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The Responsibility Threshold for Military Officership

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INTRODUCTION

Leading Through Change

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Journal of Character and Leadership Development

Greetings readers, and thank you for considering this Occasional Paper and allowing us to introduce our new Journal of Character and Leadership Development. We are excited about this evolution of our previous publication and honored to take our place as scholarship leaders in the emerging fields of character and leadership development.

Many of you will recall our previous publication, the Journal of Character and Leadership Integration (JCLI). JCLI was established to contribute to the science and discourse around the integration of the leadership and character domains. In the past, as is true with many academic disciplines, these topics were studied in isolation. In fact, there are many decades of substantial research on both character and leadership which were studied independently. While this approach has produced insight into these complex topics, we have found that it is integration of such work that is critical for development in both of these areas. While the focus of this initial effort was at the United States Air Force Academy in the Center for Character & Leadership Development (CCLD), the aim of the new Journal of Character and Leadership Development (JCLD) extends to the larger academic and applied communities. The intent is to establish a forum for the discussion of topics relevant to leadership and character development.

Over the past several years, the JCLI filled a gap in the literature. JCLD will still fill the previously identified gap, but will significantly increase the quality of scholarship and presence in the field. Though the formal JCLD will be published semi-annually, there will be scholarship outside normal publication cycles. In order to get this scholarship that is both innovative and pushes our thinking out to larger audiences in a timely manner, CCLD has begun publishing an Occasional Paper Series. This outlet allows us to examine topics that may not fit squarely within the intent of the Journal but provides critical insight into topics of interest. Through this Series, we hope to expand the dialogue around topics of interest to our readership in support of JCLD.

The current Occasional Paper was written by Maj Joseph Chapa and is an excellent treatise on the topic of officership. In the paper, Maj Chapa elaborates on the distinctions that are made between the officer and enlisted forces and the limitations of previous definitions of officership. The case that he uses as the backdrop for the discussion is the recent use of enlisted personnel as Global Hawk piolots. He adeptly steps through seminal work done by Huntington and Stavridis and colleagues, identifies limitations to how officership is defined, and distinguishes between the officer and enlisted forces. As a result of that discussion, he presents a framework that can be used to explain our traditional distinction between officers and enlisted members. The framework has four dimensions that overcome the limitations of previous definitions of officership and can be used to account for both combat and support officers. Instead of focusing on previous factors such as education and leadership training, he states that officership consists of the responsibility around four dimensions: personnel, financial resources, mission objectives, and concentrated lethality. Through a balanced discussion, he outlines how these dimensions can be used to determine thresholds that drive the demand for officer leadership. After a cogent discussion of the dimensions, he addresses a common objection to officership, or what he refers to as the "Lieutenant Problem." This is the situation that exists when a new Lieutenant is placed in a leadership situation over numerous personnel that have much more experience. Through an insightful application of the model, Maj Chapa examines several examples of Lieutenant Apprenticeship that have been successfully implemented to help grow future leaders.

We hope you will enjoy this first Occasional Paper and we look forward to bringing you timely and innovated content for many years to come through this series and the new Journal of Character and Leadership Development.

FEATURE

The Responsibility Threshold for Military Officership

Maj Joseph O. Chapa (USAF) is now a graduate student in philosophy at the University of Oxford.

The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Air Force, the Department of Defense, or the United States Government.

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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a new framework for defining military officership. Developments in technology and policy have raised questions about the nature of the profession of arms and long-held distinctions between officer and enlisted roles. Recent scholarship has argued that the advent of the cyber domain demands that we broaden the expertise of the military professional from Huntington's traditional conception of the "management of violence." At the same time, the US Air Force has recently opened RQ-4 Global Hawk pilot positions to enlisted members—a significant departure from Air Force cultural norms. The paper argues that recent conceptions fail to account for the officer/enlisted distinction and that officership ought to be defined instead in terms of the additive responsibility for people, finances, mission objectives, and concentrated lethality. This conception of officership provides a model against which to evaluate military positions to determine whether they ought to be filled by officers or enlisted members. Conclusions, though they will be applicable to the enlisted Global Hawk pilot decision, will also apply much more broadly to joint and international conceptions of military officership.

Introduction

In late 2015, the Secretary and Chief of Staff of the US Air Force announced that future RQ-4 Global Hawk pilot positions will be filled, at least in part, by enlisted Airmen (SECAF Public Affairs, 2015). The first class of enlisted pilots completed undergraduate remotely piloted aircraft training (URT) in May of 2017, breaking a precedent that had been in place since WWII (Martin, 2017). This tremendous change in the relationship between Air Force aviation roles and force structure invites a long-overdue discussion of the profession of arms in general and the distinction between officers and enlisted members in particular.

The fact that enlisted Airmen will (and in fact already do) pilot the RQ-4 Global Hawk raises an important question: Should we limit (or should we have limited) Global Hawk pilot positions (or pilot positions in general) to officers? But one cannot satisfactorily address this question without answering two more fundamental questions: (a) What is the role of the officer? (b) Ought pilot duties or more specifically, Global Hawk pilot duties, to be restricted to that role? The answers to these questions are not as obvious as they first appear. The danger in the Air Force's recent personnel decision is that it gives an answer to the second question without addressing the first. It has determined whether Global Hawk pilot duties are appropriate for enlisted members without first tackling the difficult question about what it is that distinguishes officer and enlisted roles.

> *How can the institution claim that a second lieutenant is better qualified to manage significant responsibility than the noncommissioned officer (NCO) or senior noncommissioned officer (SNCO) who supports that lieutenant?*

There may be a strong temptation here to cast both questions in normative terms. (a) What *ought* to be the role of the officer, and (b) *ought* officers to fill Global Hawk pilot positions. These are both interesting questions but putting the first question in normative terms is tantamount to asking "ought there to be an officer/enlisted distinction at all?" Such a discussion would open too many doors and close too few, and this cannot be a paper about everything. Instead, this paper's scope is limited by the recognition that there is an officer/enlisted distinction. What is at stake here is the descriptive (rather than the normative) question about the grounds on which the officer/enlisted distinction is based in actual practice.

I propose the following outline for the work that lies ahead. First, I will engage Huntington's classic and still widely accepted conception of the profession of arms, and specifically, his sharp division between officer and enlisted member in terms of expertise. After demonstrating the insufficiency of this position to explain actual practice, I will look briefly at a recent revision of Huntington's work that suggests that the military professional is the manager of effects. Upon close analysis, neither of these conceptions will prove satisfactorily in distinguishing officers from enlisted members. I will therefore propose a new model, namely that officership is required when the sum of responsibility for people, financial resources, mission objectives, and concentrated lethality reaches a critical threshold. I will further demonstrate that to a fairly high degree this model fits the officer/enlisted distinction in practice across the joint force.

It is worth noting at the outset that I am not arguing for an abolition of the officer/enlisted distinction.[1] I am suggesting that shifting officer/enlisted paradigms to the degree that

the USAF has shifted them in the 2015 Global Hawk decision is dangerous without first defining officer and enlisted roles. The scope of this paper then is fairly narrow. It seeks only to determine, based on actual practice, what we mean when we say "US military officer," and what implications our conception of "officership" has on the Global Hawk decision.

My proposal will raise at least two potential problems. The first is the lieutenant problem: How can the institution claim that a second lieutenant is better qualified to manage significant responsibility than the noncommissioned officer (NCO) or senior noncommissioned officer (SNCO) who supports that lieutenant? This problem will be addressed toward the end of this paper and the role of the lieutenant will be reasonably integrated with the responsibility threshold model for officership I propose.

Second, even if one decides, based on the proposed model, that an officer ought to maintain *responsibility* for the Global Hawk (or some other system or mission), it is not immediately obvious that he or she cannot delegate *control* of it. This concern is significant and requires considerable additional analysis and thus must wait for a subsequent paper.

The Scope of The Problem

Before progressing further it may be helpful to point out the significance of the problem at hand. Officers earn better salaries, receive better allowances (e.g., basic allowance for housing), earn better retirement pay, and can progress higher up the professional ladder than enlisted members can.[2] As an officer, I take the following question quite seriously: Why should officers get paid more than enlisted members? There are a few common answers to this question, but each of the common answers turns out to be insufficient. One such answer is grounded in education. One might argue that officers get paid more because the officer has a college degree and the enlisted member does not. But this is not accurate. Though a bachelor's degree is required for a line officer commission in each of the US military services, 8.5% of Air Force enlisted Airmen and 30% of SNCOs also have bachelor's degrees (Air Force Personnel Center, 2016). If one holds the view that officers get paid more solely because they hold undergraduate degrees (that is, that an undergraduate degree is not merely a necessary but a sufficient condition for officership) then one must be committed to the view that any enlisted Airman who earns an undergraduate degree ought to immediately and automatically receive the rank and pay of an officer (and this would be logically consistent view). However, this is not the actual practice of the US military institution, and therefore, it does not provide a justification for the officer/enlisted distinction in practice.

One may suggest that officers get paid more because they received different training. Officers, one might say, are trained to lead while enlisted Airmen are trained to follow. This may be right at the most basic level and at the lowest ranks; but the non-commissioned officer (NCO) ranks are institutionally defined in terms of leadership. 'NCOs develop as leaders, supervisors, managers, and mentors' and 'SNCOs serve as leaders, supervisors, managers, and mentors to further develop junior enlisted Airmen and NCOs under their charge to maximize their leadership abilities' ("The Enlisted Force Structure," 2009, p. 4). Once again, if one begins with the premise that officers are officers solely because they have been trained as leaders (that is, that leadership training is not merely a necessary but a sufficient condition for officership), then one must likewise admit that NCOs and SNCOs are also trained to be leaders. On this view, the officer/enlisted distinction only holds for junior Airmen. Nevertheless, second lieutenant

(O-1) pay is higher than staff sergeant (E-5) pay ("DFAS 2017 Military Pay Chart," 2017). First lieutenant (O-2) pay is higher than master sergeant (E-7) pay, and captain (O-3) pay is higher than chief master sergeant (E-9) pay.[4] If our actual institutional practices are to be any guide, there must be something more to the officer/enlisted distinction than education and leadership training.[5]

I introduce these two peripheral arguments only to show that the question is an important one (if for no other reason than modern militaries are or ought to be committed to equal pay for equal work) and that its answer may not be immediately obvious. Perhaps Huntington's classic conception of the profession of arms may be of some help.

Classic Conceptions of Officership

Samuel P. Huntington's 1957 *The Soldier and The State,* though dated, continues to have an influence on contemporary conceptions of civil-military relations and the role of the military officer (Nix, 2012, p. 88). Huntington suggests that the military officer is a professional like the doctor and lawyer, defined in terms of expertise, responsibility, and corporateness (Huntington, 1957, p. 20). On Huntington's account, each of these is a necessary condition that must be met (and they are jointly sufficient) in order to achieve 'professional' status. Though Huntington's conception has *prima facie* appeal, there are two significant problems as it relates to the officer/enlisted distinction. First, the responsibility to which Huntington points to distinguish the officer from civilian counterparts fails to distinguish the officer from the enlisted member. Second, the expertise Huntington cites is insufficient to include all, or even the majority, of military officers.

Responsibility as Huntington represents it, while perhaps adequate to describe military members in general, is insufficient to distinguish the officer corps from the enlisted corps.

The professional, according to Huntington, has a strong responsibility to a broad client base, namely, society at large. The doctor, lawyer, and military officer, for example (all professionals on Huntington's account), serve the citizenry as a whole. The doctor has duties that go beyond successful customer service and personal financial gain. She has a duty to do no harm, for example, regardless of the negative impact the execution of that duty may have on her own practice. Likewise, in the defense attorney's case, defending the client well will likely generate more clients and benefit his business; but the professional trial attorney does his job well because he recognizes that the adversarial relationship between prosecution and defense is the means by which the criminal justice system achieves its societal ends. As professionals, the doctor and lawyer are servants of society first and of individual clients second. Likewise, Huntington suggests, the officer's 'responsibility is the military security of his client, society' (Huntington, 1957, p. 15) Other vocations that do not owe responsibility so society at large are, as a result, not admitted as 'professionals.'

The responsibility that Huntington has in mind, however, seems equally applicable to officers and enlisted members, and is therefore unhelpful in distinguishing them. In his robust distinction between officers and non-professional civilians, Huntington includes the claim that the officer's behavior 'in relation to society is guided by an awareness that his skill can only be utilized for purposes approved by society through its political agent, the state' (Huntington, 1957, pp. 15-16). To a larger extent than the non-professional, 'the

officer's code is expressed in custom, tradition, and the continuing spirit of the profession' (Huntington, 1957, p. 16). While these claims are true, and though they help to distinguish the military member from the non-professional civilian, they fail to distinguish the officer from the enlisted member. At least in the modern, Western context, enlisted members have access to all the societal information that officers do, providing them every opportunity to recognize the relationship between their skills and the societally approved purposes for which they should use those skills. The enlisted member's code is 'expressed in custom, tradition, and the continuing spirit of the profession' every bit as much as the officer's code is. Responsibility as Huntington represents it, while perhaps adequate to describe military members in general, is insufficient to distinguish the officer corps from the enlisted corps.[6]

Of the three elements Huntington introduces it is expertise that seems, at least at first, to provide the strongest *differentia* between officers and enlisted members. It may be the case, as Huntington claims, that the 'direction, operation, and control of a human organization whose primary function is the application of violence is the peculiar skill of the officer' (Huntington, 1957, p. 11). The enlisted members, on the other hand, are specialists, not in the 'management of violence' (Huntington, 1957, pp. 12-13), but in the '*application* of violence' (Huntington, 1957, p. 18). On closer analysis, however, this distinction also fails to define the officer corps. Where responsibility to society casts too wide a net such that it includes enlisted members, this characterization of expertise as the managers of violence defines officership too narrowly such that excludes many officers.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016), as recently as May 2015 the percentage of U.S. military officers coded for a combat specialty across all four military branches made up only 16.1% of the total officer force. The Air Force percentage is the lowest of the four at only 6.2%.[7] Given the high percentage of non-combat military officers, one must challenge Huntington's conception. How can 'manager of violence' be a sufficient definition of officer expertise if 83.9% of joint officers (and 93.8% of Air Force officers) are doing something other than managing violence?

One possible resolution might be to recognize that the world has changed since Huntington wrote in 1957. Perhaps, one could argue, he was right then, but the non-combat requirements have ballooned, reducing the percentage of combat-coded officers. Huntington hints at such a change when he explains that logistics officers have taken up a more important role as the complexity of military operations has increased. While war has become more complex, and this complexity may have generated a marginal or even significant additional requirement for support officers, Huntington has explained away logistics officers as outliers. Though space permits only a brief glimpse, the history of warfare does not seem to support such a position.

The historical literature tells of naval logistics officers advising Admiral Chester Nimitz and his Pacific Fleet during World War II (Friedman, 2010, p. 16), of squadron and group supply officers of the US Army Air Service in Europe during World War I (Maurer, 1978, p. 72), and of commissary officers, supply officers, and a quartermaster general during The American Revolutionary War (Neimeyer, 2007, p. 107). The Grand Commander of the Teutonic Knights during the Crusades had at least two supply officers (Sterns, 1985, p. 330), and even Alexander the Great's conquest of Greece and Turkey in the fourth century B.C. involved at least one transport officer (Engels, 1978, p. 35).

Quartermaster, logistics, transport, and

supply officers do wonders for military operations, but they do not manage violence. If the long tail of military logistics is as inherent in military power—and the presence of support officers as ubiquitous—as historical accounts suggest, then Huntington's characterization of officers as 'managers of violence' has failed to account for at least one vital subset of military officers. Further, it is not merely insufficient to account for officership in the twenty-first century, but it is insufficient to define officership throughout military history. As a result, one cannot accept Huntington's definition of the profession of arms unless one is willing to exclude support officers of all kinds from the profession.

Recent military scholarship has sought to broaden Huntington's managerial conception beyond violence and thereby include bourgeoning areas of officer expertise. Lt Gen Ervin J. Rokke (USAF, ret), Brig Gen Thomas A. Drohan (USAF, ret) and CAPT Terry C. Pierce (USN, ret) suggest that the joint force must transition from the combined arms warfare of previous eras through the effects-based operations of the 1990s and early 2000s and finally to the combined effects power (CEP) of our current age (Rokke, Drohan, & Pierce, 2014, pp. 26-31). They argue that Huntington's definition of professionalism applies to combined arms warfare (CAW), which focuses on kinetic effects in the natural domains of air, land, and sea, but that Huntington's framework is insufficient when applied to CEP, which focuses on kinetic and non-kinetic effects in the traditional domains as well as the human-made cyber warfare domain. A subsequent paper by Admiral James G. Stavridis (USN, ret), Rokke, and Pierce claims more directly that Huntington's conception of officers as managers of violence, though appropriate for his day, is now insufficient (Stavridis, Rokke, & Pierce, 2016, pp. 4-9). Huntington's model 'falls short with the emergence of non-kinetic instruments of foreign policy to include those within the cyber domain' (Stavridis et al., 2016, p. 5). In order to include the cyber domain and potentially non-kinetic effects in other domains, the authors argue that 'members of today's profession of arms are "the managers of *effects*"' rather than managers of violence (Stavridis et al., 2016, p. 5).

Like Huntington's conception, the 'management of effects' view fails to account for the overwhelming percentage of military officers who do not manage effects.

The authors have here included one overt change and a subtle one. In overtly claiming that the management of violence is insufficient to account for the gamut of 21st century military effects, they have also subtly broadened the set to which this management is to apply. Huntington claimed openly that only military *officers* are members of the profession of arms, and that enlisted members are not, in part because officers are experts in the management, rather than the application, of violence (Huntington, 1957, p. 19). Stavridis *et al.* nowhere mention the officer/enlisted distinction, and refer only to the inclusive term 'members of today's profession of arms.' Though many modern readers (and the author of this paper) agree that enlisted members are, and ought to be, included in the profession of arms, the Stavridis *et al.* definition makes no claim in either direction.

Even so, the 'management of effects' conception is still too narrowly drawn. While it is broader than Huntington's and includes officers in rapidly developing technological areas such as space operations and cyber warfare, it too is insufficient to define officership. Like Huntington's conception, the

'management of effects' view fails to account for the overwhelming percentage of military officers who do *not* manage effects. Personnel officers, finance officers, acquisition officers, developmental engineers, medical personnel, and the great many staff officers supporting training, organizing, and equipping functions of their respective services, are neither managers of violence nor managers of effects. Even operational officers such as mobility air forces (MAF) pilots fail to meet the definition. While some may argue that these officers do, in fact, generate effects, such a move broadens the definition of "effects" to such a degree that it no longer describes what militaries do. If finance personnel are generating effects, and therefore finance officers are managing those effects, then it is likely also the case that employees of Bank of America and Wells Fargo likewise generate effects and that their supervisors likewise manage those effects. Similarly UPS and FedEx employees generate logistics effects and their supervisors manage those effects. Defining 'effects,' and therefore 'management of effects,' in such broad terms fails to distinguish the profession of arms from any other large organization that relies upon logistical, financial, and other support.

We might synthesize Huntington and Stavridis, *et al.* this way. We might adapt the 'managers of effects' concept, not to the expertise of the profession of arms, but to its mission. The military's goal in combined effects power is to bring effects to bear at the right place and time while the military's goal in combined arms warfare was to bring kinetics to bear. Nevertheless, the fact that the organizational goal defined in terms of combat effects does not entail that the expertise of each participant will be defined in terms of combat effects. The US Air Force's mission, for example, is to 'fly, fight and win' (Air Force Public Affairs, "Mission"). The pilot flies and the tactical air control party (TACP) fights, but the maintenance officer (under normal conditions) does neither of these things, but nevertheless contributes to this mission in equal measure. In the same way, though the mission of the profession of arms might be the application and management of effects, expertise in the management of effects is not a prerequisite for membership in the profession.

Officership and Responsibility

The model for officership developed here is grounded not in management as expertise (as in Huntington and Stavridis *et al.*) but in a threshold of responsibility. Simply put, if a particular military organization, mission, task, or weapons system requires a level of responsibility that exceeds a critical threshold then that organization, mission, task, or weapons system requires officer leadership. This model distinguishes the role of the officer from the role of the enlisted member in a way that the Huntington model failed to do and that was outside the scope of the Stavridis *et al.* project.

The responsibility threshold conception is sufficiently broad to include a wide range of military officers. This is, in part, because the types of responsibility in question are flexible enough to apply across varying circumstances. Though there may be more, I propose four categories subsumed under 'responsibility.' These are responsibility for (1) personnel, (2) for financial resources, (3) for mission objectives, and (4) for concentrated lethality. Each of these categories is additive, such that the responsibility threshold that drives the requirement for officer leadership might be, and often is, reached by a combination of two or more categories of responsibility.[8]

Responsibility for Personnel

On both the Huntington and Stavridis model, an Air Force captain responsible for *n* Airmen in

a comptroller flight fails to meet the requirement for officership because she manages neither violence nor effects. She nevertheless meets the standard required by the responsibility threshold model. The kind (quality) of responsibility she maintains distinguishes her from her civilian counterparts and the level (quantity) of responsibility distinguishes her from her enlisted Airmen.

Though the captain's civilian counterpart (e.g., a manager at a civilian financial organization) may also supervise *n* people, his level of responsibility falls far short of the captain's. While the civilian supervisor is responsible for the work his people produce, the Air Force captain is responsible *for her people*. In the discussion that follows, I use the terms 'responsibility' and 'accountability,' more or less synonymously.[9] One who is responsible is one who is expected to provide a response just as one who is accountable is one who 'will be called to account' (McKean, 2005).

Before developing this argument further, it may be helpful to engage a likely counter argument. Someone may respond at this point that there is no significant difference between the responsibility (or accountability) the military officer bears for her subordinates and the responsibility (or accountability) the civilian manager bears for his. To the non-military reader this counterargument may have some *prima facie* appeal. To the military reader this claim will ring false. The following paragraphs are intended to close this gap—or at least to shrink it.[10]

Consider two cases. In the first, a civilian manager faces ordinary duties and is responsible to superiors, shareholders, or other interested parties for goods, services, or profits. In this case there might be cultural and societal norms that demand that the leader take an active interest in the personal lives of his subordinates. For example, if a subordinate with an excellent attendance and performance record failed to show up to work without explanation, cultural norms (though likely not legal ones) might demand that the supervisor take a personal interest in the subordinate's safety and general welfare. The leader might be expected to ask coworkers of the missing person's whereabouts or call the missing person's home. In a more extreme case, suppose a subordinate arrives at work obviously injured, perhaps badly beaten. Perhaps the supervisor has strong reasons to believe that the subordinate has been the victim of domestic or other violence. Cultural norms (and perhaps in some cases, legal norms) might demand that the supervisor take appropriate steps up to and including notifying the company's human resources department or law enforcement authorities. Given what I have called the 'ordinary duties' that fall to this manager, we might call this the weak case of civilian responsibility for people.

In a second case, consider a civilian manager who faces extraordinary responsibility for her subordinates. One thinks of the manager of an oil company's people and resources in an overseas, politically tumultuous environment. This manager might be responsible for being aware of the political climate, recognizing increasing tension, and evacuating her people from dangerous areas prior to anticipated flashpoints.[11] In this way she is responsible for the personal, physical safety and security of those under her charge. We might call this the strong case of civilian responsibility for people.[12]

Neither of these cases, however, generates responsibilities for people that are of the same magnitude as those faced by the military officer. There are at least three importance differences between the responsibility of civilian managers and that of military officers. First, in the weak case, the norms acting on the manger are cultural (within the business or industry) and

societal (in the sense that some might harbor negative feelings toward him if he fails to meet those responsibilities). But the duties the manager faces are not likely legal. By contrast, the military officer bears legal responsibility, in addition to duties generating from cultural and societal norms. Air Force Instructions, for example, assert that drug abuse, alcohol abuse, personal financial matters, political activities, the use of social media, and myriad other seemingly personal concerns are of concern to the Air Force, and therefore, to the officer responsible for those members ("Air Force Standards," 2012, pp. 17-20). Like civilian managers, 'commanders must be aware of on- *and* off-duty factors affecting the climate and morale of their units' ("Commander's Responsibilities," 2014).[13] Unlike civilian managers, this awareness is a legal responsibility such that the officer can be held legally accountable for failing to fulfill it.

Second, and more strikingly, while responsibility expected of the civilian manager in the strong case is truly commendable, she is responsible first and foremost for the safety and security of her people. That responsibility is of a higher order than her responsibility for mission accomplishment. That is, she will evacuate her people at great financial cost to the company rather than allowing them to come to suffer physical harm. In the military officer case, each person has understood and committed to what is often called the 'unlimited liability clause' of the oath of office (Coleman, 2015, pp. 276-285). The members have expressed their willingness to sacrifice their lives for the sake of the mission and they will do so under the command of an officer. The officer, therefore, must weigh the lives of unit members against mission accomplishment and, at times, make the very difficult decision to accept very high risk to the lives of his or her subordinates (with the probability of death to some of those people approaching 100%) for the sake of mission accomplishment. Put another way, the oil company manager is responsible for safely moving her people away from gunfire. The military officer is responsible, at times, for moving her people *toward* gunfire. Furthermore, if subordinates disobey such orders, the officer can bring them up on legal charges.

Third, even in the non-combat context, the officer is responsible for the personal lives of subordinates in a way that is very uncommon outside the military. Officers, even those who are not commanders, have the legal authority to restrict enlisted members, that is, to '[direct them] to remain within specified limits' (UCMJ 809 Art 9. (a) & (b)). In actual practice this

The officer, therefore, must weigh the lives of unit members against mission accomplishment and, at times, make the very difficult decision to accept very high risk to the lives of his or her subordinates (with the probability of death to some of those people approaching 100%) for the sake of mission accomplishment.

authority might take the shape of a commander restricting all personnel under her command from visiting specified local businesses based on previous negative experiences between military members and that business (Doherty, 2016; Sage, 2018; Salinas, 2013; Stone IV, 2015). A commander might issue a 'no contact' order to a member such that he cannot visit or contact a spouse due to domestic violence concerns. Commanders at various echelons can suspend a subordinate from duty, cause a subordinate to forfeit pay, or reduce a subordinate's rank (UCMJ 815, Art. 15), or even confine (that is, physically restrain) a subordinate (UCMJ

809, Art. 9, Art. 15) all without appealing to a Court Martial and without intervention from higher headquarters.

In general, military officers hold a responsibility for people that is of a different kind than that held by their civilian counterparts. If the civilian manager, in executing his responsibility for his people, recognizes an issue, he reports it to the authorities. In the military case, the officer and especially the commander is *one such authority*. The civilian manager might be expected to take an active interest in the personal lives of her people; but for the military professional there is no bright line distinction between personal and professional life.

Responsibility for Financial Resources

Next, consider an acquisitions captain serving as a project manager. Though the number of people assigned to this officer as subordinates might be very low, the level of fiscal responsibility demanded of the officer is very high. This captain ensures the program remains on schedule and within budget (Air Force, 2012), which, at the captain level, is often in the hundreds of millions of dollars. While the responsibility in question (financial) may take a different shape from in the previous case (personnel), the *level* of responsibility may be commensurate. This claim is buttressed by the fact that Air Force acquisition and contracting company grade officers (CGO) often have few if any subordinates. By placing the CGO acquisition officer in charge of a project without any (or with very few) Airmen to supervise, the Air Force sends the strong message that while one officer is responsible for people, the other officer of the same rank and pay grade is responsible for money, and that the additive levels of responsibility are similar.

Responsibility for Mission Objectives

Operators responsible for mission objectives include cyber warriors, maneuver warfare forces, space operators, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) aircrew, special operations forces conducting human intelligence operations, air- and sealift officers, combat aircrew, and a host of others. Based on the proposed model in which a responsibility threshold drives the demand for officer leadership, we can expect that mission objectives that fall short of such a threshold will be achieved by enlisted operators. But as those objectives or the missions that seek to achieve them become increasingly complex, or the consequences for failure become sufficiently high, the responsibility threshold for officership is met and thus officer leadership is required.

This is borne out in actual practice. Enlisted intelligence analysts frequently provide direction to ISR aircrew according to a pre-determined ISR target deck. Enlisted space operators monitor missile early warning equipment, and push essential elements of information to the Missile Warning Center or Joint Space Operations Center. KC-10 boom operators 'fly the boom' and direct the receiving aircraft to the proper position. Enlisted joint terminal attack controllers (JTACs) issue directions for combat employment to aircrew, and enlisted artillery crews employ heavy weapons in support of maneuver units. Yet, in each case, when the responsibility for mission objectives reaches a certain threshold, that mission requires officer leadership.

In the intelligence case, though the analyst may provide inputs to aircraft according to an ISR target deck, which was built in support of and under the authority of the operations officer's ISR plan ("The Brigade Combat Team," 2006, pp. 8-7, 8-8). Space operators, each with his or her own area of responsibility, work under the supervision of a Space Operations Center Commander (SOCC) who is responsible for the sum total of their individuated responsibilities (Herbeck, 2016). The boom operator provides

gas at the direction of, and as determined by, the pilot in command of the tanker aircraft (Morgan, 2013). The JTAC controls airpower, but does so under the authority and responsibility of the ground force commander (GFC) ("Close Air Support," 2014), and the artillery crew employs its weapons at the direction of the supported commander at the appropriate command echelon ("Joint Fire Support," 2014, pp. II-10).

Once again, the military officer is distinguished from his civilian counterpart by the kind of responsibility in question. In general, the mission objectives for which the officer is responsible are of a different kind than the objectives of the leader in the civilian sector. What distinguishes the military officer from the enlisted member is the degree or quantity of that responsibility. In a traditional infantry organization a staff sergeant (E-6) might lead a squad of ten or eleven soldiers (Moran, 2006). The first captain (O-3) does not appear until the company command level and is responsible for 130 to 300 people (Army; Moran, 2006). But some missions may inherently involve mores significant mission objectives. For example, in Marcus Luttrell's well-known account, *Lone Survivor*, the SEAL reconnaissance team of only four people, but responsible for higher order objectives than the infantry company, is led by Command Controller, Lt Mike Murphy (O-3) (Luttrell, 2007). The sum of Lt Murphy's responsibilities are commensurate with the Army Infantry captain (O-3) because the Army captain's responsibility for people is offset by Murphy's responsibility for mission objectives.

Responsibility for Concentrated Lethality

The question of lethality is an important one. Some may be tempted to conclude that the mere fact of lethality generates a responsibility sufficiently high to meet the officer threshold. Those in the Air Force may be particularly tempted to make this claim because the Air Force has long-maintained an arrangement in which, at least in the general case, officers fly the airplanes that produce kinetic effects. Officer-implemented lethality, though, is the exception in US military (and other military) operations, not the rule. The standard in the U.S. Army and Marine Corps, and throughout military history, is one in which the officer directs the (largely) enlisted force under his or her command to employ lethal means. The entire infantry system, for example, is predicated upon large numbers of enlisted warfighters commanded by a small number of officers. Even within the Air Force some enlisted aviators, such as HH-60 door gunners and security forces defenders, wield lethal means (Air U. A. Force). If the mere fact of lethality by itself were enough to reach the officership threshold, every soldier carrying an M-4 would have to be an officer. This is quite clearly not the case in practice.[14]

> *If lethality alone does not generate the requirement for officership responsibility perhaps a critical concentration of lethality does.*

If lethality alone does not generate the requirement for officership responsibility perhaps a critical *concentration* of lethality does. In the aforementioned case, an Army infantry captain will command 130-300 people. The lethality wielded by these 200-300 people is distributed across the unit and each individual controls a small fraction of the unit's total lethal capacity; and yet, the company commander (O-3) maintains responsibility for the whole.

This distribution stands in stark contrast to the Air Force attack pilot. By 'attack' I am

including any aircraft capable of delivering kinetic munitions: fighters, bombers, Predator, Reaper, gunships, etc.[16] In such cases an individual pilot, or a small crew of one to five commanded by a single pilot (often an O-3, as in the infantry case), is responsible for a hundred, a thousand, or even many thousands of pounds of precision-guided munitions. The concentration of firepower is not distributed across warfighters as in the Army and Marine Corps infantry cases but rests with the pilot or with a small, tightly integrated crew under the pilot's direct command. Under such circumstances, it may be the case that the concentration of lethality generates a level of responsibility that demands officer oversight.

This distinction between enlisted and officer responsibilities is grounded, not in technical competency as one might suppose, but in the responsibility threshold. Enlisted Army Air Corps members piloted single-seat aircraft leading up to and during World War II and with great success. Indeed, 17 enlisted pilots went on to become aces (Arbon, 1992, p. 153).[16] It was never their technical skills as pilots that delimited their enlisted ranks. The conception of officership conceived in terms of responsibility suggests that even where enlisted members are capable of technical and tactical excellence (a variable that seems to me to be entirely independent of rank), they cannot (or should not) be held to such a level of responsibility.

Types of Responsibility Compared

The responsibility threshold model for military officership provides the U.S. Military with a means of comparing the responsibilities of similarly ranked officers across the force, despite the fact that those responsibilities might look quite different on the surface. As mentioned, an acquisitions captain project manager might be responsible for hundreds of millions of dollars. The infantry captain is responsible for 300 people and their considerable net lethality and effects (Army). The pilot in command of a B-1 is responsible for three other people, effects, up to 75,000 pounds worth of kinetic munitions, and a $317M aircraft (U. A. Force, 2016). The space operations center commander is responsible for seven people, part of the early warning system, and threat detection of strategic threats. The Global Hawk pilot is responsible for a $100M aircraft and a single strategic intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) mission. Our purpose here is to determine the theoretical underpinnings of "officership" as a concept and not to draw specific thresholds. Nevertheless, given this comparison, an argument can be made that flying a single Global Hawk does not meet the responsibility threshold for officership. Though strategic ISR mission objectives and the $100M cost of each aircraft are significant, they are offset by the very low responsibility for people the absence of concentrated lethality (or lethality of any kind) altogether. It may be the case that enlisted Global Hawk pilots are justifiable under the responsibility threshold model for military officership.

A thorough conception of officership, then, begins with these four kinds of responsibility: people, finances, mission objectives, and concentrated lethality. There may be others, but these four seem to effectively capture a significant percentage of officer duties throughout the joint force. There are still a few areas that need clarification in the responsibility threshold model for officership. The first of these is the lieutenant problem and it is to this problem that we now turn.

The Lieutenant Problem

The responsibility threshold model for officership suggests that 'officer' is a species of the broader genus 'military member' and the profession of arms consists in all such members.

The *differentia* that distinguishes officers from enlisted members is the high level of responsibility that officers have been trained and empowered to accept. But on what grounds can one justify the claim that the entry-level officer (e.g., the second lieutenant or ensign) meets these demands? Military academy graduates have had daily military training for four years, but that level of experience is not equivalent to four years on active duty. ROTC graduates have had less than their academy peers, and the officer training and officer candidate school programs across the four services vary from just 10 to 16 weeks in length (Hosek et al., 2001, p. 9). What reason could there be to endow newly minted lieutenants with greater responsibility than, for example, the E-7 with more than ten years of experience (Gildea, 2012)? How can one claim that the brand new lieutenant will better handle the responsibility (or accountability) when the officership threshold is reached? The answer, in short, is that one can make no such claim. Most E-7s *are* better suited to these responsibilities than the second lieutenant or ensign.

There are really two questions involved here. First, does the lieutenant have the requisite experience to inform future decisions, such that she is qualified to handle increased responsibility? Second, have the lieutenant's leaders had enough time and context to evaluate the lieutenant to determine whether or not she ought to be entrusted with that increased responsibility? For the brand new lieutenant, the answer to both questions is 'no.'

Recall the space scenario, and specifically the missile warning operations floor briefly introduced above. There are seven enlisted duty stations, each generating a different set of duties and responsibilities. The sum total of those responsibilities (because responsibility is an additive concept) meets a threshold such that an officer is required. The officer in that case, the Space Operations Center Commander (SOC CMDR), is not a lieutenant, but a captain or major (Herbeck, 2016). There is, indeed, a lieutenant on the ops floor. This officer is the *Deputy* SOC CMDR. He or she observes the SOC CMDR, learns SOC CMDR duties, and over time, will be asked to execute those duties for limited periods of time under the direct supervision of (and subsumed under the responsibility of) the SOC CMDR. When this lieutenant becomes a captain, barring any significant insufficiencies, she will be upgraded to fulfill SOC CMDR duties.

This observation from space operations is especially important to the current discussion because the Air Force's most senior leaders have cited space operations as a precedent for introducing enlisted members into what were once officer-only career fields. 'Just as we integrated officer and enlisted crew positions in the space mission set,' former

Air Force Secretary Deborah James said, 'we will deliberately integrate enlisted pilots into the Global Hawk ISR community' (SECAF Public S. o. t. A. F. P. Affairs, 2015). The press release goes on to say that 'in the space mission arena, the Air Force took a deliberate approach to incorporate enlisted personnel into satellite operations. … As a result, the Air Force grew leadership opportunities and normalized operations' (SECAF Public S. o. t. A. F. P. Affairs, 2015). Former Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen Mark Welsh, likewise said 'not too long ago, we took the best of both officer and enlisted development tracks to lead the space mission. A similar model can be applied to our Global Hawk operations' (SECAF Public S. o. t. A. F. P. Affairs, 2015).

What we find on the missile warning operations floor represents the former Service Chief's words exactly. Taking the 'best of both officer and enlisted development tracks' resulted in enlisted technicians who *control* the system, while ensuring offers remain *responsible* for the

system. At the very same time, the Air Force 'grew leadership opportunities' by establishing an apprenticeship program for the brand new lieutenant such that, first, he or she will gain the requisite experience to take responsibility as the SOC CMDR when a captain, and second, the current SOC CMDRs can evaluate the lieutenant over time to ensure that he or she can handle that increased responsibility. This precedent meets all the salient requirements set out by the responsibility threshold model of officership.

The military system needs the brand new, inexperienced, under-qualified officer to hold that position so that she can become qualified.

A look at other areas within the military suggests that this lieutenant apprenticeship model is more common than one might initially suppose. In the mobility air forces (MAF) and combat air forces (CAF) bombers, new officers are copilots before graduating to aircraft command. Here they hone their technical skills, manage limited responsibilities, and provide a means by which more experienced officers (aircraft commanders) can evaluate their potential for greater responsibility. In combat air forces (CAF) fighters, new officers are wingmen. Here we find the same relationship between the wingman and the flight lead that we found between copilot and aircraft commander. Likewise, new officers in Air Force Material Command typically rotate through the various shops, learning the projects, programs, systems, and processes of the acquisition system. Only later are they granted the responsibility of a project manager. One observes this phenomenon even in the words the military uses for some of these positions. Notice that new MAF pilots are not pilots in *command*, but simply pilots. New maintenance officers are not generally flight *commanders*, but section leaders. New Army and Marine officers are not company commanders, but platoon leaders. The new space officer is not a SOC *commander*, but a deputy.

There are, of course, exceptions; but they are, in a very real sense, the exceptions that prove the rule. Infantry platoon leaders really do take their units out into combat and issue directives that must be followed. Those same platoon leaders are responsible (or accountable) such that, even as junior officers, they are required to answer for (to provide a response for or give an account of) those people, finances, objectives, and lethality placed in their charge. This is not a deputy, copilot, or wingman position, as in the above cases, that enjoys a safety net under the direct supervision of more senior officers. In organizations in which the mission is carried out by large numbers of enlisted members (a high *n*), such as the infantry, there must be an officer subordinate in rank to the company commander. Because of this high *n*, the company commander's supervision of the platoon leader is often indirect. Given the size of the unit, the commander cannot afford to put lieutenants into positions that are primarily geared toward apprenticeship (like the Deputy SOC CMDR or copilot). They are instead put into positions that are primarily geared toward leadership. Lieutenants in organizations like these (to include Air Force maintenance and logistics units) might be responsible for 60, 80, or 100 people on their first day in the job.

The Army has recognized this structural deficiency and has instituted a cultural fix. Having acknowledged that new lieutenants have not had the opportunity to gain the requisite experience to fulfill the level of responsibility required with n subordinates, the Army imbues platoon leaders with the vicarious experience of noncommissioned officers

(NCOs). The Army has nearly formalized this relationship in its Noncommissioned Officer Guide. 'Noncommissioned Officers accept as an unwritten duty, the responsibility to *instruct and develop second lieutenants*' ("Noncommissioned Officer Guide," 2015, pp. 5-5). The previous version of the guide used even stronger language. 'In many cases, the platoon sergeant has much more *experience* than the lieutenant does; one important task is to *teach and advise the lieutenant*' ("Noncommissioned Officer Guide," 2015, pp. 5-5) The Air Force, without saying it as openly, suggests a similar requirement. Senior Noncommissioned Officers (SNCOs) are directed to 'support [the] continued development [of commissioned officers] by sharing knowledge and *experience* to best meet their organization's mission requirements' ("The Enlisted Force Structure," 2009, p. 15).

Given the definition of officership in terms of the responsibility threshold proposed above, this system in which NCOs mentor and train officers might seem quite strange. If the NCO is more experienced, more qualified, and has greater wisdom and judgment with respect to the platoon's mission, then why not just make him the platoon leader? The answer is found in lieutenant apprenticeship. The military system needs the brand new, inexperienced, under-qualified officer to hold that position *so that she can become qualified*. The assumption, given the military's force structure, is that if the officer remains in the military, she will go on to positions of greater responsibility. She will be a company commander, hold a battalion staff position, and become a battalion commander, etc. And in each case, she needs the experience afforded her in her previous positions to prepare her for the next.

This seems in keeping with long-standing Air Force assumptions. In 1977, Major General Harry A. Morris, Director of Personnel Plans, Headquarters United States Air Force clarified the reason for restricting pilot career fields to officers with college degrees. He said,

> The Air Force has consistently maintained a policy of an all officer pilot force, with enlisted pilots and flight officers as an emergency exception during the years between 1941 and 1945. ... The all college graduate officer force concept derives primarily from the requirement that the military system *develops its own leaders*. ... The college trained officer has higher management potential as a senior officer. (Roth, 2009, p. 21)

The reason, according to Maj Gen Morris, that officers ought to be pilots has nothing to do with technical expertise or ability and everything to do with cultivating responsibility in young officers such that they may become commanders in later years. As long as the Air Force cultivates an apprenticeship program for young officers, the transition to enlisted Global Hawk pilots may be commensurate with Maj Gen Morris's view. According to Maj Gen Morris and to the military's long-held force structure, even if enlisted Airmen should become Global Hawk pilots, they should not become Global Hawk squadron, group, and wing commanders. Nevertheless, those commanders must be grown, cultivated,

> *Given the technological advances of the last few decades enabling remotely piloted aircraft pilots to fight the war from inside the squadron, we must ask why the responsibility for that weapons system needs to fall to the pilot at all.*

developed somewhere. The Secretary and Chief of Staff of the Air Force seem to agree when they say that enlisted Global Hawk pilots will still fall 'under the supervision of rated officers' (SECAF Public S. o. t. A. F. P. Affairs, 2015). One might expect a reiteration of the space operations model. A captain might serve as a mission commander (MCC) responsible for five sorties at a time, while a lieutenant might serve as a deputy MCC, learning the trade and preparing to fulfill MCC duties in due time after appropriate promotions.

Conclusion: Enlisted Global Hawk Pilots

To this point we have seen that the responsibility threshold model for officership descriptively accounts for the traditional roles to which the U.S. military has assigned both officers and enlisted members. One question that remains is a normative one and falls outside the scope of this paper: Is this how it ought to be? The intention in this paper was to develop a model for officership that explains our traditional distinction between officers and enlisted members. The model I have described above does not suggest that officers are officers because they are capable of handling additional responsibility. They are officers because they *do in fact* handle additional responsibility. Someone may respond to this model by suggesting that a particular NCO is every bit as capable of handling significant responsibilities as the officer. This is undoubtedly true of many NCOs. This fact entails that such Airman ought to pursue and receive a commission, but it does not necessarily entail dissolution of the officer/enlisted distinction.

In light of the responsibility threshold model for officership, we might ask whether the Air Force should open (or should have opened) Global Hawk pilot positions to enlisted Airmen. The answer must be grounded in responsibility. Does the control of one RQ-4 Global Hawk meet a responsibility threshold such that officer leadership is required? The 2014 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report recommended that the Air Force 'evaluate the viability of using alternative personnel populations as RPA pilots,' including enlisted Airmen. In response to that report, and more than a year before its decision to incorporate enlisted Global Hawk pilots, 'the Air Force stated that it considered assigning enlisted personnel as RPA pilots, but it decided that the *responsibilities* of piloting an RPA were commensurate with the rank of officers instead' (GAO, 2014). Here, the Air Force has clearly grounded its view on the suitability of enlisted pilots on a responsibility threshold. The more recent Air Force decision, then, may reflect an unstated admission that flying a single Global Hawk does not reach the officership responsibility threshold. A close look at the responsibility threshold for officership may support this decision. I leave the final determination to the reader. My aim here was only to provide the necessary framework to begin such a discussion and make such a determination possible.

One ought also to recognize the language in the response to the GAO report: The Air Force decided that 'responsibilities of *piloting an RPA* were commensurate with the rank of officers' (GAO, 2014). It may be that since that admission, the Air Force has divided its RPA fleet into those aircraft whose pilots do not reach the officership threshold (e.g., Global Hawk) and those whose pilots do (perhaps, the MQ-9 Reaper). The definition of officership proposed in this paper is grounded in responsibility, not 'remoteness.' The fact that Global Hawk is remotely piloted seems, at best, peripheral to the question of officer responsibility. Though more work must be done to address this question thoroughly, the personnel, financial, mission objective, and concentrated lethality variables differ significantly from one major weapons system to the next, regardless of whether they

are remotely or traditionally piloted. One should not assume that just because the Global Hawk is the first to include enlisted pilots, the MQ-9 Reaper remotely piloted aircraft should be next.[17]

At least one significant challenge remains. Given the technological advances of the last few decades enabling remotely piloted aircraft pilots to fight the war from inside the squadron, we must ask why the responsibility for that weapons system needs to fall to the pilot at all. Is it possible for a captain to serve as a mission commander, maintaining responsibility for all the squadron's Global Hawk aircraft while delegating control of that aircraft to an enlisted pilot in the same way that an officer command a tank platoon but delegates control of individual tanks to enlisted soldiers? In short, under what circumstances ought we admit a gap between the one responsible for the aircraft (or system) and the one in control of it? This question is not as simple as it may seem and deserves a paper of its own.

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Chart 1
Types of Additive Responsibility

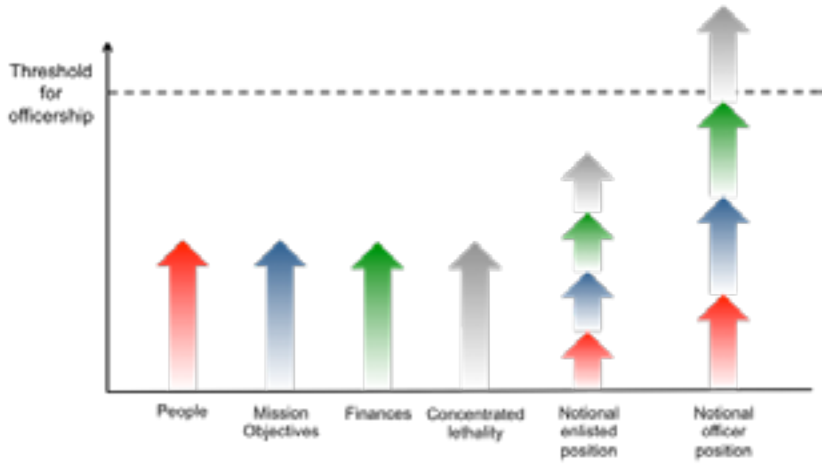
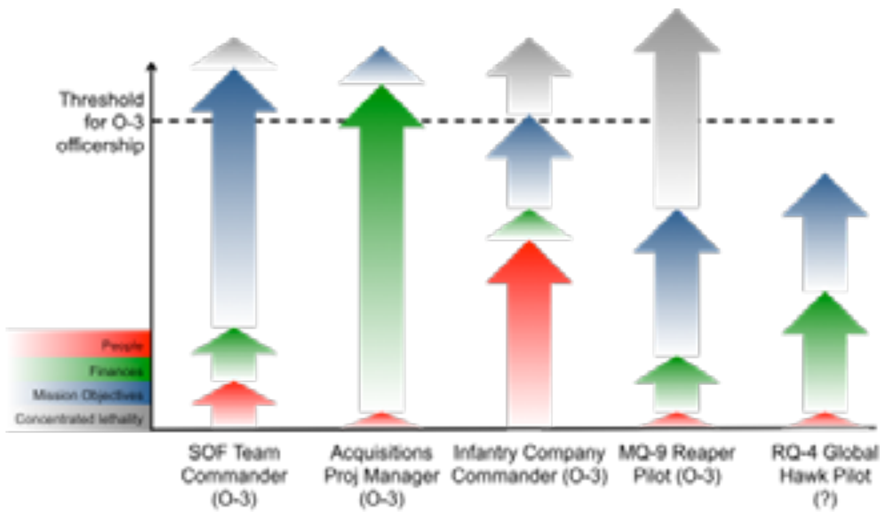


Chart 2
Examples of Additive Responsibility Across the Joint Force



Footnotes

[1] Though I do think the distinction is likely grounded in outmoded economic factors from pre WWI-European culture that no longer pertain. Anyone willing to argue for an abolition of the officer/enlisted distinction in some career fields within some branches of the US military may find my support.

[2] The military services do have means by which enlisted members can become officers. The question at stake here is not whether individual enlisted Airmen are capable of serving well as officers. It is about what it means to be an officer and what it means to be enlisted. As a result, the fact that individual enlisted Airmen can transition to officer ranks can say nothing to the purpose.

[3] 1st Lt over two years: $3,982.20. MSgt over ten years: $3,875.40.

[4] Capt over eight years: $5,940.90. CMSgt over eighteen years: $5,652.60.

[5] Someone might be tempted to argue here that education and leadership training are *jointly* sufficient. But as previously mentioned, there are numerous SNCOs with bachelors and even advanced degrees. If one holds that these two elements (education and leadership training) are jointly sufficient, one must be committed to the view that upon obtaining NCO or SNCO rank and a four-year degree, one ought to be immediately promoted to an officer rank. This is not the institutional practice and therefore the 'jointly sufficient' argument is also insufficient to ground the officer/enlisted distinction.

[6] Though space does not allow a thorough discussion here, Huntington's conception of professional 'corporateness' fails on similar grounds.

[7] Though the US Bureau of Labor Statistics has not offered the criteria by which they defined 'combat specialty', the margins are sufficiently high to suggest that any reasonable definition of 'combat specialty' would leave out a significant percentage of the officer corps in any of the four military services.

[8] This analysis provides a big picture approach. It should be used to frame the question and explain current force structure in broad strokes. It lacks the resolution required to determine the precise number of people, dollars, etc., that require officer leadership.

[9] The American Heritage College Dictionary calls them synonyms and claims that each means 'obliged to answer, as for one's actions, to an authority.' *The American Heritage College Dictionary: Fourth Edition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007).

[10] I am grateful for the Journal's anonymous reviewer for identifying this difference in perspective.

[11] I am indebted to one of the journal's anonymous peer reviewers for encouraging me to develop the officer/civilian distinction and for this particular real-world case study.

[12] The strong case and the weak case are not mutually exclusive. The oil manager probably faces the same ordinary duties as the manager in the weak case in addition to her special responsibilities generating from the more dangerous environment.

[13] Though AFI 1-2 is called 'Commander's Responsibilities,' the document makes clear that its guidance is applicable to 'leaders at all levels' *(emphasis added).*

[14] This claim anticipates the more thorough discussion of the responsibility/control gap for military officership that must wait for a subsequent paper.

[15] For an alternative interpretation of 'attack,' see Mike Benitez, "Attack! The Renaissance of the Air Force Tribe," *War on The Rocks* (June 23, 2017)

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