Army Values and Ethics: A Search for Consistency and Relevance

John W. Brinsfield

Recommended Citation

John W. Brinsfield, "Army Values and Ethics: A Search for Consistency and Relevance," *Parameters* 28, no. 3 (1998), doi:10.55540/0031-1723.1890.

Army Values and Ethics: A Search for Consistency and Relevance

JOHN W. BRINSFIELD

For the past 30 years many of the brightest and best leaders in the Army, from the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel to the individual Army service schools, have been engaged in the trying task of adequately describing Army values, ethics, and leadership doctrine. During that period virtually every Chief of Staff of the Army, 11 in all, provided guidance, directly or indirectly, to those who wrote field manuals, training circulars, or lesson plans on the subjects of professional ethics and leadership. From 1968 to 1998 the list of Army values underwent four major revisions, expanding from three to seven in number, and the definition of leadership went from an art to a process, to an essential element of combat power, then back to a process.[1]

Classroom instruction in ethics increased from a handful of courses offered intermittently on various posts in the late 1960s to complete core and advanced courses in ethics at West Point, the US Army War College, the Command and General Staff College and the other 18 Army service schools, and the ROTC Cadet Command in the 1990s. Instruction in medical ethics for Army heath care providers increased to include courses at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and most other Army medical centers and general hospitals.

During the same 30 years, the number of books and articles on military ethics and leadership mushroomed. In 1983 the US Military Academy library contained 678 titles in the subject fields of war, morality, and ethics. By 1998, at the top of the Army's educational system, the War College listed 1670 titles in the related fields of ethics and leadership. It would not be an understatement to say that no other army in the world gave as much scholarly attention to these subjects as did the United States Army from the end of the Vietnam War to the end of the Cold War. It would also be true to say that no other army improved itself as extensively in the eyes of the public as an organization worthy of trust and support as did the United States Army between 1968 and 1991.

Yet this emphasis on high standards of professionalism has not met all the needs of the service. While the new Army Values have met with widespread approval, there is still great debate within the Army concerning the adequacy of the Army's professional ethic, currently under review, which is intended to support those values. Some officers advocate a Code of Professional Ethics for the Army to simplify and clarify the entire process. Others object to the self-interest motifs in some current ethical theories that seem to run counter to the idealism of duty and selfless service which have inspired America's soldiers for more than 200 years. Still others see a danger in defining the Army too closely as a secular humanist machine, as if intellectual concepts alone will meet the demands of the battlefield where ultimate questions of meaning, guilt, pain, and death can and do nag at the consciences of soldiers.

Brief definitions of *ethics* and *morals* are in order to prevent confusion about ethics instruction. While ethical and moral are synonyms in most dictionaries, ethics and morals are differentiated by common usage. One typically speaks of legal or medical ethics, but of personal morality. As used here the word *ethics* refers to the principles, rules, and standards of proper conduct defined by an organization or profession, in this case the United States Army, for the governance of its own members. *Morals* refers to personal rules and standards of conduct based on authorities recognized by the individual which may include family, religious, organizational, or philosophical values.

This article surveys some of the approaches the Army has used in the recent past to describe the ethical principles of the military profession. The intent is twofold: to review why the Army has felt obligated to deal with ethical issues so extensively since Vietnam, and to explain why virtue ethics and character development paradigms presently in vogue can be only the first, albeit useful, step in the search for consistency between the Army's values and its professed ethical principles.

The Vietnam Cauldron

For approximately two centuries the Army of the United States paid little attention to the philosophical discipline of ethics. All that seemed necessary to America's senior military leaders was an explanation of a just cause for war to secure public support and a well-disciplined, dedicated, and trained army to win the battles. To be sure, there were courses at West Point in the 19th century in ethics and moral philosophy; but these gave way to more practical courses in leadership and military law by the end of the century. Commanders used the military law, Army regulations, and the advice of staff officers, including the chaplain, to deal with moral and ethical issues. Political leaders explained wars; military leaders won them.

The Vietnam War was a turning point in the Army's growing realization that senior military leaders, and not just political leaders, had a responsibility to be able to speak to soldiers, to the American people, and to the press about ethical issues. Ethical questions seemed to produce a range of answers during the decade of America's longest war, eventually becoming a litany of criticism. Professor Richard Falk of Princeton University wrote in 1969 that the use of high-tech weapons in Vietnam was a crime; Adam Bedau wrote in *Worldview* in 1974 that the Vietnam War amounted to genocide; Michael Walzer of Harvard in 1977 wrote in *The New Republic* that the whole Vietnam experience was a war crime on a par with German atrocities in World War II; and in 1979 William Griffen and John Marciano, in their book *Teaching the Vietnam War*, charged that the surreptitious release of the Pentagon Papers proved that the Vietnam War had been conducted with deceit unparalleled in modern American history. Dr. Cecil Currey , the author of *Self-Destruction: The Disintegration and Decay of the United States Army during the Vietnam Era*, wrote, "The Army failed in the struggle to win the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people. It failed a second time with its citizenry at home."[2]

The Army itself bore the brunt of these attacks, for both the Secretary of Defense and the President had, in effect, left office in the middle of the war. Indeed, of the three US Presidents most closely involved with Vietnam, one had been assassinated, one chose in March of 1968 not to run for another term, and one was forced to resign. The tenuous national consensus dissipated as the war dragged on. And as casualties mounted, more and more Senators and Representatives demanded complete withdrawal. The morale of the Army plummeted as service members returned home not to a parade but to hostility. Many officers felt that the Army had been abandoned by the Congress and the American people.

Some of the ethical issues faded with time, but a few, such as the March 1968 My Lai massacre, produced long-term concerns for the Army. In November 1969 the Chief of Staff, General William Westmoreland, directed Lieutenant General William R. Peers to explore the nature and scope of the original investigations into the tragedy. The Peers Inquiry, completed in March 1970, recommended to General Westmoreland that the Army study the ethical and moral standards required of its officers and noncommissioned officers.[3] General Westmoreland then directed the Commandant of the US Army War College, Major General George S. Eckhardt, to conduct a thorough review of the ethical climate in the Army and to provide an analysis leading to prompt and corrective action.[4]

The resulting Professionalism Study of 1970, the first of three in the years 1970-72, examined institutional systems and requirements for success in the Army, attitudes and values of senior officers, and tasks for the 1970s. In fact the studies would be succeeded by others, internally driven at the Army War College, for a total of 12 years. Two of the officers who participated in the 1971 study on leadership were Lieutenant Colonel Dandridge M. Malone and Lieutenant Colonel Walter F. Ulmer, Jr., both of whom became well known in later years as leaders in defining professionalism for the Army.[5]

One of the striking conclusions of the first study was that the Army contained "untoward and unhealthy pressures to strive for success" on the part of officers. Systems that regulated the selection, education, promotion, and reward of Army officers were in need of major correction.[6]

Another conclusion from a 1977 study entitled "An Analysis of Professional Military Ethics: Their Importance, Development and Inculcation," by Lieutenant Colonel Melville A. Drisko, Jr., a student at the Army War College, asserted from a survey of 2215 officers that "the motto, *Duty, Honor, Country*, alone was not effective in promoting ethical behavior among officers."[7] It was clear that the Army needed to evaluate its concepts of values and ethics.

An Obligation to Explain, Train, and Maintain

General Creighton W. Abrams, who became Chief of Staff in 1972, fully understood the critical need to address the Army's crisis in professionalism. Abrams recognized that one of the key elements in any initial reform of the Army would be to restore to the dispirited leaders of the post-Vietnam period a sense of patriotism, integrity, honesty, and devotion to duty. He stressed the values and the discipline that would have to be instilled in what was to be, in effect, a new Army. At a command conference in July 1973, General Abrams addressed his audience on the subject of reform:

> The Army is and always will be people. Our people are really good. It is a rare man who wants to be bad, but a lot of men are not strong enough to be good all by themselves, and a little help is enough. It does not make any difference where they come from. If we have faith in them and encourage them and keep standing for the right ourselves, the Army will get back into the shape the country needs and has to have.[8]

The world that General Abrams inherited and which he would pass on to his successors in the Office of the Chief of Staff was more complicated in 1972-74 than had been the case even a decade earlier. The old paradigm of law, regulations, religious-moral discourse, and personal example for supporting discipline and ethical behavior in the Army had new challenges. In 1969 a court case invalidated the practice of marching midshipmen to chapel at the US Naval Academy. Midshipmen were free to choose whether they would attend religious services. West Point followed suit the next year. In 1974 the All Volunteer Army came into being. The Women's Army Corps was being integrated into the total force, and in civilian communities the women's liberation movement was in full swing. Between October 1973 and August 1974, moreover, first the Vice President resigned following tax evasion charges and then the United States lost the President and Attorney General to the Watergate scandal. Reforming the Army in such an ethically relativistic and situational environment was a difficult undertaking; it was complicated by General Abrams' tragic death in September 1974.

During the decades of the 1970s and 1980s senior commanders in all the services began to exert their influence on the direction and content of ethics instruction. Courses in ethics were added to the curricula in the Army service schools, at the service academies, in ROTC instruction, and at the war colleges. So great was the interest in defining "the soul of the military profession" that when Colonel Malham Wakin, Associate Dean and Head of the Department of Philosophy and Fine Arts at the US Air Force Academy, published his book *War, Morality and the Military Profession* in 1979, it became practically a best-seller in the field of military ethics. Colonel Wakin founded the Joint Service Conference on Professional Ethics (which continues to meet annually in Washington, D.C.,) to consider the views of some of the most distinguished military ethicists in the United States, the United Kingdom, and other nations.

In 1981 Lieutenant General Andrew J. Goodpaster, Superintendent of the US Military Academy, inaugurated a core course in ethics for all cadets at West Point.[9] In 1984 General John A. Wickham, Chief of Staff of the Army, published *Guideposts for a Proud and Ready Army*, which contained not only the Army ethic (which had previously been described in Field Manual 100-1) but also the four soldierly qualities of commitment, competence, candor, and courage. And from 1987 through 1993 two Presidents of the National Defense University, Lieutenant General Bradley C. Hosmer, USAF, and Lieutenant General Paul G. Cerjan, USA, approved the publication of three anthologies in the field of ethics. These books, *Military Ethics*, *Ethics and National Defense*, and *Moral Obligation and the Military*, joined the growing corpus of professional books and journals, which included *Parameters*, *Military Review*, *Military Chaplains' Review*, and others, in expanding the awareness of the military services on issues dealing with ethics and professionalism.

Space precludes a full listing of all of the leaders, publications, and agencies involved in the ethical component of the Army's resurgence since Vietnam. Proof that real progress had been made may have been found during the Gulf War of 1990-91 and the humanitarian and peacekeeping missions the Army has undertaken throughout this decade. The vast majority of Americans agreed that the Army had fought in the Gulf with restraint, had avoided many of the problems it had encountered in Southeast Asia, and had performed missions of humanitarian relief in Asia, Latin America, Africa, and Europe with total dedication. A 1973 Harris poll had revealed that by the end of the Vietnam War, the American public ranked the military only above sanitation workers in relative order of respect. (And some said that the sanitation workers had gotten a bum rap.) By 1989 a Harris survey found that Americans ranked the

military above big business, organized labor, the medical community, banks, newspapers, Congress, television, newspapers, and even the Supreme Court in trust. The Army had come a long way in the years since its nadir in Vietnam.

Post-Cold War Concerns

In the flush of victory after Operation Desert Storm, it seemed that the ethical reputation of the military profession was at a high point, at least in the eyes of the American public. Yet most moral crises in the Army in the 20th century had occurred (or had been revealed) just after wars were concluded, and the Gulf War proved to be no exception. Beginning in 1991 the American military experienced a series of incidents which, though perhaps not reflective of a decline in the good order and discipline of the majority of service members, surely brought more unfavorable publicity than the services desired or deserved.

In 1991 the Navy's Tailhook scandal led to a five-year series of investigations, indictments, flagging actions, retirements, resignations, and disciplinary actions related to allegations and incidents of sexual harassment. The topic of sexual harassment was brought to the nation's attention in 1993 with the nationally televised Anita Hill and Judge Clarence Thomas testimonies before a US Senate Committee, and shortly thereafter an Armed Forces Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Review was ordered by Congress. In 1997 the Secretary of the Army's Senior Review Panel on Sexual Harassment published its conclusions that sexual harassment in many forms was a serious leadership issue throughout the Army.

During the same period, the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy relating to homosexual service members engaged not only the courts but also many Pentagon staff officers. When US District Judge Eugene Nickerson ruled on 30 March 1995 that "the government's policy was not only unconstitutional but also Orwellian because it equated, by assumption, sexual orientation with personal misconduct," the Army's Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel had to assign a lieutenant colonel to do little else but answer the mail on this issue.[10]

Later that year, outbreaks of violence at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, got the attention of the Army Chief of Staff. On 31 October 1995, a sniper attack during a physical training run left one soldier dead. In December three soldiers at Fort Bragg were charged in the killing of an African-American couple in Fayetteville. It was later learned that one of the soldiers charged in the double murder had extremist materials, including a Nazi flag, in his possession.[11] In light of the Oklahoma City bombing, military officials became concerned about extremist groups in the Army and how military training might be misused. Several different government agencies conducted multiple investigations at Fort Bragg, Fort Carson, and Fort Benning among other installations.

Perhaps the most damaging single incident in terms of service credibility occurred late in 1996 when charges were brought against 12 soldiers for sexual crimes committed at Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland. One soldier, a drill sergeant, was charged with 15 counts of rape and 48 related charges against a total of 21 women who were trainees at the installation. In unrelated but no less serious cases, the Army announced charges against two sergeants in Darmstadt, Germany, for rape and other crimes against 18 women soldiers.[12] Eventually more charges for similar crimes were registered against soldiers at Fort Bliss, Texas, and at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

During the same period, 1994-98, the service academies and even some state military schools came under media fire for breakdowns in good order and discipline. In 1994 a string of criminal incidents involving midshipmen at Annapolis caused concern at the highest levels of the Navy's leadership.

Although some unit commanders bemoaned the fact that "new recruits" did not seem to subscribe to the "old values," the problems with behavior were clearly not limited to the young. In 1994 the Army Inspector General reported 282 complaints involving improper conduct against 118 senior military and 19 Senior Executive Service leaders. These resulted in 24 investigations of which 22 were substantiated. In 1996 the leading causes for disciplinary action against senior Army leaders included misuse of aircraft and official vehicles, personal misconduct (non-sexual), abuse of authority, favoritism toward subordinates, dereliction of duty, and sexual misconduct. Even more confusing to the Army in general were the punishments, or lack of them, for senior leaders who had violated policy or the law.

Certainly this litany of sensational reports in the press represented only a tiny fraction of the dedicated men and

women who served in the nation's armed forces in the United States and around the world in the 1990s. In the latter part of 1994, for example, more than 70 regional wars and insurgencies were in progress in the world. During this period, some 108,000 Army personnel were assigned in 39 countries outside the continental United States in an attempt to guarantee the peace. These countries included Somalia, where more than 100,000 people faced the prospect of starvation without US aid, and Bosnia-Herzegovina where 100,000 civilians were killed and a quarter million more made homeless as a result of years of fighting.[13]

In the main, however, the unfavorable reports were true. Perhaps they illustrated a basic misunderstanding of the real nature of the military profession by some both in the military and outside of it. The application of civil laws to the military over the course of 20 years, at first to combat racism and sexism, had opened the door to endless litigation which ranged from allegations of improperly constituted promotion boards to specific comments on efficiency reports. The military seemed to be perceived not as a special profession, but as just another department of government where individual rights could override traditions, regulations, and even promotion boards. Writers of Army doctrine found themselves asking whether proposed policy statements might result in civil law suits. At a minimum, it was evident that some soldiers and officers were learning to manipulate the letter of regulations and avoid the spirit of them, if indeed they bothered with regulations at all. Clearly the time had passed when a commander could say, as Oliver Cromwell did, "Sir, this is a military camp, the rules of Parliament do not apply." For the third time since the end of World War II, the Army undertook the task of determining and explaining its values, and the rationale for those values, in a new statement of the Army ethic.

The Response

Early in 1994, General Gordon Sullivan, then Army Chief of Staff, discussed the desirability of a new character development program for enlisted soldiers with some of his principal staff members, including the Army's Chief of Chaplains. General Sullivan was concerned about a number of issues, among them reports of efforts by racial and cultural extremist groups to recruit soldiers. He mentioned the possibility of a new program, somewhat akin to the Character Guidance program of the early 1950s, that would provide lessons and discussions for soldiers on Army values and character formation.

The proponent for this proposal was not the Office of the Chief of Chaplains, although chaplains would support the initiative, but rather the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (ODCSPER). Within ODCSPER, several staff officers would develop the outlines of what came to be called "Character Development XXI."

The ODCSPER staff conducted a comprehensive survey of the materials available to unit commanders, as well as curricula used at West Point, in ROTC programs, in the Sergeants Major Academy, at the Command and General Staff College, and at the Army War College. The staff learned that in 1994 there was no systematic horizontal and vertical integration of programs related to moral leadership or character development in the Army. Most organizations developed their own curriculum or programs which generally reflected appropriate levels of instruction, but which had not been subjected to a standardized review, analysis, and design process.

In early 1995, an ODCSPER staff study, "Character Development in the US Army: A Proposal to Change the Future," proposed a strategy for a Character Development Program in the Army which would reflect "a developmental and progressive process of training." Such a process would build a standardized, progressive, developmental, and sequential curriculum in character development for the Total Army which would avoid the fragmentary approach of previous years. It would also build on normative tasks and expectations at each rank, with case studies and discussions to prepare leaders for the next level of responsibility. Each school or training installation, from basic training through the Sergeants Major Academy for noncommissioned officers, and from precommissioning institutions through the Army War College for officers, would design its own lesson plans and case studies. These training packages would then be subject to a review, analysis, and design process to check for suitability, relevance, and lack of redundancy. The benefits for the Army would include greater cooperation between educational and training facilities, sharing of training experience and resources, and a structure that would enable the Army Chief of Staff to influence training. One possible disadvantage was the difficulty in developing a staff of experts who could manage such an enterprise.

The Character Development XXI initiative had already been implemented in part by the Sergeants Major Academy by

1996. The Noncommissioned Officer Educational System already had a developmental, sequential curriculum. The institutions that trained officers, however, still basically did their own design. A 1996 US Army War College study, which surveyed ethics curricula at West Point, in ROTC Cadet Command, in Army service schools, and at the Army War College itself, confirmed the ODCSPER observations. There was no single office that monitored ethics instruction in the Army. Many instructors wrote their own lesson plans. Some case studies were used repeatedly at different levels; and one case study, the My Lai massacre, had been used somewhat redundantly at different levels of officer instruction for more than 20 years. Chaplains still comprised 80 percent of the ethics instructors in the Army service schools in 1996, and provided instruction in ethics at the Command and General Staff College and at the Army War College, with the content of the training materials usually approved within each institution.

Leadership, Character Development, and Virtue Ethics

As the Character Development XXI initiative continued, a separate but related effort was under way. The Army's leadership manual, FM 22-100, titled *Army Leadership*, was under revision by the Center for Army Leadership at Fort Leavenworth. The task was to write a doctrinal manual on leadership that would include not only recognized skills for leaders at many levels but also the Army values and the Army ethic supporting those values--truly a Herculean task. The quest for consensus on a finite list of values for a profession, much less a rationale that would pass muster within the different Army institutions as well as scrutiny by general officers across the Total Army, has produced a continuous loop.

Making the task of writing FM 22-100 even more frustrating were the two ends of the intellectual spectrum that had to be covered: consistency and relevance. When the content of successive drafts was evaluated from the field, reviewers frequently challenged either the philosophical consistency of the manual or its "no-kidding" relevance to the profession of arms. The more consistent the ethical philosophy, the less relevance it had to a diverse, hierarchical organization with multiple missions in war and peace. The more relevant the suggestions, the less consistent they were with purely philosophical principles. Many of the Army's experienced doctrine writers and even ethicists were concerned that the result of too many accommodations would be an eclectic hodgepodge of ethical principles, a mix of individual and organizational values held together by many diverse historical illustrations.

One group of officers argued, for example, that character development was the central goal of leadership. Character development could include embedding the Army's values of loyalty, integrity, respect, and personal courage (among others) in the developmental process, ostensibly to produce a person of healthy self-esteem and reliability. Character development, in turn, could be supported by "virtue ethics," which has as its goal the production of virtuous people. One of the ancient champions of virtue ethics was Aristotle, who became the philosopher of choice for some of these Army officers. Aristotle wrote in *The Nicomachean Ethics* that happiness (*eudaimonia*) must be the final good for man. Happiness is further described as "living well and doing well."[14] Virtues enable one to live well and to do well. Aristotle noted, however, that describing a good man (as a goal) or even The Good in general is risky; "the term `good,'" as he observed, "is used in as many different senses as we use the verb `is.' We apply it as a predicate in the category of substance, when we say that God and reason are good; in the category of quality, as applied to the virtues . . . and so on. Clearly, then, the good cannot be something at once universally present in all cases and single."[15]

• Character development supported by virtue ethics has some advantages. It could be applied universally, that is, to the virtues embedded in any culture. It is not dependent on any understanding of religious virtues because the end (*teleios* for Aristotle) is simply living well and doing well, both of which could be accomplished in a totally secular context. Virtue ethics also offers an attractive first step for those who may not have any other moral grounding, but who may be able to respond to the concept of developing strength of character because it is clearly in one's self interest if it leads to living well and doing well. The problem with this construct, however, is that it has little to do with the obligation that a soldier takes to support and defend the Constitution with the possible loss of his or her life as a consequence.

This latter assertion is made even clearer if one compares virtue ethics to General Douglas MacArthur's "Duty, Honor, Country" speech at West Point in May 1962. At no point does General MacArthur argue that soldiers should be virtuous in order to live well or to do well except to do their duty:

Duty, honor, country: Those three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be. They are your rallying point to build courage when courage seems to fail, to regain faith when there seems to be little cause for faith, to create hope when hope becomes forlorn. The code which those words perpetuate embraces the highest moral law and will stand the test of any ethics or philosophies ever promulgated for the uplift of mankind. Its requirements are for the things that are right and its restraints are from the things that are wrong. The soldier, above all other men, is required to practice the greatest act of religious training--sacrifice. In battle, and in the face of danger and death, he discloses those divine attributes which his Maker gave when He created man in His own image. No physical courage and no greater strength can take the place of the divine help which alone can sustain him. However hard the incidents of war may be, the soldier who is called upon to offer and give his life for his country is the noblest development of mankind.[16]

Of course, General MacArthur's speech may no longer be politically correct for some, for a variety of reasons, but he presented a contrasting view to that of Aristotle. MacArthur's is an ethic of duty based on a realistic appraisal of what can be required of a soldier who fights for his or her country.

The concept of duty, interestingly enough, is even older than the concept of virtue ethics. Socrates regarded duty or obligation to one's country, to one's city-state, to one's family, and to one's self as the basis and test for true character development. Plato described duty (or obligation) as encompassing duty to God and the State, which, filtered through Kant and Paley at West Point in the 19th century, became God and Country. That motto remains at Yale, much as the footprint remains at West Point and in the writings of such figures as Washington, Lee, Marshall, and MacArthur. Field Manual 100-1, *The Army*, published in 1994, states clearly, "The Army ethos, the guiding beliefs, standards and ideals that characterize and motivate the Army, is succinctly described in one word--Duty." MacArthur probably would have said that a willingness to perform one's duty, no matter what the cost, is what puts the soldier "above all other men."

• There is another reason why virtue ethics must be only a first step in character development. The motivation for virtue ethics (at least in Aristotle) is essentially one of self-interest and self-development. It would be very difficult to understand how self-interest could be correlated with selfless service, much less with duty, as Army values. The US Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, in its study on effective unit performance, put it this way:

When the chips are down, there is no rational calculation in the world capable of causing an individual to lay down his life. On both the individual and collective levels, war is therefore primarily an affair of the heart. It is dominated by such irrational factors as resolution and courage, honor and duty and loyalty and sacrifice of self. When everything is said and done, none of these have anything to do with technology, whether primitive or sophisticated.[17]

One implication of this statement, of course, is that love of country must be the real motivation for service. Loyalty to one's unit and to one's fellow soldiers, sometimes described as "cohesion," is perhaps a permutation of that same emotion.

• Finally, virtue ethics must be only a first step in character development because virtue ethics, as described above, cannot equip the soldier to face the possibility of death, disfiguring wounds, or the guilt which may come with casualties in sustained combat. Personal courage, of course, is important. Yet when faced with ultimate questions, the soldier must be not only physically and mentally fit, but also spiritually fit as well.

Spiritual Fitness: A Key Component for a Wartime Ethic

The necessity of spiritual support for personnel in crisis has been recognized not only by the Army, but also by civilian law enforcement and disaster relief personnel. In January 1982, when Air Florida Flight 90, with 79 persons on board, crashed into the ice-bound Potomac River in Washington, D.C., Army and Navy chaplains from the immediate area supported the civilian rescue workers, police, and divers who were pulling bodies from the muddy water. The presence of the chaplains reinforced the courage of those who had to perform the most difficult tasks. The same support was rendered by chaplains and clergy during the relief efforts in Florida following Hurricane Andrew in 1992, during the

Midwestern floods of 1993, and as a part of Project Heartland, following the Oklahoma City bombing of April 1995.

Spiritual fitness in the Army means the ability of the individual to believe in the importance, necessity, and just nature of the mission; to have faith in the reliability of leaders, in the dependability of fellow soldiers, and in the training and equipment furnished for the operation; and to be prepared to encounter and cope with extreme danger, devastation, and even death with confidence, dedication, and courage. Spiritual fitness transcends moral fitness because it prepares the individual to deal with ultimate questions such as the meaning and value of life and not merely questions of proper behavior. Spiritual strength for many soldiers is supported by their religious convictions; for others who may not be religious, it may be an expression of their loyalty to the nation, to the unit, and to their fellow soldiers. Spiritual strength is an inspirational character trait which can motivate a unit even when circumstances seem bleak. General George Patton recognized the power of spiritual strength when he circulated 250,000 copies of a weather prayer, one for every soldier in the Third Army, during the Battle of the Bulge.[18] In the final analysis, spiritual strength may be measured by the determination of the soldiers in a unit to support one another with fidelity and to accomplish their mission with honor no matter what the cost. It is part of the foundation of the Army Ranger Creed, "I will not fail those with whom I serve."

Many of the nation's senior leaders have recognized the power and necessity of spiritual fitness in the past. General George Marshall commented at the end of World War II on the desirability not only of a moral Army but of a righteous Army:

> I look upon the spiritual life of the soldier as even more important than his physical equipment. It's morale--and I mean spiritual morale--which wins the victory in the ultimate, and that type of morale can only come out of the religious nature of the soldier who knows God and who had the spirit of religious fervor in his soul. I count heavily on that type of man and that kind of Army.[19]

In 1951 President Harry Truman wrote, "As we build up our military strength to secure the free world from aggression, we must be equally diligent to strengthen the moral and spiritual life of our armed forces."[20]

President Dwight D. Eisenhower, in recalling his decision to launch the Normandy invasion in 1944 and the time he spent in prayer then, reflected that "prayer gives you the courage to make the decisions you must make in a crisis and then the confidence to leave the result to a Higher Power." Even more recently, at the end of Operation Desert Storm, General H. Norman Schwarzkopf encouraged Christian soldiers to celebrate Easter, Jewish soldiers to celebrate Passover, and Muslim soldiers to make the minor pilgrimage to Mecca supported by the 535 Army chaplains in US Central Command.[21]

General Gordon R. Sullivan summarized the relationship between personal courage in war and the spiritual fitness of soldiers in Field Manual 100-1, *The Army*, published in December 1991:

> Courage is the ability to overcome fear and carry on with the mission. Courage makes it possible for soldiers to fight and win. Courage, however, transcends the physical dimension. Moral and spiritual courage are equally important. There is an aspect of courage which comes from a deep spiritual faith which, when prevalent in an Army unit, can result in uncommon toughness and tenacity in combat.[22]

Spiritual fitness, however, is not a fixed quantity. It must be discussed and reinforced by stressing duty to country, selfless service, and loyalty to high ideals. Many soldiers find support for such values in their religious affiliation. Religious support, provided by chaplains and chaplain assistants, and approved by the commander's religious support plan, not only facilitates the soldier's constitutional right to the free exercise of religion, but also reinforces such values as respect for others, loyalty, and selfless service.

Religious support and confidential counseling, available to soldiers who voluntarily seek such services, is an important element of spiritual fitness for many in the Army. In Operation Desert Storm, for example, more than 15,000 soldiers of the XVIII Airborne Corps attended worship on one Sunday before the ground war began. For soldiers who do not choose to attend religious services or avail themselves of the support of chaplains, there are counselors, medical personnel, and other professionals who can provide some spiritual fitness support. Commanders must of course be careful that in providing the resources to those who wish to worship freely they do not pressure others who may prefer

their own private thoughts.

Ethics Questions for the Army After Next

This essay shows why and how the US Army became intensively involved in describing its values, ethical reasoning, and leadership doctrine during the past 30 years and where it might go in the next 30 years. Even though the historian can trace some concerns with ethics back to the Revolutionary War, and particularly the practice of detailing chaplains to assist in the moral instruction of soldiers, the principal effort to clarify the Army ethos, character, and identity has been very recent.

The Army faces four challenges in the near future. The first is to settle on an adequate supporting rationale to serve as a foundation for the seven Army values. This article has argued that virtue ethics, which may be useful as a first step, does not, on its own, meet the relevance and reality needs of soldiers who are charged with winning the nation's wars. It is not wise to lose touch with the traditions of the profession in an effort to be purely "neutral" in approaching matters of moral behavior. Second, the Army must decide how closely it wishes to monitor what is being taught in ethics courses from the basic trainee and precommissioning levels through the senior levels of leadership. Many who have surveyed the current decentralized system of curriculum design believe that some detailed monitoring is desirable.

Third, the Army must decide how far the threats of constant civil litigation over individual rights issues will influence its professionalism, ethics, and enforcement of the rules and regulations of the service. Where will the line be in the 21st century between individual rights and the common good in the military services? Will the Army change its historic ethos as the nation's war guardian and become just another department of the federal government? If so, will such a course ultimately undermine the authority of commanders to compel the obedience of soldiers in units? Will it ultimately be necessary to have a lawyer on every battalion staff?

Finally, the Army must examine its concept of the human and spiritual needs of the soldier and how to prepare its soldiers for war. In the past 30 years the Army has grown uneasy about publicly acknowledging religion as a support for soldiers even though the present Chief of Staff has increased the number of chaplains in basic training units. A century ago religion was a public matter, while sex was very private. Today the situation is reversed, due in part to the fear that someone out there is waiting to file a lawsuit against the uninformed commander who might want to make a prayer breakfast mandatory rather than voluntary. The truth is that there are many more religious and tolerant people in the Army than litigious ones. The Army will ultimately have to decide if it wants to continue to recruit religious people to serve in the military, and if so, where the line protecting two individual rights--the right to freedom of conscience and the right to freedom of religious expression--needs to be drawn for the next century.

As the Army looks into the 21st century, it is clear that the pluralistic nature of the country will continue to increase. There will be many philosophies on the shelf from which to choose, and many educated people who will make compelling cases for the military to change or continue its policies, to modify or continue its values, to open the door to change or to slam it shut against intrusion. As General MacArthur advised,

> Let civilian voices argue the merits or demerits of our processes of government: Whether our strength is being sapped by deficit financing indulged in too long, by Federal paternalism grown too mighty, by power groups grown too arrogant, by politics grown too corrupt, by crime grown too rampant, by mortals grown too low, by taxes grown too high, by extremists grown too violent; whether our personal liberties are as thorough and complete as they should be. . . . And through all this welter of change and development your mission remains fixed, determined, inviolable. It is to win our wars.[23]

The Army's mission is to win the nation's wars. The Army ethicists' mission is to describe the essential values, the explanation for those values, and the relevant leadership principles that will enable the Army to accomplish its mission with honor. One hopes that in this quest, Army leaders will not settle for watered-down versions of a tough Army ethic that espouses a challenging life of service to the nation. If we do, whether to increase recruitment or just to make people feel better, we will pay the bill later.

NOTES

1. Robert A. Fitton, ed., *Leadership: Quotations from the Military Tradition* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1994), p. 179. The Army's documents which defined leadership included Field Manual (FM) 22-100, 1965; DA Pam 600-15, October 1968; FM 100-5,1982; FM 22-100,1983; FM 22-103,1987; and FM 22-100, Draft 1997, among others.

2. Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1980), p.300; John Brinsfield, "Chaplain As Advisor to the Commander," Training Support Packet (Fort Monmouth, N.J.: US Army Chaplain Center and School, 1988), pp. 23-24.

3. Harry P. Ball, *Of Responsible Command* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: USAWC Alumni Association, 1994), pp. 393-94.

4. Ibid.

5. Franklin M. Davis, *A Study on Leadership for the 1970's* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: USAWC, 16 August 1971), p. iv.

6. Ball, p. 394.

7. John W. Brinsfield, "Ethics and the Angry Young Man," *Military Chaplains' Review* (Summer 1980), pp. 45-59.

8. John W. Brinsfield, *Encouraging Faith, Supporting Soldiers: A History of the Army Chaplain Corps, 1975-1995* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, 1997), p.10.

9. Chaplain (Major General) Kermit D. Johnson, Chief of Army Chaplains in 1981, had recommended this course to General Goodpaster in December 1980. See Brinsfield, *Encouraging Faith, Supporting Soldiers*, Part 1, p. 133.

10. Ibid., p. 373.

11. Sir Walter Scott, Jr., "The Recruitment Practices of Extremist Groups," USAWC Strategic Research Project, unpublished study (Carlisle, Pa.: USAWC,1996), p.17.

12. Jane McHugh and G. E. Willis, "Defense to Plead `Breakdown of Discipline,'" *Army Times*, 21 April 1997, pp. 2, 15.

13. Brinsfield, *Encouraging Faith, Supporting Soldiers*, p. 361.

14. Philip Wheelwright, tr., *Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics* (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1951), pp. 167, 160.

15. Ibid., p.163.

16. Vorin E. Whan, Jr., ed., *A Soldier Speaks* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965), pp. 353, 355.

17. US Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, *Determinants of Effective Unit Performance* (Alexandria, Va.: US Army Research Institute for Behavioral and Social Sciences, 1994), p. 233.

18. Robert Gushwa, *The Best and Worst of Times: The United States Army Chaplaincy, 1920-1945* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, 1977), p. 157.

19. Ibid., p. 186.

20. Rodger Venzke, *Confidence in Battle, Inspiration in Peace: The United States Army Chaplaincy, 1945-1975* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, 1977), p. 114.

21. From December 1990 to May 1991 the author served as the ARCENT PERSCOM Chaplain during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Additional duties included supervising religious support for three battalions of soldiers located in Dhahran, Riyadh, and King Khalid Military City. After ministering to soldiers during six SCUD attacks, and

supporting medics who were preparing casualties for body bags, the author became convinced that the Army must never lose its perspective on the human dimension of service in combat and the necessity of spiritual support for soldiers.

22. US Army, Field Manual 100-1, *The Army* (Washington: GPO, 1991), p. 17.

23. Whan, p. 357.

Chaplain (Colonel) John W. Brinsfield is Director of Ethical Program Development at the US Army War College. He is a graduate of Vanderbilt University and the US Army War College, has an M.Div. from Yale Divinity School, a Ph.D. in history from Emory University, and a D.Min. in ethics from Drew University. In 1972-73 Chaplain Brinsfield was a Woodrow Wilson Fellow at Mansfield College, Oxford, and a Leopold Schepp Fellow at Cambridge University. He has taught military ethics in the Army since 1976 at, among other places, the Army Aviation School, the Army Chaplain School, the US Military Academy, and the US Army War College. His most recent books are *Religion and Politics in Colonial South Carolina* and *Encouraging Faith, Supporting Soldiers: A History of the United States Army Chaplain Corps, 1975-1995*. He is a veteran of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.