

The Senior NCO Corps and Professionalism: Where do we Stand?

A paper written for the CF Leadership Institute

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INTRODUCTION

Even though records of non-commissioned officers (NCOs) in armies can be found as far back as Roman times, the theme of this paper, the Senior NCO Corps and Professionalism, is a topic that has not been debated widely in the literature.¹ Most Western societies see the officer corps as the repository of professionalism in their armed forces, and non-commissioned members (NCMs)² are usually viewed as tradespersons³ who are not professionals in the traditional meaning of the word. However, increasingly the status of NCMs in the CF has been questioned as roles of officers and NCMs have changed within the military and changes in Canadian social demographics have resulted in increased education levels among NCMs so that in some cases they are as well educated as officers.⁴ The recently published (2003) cornerstone manual describing the philosophy and practice of the profession of arms in Canada, *Duty with Honour*, has

¹ Ronald G. Haycock, "The Stuff of Armies': The NCO Throughout History," in Douglas L. Bland, ed. *Backbone of the Army: Non-Commissioned Officers in the Future Army* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, 2000), 11-12; and Douglas L. Bland, "Preface," in Bland, ed. *Backbone of the Army*, xi.

² The CF defines "non-commissioned member" as "any person, other than an officer, who is enrolled in, or who pursuant to law is attached or seconded otherwise than as an officer to, the Canadian Forces, and "non-commissioned officer" as "a member holding the rank of sergeant or corporal." Queen's Regulations and Orders for the Canadian Forces, Volume I - Administrative, Chapter 1, Introduction and Definitions. However, the three warrant officer ranks are usually included as part of the NCO Corps. See for example, DND, *Duty with Honour: The Profession of Arms in Canada* (Kingston, ON: CF Leadership Institute, 2003), 11, 19.

³ The difference between trades people and professionals is that trades persons or technicians use tools without a comprehensive knowledge of how those tools came to be, whereas a professional, because of his/her understanding of how and why the tools were made, is able to adapt the tools for new uses in innovative ways or to modify them to meet unforeseen requirements. D. J. Bercuson, "Defence Education for 2000...and Beyond," in "Educating Canada's Military: Workshop Report, 7-8 December 1998," Kingston, ON: Royal Military College of Canada, Bercuson, 30.

⁴ For example, in 1999-2000 it was estimated that 40 percent of the individuals enrolled in the RMC Continuing Studies university degree program were NCMs. Camille Tkacz, "The Canadian Forces Non-Commissioned Member Professional Development System," Bland, ed. *Backbone of the Army Backbone*, 107.

recognized the changing status of NCOs and asserted that “all regular force members of the CF, regardless of rank, are members of the profession of arms.”⁵

Nonetheless, *Duty with Honour* recognizes a distinction between officers and NCMs based on “the current distribution of responsibilities and expertise” between the officer and NCO corps. For example, the manual states that “officers possess knowledge of a more general nature” which “is used to marshal forces and direct their employment,” and that NCMs apply their specific expertise to accomplish specific tasks or missions. Therefore, commissioned officers are believed to “identify themselves as potential commanders and leaders” while NCMs are more focused on “the effective and efficient accomplishment of all tasks” and “the immediate welfare of individual subordinates.”⁶ However, *Duty with Honour* predicts that because “uncertainty, ambiguity and complexity will increasingly characterize most operations in all environments, the old paradigm that emphasized the decision-making role of the officer and the applied, technical role of the NCM will likely shift.” Based on this assumption *Duty with Honour* asserts that “[a]uthority will be increasingly delegated and an even greater degree of responsibility assigned to NCOs and warrant officers...” and that “[i]n some cases, officers, NCOs and warrant officers may share these authorities and responsibilities...”⁷ These assertions, at first glance, ring true. A closer look at the profession of arms in Canada, however, may shed a different light on these issues and even call some of the assumptions in *Duty with Honour* into question.

This paper, therefore, examines the nature military professionalism in the Canadian context focussing on the professional status of the senior NCO corps now and in the future. It concludes that a new model of military professionalism is required to accommodate the context in which NCMs operate currently and will operate in the future within the Canadian profession of arms.

THE CURRENT CANADIAN MODEL OF MILITARY PROFESSIONALISM

As the first comprehensive official statement of Canadian military professionalism, *Duty with Honour* is a significant document and represents important progress in explaining and defining the Canadian profession of arms. It uses a model of the professions that is based on the “classic works” that “have informed most Western thinking on the nature of the profession of arms and the concept of military professionalism.”⁸ And the definition of a profession “synthesized from the scholarly literature” given by *Duty with Honour* reflects the traditional model of the professions used by English-speaking armed forces:

⁵ Members of the primary reserve on “active duty” are “accorded professional status.” *Duty with Honour*, 11.

⁶ *Duty with Honour*, 19-20.

⁷ *Duty with Honour*, 75. This view was shared by NCOs attending a Symposium on the NCO in the future army in June 1999, Bland, “Preface,” xv.

⁸ *Duty with Honour*, 7.

A profession is an exclusive group of people who possess and apply a systematically acquired body of knowledge derived from extensive research, education, training and experience. Members of a profession have a special responsibility to fulfill their function competently and objectively for the benefit of society. Professionals are governed by a code of ethics that establishes standards of conduct while defining and regulating their work. This code of ethics is enforced by the members themselves and contains values that are widely accepted as legitimate by society at large.⁹

This definition is a useful yardstick with which to evaluate Canadian military professionalism, but the model supporting it is not described in detail. The definition, however, does seem to rely heavily on Huntington's model of military professionalism,¹⁰ which, while still widely used in Western (especially the American) armed forces, has limitations that may make it inappropriate for use by the CF. For example, in the Huntington model, NCOs are portrayed as having "neither the intellectual skills nor the professional responsibility of the officer." Therefore, because they are specialists in the application but not the management of violence, they are characterized as practitioners of a trade, not as professionals.¹¹ However, Huntington's interpretation of the professional status of NCOs may be culturally limited by its basis in the US military's NCO corps and also dated, given both the recent advances in NCO education and the increased responsibility thrust on NCOs by decentralized operations such as peace support and "operations other than war."

The view that the CF has not fully subscribed to Huntington's model is reflected in *Duty with Honour* which describes the profession of arms in Canada as an "inclusive profession," and asserts that "[a]ll uniformed personnel fulfilling operational, support or specialist functions are considered military professionals." They are deemed to be professionals because they meet these criteria: 1) embracing the military ethos; 2) reaching and maintaining minimum first employment standards; 3) pursuing the highest standards of the required expertise; 4) understanding, accepting and fulfilling all the commitments and responsibilities inherent in the profession of arms.¹² The manual further states that:

In the Canadian Forces, all non-commissioned members (NCMs), especially non-commissioned officers (NCOs), warrant officers (WOs), chief petty officers and petty officers (CPOs and POs), share leadership responsibilities and are required to master complex skills and gain extensive knowledge of the theory of conflict.

⁹ *Duty with Honour*, 6.

¹⁰ See *Duty with Honour*, 7-8, especially Figure 1-1 and the use of Huntington's identity-expertise-responsibility triad as the "Theoretical Construct of the Profession of Arms in Canada." Huntington used the term "corporateness" instead of "identity."

¹¹ Don M. Snider, "An Uninformed Debate on Military Culture," *Orbis* 43, no. 1 (Winter 1999), 24-5.

¹² *Duty with Honour*, 10-11.

Therefore, and in accordance with the criteria listed, all regular force members of the CF, regardless of rank, are members of the profession of arms.¹³

However, *Duty with Honour* recognizes the difference between NCOs and officers in terms of competencies, authority and responsibility, because it states that “[t]hrough their commission, officers are given particular authority and responsibility for decisions on the use of force.” Officers are also described as having “the right and privilege to command,” and more specifically officers in command appointments are held to be “responsible for creating the conditions for a mission’s success, including a clear statement of the commander’s intent, and thereafter for leading all subordinates to achieve the objective.” Because of these responsibilities and responsibilities for strategic leadership, the “officer’s scope of responsibility” is described as “broader than that of NCOs and warrant officers and typically gets larger as he or she rises in rank.”¹⁴

The manual also recognizes the necessity of having both an officer corps and an NCM corps because of “the extremely complex nature of the profession of arms and the need to organize and structure the profession to accommodate the many demands that it faces.” It notes that “responsibility and expertise are distributed between officers and NCMs in such a manner as to clearly define each and make the most effective contribution to accomplishing the mission.”¹⁵ This distribution, however, has a long history based on the experience of operations in each of the environments that is not fully accounted for in *Duty with Honour*, as we shall see.

Duty with Honour states that the NCM Corps tends to apply technical knowledge to accomplish a task or mission, but it states that NCMs’ “knowledge and skill have been oriented primarily to the tactical level,” but because the levels of conflict may overlap or be blurred in today’s world, “NCMs, especially NCOs and warrant officers, are increasingly required to be knowledgeable about every level to one degree or another...”¹⁶ The idea that NCMs need to have a more broadly based expertise is often supported by the notion of the “strategic corporal,” where “decisions and actions taken by NCOs, warrant officers and their subordinates can, and often do, have consequences up to and including the strategic and political level.”¹⁷ This is an interesting hypothesis, based largely on the Army’s recent experience, but it is not necessarily supported by the types of work NCMs have traditionally performed or continue to perform in the Navy or in the Air Force.¹⁸

¹³ *Duty with Honour*, 11.

¹⁴ *Duty with Honour*, 15.

¹⁵ *Duty with Honour*, 11. This view was supported by NCOs attending a Symposium on the NCO in the future army in June 1999, Bland, “Preface,” x.

¹⁶ *Duty with Honour*, 19.

¹⁷ *Duty with Honour*, 64.

¹⁸ An excellent description of the Senior NCO Corps’ role in the Army is found in Bernd Horn, “A Timeless Strength: The Army’s Senior NCO Corps,” *Canadian Military Journal* 3, no. 2 (Summer 2002), 39-47. No similar description exists for the Navy or Air Force.

For example, in the Canadian Navy since the Second World War the responsibility levels of the senior NCMs, the Chief Petty Officers and Petty Officers, have gradually extended into what were traditionally junior officers' roles in terms of managing the technical aspects of operations, like warfare director.¹⁹ But this extension of technical responsibility by senior POs does not extend beyond the technical realm into the command arena as no NCM is trained for and therefore has the skill to perform officer of the watch or command roles.²⁰

In the Canadian Air Force there is a clear distinction between NCMs and officers. Most of the aircrew in the Air Force are officers, and even though they are outnumbered by the NCMs, it is the officers that are the warrior class. Most NCMs are in support roles and this delineation has defined the roles officer and NCM roles in the Air Force. For example, in the Second World War, while groundcrew out-numbered aircrew five to one, 94 percent of the Royal Canadian Air Force's (RCAF) fatal casualties were aircrew.²¹ By virtue of this hierarchy most of the senior command positions in the Air Force are held by aircrew.²²

Besides the three operational environments (Army, Navy and Air Force) of the CF, there are also many in the CF who, despite their environmental affiliation, could be classed as support or technical personnel (sometimes referred to as "purple" occupations in the CF). Bland notes that many officers and NCOs no longer exercise command, but "manage" technicians "using quite collegial techniques foreign to past generations." This has given rise to what he calls "new-order units" that are depend more on technical expertise than hierarchical position to lead.²³ Elsewhere, I have hypothesized that the balance between

¹⁹ *Duty with Honour*, 18.

²⁰ Allan English, Richard Gimblett, Lynn Mason, and Mervyn Berridge Sills, "Command Styles in the Canadian Navy," report prepared for Defence Research and Development Canada, draft dated 23 Nov 2004, 131.

²¹ Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 66, 305; and W.R. Feasby, ed., *The Official History of the Canadian Medical Services 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer), 512.

²² The custom of choosing leaders from among pilots was less predominant in maritime patrol and maritime helicopter squadrons where naval traditions had some influence and there was less concern with the occupation of squadron and flight commanders as long as they were aircrew. See James F. Johnson, "Air Navigators and Squadron Command Opportunities," *Canadian Forces Polaris* 2, no. 1 (1973), 40-1. Issues of aircrew leadership also were raised by me in a number of presentations to air force officers starting in 1999 and first published as Allan English, "Leadership and Command in the Air Force: Can Non-Aircrew Command Flying Squadrons?" paper given at the 6th Air Force Historical Conference, Cornwall, ON, 21-23 June 2000. In Office of Air Force Heritage and History, ed. *Proceedings: 6th Annual Air Force Historical Conference*. Winnipeg, MB: Air Force History and Heritage, 2000, 79-86.

²³ Bland, "Preface," x. The notion of leadership differences between combat arms and "technical corps" was recognized in the British Army as early as the beginning of the 20th century. Allan English, "The Masks of Command: Leadership Differences in the Canadian Army, Navy, and Air Force," paper given at the Conference on Leadership in

technical and traditional “heroic” leadership varies according to environment (service) and even by type of unit within a service.²⁴

These examples demonstrate that understanding differences in leadership among armies, navies, and air forces are critical to understanding the nature of the profession of arms and has become increasingly important in an era where joint and combined operations predominate. *Duty with Honour* recognizes that changes in the CF and in Canadian society will result in both change and continuity in the relationship between the officer and NCO corps and that the forces of continuity and change may well be different in the three environments.²⁵ I would add that the so called “purple” occupations will also be subject to different dynamics. Every environment, and one could argue every occupation in the CF, has different leadership expectations based on that environment’s “mask of command.” Even in the unified CF, where a significant amount of training and education is conducted in a joint environment, leaders spend their most formative years in service cultures that shapes their views about what is an appropriate leadership style. Furthermore, there may be a significant difference between leaders, both officers and NCOs, in the technical and support branches of the CF, and even among officers and NCOs in the operational or combat arms branches. This is an area that requires more study before the assertions in *Duty with Honour* about the differences between officers and NCOs can be accepted without reservation.

THE TRADITIONAL MODEL OF THE WESTERN MILITARY PROFESSIONAL²⁶

Since *Duty with Honour* does not describe in detail the model that it uses to assess professionalism in the CF, it is necessary to examine some of the “classic works” that have informed *Duty with Honour* and “most Western thinking on the nature of the profession of arms and the concept of military professionalism” before we can decide if the assumptions made in *Duty with Honour* are valid for the CF in the 21st century.

The early work of writers like Huntington and Finer on theories of professionalism hypothesized that civilian control over armed services “was best served by maximizing professionalism” because it “recognized and encompassed” civilian control. Central to Huntington’s (1957) search for an answer to his question of whether or not American

the Armies of Tomorrow and the Future, Kingston, ON, 6-7 Feb 2002 and the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society, Kingston ON, 25-27 October 2002, 11.

²⁴ See English, “The Masks of Command” for a detailed treatment of this topic.

²⁵ *Duty with Honour*, 74.

²⁶ These issues are discussed in more detail in Allan D. English, “Professionalism and the Military - Past, Present, and Future: A Canadian Perspective.” Paper written for the Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, May 2002.

<http://www.cda.forces.gc.ca/cfli/engraph/research/pdf/21.pdf>

liberal ideals of democracy had been compromised by increases in the size of its peacetime armed forces was the concept of professionalism. Military professionalism, according to Huntington, was the key to civilian control over the armed forces. It was far preferable to use the device of professionalism in the armed forces as an objective method of control rather than by the subjective means of maximizing civilian authority over them, he argued. He believed that with professionalism the armed services themselves would promote military efficiency whilst recognizing their subservience to the state; this was, in his view, better than imposing civilian values and directives on them, which might impair their efficiency. Huntington's ideas were in tune with the "new conservatism" of post-Second World War America where the need for a large and efficient standing army was recognized. The concept of professionalism was embraced to assure that the US armed services would meet both the highest standards of performance and an obligation to serve society. Finer, one of Huntington's severest critics, writing in 1962 noted that in certain circumstances the armed services of a state may be constitutionally required to intervene in government, as a measure of last resort and a matter of professional duty. On the other hand, research on Latin American militaries has shown that professionalism alone was not a guarantee of non-involvement in politics as "civilian government tended to be supreme until the military professionalized" and acquired the capacity to usurp civilian control of the state.²⁷ Huntington acknowledged that in some states the prevailing ideology was wholly incompatible with Western concepts of professionalism except in terms of the military being composed of paid experts. However, as we shall see, the universality of Huntington's theory of military professionalism has been challenged because certain ideal conditions, such as a balance between the requirements of the armed forces and the values of society, would have to prevail for it to apply in all cases.²⁸ Feaver notes that in his 1977 revision of *The Soldier and the State* Huntington does not discuss his earlier characteristics of professionalism, expertise, responsibility, and corporateness, but adopts "the Janowitz's vocabulary of "congruence/convergence."²⁹

Janowitz's (1960) study of the post-Second World War American armed services concluded that while there had been changes in the professional officer corps and the armed services' organizational structure, the American armed services had maintained their professional distinctiveness and integrity. Their professional ethic, he concluded, was adequate to maintain civilian political supremacy without compromising their professional autonomy.³⁰ Feaver suggests that for all their conceptual differences,

²⁷ Peter D. Feaver, "The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control," *Armed Forces and Society* 23, no. 2 (Winter 1996), 163-4, 177, note 41.

²⁸ Martin Edmonds, *Armed Services and Society* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), 79-80.

²⁹ Feaver, "The Civil-Military Problematique," 163, 176, note 39.

³⁰ Edmonds, *Armed Services and Society*, 81.

Janowitz and Huntington use the same “values-based” mechanism, professionalism, to explain how civil control of military forces can best be maintained in the West.³¹ These other views of the relationship between modern societies and armed forces notwithstanding, Huntington’s ideas continue to dominate much of the debate on this topic, in Canada as well as elsewhere.³² His supporters claim that many of his ideas are as valid today as they were when they were written. Noting that *The Soldier and the State* “put the issue of civil-military relations on the map,” Robert Kaplan explains that the book was inspired by President Truman’s firing of General Douglas MacArthur in 1951 during the Korean War. MacArthur’s “political generalship,” according to Huntington, “undermined the idea of a professional military.” And a professional military, in Huntington’s view, is the only way to keep the threat of a military take over in liberal democracies at bay. For him “the modern officer is a professional, whose job is the management of violence and whose client is the state,” and whose advice is “strictly professional” based at all times on the “national interest.”³³ While this may appear to be a valid theoretical construct, one challenge might be what is and who defines the national interest. Recent US military operations have shown that this is interpreted differently by the different US services often giving advice to promote the capabilities, and therefore the budget share, of their own service.³⁴

One of the greatest weaknesses of Huntington’s work is his methodology. While few would argue with his view that people, events, beliefs and institutions do not fit into “neat logical categories,” and therefore scholars are forced to generalize if they wish to derive “lessons for broader application,” most historians would take issue with generalizations that are not supported by the facts. Kaplan tells us that Huntington was a political scientist who was comfortable producing *The Soldier and the State* as “a book of relentless empirical generalizations.”³⁵ If one accepts that “empirical” here refers to making generalizations based on observation or experience not rigorous research,³⁶ then

³¹ Feaver, “The Civil-Military Problematique,” 165.

³² The essence of Huntington’s views on professionalism was endorsed by senior Department of National Defence leaders at a 1999 conference on the profession of arms in Canada and are also found in DWH. See General Maurice Baril, “Keynote Address: The State of the Profession of Arms in the Canadian Forces,” presented at Conference of Defence Associations Institute XVth Annual Seminar, 1999 - The Profession of Arms in Canada: Past, Present and Future <http://www.cda-cdai.ca/english-frame.htm>; and note 10 above.

³³ Robert D. Kaplan, “Looking the World in the Eye,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 280, no. 5 (December 2001), 70, 72-4.

³⁴ See Allan English, “The Operational Art: Theory, Practice, and Implications for the Future.” Paper written for the Canadian Forces College, March 2003, 18-20 for an overview of this issue.

³⁵ Kaplan, “Looking the World in the Eye,” 72.

³⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 6th ed. (1980), 339.

those scholars who have recently taken issue with Huntington's generalizations appear to have a point.

In "The Long Shadow of *The Soldier and the State*" Coffman gives examples of how a lack of historical data can lead to some of the faulty assumptions that have dominated the debate of military professionalism. Historians have found that, contrary to Huntington's assumptions, in the late 19th century there "was no great gap between [American officers] and the propertied middle class" and that the "drive for military professionalism" was no different than that found in the civilian professions at the time." In fact rather than epitomizing a civil-military gap, the officer corps of the late 19th century American army shared many characteristics with urban reformers in America - they were Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, middle class, educated, and believed in "character, fair play, progress, the betterment of mankind, and the democratic mission of their nation."³⁷ Furthermore, in the between 1880 and 1920 military leaders "maintained close social and intellectual ties with America's business, professional, and political elites and shared their outlook."³⁸ Historical studies have shown that Huntington's model does not correspond to "the realities of American life" at the time, and in some ways was almost a "literary construct." American army officers were not "polarized ideologically" from their contemporaries, but "shared the values of the middle class from which they came."³⁹ This raises the question of how Huntington arrived at his conclusions.

Huntington's approach to issues of military professionalism, according to Kaplan, can be best understood by Huntington's education, experience and national culture. He is described as "someone who combines liberal ideals with a deeply conservative understanding of history and foreign policy." In his framework, liberalism is a highly idealistic "ideology of individualism, free markets, liberty, and the rule of law," whereas he believes that conservatism is not an ideology but a practical way of constraining the almost unbounded idealism of liberalism. "Real conservatism cannot aspire to lofty principles, because its task is to defend what already exists," he asserts. This paradigm led Huntington to conclude that conservatism was the only proper mind set for the military profession. In fact, he believes that liberal values, based on individualism, can "undermine a professional officer corps." Huntington, however, does not see the military professional as a reactionary; he acknowledges that the professionalization of 19th century European militaries promoted a meritocracy in the officer corps and challenged "the aristocratic basis of society." He argued that the civil-military dynamic was very different in 19th century America because an isolated officer corps developed an aristocratic ethos. But as we have seen this view has been challenged by historians.⁴⁰

³⁷ Edward M. Coffman, "The Long Shadow of *The Soldier and the State*," *The Journal of Military History* 55 (January 1991), 76-77.

³⁸ American historian James Abrahamson cited in Coffman, "The Long Shadow of *The Soldier and the State*," 78.

³⁹ Coffman, "The Long Shadow of *The Soldier and the State*," 69, 81.

⁴⁰ Coffman, "The Long Shadow of *The Soldier and the State*," 71, 73, 82.

Perhaps a better and more widely applicable characterization of Huntington's views on militaries in the 20th century can be found in his book *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968): "In the world of oligarchy, the soldier is a radical; in the middle class world, he is a participant and an arbiter; as the mass society looms...he becomes the conservative guardian of the existing order."⁴¹ Yet many of Huntington's ideas from his earlier work, *The Soldier and the State*, underlie the current debate about the place of the US military in its society. The debate has polarized between those who believe that the US military should maintain what they believe to have been its traditional isolation from the liberal society, thus maintaining its warrior ethos, and those who believe that the military should more closely resemble the society it defends.⁴² This phenomenon is neither new nor restricted to the US. In late 19th century France, "right-wing and conservative groups" saw the discipline and hierarchical authority of the army as a proper model for civilian society.⁴³ Therefore, the issue of the relationship between armed forces and society is likely to be an integral part of any debate on the military profession's place in society.

Much new scholarly work on professions has been written since the two most influential studies of the military as a profession, Huntington's *Soldier and the State* and Janowitz's *The Professional Soldier*, were written over 40 years ago. Yet, as Burk noted, the implications of this new literature for military professionalism has not yet been fully explored. He goes on to explain that this is an important issue because to "call an occupation 'professional' is usually a positive normative judgment about the work being done and, since we think that professional work is a social good, whatever we call professional work also reveals something about what we believe is required for the well-being of society." Burk argues that the key characteristics of a profession are expertise (mastery of abstract knowledge), control over a jurisdiction to apply expert knowledge, and the legitimacy ascribed to that profession by others.⁴⁴ His views are summarized here because they are one of the few recent treatments of the military profession in the context of the new work being done on the professions and because they capture many of the perspectives on professions that predominate in the militaries of Canada and the US.

⁴¹ Huntington cited in Kaplan, "Looking the World in the Eye," 78.

⁴² See for example Williamson Murray, "Military Culture Does Matter," *Strategic Review* 27, no. 2 (Spring 1999), 32-40; and Don M. Snider, "An Uninformed Debate on Military Culture," *Orbis* 43, no. 1 (Winter 1999), 15-26. This debate is discussed in a Canadian context in Allan D. English, *Understanding Military Culture: A Canadian Perspective*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004, chapters 5 and 6.

⁴³ Stephen Wilson, "For a Socio-Historical Approach to the Study of Western Military Culture," *Armed Forces and Society* 6, no. 4 (Summer 1980), 544.

⁴⁴ James Burk, "Expertise, Jurisdiction, and Legitimacy of the Military Profession," paper presented at the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society, Baltimore, MD, 19-21 October 2001 (dated June 2001), 1.

Burk tells us that in pre-20th century Britain professions were those “‘occupations suitable for a gentleman,’” and the status of professions often depended more on the prestige of the persons who worked in them than the work itself.⁴⁵ This interpretation has been challenged by Freidson who argues that the prestige of the professions is due less to the social origins of their members than to their service to society’s elites.⁴⁶ Either interpretation could be applied to the profession of arms in Europe, which, although generally held in low esteem because of the social class of those in the ranks and the nature of soldiering, was considered to be respectable in some ways because most of the officer corps was composed of sons of the nobility who defended, in uniform, the interests of society’s elites. However, by the 20th century a profession’s status depended more on the work done than on social standing of the worker. To ensure that the quality of a professional work remained high, people in certain relatively high status occupations organized into associations that trained and tested their members. They also, through mechanisms that varied in time and place, protected their right to practice in a certain domain by excluding outsiders who they considered unqualified. Intrinsic to this concept was the idea of service, in other words professionals were doing important work in society and they put the needs of their clients above their own needs. By the mid-20th century many scholars accepted the idea that professions enjoyed high status because they met important social needs and had risen above the self-serving motives of those, like merchants and businessmen, in non-professional occupations⁴⁷

This ideal was captured in texts widely used in courses on military ethics and professionalism at Canadian military colleges and American military academies. In one representative essay Barzun sketches an outline of history of professions as groups with a monopoly on certain skills for a “distinct practical purpose.” He reminds us that because of this focus on practical outcomes, professions are vulnerable institutions, because, while the role of professions in society may be eternal, a particular profession may disappear or change radically over time, for example the priest-physician or barber-surgeon. Barzun observes that the “tendency of an egalitarian age to turn every occupation into a profession” has complicated the subject of professional ethics. He uses the example of the “profession” of journalism to illustrate this point: there is no body of peers to tell if practitioners are competent, the “professional” has a distant relationship with his/her clients, and there are no specific professional credentials required to become a journalist. This trend is paralleled by the gradual demoting of professions to the level of ordinary trades and businesses. His message for professions is that their one hope for survival is the recovery of their mental and moral force. It is not enough to have codes of conduct that are policed by professional oversight bodies; professions must also exercise “moral and intellectual leadership” that communicates the message that ethical behaviour

⁴⁵ British sociologist T.H. Marshall cited in Burk, “Expertise...,” 5.

⁴⁶ Eliot Freidson, *Professionalism: The Third Logic* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2001), 103.

⁴⁷ Burk, “Expertise...,” 5-6, 9.

is “desirable, widely practiced, approved and admired.”⁴⁸ Or as Lerner puts it: all professions need to “recapture the sense of vocation or calling.”⁴⁹ Barzun’s essay was written in 1978 and Lerner’s in 1975, but the points they made then are still highly relevant today.

In this context, a committee advising the Minister of National Defence on reform of the CF’s officer corps in the late 1990s suggested that: “A suitable formal education has become as much of a touchstone of military professionalism as charisma, honour, dedication, courage and a 'strong right arm.' Although the essence of war-fighting is today the same as it was in ancient times...It is no longer sufficient for Canadian Forces officers to know which civil or military solutions to apply to problems, it is necessary that they thoroughly understand the nature of the solutions they aspire to use and to be able to adapt or improvise solutions to suit particular circumstances. To do that, they must learn those basic skills of critical evaluation and analysis that will allow them to tackle any problem that may come along. Put simply, they must acquire the thinking skills that a liberal arts education affords as the basis for whatever technical learning they need also acquire.”⁵⁰ This rationale suggests an approach not dissimilar from those used by other professions in training their apprentices for service to society. As Freidson has pointed out, professions require their trainees to be taught the first principles of their work formally in schools because as practitioners they may be required to exercise extensive “discretionary judgment” which demands more of “a firm grounding in basic theory and concepts to guide discretionary judgment than to gain practice” in what otherwise would be a selection from a number of practices established by custom or tradition.⁵¹

The Profession of Arms in Canada⁵²

Similar to many Western armed forces, the CF’s leadership has indicated that members of the CF, particularly the officers, practice a profession, and therefore they promoted the idea that a military career is not just a job, but a vocation or a way of life. Members of the CF are expected to possess military virtues and to rely on them to perform beyond what is

⁴⁸ Jacques Barzun, “The Professions Under Siege,” in Malham M. Wakin, ed., *War, Morality, and the Military Profession* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), 124-5, 128, 130, 132.

⁴⁹ Max Lerner, “The Shame of the Professions ” in Wakin, *War, Morality, and the Military Profession*, 138.

⁵⁰ “Second Interim Report of the Minister’s Monitoring Committee on Change in the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces,” nd [July 1999], can be found at http://www.dnd.ca/menu/press/Reports/monitor_com/eng/leader_e.htm, chapter 5, “observations,” np.

⁵¹ Freidson, *Professionalism*, 95.

⁵² These issues are discussed in more detail in English, “Professionalism and the Military.”

expected of those in civil society. Some in Canada believe that the CF should serve “as a symbol of all that is best in the national character.” However, the Somalia Commission concluded that military professionalism in Canada has been undermined by “a shift toward ‘civilianization.’” This has resulted in the infusion of occupational, versus the traditional vocational, values in the CF. The influence of technology, which has forced increased specialization and civilian skills onto Western armed services, plus the reorganization of the CF in the 1960s and 1970s, have exacerbated this trend. The Somalia Commission, citing Cotton, argued that “military service as a calling or vocation, made legitimate by broadly based national values, had given way to” a perception that those in the military were performing civilian type jobs for rewards specified under contracts often seen in the business sector. This has led to reduced standards of accountability among senior officers, who are now unwilling to accept responsibility when things go wrong in their command.⁵³

One of Canada’s leading military historians, Stephen Harris, has analyzed the Canadian military in terms of Huntington’s professional characteristics of expertise, corporateness, and responsibility. Focussing on the period 1860-1939, he concluded that the Canadian permanent force “had little in common with the professional armies emerging in Europe, in the United Kingdom, and in the United States.”⁵⁴ Lacking a professional infrastructure and with commissions often bestowed for political patronage rather than merit, the Canadian military was bereft of most of the basic prerequisites to form a professional body. And unlike Huntington’s portrayal of an isolated American officer corps, the Canadian officer of the period Harris describes was predominantly a civilian in uniform serving in the part-time citizen militia - amateurs in the true sense of the word. Even in the two great wars of the 20th century, the vast majority of Canadian officers were civilians in uniform “for the duration only” of hostilities. However, these amateur soldiers acquitted themselves well compared to their regular force colleagues, who, Harris argues, lacked professional competence. This lack of professional competence was demonstrated in the Second World War by the fact that the performance of regular force officers in command of brigades and other higher formations was often worse than that of their amateur “for the duration only” colleagues.

The Canadian Army generally followed the “this is a profession because it is suitable for gentlemen” model, articulated by Burk, until the mid-20th century. The Royal Military

⁵³ Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of Canadian Forces to Somalia [hereafter Somalia Commission], *Dishonoured Legacy: The Lessons of the Somalia Affair* (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services, 1997), Vol. 1, 81-2.

⁵⁴ It should be noted that our allies have not always maintained the professional standards ascribed to them. For example, in the mid-1990s at a conference on Defence Education in the Americas, General Charles E. Wilhelm, then Commander-in-Chief of the US Southern Command, described US military officers of the 1960s as trades people, proficient in the technicalities of war but uneducated in the social context which must invariably shape the US military. Bercuson, , “Defence Education for 2000...and Beyond,” 27.

College of Canada's (RMC) concept of the military as a profession because the officer corps was populated by professional engineers had little impact on the Army until the 1950s when the regular force supplanted the militia as the main component of the Army. As late as 1952, the *Junior Officers' Guide* advised young subalterns not to be too concerned with the technical details of their occupation because it would make them look too much like tradesmen. This outlook began to change in the late 1950s when leadership practices based on the "science of management" were introduced as a replacement for the old ideal that officers were gentlemen who instinctively knew how to lead because good leaders were born not made.⁵⁵ If Canadian officers were seen to be professionals in any sense up to this time it was due to their holding the same social status as their professional colleagues. However, their lack of expertise, particularly in the sense of abstract knowledge, marginalized any claims they might make for professional status. The anti-intellectualism of some officers, which persists to this day in some quarters of the CF, precluded them from joining the ranks of the professionals until increased educational standards permitted them to raise their occupation's status by acquiring expertise based on education in abstract knowledge.

With the creation of large regular military forces during the Cold War, the profession of arms in Canada began to resemble the professional corporate body seen in other armed forces in the Western world.⁵⁶ And like other professions in Canada the CF started to control the "education, training, and socialization of its members" with its own institutions, including schools and colleges. There are some notable differences, nonetheless. While the CF does not have a standard ethical code, like some other professions, officers "freely enter into a moral and legal contract that imposes professional duties and standards" based on the texts of their commissions and oaths. The Oath of Allegiance is the Canadian service person's "code of moral obligation."⁵⁷ However, unlike other professions in Canadian society, the military can be called upon to ensure the very survival of the nation. In executing this function, as well as other military roles, members of the military can be called upon to lay down their lives - sometimes expressed as the concept of unlimited liability.⁵⁸ Another distinction between the military professional and other professionals is that military leaders have the right to sacrifice the lives of their subordinates in order to achieve military objectives.⁵⁹

The Cold War ushered in a period where, for the first time in Canadian history, regular force officers dominated the military establishment. This led to the introduction of "the trappings of professionalism," such as the principle of merit for promotion and "a formal

⁵⁵ Stephen J. Harris, "Tracking Development of Canadian Leadership and Practice," presentation at Conference on Leadership in the Armies of Tomorrow and the Future 6-7 February 2002, Fort Frontenac, Kingston, ON.

⁵⁶ Much of this section is based on the section on professionalism in English, "Understanding Military Culture: A Canadian Perspective."

⁵⁷ Somalia Commission, Vol. 1, 80, 83.

⁵⁸ *Duty with Honour*, 4, 9, 20, 26, 73.

⁵⁹ *Duty with Honour*, 26.

system of professional military education.” But even as the military became more professional in many ways after Second World War, with its own permanent Staff Colleges and a National Defence College, Harris argues that the unification of the CF in 1968 caused “the armed forces’ status as a distinct profession” to disappear. With what he characterizes as decisions of a professional nature, such as equipment procurement, now being made by civilian bureaucrats on the basis of regional economic benefits and not military merit, he contends that Canadian military professionalism has been gravely eroded. Harris concludes that maintaining a professional military in Canada will always be difficult because of society’s indifference to the military, Canada’s geographic isolation, its small population and its dependence on the great powers “as a defender of last resort.”⁶⁰

Another major civilianizing effect on the CF is ironically its only military college, RMC, which is the preferred entry level school for officers in the profession of arms in Canada. A key role of professional schools is to teach the latest professional knowledge and to engage in “research and scholarship designed to codify what is already know” as well as extend the boundaries of professional knowledge as part of the work of expanding a profession’s expertise and legitimizing its jurisdiction.⁶¹ Yet throughout its 125 year history RMC has been primarily a school first for training military engineers and more recently for educating professional engineers. It has in effect been largely a school educating the majority of its students for a profession other than the profession of arms.⁶² A review of theses and research projects at RMC recently show that while there is some shift towards topics directly related to the military profession, the majority of research being done at RMC is in the fields of science and engineering. Until RMC’s primary focus becomes the profession of arms, it cannot properly be described as the CF’s professional school.

From a theoretical point of view, the officer corps has generally been identified as the group that should lead change in military organizations because officers are responsible for conceptualizing and leading change in a service culture.⁶³ In the Canadian context, NCOs may also belong to this group of leaders. Unlike some armed forces, Canada’s senior NCOs constitute a group that makes the military a career and exhibits many of the characteristics of professionals. Bercuson describes the most senior of them in the army, the Regimental Sergeants Major, as “guardians of the regimental memory” since they

⁶⁰ Stephen J. Harris, *Canadian Brass: The Making of a Professional Army 1860-1939* (Toronto, Univ. of Toronto Press, 1988), 210-1, 215-20.

⁶¹ Freidson, *Professionalism*, 97.

⁶² See Richard A. Preston, *To Serve Canada: A History of the Royal Military College Since the Second World War* (Ottawa: Univ. of Ottawa Press, 1991); and Richard A. Preston, *Canada’s RMC* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1969), for a detailed account of this story.

⁶³ Charles B. Breslin, “Organizational Culture and the Military,” (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, 2000), 12.

often serve in one regiment throughout their careers. This permanence makes the NCO the first level of command so that NCOs are not only able to ensure that officers' orders are carried out, but also often assume an important leadership role themselves.⁶⁴ To maintain this arrangement, Bercuson endorsed a "Victorian" separation between officers and NCOs as necessary for good order and discipline to prevail in the army.⁶⁵ This separation could be interpreted as an endorsement of Huntington's model, accepted by many in the US military, where NCOs are portrayed as having "neither the intellectual skills nor the professional responsibility of the officer." And as practitioners of a trade, not a profession, they are specialists in the application, but not the management, of violence. But Huntington's interpretation may be dated given both the recent advances in NCO education and the increased responsibility thrust on NCOs by decentralized operations such as peace support.⁶⁶

The classic models of professionalism used by *Duty with Honour* may not be relevant because of differences in historical experience between the CF and other Western countries, particularly the US. Perhaps the greatest difference between the profession of arms in Canada and the US is the difference between the *raison d'être* of military forces in each country. The CF's mission is described as: "to defend Canada and Canadian interests and values while contributing to international peace and security."⁶⁷ American commentators are virtually unanimous in asserting that its military forces exist primarily to achieve victory in war even though the military may be getting mixed messages from its political leaders that sound more like Sir John Hackett's advice that a military professional's function is the "ordered application of force in the resolution of a social problem."⁶⁸ The American military professional literature generally supports the assumption that peacekeeping and other similar missions (often referred to as Military Operations Other than War) are corroding the US Army's "norms of professional behavior."⁶⁹ In stark contrast to this American self-perception, the Canadian military's expertise in United Nation's peacekeeping has often been used to define its place in the

⁶⁴ See Horn, "A Timeless Strength," 44-5 for a description of the NCO's role as a leader.

⁶⁵ David Bercuson, *Significant Incident: Canada's Army, the Airborne, and the Murder in Somalia* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1996), 35, 37, 62-3.

⁶⁶ Snider, "An Uninformed Debate on Military Culture," 24-5.

⁶⁷ "Shaping the Future of the Canadian Forces: A Strategy for 2020," The Defence Mission, 2.

⁶⁸ Sam C. Sarkesian and Robert E. Connor, Jr, *The US Military into the Twenty-First Century* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), ix-x, 24; Hackett cited in Sarkesian and Connor, 19; and Snider et al., *Army Professionalism...*, 18.

⁶⁹ Don M. Snider, et al., *Army Professionalism, the Military Ethic, and Officership in the 21st Century* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 1999), 2, 21

world and to distinguish it from the armed forces of the US.⁷⁰ Peacekeeping has had an important influence on Canada's military culture beginning with the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) after the Suez crisis in 1956. Forty years later, 100,000 Canadian troops had participated in more than 30 peacekeeping (both UN and non-UN) operations. Despite widespread public support for peacekeeping,⁷¹ some in the CF saw peacekeeping as a diversion from "the big show" in Germany with NATO and a drain on scarce resources. Peacekeeping nevertheless became so integral to the Canadian Army in the public mind that Canadians tended to forget that armies exist to fight wars.⁷²

This brief sketch of the Canadian military shows how different it was from Huntington's description of the American military of the same era. From the late 19th and up to the middle of the 20th century most Canadian officers were amateurs who were an integral part of society, unlike Huntington's portrayal of the isolated American professional officer at that time. In Canada, there was no equivalent of the professional renaissance that the US army experienced in this period; therefore, it can be concluded that the Canadian and American militaries had very different historical formative experiences prior to the Cold War. And after the Second World War the CF has been defined in many of Canadian public's eyes by peacekeeping, an activity explicitly rejected by many commentators in the US as an activity suitable for the American armed forces. Therefore, the use of models of military professionalism based on the American experience, like Huntington's, may not be appropriate for the CF.

Another reason that the model of professionalism currently used by the CF may not be entirely appropriate for the Canadian profession of arms is its reliance on Anglo-American concepts of professionalism. Until fairly recently, in Canada our understanding of the role of professions in society has been based on Anglo-American concepts of the professions found in the literature. These models of the professions, reflecting a limited historical experience, have a number of deficiencies. Perhaps the most important, in the military context, is that of presenting the professions in terms of those occupations that possess certain fairly well defined characteristics. The Anglo-American concepts also minimize the effect of the state on the professions. For armed forces, however, this may not be appropriate. The state has always had a significant influence on the profession of

⁷⁰ J.L. Granatstein, "The American Influence on the Canadian Military," in B.D. Hunt and R.G. Haycock, eds., *Canada's Defence* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1993), 132, 134, 137.

⁷¹ In 1943, 73 percent of Canadians supported a postwar peacekeeping force even if it meant Canadian servicemen might be killed serving in it. Cited in Alex Morrison and Suzanne M. Plain, "The Canadian UN Policy: An Historical Assessment," in Hans-Georg Ehrhart and David G. Haglund, eds., *The "New Peacekeeping" and European Security* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1993), 167. Twenty years later 75 percent of Canadians supported Canadian participation in UN peacekeeping forces. Cited in John Paul and Jerome Lauglicht, *In Your Opinion: Leaders' and Voters' Attitudes on Defence and Disarmament* (Clarkson, ON: Canadian Peace Research Institute, 1963), 16.

⁷² Bercuson, *Significant Incident*, 58-60.

arms, from providing its resources to granting commissions to its officers, often in the name of the head of state, as is the case in Canada. In the Continental model of professionalism, professions were often much more closely aligned with the state than in the Anglo-American world, and have been described as a way the state could infuse specialized knowledge into civil society.⁷³ Green goes even further and suggests that the Continental model may be more appropriate to describe the historical evolution of some professions in the United Kingdom (UK) and the US. He points out that one reason for developing centralized educational systems, including some professional schools, not only in 19th century France but also the UK and the US, was the “need to provide the state with trained administrators, engineers, and military personnel; to spread national cultures and inculcate popular ideologies of nationhood; and so to forge the political and cultural unity of burgeoning nation states, and cement the cultural hegemony of their dominant classes.”⁷⁴ The history of the Canada’s RMC supports this assertion,⁷⁵ and so the Continental model may be more applicable to the study of the Canadian profession of arms than the Anglo-American model now in use.

The Canadian historical experience provides one more reason why the CF’s current model of professionalism may need to be modified. *Duty with Honour* notes that “the Canadian profession of arms stands out in terms of the roles NCMs have played” because, they have generally been “assigned a greater scope of responsibility than their colleagues in many other militaries.” Similarly, the most senior NCOs have been described as the “custodians” of the CF’s Senior NCO Corps with responsibility “for the good order and discipline of all subordinates.”⁷⁶ The continued use of NCOs in “[b]uilding effective, cohesive fighting teams instilled with the discipline and skill to prevail in all tasks will remain a primary role of NCOs and warrant officers” is advocated by *Duty with Honour* as a reason to maintain this characteristic of the Canadian profession of arms.⁷⁷ Perhaps new ideas about the evolution of professions in the 21st century can help us better understand the status the NCMs may have in view of their continuing and their changing roles.

The Future Evolution of the Professions - Implications for the Military

Perceptions of rapid change in society at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries have led to a great deal of speculation about how the professions are changing and evolving. In fact the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

⁷³ Magali Sarfatti Larson, “In the Matter of Experts and Professionals, or how Impossible it is to Leave Nothing Unsaid,” in Torstendahl and Burrage, eds. *The Formation of Professions* (London: Sage Publications, 1990), 44.

⁷⁴ A. Green cited in Freidson, *Professionalism*, 85.

⁷⁵ Thirteen of the first 18 graduates of RMC (who started their courses in 1876) “had careers that were primarily civilian.” Preston, *Canada’s RMC*, 75.

⁷⁶ *Duty with Honour*, 15.

⁷⁷ *Duty with Honour*, 74.

has allocated substantial funding to promote research into how “the increased speed of technological development and the rapid growth of knowledge are creating unprecedented new opportunities for prosperity and growth, as well as contributing to major social, cultural and personal change...It is crucial to understand the complex and wide-ranging factors that are transforming our firms and their workplaces, our institutions, organizations, households, families and communities.”⁷⁸ This change has direct implications for the Canadian military in two key ways. First of all the CF are composed of many different professions - traditional professions (such as law, medicine, and engineering) and what have been recently termed “virtual” professions (such as logistics and information management), besides the core profession of arms. Therefore, the CF need to understand not only how the core profession of arms might change, but also how change in other professions might affect their role in the CF. Second, these professions have an influence on how the CF itself evolves and changes. For example, the effect of some professions, notably medicine and law, on the CF chain of command has been discussed elsewhere.⁷⁹ Consequently, the CF must understand how the change in the professions might transform the way in which they influence change in the CF.

An emerging trend in the workplace seems to be that the professions are no longer discrete; there are new functions and activities that are creating new professions. Michael Bloom of the Conference Board of Canada has noted that the older guild model of the professions is being challenged by new “virtual” professions. He noted that the guild professions (like medicine and law) were typical of many of the older service professions today. They are characterized by difficult entry, one-time competence checks, self-regulation, and a legal responsibility for the actions of their practitioners. Bloom argued that the guild professions need to change their gatekeeper or entry systems because they are not very responsive to outside change. On the other hand, the new “virtual” professions, while they are not yet clearly defined, are very good at responding to change. These new professions create products as well as services, have no formal accreditation process and are growing rapidly. An example of the new virtual profession is in the financial services sector. It used to be dominated by the profession described as “banking” and it was seen as a rather conservative, stable profession. This sector is now fluid and in constant flux, and there is no single profession that can claim to be providing financial services. Instead we see many different service providers with a multitude of areas of expertise from insurance to stock derivatives. The expertise in this area is resident in the individuals rather than in a database or professional literature, and because the expertise required to be successful in this field is constantly changing, those practising in this field are constantly modifying their skills and competencies to meet the needs of their clients. As recent business scandals in have shown, a major challenge for the future will be how to regulate the virtual professions while accommodating their

⁷⁸ Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, “INE [Initiative on the New Economy] Theme: General New Economy Issues,” http://www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/background/ine_general_issues_e.asp.

⁷⁹ G.E. (Joe) Sharpe and Allan English, *Principles for Change in the Post-Cold War Command and Control in the Canadian Forces*, (Kingston, ON: Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2002) 61-2.

ability to provide value added and innovation to the economy.⁸⁰ Some examples of virtual professions in the military are in the logistics occupation where “the revolution in business affairs” has affected how support is provided to military forces.⁸¹ These new trends in professions suggest that perhaps we should think less about how professions are constituted as discrete entities and more about how expert knowledge is used and how it will affect society and the military profession.⁸²

The profession of arms has undergone many significant changes in the last 100 years. In fact, it could be argued that since the First World War the profession of arms has exhibited some of the characteristics of virtual professions⁸³ and that the successful adaptation to changes in the nature of conflict by military professionals requires the same innovation skills seen in today’s virtual professions. Key competencies for professionals of the future will include the ability to work effectively as teams; being able to go beyond just performing a particular job or function (the “how”) to articulating why things are done a certain way; being able to deal with information streams as opposed to discrete chunks of information; and possessing inter-cultural nimbleness, the ability to bridge culture gaps in performing professional work. The CF has identified many of these competencies and set goals to impart them to CF members in its recent statements on professional military education.⁸⁴ The challenge will be in meeting the goals as some major human resource obstacles hinder the CF’s ability to adapt to change..

The current CF personnel production cycle (job analyses-occupation structure revision-recruiting-training), where it takes eight or more years to go from an Occupational Analysis which identifies a new skill set that needs to be developed to actually producing the first qualified people with that skill set, is no longer viable in an environment where the required skills change before the first products of the system can be usefully employed.⁸⁵ Furthermore, today’s armed forces consisting of officers and NCOs and still operating under a system defined by rank, deference and pay structures reflects the

⁸⁰ Michael Bloom, presentation to Queen’s University and Canadian Defence Academy Workshop on work and learning in the professions held in Kingston, ON, 11-12 April, 2002.

⁸¹ See for example Norman Williams, "Revolution in Military Logistics," *Military Technology* 21, no. 11 (November 1997), 50-3.

⁸² Larson, “In the Matter of Experts and Professionals...,” 25.

⁸³ See Michael Howard, “Men Against Fire: The Doctrine of the Offensive in 1914,” in Paret, 510-26, for an account of innovation in doctrinal development in that war that refutes the myth that this was a static war in intellectual as well as geographical terms.

⁸⁴ See for example, Vice Admiral G.L. Garnett, VCDS, “Foreward,” *Canadian Officership in the 21st Century (Officership 2020): Strategic Guidance for the CF Officer Corps and the OPD System* dated 8 Mar 2001.

⁸⁵ Al Okros, “Into the Twenty-first Century: Strategic Human-Resources Issues,” in Bland, ed. *Backbone of the Army*, 40-1.

industrial age military's preoccupation with "standardization, specialization, professionalization, synchronization...[and] centralization," are suitable for a bygone era, and are not appropriate for war in the 21st century, Cohen argues.⁸⁶ In 1994 then Chief of Staff of US Army, General Gordon Sullivan, argued that in the future armed forces must be prepared to operate in the information age, and, therefore must re-structure themselves into less hierarchical learning organizations with the network not the pyramid as the model and knowledge as capital.⁸⁷ What may be needed is a flatter organization with fewer ranks. *Duty with Honour* acknowledges this trend in military organization and states that "[t]eamwork and collegiality will be emphasized over hierarchy" in the CF of the future. Okros supports this assertion and contends that the current hierarchical "stovepipe" CF human resource system based on an internal labour market and predicated on constraints and assumptions from 30 years ago is no longer viable.⁸⁸ Based on these factors, a complete overhaul of existing rank and MOC structures may be necessary. But until the CF human resource system addresses these problems, the aspirations articulated in *Duty with Honour* for more teamwork and collegiality may come to naught.

Majoor's three-level model is one approach to addressing these problems and it suggests redefining the relationship between officers and NCOs to create a more effective military. His "three-level structure" proposes a leadership level (open to both officers and NCOs), a technical level (to accommodate those who do not aspire to high leadership positions but prefer to work in teams with other experts), and the subordinate level (to include all those new to the CF or to their jobs).⁸⁹ This model addresses one of the frequent criticisms of today's Western militaries – that, based on the industrial paradigm of the 20th century there are too many rank levels. As Granatstein has observed, "with eighteen ranks between private and general, there are likely six to eight ranks too many. The reason for this structure was well-intentioned: when there was an earlier pay freeze, the only way NCMs could get more money was for them to be promoted. The result was a plethora of master corporals and WOs. The system desperately cries out for rationalization."⁹⁰ Majoor's concept is an innovative one that serves as an example of how to address some of the issues raised here.

⁸⁶ Eliot A Cohen, "A Revolution in Warfare," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 2 (March/April 1996), 38, 48.

⁸⁷ Cited in Stephane Lefebvre, et al., "The Revolution in Military Affairs': its implications for doctrine and force development within the US Army," in B.J.C. McKercher and Michael A. Hennessy, eds. *The Operational Art: Developments in the Theories of War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), 179.

⁸⁸ Okros, "Into the Twenty-first Century," 25-46.

⁸⁹ Arthur Majoor, "The End of the Non-Commissioned Officer Corps?" in Bland, ed. *Backbone of the Army*, 118-19.

⁹⁰ "Granatstein Report," Minister Young's Letter to the Prime Minister, 27 Mar 1997, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/Minister/eng/Granatstein/gra2main.html>.

Other approaches to these problems, such as the idea of tapping into pools of civilian professionals, can be found in our own history. For example, after the Second World War the RCAF Auxiliary was composed of formed units of part-time aircrew, mechanics, intelligence analysts, air traffic controllers, meteorologists, administrators, medical personnel, etc. who practised their wartime roles on weekends and in the evenings. Organized into 12 flying squadrons, and more than 35 other units (including four intelligence units), they manned everything from seven fighter squadrons (some equipped with jets) to the ground radars that controlled the interceptors. Most Auxiliary units were located near towns or urban centres to ensure a suitable recruiting base. The Auxiliary's wartime role was to augment and where necessary replace regular RCAF units in Canada so that they could be deployed overseas. A modern version of the RCAF Auxiliary might be a reserve information technology (IT) squadron, along the lines of 5001 Intelligence Unit based in Toronto in the 1950s. It could be formed from some of the many IT specialists who live in the Metropolitan Toronto area. The motivation for belonging to such a squadron would not be financial, but perhaps the chance to work in area (like national defence) that these specialists cannot work in during their normal employment. Other motivators, like the ones that sustained the RCAF Auxiliary in the 1950s and early 1960s, might be the camaraderie provided by belonging to such a squadron, and the chance to be a member of a prestigious "club" with its own distinctive uniform and mess. This approach would have the potential of getting highly prized technical expertise for the CF at a very low cost, and address some of the problems discussed previously, such as the defects in current hierarchical "stovepipe" CF human resource system based on an internal labour market.⁹¹

Another way for the CF to deal with changes in roles and in the profession of arms is through professional development. *Duty with Honour* suggests that professional development:

must take into account the changing division of responsibility and authority in operations, the growing requirement for the development of common intellectual competencies, and the increasing breadth and depth of specialist and generalist experience required within both corps... Well-developed critical reasoning, creative thinking and the application of sound judgement will be required. There will also be a greater need for the application of generalist knowledge, as well as a greater demand for technical competence, both theoretical and applied. These trends strongly suggest the need for a growing convergence in the professional development of officers and NCMs.⁹²

However laudable these goals might be in theory, in practice due to force reductions and high operational tempo there have been significant problems in finding the time for

⁹¹ Allan English, "Personnel for Space Operations," in Dennis Margueratt and Allan English, eds. *Space in the 21st Century* (Toronto: Canadian Forces College, 2000), 109-12.

⁹² *Duty with Honour*, 75.

members of the CF to achieve stated professional development goals.⁹³ Therefore, PD goals must be carefully set based on empirical needs assessments to avoid the situation where the study of “subjects and techniques ‘peripheral to the non-commissioned officer’s primary duties to lead and care for soldiers’” might undermine “the long-term health of the non-commissioned officer corps.”⁹⁴

In its cornerstone manual on the profession of arms the CF has argued that professional development “must anticipate and prepare members for change based on principles that map and anticipate the changing environment.”⁹⁵ I agree with this sentiment, but I would argue that professional development must be based on a clear understanding of the roles of the officer and NCO corps. One important way to achieve this will be through the development and use of a model of the professions that encompasses both the traditional views of the profession of arms and the new emerging professional realities of the 21st century.

CONCLUSIONS

There has been very little study of the nature of Senior NCO Corps in the CF, or other Western armed forces, particularly in the context of the professional status of NCOs. Until recently, the status of the NCO Corps has generally been assumed to be that of tradespersons supporting the professionals in the military – the officers. However, changes in Canadian society and the CF, plus a greater understanding of NCOs’ historical role in the Canadian military, have led to a significant change in the CF’s official view of the status of NCOs in the armed forces of Canada. In fact, the recently published cornerstone manual for describing the philosophy and practice of the profession of arms in Canada has explicitly stated that all regular force NCMs are members of the Canadian profession of arms.

Nevertheless, *Duty with Honour* recognizes a distinction between officers and NCOs, with officers expected to have more general knowledge that can be applied at all levels from the tactical to the strategic, whereas NCOs are expected to be technical specialists more focussed on tasks at the tactical level and on “the immediate welfare of individual subordinates.” Given the increasingly complex and uncertain operating environment for armed forces at the beginning of the 21st century, *Duty with Honour* argues that NCOs have assumed and will continue to assume greater responsibility; therefore, they will be granted the authority to make decisions in areas that used to be the exclusive preserve of the officer corps. This paper has argued, however, that the assertions in *Duty with Honour* about changing roles for NCOs in the CF are based largely on assumptions

⁹³ This problem is recognized in *The Canadian Forces Non-Commissioned Member in the 21st Century* (NCM Corps 2020) http://www.cda.forces.gc.ca/2020/engraph/ncm/ncm_e.asp, pp. II-15, II-17. The US Air Force recently conducted a major restructuring of its professional development to address this problem. See General John Jumper, “Total Force Development,” *USAF Chief’s Sight Picture* (6 Nov 2002).

⁹⁴ Bland, “Preface,” xviii.

⁹⁵ *Duty with Honour*, 75.

related to the Army's experience in recent years. Even though *Duty with Honour* admits that may well be a difference in the relationship between the officer and NCO corps in the three environments, it does not discuss these potential differences in any detail, let alone address the equally important officer-NCO relationship in the technical occupations both inside and outside the Army. Furthermore, a closer look at the Navy, the Air Force, and "purple" occupations in the CF may suggest roles and officer-NCO relationships that are quite different from those described in *Duty with Honour*.

The nature of changes to the roles of NCOs and the officer-NCO relationship in the CF may not be clearly discernable at the moment for a number of reasons. One reason is that the profession of arms, like many other professions, is rapidly changing at the beginning of the 21st century. Studies of the evolution of the professions suggest that, this is a normal process, and that the concept of a profession changes over time based on the social, economic, and historical context in which the profession exists. The continuous evolution of professions in society may therefore permit only the most general definition of the concept. Many scholars agree that a profession is a discrete type of work, but there is disagreement in the literature about how to differentiate it from other kinds of work. This suggests that previous concepts of the military profession, based on older conceptual frameworks, need to be re-evaluated in the light of the latest scholarship on the subject of professions.

While, in general, *Duty with Honour* is a very useful articulation of the nature of the profession of arms in Canada, its reliance in on "classic works" to describe the concept of military professionalism has perpetuated the limitations in these works. The main limitations are the use of Anglo-American concepts of professionalism and concepts of professionalism derived from other countries' (particularly the US) historical experience. The different Canadian historical experience, the recent dramatic changes in the nature of professionalism, and the distinct role of NCOs in the CF all suggest that a new conceptual model needs to be developed to properly explain the role of the Senior NCO Corps in the CF in the context of professionalism. Only then will the CF be able to clearly understand the role of its Senior NCO Corps now and in the future.