

# Beyond the Battlefield

## The New Military Professionalism

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Sam C. Sarkesian

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## Beyond the Battlefield

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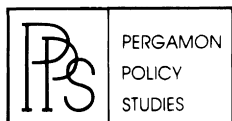
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ON INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

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to  
Jeanette

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## Preface

I have compiled this volume because I firmly believe that there is a serious need to again speak out against the increasing tendency for the military to view professionalism primarily in terms of military skills with only a cursory nod to the idea that military professionals must be more than battlefield technicians. Such a view not only creates compartmentalized competence, but limits intellectual horizons, reduces the professional ability to deal with political-social matters, and makes moral and ethical criteria a matter of tactical expediency.

Since the final years of the Vietnam involvement, there has been a great deal of discussion and debate regarding the nature and character of military professionalism. These ranged from biting criticisms of the conduct of the officer corps and charges that the American Army collapsed in Vietnam to the claim that the military did its job and any failures in Vietnam were due to civilian leadership. Serious reassessments were made of military honor, morality, and ethical behavior. Many examinations led to recommendations for the revitalization of military professionalism including such items as publishing a code of conduct, revamping military education, and restoring the concept of honor. Yet, many argued that the real problem lay in not following the traditional concepts of "Duty, Honor, Country." From all of these debates and examinations, one would expect to see a revitalized military professionalism emerge attuned to the challenges of the new decade. What appears to have evolved, however, is a concept of professionalism chained to the traditional view that military training and military skills produce the best professional. Translated into the realities of military life, this simply means that military officers should spend more time in on-the-job training, learning, for example, how to command companies and battalions, as

well as learning the technical skills required for various positions associated with these units. There is little to criticize about these efforts and goals. What is disturbing, however, is the perpetuation of a narrow concept of professionalism which disregards almost two decades of change and challenge. This reversion to a traditional professional posture not only indicates the lack of an institutional memory, but attempts to blot out the lessons of Vietnam and implies a political-psychological isolation from the political-social environment. Carried to its logical conclusion, such a concept will erode the very basis of military professionalism by ignoring the humanistic and political-social character of the military institution as well as the characteristics of the environment in which the military must operate.

Let me illustrate this. At the Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, many hours are spent over terrain boards of Europe with students maneuvering American armor units against Soviet units. In these exercises little if any attention is given to the responsibilities of unit commanders to the "people" problem - what to do with hundreds and thousands of refugees or how to deal with the problems encountered in trying to engage an enemy within the territory and population of friendly countries.

Similar shortcomings are evident in FM 100-5, Operations. The thrust and substance of FM 100-5 have been debated in a number of forums. In sum, this Field Manual is primarily concerned with the land battle in Europe. The fact that FM 100-5 is the operational bible for the U.S. Army makes it appear that little operational attention will be given to contingencies outside of the European area - contingencies, it might be added, that in the view of a number of observers are most likely to be the areas of future operations and the most difficult to undertake. Most importantly, these shortcomings are a reflection of the traditional professional orientation and its educational and socialization processes.

The theme of the essays in this volume is that American military professionalism, as it is presently conceived and followed, is inadequate to meet the challenges of the coming decade. Not only is this true with respect to the international security environment, but professional expertise is woefully inadequate in its capacity to understand and respond to political-social issues, making the profession unprepared to interact harmoniously with its own political system. Nor is it prepared for the political-social challenges of non-nuclear and low intensity conflicts. It is argued that the concept of military professionalism must be broadened and "humanized," intellectual preparation and military posture revised and in a number of instances changed, if the military profession is to be more than a "robot-like" mechanism designed for uncritical and nonthinking utility.

Complementing this theme is one that focuses on the moral and ethical aspects of professionalism, arguing that the military professional must perceive these free from the confines of traditional perspectives. Moral and ethical criteria cannot be derived solely from within the military profession. They must originate from the broader community and from universal philosophical principles, echoing the essential thrust of the other theme in these essays.

Finally, underlying these themes is the view that the decade of the 1970s saw the end of American military posture and professionalism characteristic of the post World War II period, and the beginning of a new one marked by the end of the Vietnam War. This new era is characterized by at least four major factors: the volunteer military system; the impact of the Vietnam War; the loss of America's dominant position in international politics; and the rise of egalitarianism in American society.

The essays in this volume are linked to these factors in a number of ways and from a variety of perspectives. While several of these factors are studied in some detail, they are not treated as separate topics, but rather as part of the general study of professionalism and institutional change. Even in examining the impact of Vietnam (which is done in several chapters), the concern is not necessarily with the details of the War, but with the issue of professionalism.

Even though a number of the essays appeared earlier, I have placed them in this volume, together with several original works, in order to encourage a sharper focus and a more critical reassessment of military professionalism. In doing so, I have not attempted to place these works in chronological order. Rather, they have been organized around three major issues: the meaning of military professionalism; the problems facing the profession stemming from the Vietnam experience through the past two decades; and the character and nature of military professionalism necessary for the coming decade.

The essays represent a range of data, sources, and inquiry techniques. Some are based on survey data, others are based on my own military experience, and still others are an attempt to integrate the practicalities of military life with theoretical perspectives. Some of the issues facing the military and several institutional procedures have changed since the publication of the earlier articles; i.e., the establishment of alternate career patterns (secondary specialties) for Army officers. Little attempt has been made to revise the earlier articles to reflect current procedures, since these are tangential to the main themes. Finally, all of the work has taken advantage of the input of colleagues and friends from both the military and academic professions.

Most of the essays not only attempt to identify prevailing views of a particular aspect of professionalism, but also include an assessment of the implications of existing professional perspectives and what revisions, modifications, and/or changes are necessary. Nevertheless, this volume is not intended to serve as an operational manual to implement programs and training designed to correct professional shortcomings and weaknesses. While the final chapter does address the problem of "what needs to be done," this is viewed from broad operational principles aimed primarily at the philosophical and educational underpinnings of the military profession. Thus, one will not find in this volume, for example, what changes of curricula are needed in senior military schools to develop proper dimensions of professionalism. Nor will one find a training plan to train professionals in the proper strategy for low intensity conflict. To be sure, specific programs and plans are necessary to convert the theoretical into the practical and operational. I argue, however, that this cannot be done correctly without first recognizing the nature and extent of the problem, understanding the philosophical principles and values of the military in a liberal democracy, and developing the intellectual capacity and critical inquiry needed to deal with the complexity of issues facing the military profession. Programmatic templates are simply the visible reflection of these fundamental concepts.

My own interest and research has been primarily on professionalism in the U.S. Army. The articles reflect this perspective. Yet, a number of assessments apply equally to all services and hopefully provide insights into the general concept of the military profession. There are overlaps in these works (as one would expect) - even the use of identical sources. This not only reflects my continuing concern and focus on a broadly based military professionalism, but also my recognition of the complexity of the subject and its multi-dimensional considerations, particularly its political dimension.

In the final analysis, however, the conclusions and policy recommendations are my own. These do not profess earth-shaking revelations or completely new views divorced from the long line of scholarship on the subject. What I do claim, however, is persistence in advocating a political-military dimension to the profession. Without such a dimension, I fail to see how the military profession can cope with its own system and with American society, much less with the international environment.

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