Force Quarterly* 81 (2nd Quarter 2016), 4–9, <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/JFQ/Joint-Force-Quarterly-81/Article/701992/crafting-and-managing-effects-the-evolution-of-the-profession-of-arms>.

¹⁶ James R. Locher III, "The Most Important Thing: Legislative Reform of the National Security System," *Military Review*, May–June 2008, 19–27, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/PDF-UA-docs/Locher-UA.pdf>.