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Fault Lines of the American Military Profession

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Abstract

Over the past decade, the American armed services have witnessed a near-constant stream of so-called ethical lapses. Spanning rank, specialty, and service, these "lapses" have given rise to a flood of criticism by journalists and piercing calls for reform from politicians. In response, American military leaders have pointed to the paired concepts of *profession* and *professionalism* as the solution. In this article, we use classical conceptualizations of the military profession to resituate the problem of ethical lapses as instead one of the three fault lines of the contemporary American military profession, unfolding alongside crises in military expertise and identity. The three fault lines reveal at once the large scale of the challenges facing the American armed services and our very limited social scientific understanding of those problems. We end by emphasizing the need for future research to establish an updated empirical baseline for theories of the military profession in America.

Keywords

military profession, civil–military relations, expertise, military ethic, domestic politics

Over the past decade, the American armed services have witnessed a near-constant stream of so-called ethical lapses from the abuse of detainees by enlistees to cheating on nuclear power training exams by junior officers to drunken and disorderly behavior by general and flag staff officers. Spanning rank, specialty, and service, these

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"lapses" have given rise to a flood of criticism by journalists and piercing calls for reform from politicians. In response, American military leaders have pointed to the paired concepts of *profession* and *professionalism* as the solution.

Military professionalism has long been a standard topic of research by social scientists interested in war and military affairs (Boene, 2000; Kestnbaum, 2009; Moskos, 1977; Segal, 1993). As the key concept in Janowitz's (1960) landmark study *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*, professionalism had particular influence over the development of the field of military sociology (Burk, 1993). It is also one of the field's most successful exports, featuring widely in internal military conversations both domestically and abroad. And yet, it is a concept based on outdated empirical research with deep chasms in how it is understood and implemented by military organizations.

In this article, we use the classical conceptualizations of the military profession developed by Samuel P. Huntington and Morris Janowitz to resituate the problem of ethical lapses as instead one of the three fault lines in the contemporary American military profession, unfolding alongside crises in military expertise and identity. The three fault lines reveal at once the large scale of the challenges facing the American armed services and our very limited social scientific understanding of those problems. We end by emphasizing the need for future research to establish an updated empirical baseline for theories of the military profession in America.

Professionalism Problems

Any public agency in a hypermediated democracy has good reason to take the danger of scandals and public opprobrium seriously (Adut, 2005). Unwanted publicity can have lasting consequences on everything from talent management to the bottom line. For militaries, negative publicity can also generate problems in the strategic domain, since enemies may use such incidences to fuel propaganda and otherwise undermine the legitimacy of a state's foreign affairs. For the past decade or so, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) has served as an extreme case for understanding the effects of near-constant scandal on a state agency (Crosbie, 2014; Crosbie and Sass, 2016). For the purposes of this article, we focus exclusively on what these scandals can teach us about the changing nature of the American military profession. What is perhaps most obvious from even a cursory glance at the list of recent scandals is the overwhelming concern by critics inside and outside the military with ethical lapses.

The Department of the Army, the largest of the three branches, has had a difficult decade, facing major scandals from Abu Ghraib in 2004 to Walter Reed in 2010, in addition to the downfall of its two most prominent generals, David Petraeus and Stanley A. McChrystal, and a charge of atrocity against one of its most celebrated units in the Iraqi town of Al-Mahmudiyah (Frederick, 2010). Army intellectuals have noted the failure to maintain standards in the professional military education (PME) program (C. D. Allen, 2010; Johnson-Freese, 2013). Army officers have

critiqued the competence of their generals (Yingling, 2007); have pointed to frequent breaches of professional ethics (Berg, 2014), including perverse incentives for dishonesty (Wong & Gerras, 2015); and have linked the rise in the rate of suicide to a "trust lapse" in the Army (Glonek, 2013). In each case, internal and external critics have accused military commanders of failing to maintain the ethical standards of the profession.

The Department of the Navy has acknowledged an abundance of ethical lapses in both Navy and Marine Corps. From the massacre of Iraqi civilians at Haditha to video of Marines urinating on the corpses of Taliban fighters, the Marine Corps has weathered "almost-monthly scandals," exacerbated by widespread dislike for Commandant General James F. Amos (Forsling, 2015). Likewise, the Navy is today facing multiple bribery scandals as well as reports of sailors cheating on nuclear power training exams (Brannen, 2014). This is reflected in a review of Naval Personnel Command data on officers relieved of command, which found a sharp increase in misconduct firings in the 2000–2010 period (Light, 2012).

The Department of the Air Force has been particularly shaped by sexual assault scandals. In 2003, reports surfaced of pervasive sexual assault at the Air Force Academy. Similar reports emerged in 2011 concerning the Lackland Air Force Base. More recently, the promotion of convicted sex offender Chief Master Sergeant Eric Soluri has generated controversy (Davis, 2011). A more direct blow to the Air Force's service autonomy came with the forced resignation of Air Force Secretary Michael W. Wynn and Chief of Staff T. Michael Moseley in the wake of the 2008 Donald's report, which alleged widespread mismanagement of the Air Force's nuclear weapons (*Air Force Times*, 2008). Further scandal, including reports of nuclear launch officers cheating on tests (Martinez, 2014), and further investigation (Report of the Secretary of Defense Task Force, 2008) have followed. Colonel Donald Grannan's (2014) allegation of a "leadership gap" in his service circulated widely through social media, with a similar concern voiced from the lower ranks by Major Jeff Donnithorne (2010).

Individual ethical lapses are often taken to be examples of "bad apples" rather than indicators of corruption and organizational failure (Crosbie, 2014). However, a closer examination reveals that these ethical failures have unfolded against a backdrop of similar problems in both the military profession's control over expert knowledge and its capacities to act as an effective political pressure group, in Janowitz's (1960) sense. The challenge facing the military is thus not to identify simply contexts within which individuals act unethically but rather to highlight the areas of tension and potential conflict within and between the services with respect to the integrity of the profession itself.

Ethical Lapses and the Theory of the Military Profession

As C. D. Allen (2011) has pointed out, the challenges facing the military profession may seem insignificant given the wealth, power, and prestige of the American armed

services. Indeed, the DOD is in a very good position in terms of both its relations with the public (Jones, 2011) and, notwithstanding the drawdown and even the sequestration, its long-term outlook (Congressional Budget Office, 2016). Why, then, should we care about what the flurry of ethical lapses that have been reported in the press? From a theoretical perspective, what is significant here is the entwining of occupational domains, in this case ethics and expertise. The American military is both profession and bureaucratic organization (Huntington, 1957), but, all too often, the critical measures of health concern only the latter, namely, the vitality of the organization, and not the former, namely, the health and well-being of the military profession.

Scholars of professions recognize that a profession's ethical lapses are often complexly entwined with other domains, particularly in the legitimacy of the profession's claim of expertise over a domain of work and in the sense of identity that solidifies the individual professionals into a single profession. Thus, while military leaders are likely to feel relatively secure in the future of their *organization*, many are very clearly concerned with the future of their *profes*sion. The sociology of professions provides the conceptual framework to understand why ethical lapses can and should be viewed as potential indicators of broader problems in the legitimacy of expertise and the capacity of a profession to maintain a corporate identity.

The concept of military professionalism as a sociological category first emerged through exploratory discussions of military elites, particularly by Lasswell (1941) and Mills (1956). Where they theorized the dangers posed by military officers to the polity, Huntington (1957) took the opposite view, fearing for the threat to military capabilities posed by civilians. This normative shift came with the theoretical insight that there were multiple power structures competing within the military. Huntington strongly identified one occupational group, the managers of violence, with the military ethic and attributed to it a professional identity derived from *expertise*, *responsibility*, and *corporateness*. From this theoretical framing, he confidently concluded that democracies do best when the state maintains a strong and relatively autonomous military dominated by its managers of violence and their military ethic, a circumstance he termed objective civilian control (Huntington, 1957, pp. 198–192). While Huntington can be credited with framing the basic discussion around military professionalism and for introducing its fundamental features (expertise, responsibility, and corporateness), the empirical foundations for many of his conclusions were not strong (Nielsen, 2005, pp. 61–84) and led to a major failure of prediction (Feaver, 2005, pp. 16–53).

While civil–military relations scholars have largely followed Huntington, the sociology of the military profession began with Janowitz (1960). Like Huntington, Janowitz drew extensively on the secondary historical literature in addition to government hearings and military reports, but unlike Huntington, he conducted extensive original research. While largely accepting Huntington's definition of military professionalism, Janowitz disproved the claim that military leaders were apolitical and argued instead that they were members of a pressure group struggling to shape

their political environment, while responding to broader social changes in organization, thereby subtly altering the concept of corporateness to take on a stronger political dimension.

Janowitz's framework offers sociologists a means to probe the changing expertise, responsibility, and corporateness of the individual services but leaves open the question of how they intersect with one another and with competing occupational groups, what Abbott (1988) envisioned as "contested jurisdictions" or in effect the turf war between occupations. After all, American national security is not controlled exclusively by American uniformed professionals. Indeed, there is more competition today (primarily from contractors and other governmental agencies) than at any time in the history of the American professional force. This question of jurisdiction has been at the center of the broader sociological conception of professions since Abbott (1988), evolving more recently to a vision of linked ecologies, which Abbott (2002) notes is particularly complicated in the military context.

In sum, the theory of professions posits an interlock between expertise, responsibility, and corporateness, which together modulate the ecological conflicts that envelop occupational groups. Each of these fundamental components of a profession is at once a bedrock of stability and a potential fault line posing a considerable risk to the group. This is why the present argument begins with the discussion of ethical lapses, the most publicly visible of the three fault lines that concern us here. Of course, any group that expects high levels of coordination across individuals' understanding of the world, sense of values, and very identity must contend with human fallibility. Ethical lapses are inevitable, but the very public observation of what appears to be a high rate of ethical lapses in the American military should be taken as a good indicator of a problem in the professionalism of the services. Since the fault lines are interlocked, serious ethical lapses may or may not reveal problems of expertise or responsibility.

Notwithstanding the special complexity of the military case, we are left with some fairly basic questions. How open the military will be to new ideas, how stable the military will be in its relations with the polity, and how effective the military will be in its advocacy before elected officials, all hinge on their solutions to the problems of professionalism, solutions which change over time. The question is whether soldiers and scholars have succeeded in answering Janowitz's questions for the present day.

Responsibility and the Military Ethic

In the military context, the need for public support and trust is expressed through internal norms regulating the responsibility to serve and how service should be conducted, called the military ethic. The subject of vast internal and external literatures, the military ethic concerns us here only in terms of the problems it poses to the theory of military professionalism. While deviance from ethical norms arises in any occupation context, the ethical lapses noted above pose particular dangers to the

military because they undermine public support and potentially erode readiness. To maintain a professional identity that is perceived by the client (in this case, the American state) as responsible rather than negligent or even malignant is a core organizational and professional priority for the military.

Why, then, do we see so many lapses in the military ethic? To date, no single set of convincing answers has emerged from the literature. According to the editors of the *Journal of Military Ethics*, the study of military ethics exists "to assist thoughtful professionals to think through their real-world problems and issues" (Cook & Syse, 2010, p. 121). While the literature is vast, the editors note that much of what is written fails this practical test. A similarly critical perspective from the Army context is offered by Snider, Oh, and Toner (2009), who consider the Army's body of "moral-ethical expert knowledge" as the least developed field of professional thought, and argue that which exists is often too theoretical to have practical value. Of the work in this field that both passes the practical test and contributes to the body of expert knowledge, there is a repeated emphasis on both the centrality of the topic to military affairs writ large and a strong assertion that more research is needed. For example, C. D. Allen and Braun (2013) discuss the findings of the Army Profession Campaign's research on internal military trust dynamics, but note the lack of corresponding research on the external trust between the public and the services.

Nevertheless, some suggestive findings are worth highlighting. The tradition of military values research makes clear that American service members have a propensity to share a fairly coherent set of values. For the most part, the logic here is of self-selection patterns (e.g., Bachman, Sigelman, & Diamond, 1987; Hammill, Segal, & Segal, 1995) alongside intense socialization at key PME facilities (e.g., Franke, 2000). In a cross-national study that included the American case, Franke and Heinecken (2001) observed that this combination of self-selection and socialization is weakened in the absence of public support. On one hand, unpopular wars are expected to shift the balance in the logic of self-selection from candidates joining a community that shares their values to candidates joining for occupational reasons. On the other hand, the PME-based socialization efforts have been shown by Franke and Heinecken to be less successful in the absence of broader reinforcement of the values in the larger society. Recent combat operations have been bedeviled by a lack of public support, which may suggest that some ethical lapses are the result of individuals failing to share the values of their institution. As elsewhere, the failure of jointness and the endurance of interservice divisions again deepen our theoretical problems. For example, Mattox (2013) compares the value statements of each of the armed services and finds considerable differences in what each service promotes as its central ethical considerations.

Nevertheless, even if we assume that there is agreement on what constitutes the core ethics of the profession, two other major sources of uncertainty have been explored by scholars. First, military professionals face real challenges regarding their obligation to the truth given an overheated media climate. C. D. Allen and

Braun (2013, p. 80), for example, have helped clarify the unintended consequences of the performativity problems that arise around trust in the military. They note, "perceptions of trust violations can be as damaging as actual violations" (C. D. Allen & Braun, 2013, p. 80), which can be a source of both frustration and confusion to leaders. While there is a clear sense that the military is responsive to public outrage on the declaratory level (Williams, 1997), it is not clear under what circumstances real organizational change coincides with declaratory acknowledgments (Crosbie, 2014; Crosbie and Sass, 2016).

In what sense does this constitute a professional "truth problem"? Certainly, only a handful of military professionals are involved with the sort of high-level policy decisions that might require compromising decisions regarding real and declaratory goals, although this does occur. For example, Crosbie and Sass's (2016) study of service chiefs appearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee reveals unmistakable patterns of dissembling that are worrisome and hardly professional. However, far more common and equally consequential are the routinized acts of dishonesty that Wong and Gerras (2015, p. 18) explore in the context of officers lying on paperwork in order to meet the deluge of reporting requirements, often leaving them "ethically numb."

Second, American service members face an additional source of uncertainty in how to behave ethically when professional ethics come into conflict with the military's need to act as a political pressure group. At a mesosocial level, military organizations are confronted with the paradox of having immense resources to shape public opinion through strategic communications. At the same time, they must contend with long-standing regulatory and customary prohibitions on their use. Furthermore, Braun and Allen (2014, p. 56) argue, "influencing segments of a society and their leadership short of conflict is achieved largely through trust relationships and cooperative engagements," both of which are fragile and likely to be undermined by the illicit use of strategic communications.

At the microsocial level, military professionals, especially those charged with making life and death decisions in complex theaters, are regularly confronted with difficult questions of where their ethical and legal responsibilities lie. At higher levels, this may lead to "shirking" (Feaver, 2005). Ulrich and Cook (2006) argue that senior military leaders have an ethical and legal responsibility to provide honest professional opinions to Congress, but note the dangers of a chilling effect silencing them entirely. At lower levels, Wolfendale (2009) and Milburn (2010) separately argue that officers have a duty to disobey orders that conflict with their code of ethics and oath of office.

Taken together, these varied insights can be used to develop hypotheses to drive future research. The broad context is one in which the American military is still enjoying very high levels of public confidence and political support, even as the organizational and cultural foundations for that support may be weakening. We propose here two hypotheses that revolve around the consequences of an eroding base of responsibility.

Hypothesis 1: We are approaching an inflection point where the factors contributing to public confidence in the military will be outpaced by the factors contributing to public distrust (e.g., ethical lapses, ethical numbing, and contradictions in declaratory and actual policy).

Researching Hypothesis 1 involves a close attention to the debate over military appropriations in the Trump administration as well as the public response to any future ethical lapses. Special attention should be paid to how military leaders prioritize their competing desires for ever greater budgets, ever higher approval ratings, and democratic norms of openness and transparency in their dealings with the American state and public they serve.

Hypothesis 2: More service members find themselves working in roles that require complex moral calculations and/or routinized dissembling.

Researching Hypothesis 2 involves expanding the work done by Wong and Gerras (2015) to better understand the incidence of routinized dishonesty across the services. It also involves scholars in the process of assessing the depth of public oversight into the dark areas of the defense establishment, particularly in the growth areas of Special Operations and Cyber Command.

Expertise

Professional responsibility is an important resource for allowing an occupational group to maintain its control over a body of expert knowledge. Responsibility ebbs and flows with its corollary, public trust, and in doing so shapes the fortunes of the profession. For example, when the American public began to lose confidence in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War (J. T. Allen, Samaranayake, & Albrittain, 2007), the Army recognized this as an existential crisis and began a major overhaul of its doctrine, despite the fact that in operational terms, it was successful on the battlefield (Lock-Pullan, 2007). The quality of expertise, as indicated by this example and as attested by the emerging field of the sociology of expertise (H. Collins & Evans, 2007; Eyal, 2013), is thus analytically separate from the trust in which it is held. How, then, do American military professionals maintain authority over questions such as how wars should be fought and how military costs (in life and limb, in materiel and opportunity) should be assessed? As with the issue of responsibility, the secondary literature provides no definitive answers but rather points to troubling sources of instability in American military expertise.

For Huntington (1957), the expertise of military professionals related exclusively to the management of violence. Today's military professionals, however, occupy a dizzying array of occupational specialties that often have little to do with the management of violence. By contrast, Janowitz's (1960) more expansive definition recognized that force support, logistics, acquisition, and similar fields all contribute to the military's collective goals and as such encompass areas of expert knowledge

that the military claims as its own. To this, we must now add an array of new military responsibilities, from peacekeeping to state-building, that cluster under the umbrella of military operations other than war and which have become formal responsibilities of the services. Meanwhile, the public's interest in military expertise derives from the benefits of increasing efficiencies on the battlefield, decreasing costs (both direct and indirect), acting in concert with widely shared values, and managing global public opinion.

Given this broad sweep of interests, military expertise is not inevitably housed in military organizations alone. Sociologists of expertise stress the value of liminal institutional boundaries in allowing productive ideas to seep into new domains. For example, Eyal (2002) found significant seepage between the intelligence and academic fields in Israel, but similar research has been lacking in the American context. Such liminal boundaries are likely to become increasingly significant as new media, often horizontally structured and with strong democratic norms, allow for increased interactions between the military's professional experts and others. For example, the role of bloggers in shaping counterinsurgency policy provides a likely site of liminal interaction (Ricks, 2009).

Thinking holistically about expertise allows us to question the existing focus on the military's formal arenas for developing expert knowledge, namely, the service academies, war and staff colleges, and other sites of PME. However, even if we strictly identify formal military PME with military expertise, there remain serious questions of its effectiveness (J. G. Pierce, 2010), intellectual rigor (Johnson-Freese, 2013), and of the disincentives for ambitious officers to take PME seriously (Mansoor, 2008, pp. 9–18).

By approaching expertise as distinct from professional credentials, we encounter real questions of who should be included in the tally. Snider and Watkins (2002) argue that there are three distinct American military professions, namely Army, Navy, and aerospace. But if the boundary is drawn around those with expert knowledge in these fields rather than around their respective officer corps, Segal and De Angelis (2009) argue that each of these military professions may well include senior NCOs, reservists, civilians, and contractors. We may also note that military professional closure was once sufficiently robust that it could resist the enormous social pressure to end employer discrimination based on gender and sexuality but no longer (Segal & Kestnbaum, 2002). It remains to be seen whether expertise closure likewise erodes in the face of broader social expectations.

Along similar lines, Abbott (2002, p. 525) observes that many of the changes that have been noted in military organization are not unique to it but rather "characteristic of the entire American production system." However, in sketching this essential similarity, Abbott also lays the groundwork for a major theoretical intervention in the standard sociological theory of professions. The standard theory, introduced by Abbott himself in 1988, presupposes static environments of valuation within which the occupational groups claiming professional jurisdiction constitute a dynamic ecology. The Army's "manifest enmeshment" (Abbott, 2002,

p. 535) in multiple ecologies (political, military, but also the corporate world of contractors, the bureaucratic worlds of other government agencies, the civilian worlds of veterans and civilian employees, etc.) implies to Abbott's mind that normal professional processes must be retheorized to account for massively complex networks of actors.

Thus far, no one has succeeded in sketching the complexity of the overlapping ecologies of military expertise. Indeed, perhaps the most problematic sign of the military's expertise problems can be found in the DOD's continuing failure to overcome the long-standing divisions between the services (Amburn, 2009). For example, Richardson (2008) outlines the "long and unhappy engagement" between the Navy and so-called jointness doctrine. Stavridis and Hagerott (2009) provide evidence of how jointness is actually declining in practice. In a context where even joint basing (sharing infrastructure) proves an insurmountable challenge (Gould, 2013), the free flow of expertise across service domains seems unlikely indeed. For Huntington (1957), this raises serious concerns regarding his narrow sense of military professionals as managers of violence, and the facts would seem to conform better to Snider and Watkins's (2002) sense that there are multiple military professions. Regardless, the increasing pressure to think holistically about military operations is clearly in conflict with the long-standing traditions of interservice rivalry.

To summarize, then, the jurisdictional claims made by the American armed services over bodies of expert knowledge are being expressed in contexts of increasing complexity, but there does not appear to be a consensus regarding how the profession can and should shape policy to account for that complexity. Although it may look like a solution, jointness in practice does not appear to have succeeded in establishing a clear line of demarcation between the appropriate realms of military versus civilian expertise. Future research oriented around the following hypotheses may help resolve some of the confusion in these realms.

> **Hypothesis 3:** Military expertise increasingly flows across the public–private and military–civilian thresholds, which may justify a shift toward significantly increasing opportunities for lateral entry.

Researching Hypothesis 3 involves talking to military professionals across occupational domains to identify opportunities to increase the quality of military expertise through policies such as lateral entry. Conversely, by identifying areas where there are compelling reasons to maintain a strict military control over the development and implementation of expert knowledge, researchers can help the profession locate its core competencies and develop policy to link those areas of work to the identity processes described below. Additionally, this hypothesis directs attention to the importance of civilian credentialing and involvement in civilian professional affiliations to many service members in force support roles ranging from judge advocates to accountants to engineers.

Hypothesis 4: Officers have improved career outcomes and contribute more to the professional community when they have a mixture of civilian education and PME.

The challenges confronting the military's control over its expert knowledge suggest that scholars help the military rethink the long-term value of the PME system, as it is currently constituted. If Hypothesis 4 is borne out through future research, this could suggest either "civilianizing" PME institutions by increasing the rate of attendance of civilians and the use of civilian-derived educational resources or it could mean encouraging officers to attend both PME and civilian institutions.

Identity

For students of the American military, there is arguably no topic more plagued than the relationship between identity and collective action, particularly as this is manifested in the political arena. Indeed, of the three categories, Huntington's notion of an apolitical corporate identity reveals the largest gap between academic and military analyses. Huntington understood military professionals to be an elite subset of uniformed officers, a relatively small group of men who shared an identity as managers of violence and who acted collectively in the pursuance of their operational goals. Ironically, a critical feature of this shared identity was to remain strictly nonpartisan. Historical context for Huntington's (1957) theory is provided by Skelton (1992), who sketches the 18th-century origins of Americans' fear of a politically active military, fears which contributed to its relatively slow professionalization up to the Civil War. As such, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen's (2008) exhortation that the "military must stay apolitical" draws from a long tradition. Mullen's dictum is reaffirmed by many military intellectuals (e.g., Corbett & Davidson, 2009/2010; Strong, 2005).

Nevertheless, scholars overwhelmingly dismiss Huntington's description of the military as apolitical as mythical and misleading. According to Janowitz's (1960) findings, military leaders vary in their partisanship but regardless were deeply enmeshed in political processes. Furthermore, two articles have been dedicated to discrediting Huntington's claim (Babcock-Lumish, 2013; Meilinger, 2010), and lengthy critiques are offered in many of the leading monographs on civil–military relations (Cohen, 2002; Feaver, 2005; Herspring, 2005; Schiff, 2009).

Despite such theoretical assertions, the degree to which military professionals act as a unified pressure group (as Janowitz, 1960, theorizes) remains largely unexplored, and instead we have a variety of studies that provide snapshots of military politics. For example, Sarkesian (1972), following Janowitz (1960), pointed to the centrality of politics to military professionalism on several occasions. Likewise, Bacevich (1997) provides a rich sketch of the emergence of politicized military leadership in the mid-1950s, while Brooks (2005) and Peri (2006) have outlined the

domestic political actions of military leaders in the United States and Israel, respectively.

What remains unclear is not whether military leaders act politically, but rather how they develop political goals, how these goals are pursued, and the degree to which such goals are shared across elite networks. As with the case of who counts as an expert, it is not at all clear who should be included in the category of the military's political corporateness. Gelpi and Feaver (2002) model the actual influence of veterans on politics, suggesting that veterans are deeply involved in the military's political outreach. Noting the dynamics driving the development of the "Hollow Army" of the 1980s, C. D. Allen (2010) documents the importance of cautious political strategy. While Strachan (2010) may be correct that some of the political dysfunction should be blamed on insufficiently knowledgeable politicians, the military's track record suggests that it should take up more of the slack (Crosbie, 2015). Baker (2007) and Moten (2010) make similar points in noting the need for both more private discussion and less public critique.

Together, these studies suggest that political capabilities remain an understudied but critically important element of the American military's professional cultures. Accordingly, this provides a hypothesis for future research:

> **Hypothesis 5:** Flag and general staff officers develop political goals and pursue political strategies in ways that can be either appropriate or inappropriate with regard to the laws and customs governing military politics.

Researching this hypothesis poses special difficulties, but it should be stressed that from a Janowitzian perspective, the pursuit of political goals is appropriate and indeed necessary. However, because of the Huntingtonian taboos that surround the topic, military leaders are unlikely to openly discuss these goals. Much remains to be discovered about this critical element of American politics.

While an overtly partisan military poses dangers to the democratic process and risks undermining its own readiness, the possibility that individuals within the service cause any harm by engaging in partisan politics is also not a settled question (Betros, 2001; J. J. Collins, 2010). To guard against a partisan military, Owens (2006) suggests that while officers have a responsibility to voice their expert opinions, they should refrain from criticizing policy after it has been set and from arguing for or against going to war, which is echoed by Cook (2008) and his notion that military dissent as a "duty to warn." This brings us to a final hypothesis for future research.

> **Hypothesis 6:** Officers are increasingly political but not increasingly partisan.

While there is a long history of researching the partisan attitudes and activities of service members, veterans, and military dependents, we understand very little about the nonpartisan political activities of military populations. Urben (2010) provides a

useful starting point for developing techniques to measure military politics beyond the scope of partisanship.

Limitations of the Existing Reform Efforts

Can and should the concept of professionalism be resuscitated for 21st-century military organizations? American military leaders seem increasingly inclined to answer that the profession is and will remain central to the organization. This was signaled by former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen in a service-wide conference on the topic held on January 10, 2011 (A. C. Pierce, 2011). It was reaffirmed on February 23, 2012, when Mullen's replacement, General Martin E. Dempsey, released a white paper titled "America's Military—A Profession of Arms," which established professionalism as a core resource for guiding the DOD through a period of considerable upheaval. In his words, "our commitment to our profession is imperative" (Dempsey, 2012). General Joseph Dunford, Dempsey's replacement, has continued this command focus on professionalism, with Vice Chairman General Paul J. Selva stressing professionalism as "incredibly important to the foundation of who we are" at the inaugural Defense Department military professionalism summit in February 2016 (Ferdinando, 2016).

As indicated above, the theory of professions posits an interlock between an occupational group's expertise, responsibility, and identity. Lapses in one arena may well bleed into the others. In the context of the American military, issues of identity and expertise are largely hidden from public view, since the military is, for most Americans, a distant abstraction. By contrast, lapses in responsibility, including the ethical lapses described at the beginning of this article, create disproportionate risk to the military both indirectly, in terms of public confidence and support, and directly, in terms of the politics of appropriations.

Given the wide-ranging fissures we have considered in all three of the fault lines, can American military leaders truly solve the problem of ethical lapses by reaffirming the basic principles of professionalism? In this section, we briefly consider the efforts to do so to date and then conclude with our recommendations for future research and policy.[1]

Joint Approaches

The statements above by the Chiefs of Staff must be situated within a longer history of the DOD's efforts to reconcile its status as simultaneously a network of bureaucracies and a collection of occupational fields with professional characteristics. Only a few years before Mullen's conference, however, military leaders had resisted efforts to bridge this organization–profession gap. An executive order by President George W. Bush in 2007 had called for the development of "national security professionals," a single professional identity cutting across departments and armed services (Executive Order No. 13,434, 2007). The plan, largely ignored

by the armed services, was never funded by Congress (Dale, Searafino, & Towell, 2008; Griffiths, 2014).

If the DOD is to follow Dempsey's (2012) guidance in refocusing on professionalism, then it would do well to first resolve the problems that have thus far prevented the emergence of a department-wide professional identity. One step in this direction has recently been taken with the appointment of Rear Admiral Margaret Klein to the new role of senior advisor to the Secretary of Defense for Military Professionalism (Garamone, 2014). Notably, Klein's focus appears to be on military ethics, leaving open the question of systematic research on the problems of expertise and corporateness noted earlier. Klein's office is complemented by the existing Institute for National Security Ethics and Leadership at the National Defense University (2012), the home for the teaching of Joint ethics, but not apparently a hub for research. Although these efforts are commendable, it seems unlikely indeed that a true pan-professionalism could emerge in the near future in the American context.

Service Approaches

Disagreement on what it means to be a professional is also found within and between the individual services (Watkins & Cohen, 2002). The Army Profession Campaign would ultimately reveal "a lack of common understanding throughout the Army on what it means to be a profession or a professional" (U.S. Department of the Army, 2013, p. 1), which echoed criticism raised earlier by Moten (2010). During confirmation hearings held on July 2014, the incoming Marine Corps Commandant General Joseph Dunford (*Marine Corps Times*, 2014) described PME as his second priority. By contrast, in a September 2014 article in the Marine Corps Gazette titled "What is a Military Professional? Do We Have a Professional Enlisted Corps?," Sergeant Major James D. Willeford (2014) noted with dismay,

> there are those who believe *everyone* in the military is a professional, those who believe only the *officer corps* is professional, and those who believe *no one* is. For something so foundational, it is remarkable that this has not been resolved.

Professionalism is an even more plagued concept for the technical services, the Air Force and Navy, with members identifying primarily with their technical specialty or occupational community rather than a service-wide professional identity (Constant, 2002; Davis & Donnini, 1991; Kelly, 2014). Regardless, high-ranking officers in both services continue to identify professionalism as a key response to organizational problems (e.g. Marshall, 2014).

The Department of the Army has conducted very public research on professionalism. In May 2008, the Army created what is now the Center for the Army Profession and Ethic (CAPE), and this agency has housed the Profession of Arms Campaign, renamed Army Profession Campaign, which concluded in 2013, and has published several reports and white papers, culminating in new doctrine (CAPE,

2014). The campaign itself was remarkably rich methodologically including two surveys with a total of 41,000 respondents; focus groups including over 500 soldiers and civilians, 15 academic and military intellectual forums, and a review of 35 prior studies by Army agencies (Army Profession Campaign, 2011). This was apparently supplemented by the work of the Leader Development Task Force (LDTF), which also issued its final report in 2013, and included 550 interviews, forums including 48 commanders, and a survey of 12,022 officers (Office of the Chief of Staff of the Army, 2013).

While some of the LDTF's survey results will be of value in addressing all three categories of research, it is indicative that the primary conclusions of the report concern very narrow operational concerns, principally the embedding of mission command and the adoption of new assessment methods rather than the broader questions of expertise, responsibility, and corporateness. Accordingly, the LDFT report fails to address the core concerns of the literature. It is possible that the Army Profession Campaign does indeed succeed in those areas, but it is classified for official use only. It remains unclear whether these findings can or will be shared with the other services.

The Navy equivalent of CAPE appears to be the Center for Personal and Professional Development (CPPD), while the Marine Corps equivalent appears to be the PME program at the Marine Corps University. In the only publicly available research on the Navy's CPPD and the Marine Corps' PME (Filiz & Jean-Pierre, 2012; Wilhelm et al., 2006), a raft of recommendations and areas of concern are noted. The Air Force benefited from extensive analysis of its PME programs in the 1990s and early 2000s (Davis & Donnini, 1991; Weaver, 2001), but publicly accessible research on more recent developments has not been made available.

There are, of course, alternatives to maintaining a professional force. Three alternatives (not mutually exclusive) may be viewed as semirealistic choices for the United States: the return to a conscript force, the bureaucratization of the existing professional force, and the off-loading of responsibilities to allies or to private contractors. Critics of each are easy to find (against conscription, see Bacevith, 2008, pp. 152–155; against bureaucratization, see Snider & Watkins, 2002, pp. 11–13; against the use of contractors, see Schaub & Franke, 2009, pp. 88–104). Advocates for any of these positions are harder to find (Lewis, 2009). While any of these options would allow the state to maintain its monopoly over the legitimate projection of state power abroad, the current All-Volunteer Force model of military organization is structured fundamentally on a professional force model. This organizational preference is reinforced by the realities of the modern battlefield, which is increasingly complex (Hajjar, 2014), technologically sophisticated (Grey, 1997), and mediated (Coletta & Feaver, 2006). This complexity and technological sophistication suggests the need for better trained, more expert agents. Meanwhile, the media component vastly increases the risk associated with deviance from civilian norms of conduct, again demanding agents with specialized training (Maltby, 2013). Since American military doctrine has tracked these developments closely by

emphasizing the need for more professional soldiers (Counterinsurgency Field Manual, 2007; Krulak, 1999), we have good reason to expect that military professionalism will almost certainly retain its centrality in DOD organization for the foreseeable future.

Summary and Future Research Goals

The three fault lines that we have identified in the American military profession are long-standing sources of tension and uncertainty that have been widely recognized as such for some time. What has been missing has been a broader perspective on how these problems relate to one another. All three traditional elements of the profession are now sources of tension and uncertainty that collectively undermine the efficacy of the profession and its efforts to establish trust, maintain control over its areas of expert knowledge, and act collectively as a political interest group.

In outlining the state of the field, as we have done in this article, we hope to sensitize scholars to the key issues in the field and to the need for sustained attention to these issues. We are ourselves embarking upon a comprehensive effort to replicate the research design of Janowitz's (1960) *The Professional Soldier*. Funded by the Army Research Institute, we hope that this research provides the empirical baseline for an updated sociology of the military profession in America.

Several elements are still missing, however. First, following Abbott's (2002, 2005) theory of linked ecologies, we are still missing a sufficiently robust analysis of the fields of organized work and life across which military affairs unfold. This hinders our understanding of professional jurisdictional struggles and boundary work, particularly with an eye to the rise of defense and security paraprofessionals (McCoy, 2012) and hybrid professionals (Noordegraaf, 2007). Second, these efforts need to be connected to similar research in other national and regional contexts, if we are to properly understand the evolving role of military professions in the relations within and between states. In this age of perpetual war (Joyner, 2011), where the world's biggest employer is the U.S. Department of Defense (Taylor, 2015) and yet where the American civil–military gap continues to grow (Thompson, 2001) and general military literacy continues to decline among American voters (Fellows, 2015), the need for ethical, expert, and self-restraining military leadership is hard to overstate. Finally, the six hypotheses offered here are intended to spur future research in the area, not to constrain such research to a rigid theoretical framework. We encourage our colleagues to look with fresh eyes at the American military profession, weighing anew its success and its failures, its extraordinary costs and its unique benefits, its past and its future.

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Note

1. "Professional" and "professionalism" are watchwords in the American defense community and are, as the following discussion makes clear, invoked repeatedly by military leaders in the spirit of describing the challenges facing their service and their own preferred solution to such problems. At this point, the skeptical reader may wonder whether the terms are sometimes used in the vernacular, in other words, to contrast with concepts such as "amateurish," "negligent" or "inefficient" or if the speakers actually intend a more academic or technical understanding of the term. In the following discussion, we believe that the latter is indeed more likely the case. Evidence for this includes the importance of the concept of professions/professionalism in the Professional Military Education curricula (the individuals we cite would have unquestionably been exposed to these concepts during their officer training) as well as the tenor of policy interventions that follow from the declaratory statements we reference. For example, the Army Profession Campaign and the new office of special advisor to the Secretary of Defense on military professionalism are both explicitly oriented to the technical and not vernacular use of the term.

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