Moral Foundations of Military Service

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Recommended Citation

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From *Parameters*, Spring 2000, pp. 117-29.

The topic of morality and military service is a very broad one. For purposes of clarity, let's first group the issues into two areas: ethics *of* military service and ethics *in* military service.

By "ethics *of* military service," I mean the moral basis of the military profession itself. The introductory portion of this essay will address the moral meaning of soldiering and what it means to choose to devote one's life to national defense. Then we will turn to the ethic internal to the military profession--"ethics *in* military service."

Much has been written in recent years about the moral culture of the American military. Some see the unique (and some would say superior) moral demands of military service as a resource for national moral renewal--a kind of "light to the nation" in a time when the nation is sorely in need of confidence in the integrity of its leaders. Others view with alarm the supposed "culture gap" they see emerging between the American military and the civilian society it serves. The question of ethics in the military profession concerns the unique moral demands of military service. Apart from an inherent cultural conservatism of the military, what is it about military service that generates special moral obligations?

Ethics of Military Service

We begin, then, with the first topic, the ethics *of* military service. What is the moral basis of military service? Why is it morally legitimate to willingly assume the obligation to fight and die for one's country?[1]

Morally serious and thoughtful military officers feel a deep tension in the moral basis of their profession. On the one hand, there are few places in our society where the concepts of duty and service above self have such currency. High and noble ideals have a place in the military that they have in few other areas of modern American life. For many years now, polling data have shown that Americans respect and trust their military more than any other group in our society. Military service embodies some of the deepest values of human life and our society, and it produces character that inspires admiration and respect. Even a pacifist like the great American philosopher William James was deeply impressed by the "military virtues." He wrote a famous essay in which he speculated on what could be the "moral equivalent" of war and military service, and what else could produce such absolutely necessary virtues in our society.[2]

But while producing excellence of character and virtue, the military exists to serve the will of the political leadership of a particular state. The military will, at times, be employed for less-than-grand purposes in the service of that state. If ethics at its highest is about universal human values, such as the equal moral and spiritual value of every human being, how can that be manifested by serving to advance the interests of the very partial human community of a single nation?

Clearly there is a tension between these highest and *universal* ethical ideals and the reality that the military serves particular states and their political leaders. If we believe Clausewitz's judgment that war is a continuation of politics by other means, the real purpose of military leadership is simply to serve the national interest.

Viewed in this perspective, all the rhetoric about the high moral purposes of military service constitutes a verbal smoke screen behind which lurks an unpleasant truth: It is *functional* to persuade individuals to think about military service in such moral terms, but such talk only makes it psychologically easier to evade the true reality that military people and organizations exist solely to serve the tribal interests of the state. And since states are engaged in a constant struggle to advance their interests and to diminish those of other states, there is little here to be seen as truly morally grand.

Of course we would probably disguise this reality by invocation of ideas of the "self-defense" of the state. But such talk is vague. We know the core meaning of "self-defense": self-defense is when we fend off someone who is attacking us personally or, extended to the state, when we resist a border incursion or protect the lives of fellow citizens in peril. In that narrow and relatively precise sense, all but absolute pacifists grant there is a right to self-defense.

But it requires considerable conceptual sleight-of-hand to extend the concept of self-defense to foreign interventions-- whether humanitarian or imperial--and to balance-of-power wars. Only rarely do militaries (especially the US military) fight in wars that genuinely defend national political sovereignty and territorial integrity. Typically our wars serve something considerably broader and vaguer than strict self-defense would imply, something expressed in terms of national interests or important national values.

So we are now prepared to focus the fundamental question: What is the moral basis of states themselves that justifies our fighting to advance their interests? Certainly, one might argue, it is only human individuals who make moral claims on us, and the use of force and violence might be justified only in the defense of such individuals. So why should anyone be willing to kill and die for the state, an entity which is, after all, a relatively artificial construct, an abstraction?

What States Are and Why We Value Them

Our question was posed most sharply by St. Augustine 1600 years ago. He wrote at one of those few real crossroads of history, literally watching as the Roman Empire was collapsing around him, sensing that a new age of darkness was descending on the Western world. In his great work *The City of God*, Augustine reflected on the ruins of the Roman Empire. Romans of the old school had a ready explanation for the collapse of their civilization: the fall of Rome was the fault of the Christians.

For centuries Rome was secure in its political and military strength because it worshipped the civic gods of Rome. In return, those gods protected the Empire and sustained its armies. Indeed, for the Romans, much of religion had a primarily practical and civic function. So from the beginning Christians' appeal to universal and transcendent values that embraced all of humanity seemed politically dangerous and profoundly "un-Roman." From this pagan Roman perspective, a century of Christian rule had undermined those civic virtues and hence weakened the Roman character and will to fight.

It is Augustine's task, as he sees it, to refute the pagan charge. His point of departure is to question Roman assumptions about the glorious character of the state itself. He recounts the legends of the founding of Rome. Were not the legendary founders of the state, Romulus and Remus, suckled by wolves? Was the state not founded on murder and treachery? Was Imperial glory not built on a foundation of conquest and suppression of other peoples and nations?

In one of the most famous passages of Augustine's work, he offered his own view of the glory that was Rome:

> Remove justice, and what are kingdoms but gangs of criminals on a large scale? What are criminal gangs but petty kingdoms? A gang is a group of men under the command of a leader, bound by a compact of association, in which plunder is divided according to an agreed convention. If this villainy wins so many recruits from the ranks of the demoralized that it acquires territory, establishes a base, captures cities, and subdues peoples, it then openly arrogates to itself the title of kingdom, which is conferred on it in the eyes of the world, not by the renouncing of aggression but by the attainment of impunity. For it was a witty and truthful rejoinder which was given by a captured pirate to Alexander the Great. The king asked the fellow, "What is your idea, in infesting the sea?" And the pirate answered . . . "The same as yours, in infesting the earth! But because I do it with a tiny craft, I'm called a pirate: because you have a mighty navy, you're called an emperor."[3]

In Augustine's view there simply is no moral difference between states and bands of pirates. There is only the difference of scale, which can make the state seem grand while the robber band is simply evil. Both depend for their success on a kind of internal harmony and organization (what we might call "military virtues"), and both measure success by their ability to take and destroy the lives and property of others.

Because of this view of the state, Augustine counsels Christians to look to their true home not in the City of Man or the Earthly City, as he calls it, but in the City of God, a "city" of universal and transcendent value. Only in such a city can human beings find spiritual and moral rest; as he wrote in another work, "God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee."[4] Only there do universal human values find a true and lasting home.

But for the time being, Augustine said, we must live in both cities. In this life, and in this history, we must struggle amid the shades of gray of the state, of warfare, and of injustice, doing what we can to make things better and more peaceful than they would otherwise be, but not hoping for or expecting purity. We are to live, then, "between the times"--aware of the City of God, but not trying "before its time" to live as if we were its citizens exclusively.

It may be necessary to go to war in service of the *relatively good* state, which is all that stands between us and complete political and moral chaos. Augustine quite literally saw that chaos on the horizon as Rome fell and barbarian armies advanced on his own city in Africa. But such wars are to be entered "mournfully." They are justified because others have broken the peace, and the soldier who fights to restore the peace that had existed is the true peacemaker. But Augustine's mournful soldier is free of false hopes and unrealistic ideals. His wars will not create a City of God amid the shadows of the City of Man. At most they will maintain a kind of order and a kind of peace, resting on force and the threat of force.

This Augustinian line of thinking laid the foundation for the classic Christian and, later, the secular international-legal justification for participation in warfare: the Just (or Justified) War Theory. This theory worked out a place for moral conduct of soldiers intermediate between the pacifism of the early church and the amoralism of the nihilist's denial that moral categories apply to war at all.

Of course this tradition undergoes enormous elaboration and qualification as it wends its way through Western intellectual history, and through the changing political contexts in which it is worked out. For most of that next thousand years after Augustine, the Western world was a relative backwater compared to the stronger and more sophisticated civilizations of the East, first of the Eastern Roman Empire, and then of the new Islamic civilization centered in Baghdad.

But within the West, the ideal was a model of a unified Christian civilization, centered in Rome and under the authority of the bishop of Rome, the Pope. On this understanding, wars were justified as responses to disruptions of the order of that civilization.

So it is important in our thinking about fighting *in defense of states* to remind ourselves that the state as we know it is a fairly modern invention. For much of history, and for many cultures, *the state as we think about it* does not exist at all.

In the West it was not until the period after the Reformation that the nation-state, with its claims to sovereignty and territorial integrity, became the dominant institution. Prior to that, European nations and political leaders were subordinate in principle, and often in fact, to the ideal of a universal Christendom.

Similarly the Islamic world affirms in principle the unity of all Muslim peoples, and the ideal of gathering all these peoples in a single political order with a single political head. This Muslim civilization as a unified entity is set in contrast to the *dar al harb*, the world of conflict that lies outside the order of Islamic civilization.

In many parts of the world we discover daily that the boundaries of states on the map correspond poorly to people's senses of identity and belonging. Whether we're talking about failed states, or "tribes with flags" that are the reality in much of the world, the nation-state, founded on the civic equality of all citizens, is a recent and regionally specific development.

The growth of the concept of states with rights to territorial integrity and political sovereignty, and the evolution of a world system taking that form of organization as fundamental, can be seen as an attempt to give a moral shape and definition to the realities of post-Reformation Europe. It became obvious as Europe exhausted itself in the religious

wars following the Reformation that the last illusions of a unified Christian Empire were no longer thinkable. In place of the earlier ideal, laws and customs of international relations evolved to deal with those new realities, and particularly to put an end to perennial war over religious differences. At the end of the Thirty Years War, accepting the futility of restoring political and religious unity by force, the European states crafted the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.

In this new Westphalian international system, religion would no longer be a factor in determining alliances or granting or withholding citizenship. Nor would it be a cause of war. What resulted was the system of Westphalia in which Europe was organized into nation-states of differing religious systems. Here the rules of the game were that the internal matters of states were their own business.

From this specific set of historical circumstances we get the modern international system in which political sovereignty and territorial integrity of states are the highest values. The whole body of international law is founded on this idea of the sovereign state as an entity closely analogous to a free individual, able to do as he or she sees fit in matters that affect only individual welfare. Each free individual is at liberty to pursue the life and beliefs that seem to him or her most likely to lead to happiness, free from the interference of others.

The whole body of Christian and Medieval thought about just war is transposed in this new environment into a secular version of the theory. Here *jus ad bellum*, the reasons for going to war, are increasingly defined in terms of the defense of the twin principles of the new international system: territorial integrity and political sovereignty of states.

For the purpose of developing the moral foundations of military service, it is important to note that the military, too, comes to have a rather different conceptual framework in this model of the international system than it had in Medieval Europe or in the Islamic world.

Naturally, one would not defend the Crusades or the military aspects of the Islamic concept of *jihad* (religious struggle) to expand the realm of Islam. But we should note that those ideas place the activities of the warrior in a supposedly universal moral and religious frame. The soldier fights in the name of values believed to be universal and transcendent, not merely for a particular sovereign state.

In the context of the nation-state, by contrast, the role of the military is set in a much smaller, and probably more realistic, context. It is not fighting for God or universal humanity. Instead, it is defending a particular political and social order in the face of threats to it by other militaries in the service of other states.

It is an axiom of this new model of international order that all states *have equal moral claims* to territorial integrity and political sovereignty. Each state has the right to be free of aggression by others and to use its military in defense of those rights.

Occasionally the rhetoric is more grandiose, perhaps especially in American political discourse (the "war to end all wars," defending democracy or civilization, or defeating communism). But the "official rules" of the international system were built on the idea of the fundamental equal sovereignty of all states.

There is an implication in this for the morality of the military: In the Westphalian international system, military officers are moral equals as well, regardless of the state they serve. This is the classical modern European understanding of the moral foundation of officership--that all military officers are morally equal members of the profession of arms.

On this model, the moral demands on the military profession are great, but they are also delimited. The officer is obliged to serve the state with integrity and to conduct military operations in a professional manner, disciplining subordinates and ensuring that they conduct themselves within the bounds of the laws and customs of war. But it is *not* the moral responsibility of the officer to assess the moral worth of the state itself. Neither is the officer generally obliged to determine the justice of the war the state orders unless there is a compelling reason to do so.

But one may still ask our fundamental question: What is the moral basis on which officers of these particular states can justify killing and dying for their interests? Such states fall far short of being bearers of universal moral, religious, or political truth. Yet as ethical agents, soldiers too understand and appeal to universal human values.

Killing for One's Country

Fighting in defense of the interests of particular states requires a strong case be made for it. Let's look only at American history. Suppose someone said that the United States is built on the morally questionable foundation of conquest and territorial expansion. Further, American expansion and development rest on the destruction of an indigenous civilization by disease and war and by dishonorable and dishonest dealings with both Native American peoples and with Mexico. Suppose that person went on to say that racism is alive and well in American life, and that the relations between the sexes are far from fair and equal.

To that litany of charges, what can any well-informed and educated American say but, "True"? In a famous essay, Admiral James Stockdale, who had been the senior American Prisoner of War (POW) in Vietnam, discussed his observations on education and the POW experience.[5] He noted that a POW with little historical education or an uncritical patriotism in which America could do no wrong was at great risk. For that POW, the reality of a less-than-perfect American society could be exploited by an enemy. It could be used to shake his confidence and loyalty by making him see the nation's faults and flaws, perhaps for the first time.

Stockdale's point is a profound one: If one is to serve the state as a thinking military officer, one must serve the state *as it is*, not the fantasy state of America's highest ideals and ambitions. In this regard, Augustine's somber estimate of the state--of any state--is far closer to reality than the "alabaster cities" whose gleam is "undimmed by human tears" in our best national song.

Of course that litany of injustice, conflict, and conquest, with only regional variations, would be the story behind every other state in the world too, except in the worse cases of states whose borders are even more unnatural, imposed as they were by departing colonial powers. So we can now pose the question again: What about such states morally warrants a profession dedicated to serving their interests and killing and dying on their behalf?

Princeton philosopher Michael Walzer, in his fine book *Just and Unjust Wars*, attempts to work out why national loyalties should matter to people. True, existing states and their boundaries result from utterly irrational patterns of arbitrary map-making and histories of conquest. Still, in reasonably good states, the nation with its twin rights of territorial integrity and political sovereignty creates a "space" (both literal and metaphorical) where a group of people can attempt to work out a "common life." He explains this concept of common life as follows:

> Over a long period of time, shared experiences and cooperative activity of many different kinds shape a common life. The protection [of the state] extends *not only to the lives and liberties of individuals but also to their shared life and liberty*, the independent community they have made, for which individuals are sometimes sacrificed.[6]

On this model, one serves the state in order to protect that common life the officer shares with fellow citizens. One recognizes the complexity and often the moral ambiguity of the processes that give rise to that common life. But one also recognizes that the persistence and flourishing of that common life is a condition for human welfare and goods less tangible than life and property--the goods of shared memory, common symbols, shared suffering, defeat and victory, and history and culture built up over time together.

Walzer's idea of a common life provides a language to try to articulate why, in reasonably good states, it matters to be an American or a Japanese or an Egyptian, over and above the good of individual survival. It helps articulate what a well-grounded and honest patriotic feeling is about.

The foundation of this idea of a common life is Westphalian. It is applicable to every society possessed of sufficient historical continuity through time. If the moral basis of states is that they create and maintain the space within which a common life can flourish, it is obvious that states succeed in doing this to widely varying degrees. Walzer continues his argument:

> The moral standing of any particular state depends upon the reality of the common life it protects and the extent to which the sacrifices required by that protection are willingly accepted and thought worthwhile. If

no common life exists, or if the state doesn't defend the common life that does exist, its own defense may have no moral justification.[7]

If we follow this line of argument, the defense of states rests on a universal foundation. The argument gives states the benefit of the doubt and assumes that they really do sustain the common life and welfare of their citizens. And I believe this is the right account. But note that it opens the door to judging and perhaps even intervening into the affairs of sovereign states if and when their defense of those values is fundamentally flawed. And it also challenges the moral equality of soldiers, linking the moral basis of their service to the moral character of the political order they serve.

Symbolically the change was marked by General Eisenhower's conduct at the end of World War II. When German General von Arnim was captured, he requested a meeting with General Eisenhower, a request completely reasonable if one assumes the moral equality of members of the profession of arms. Eisenhower refused, however, saying,

> The tradition that all professional soldiers are comrades in arms has . . . persisted to this day. For me, World War II was far too personal a thing to entertain such feelings. Daily as it progressed there grew within me the conviction that, as never before . . . the forces that stood for human good and men's rights were . . . confronted by a completely evil conspiracy with which no compromise could be tolerated.[8]

General Eisenhower's attitude marks a change from the idea of morally equal military professionals. It reflects an idea of military service set once again in the framework of universal moral questions about the nature of the states officers serve. It reflects a profound change in our thinking about states and war. It suggests the Westphalian pillars of state sovereignty and territorial integrity may not be as sacrosanct in the future as they have been. It suggests new thinking about warfare in the post-Cold War world.

Take the Gulf War as an example. No other war since World War II has so clearly matched the Westphalian paradigm: a sovereign state, internationally recognized, has its territorial integrity and political sovereignty directly and unambiguously attacked. That state requests help from the international community to restore it among the nations of the world. States respond; aggression is rolled back; Kuwaiti sovereignty is restored. This is the classic Westphalian story with a happy ending.

But, say the critics, the moral basis of the Gulf War is tainted. Despite all the rhetoric of international law and multinational coalitions, so the argument goes, really the war was about oil and economics. The implication seems to be that because there were important international economic interests involved in that war, the presence of such interests makes the motives impure. "No blood for oil!" went the chant. But would "blood for Kuwaiti sovereignty"--in the absence of oil--rally the enthusiasm of the critics?

For the sake of contrast, let us briefly examine the Kosovo intervention. Here, in extreme contrast to the Gulf War, it is very hard to make a case for a crucial US interest in Kosovo. Yet here the criticism is the opposite to that of the Gulf War: "No blood for the rights of foreigners when there is no national interest involved!" would probably be the cry.

These examples point to the horns of the Westphalian dilemma in its post-Cold War form: Is military power to be used in the service of national interests, wherever they are? If so, then claims to higher moral justifications are unnecessary and misguided. In other words, Clausewitz's word is the final word, and war really is just politics by other means.

Alternatively, is military power, freed from the fairly artificial and historically abnormal framework of the bipolar superpower world, now at last at liberty to serve the universal moral ends of promoting democracy, supporting human rights, and removing oppressors to the cheers of the oppressed? If so, how and why should national political leaders be willing to spend the blood and treasure of their individual nations in the service of the lives and rights of foreign nationals?

It seems we are now deeply ambivalent about these alternatives. Much of our national confusion about the role of US foreign policy generally, and of the purposes of military power specifically, result from this conflicting pair of models for thinking about the proper uses of military power.

In a profound speech to a Joint Session of the US Congress, South African President Nelson Mandela said the

following:

> In an age such as this, when the fissures of the great oceans shall, in the face of human genius, be reduced to the narrowness of a forest path, much revision will have to be done of ideas that have seemed as stable as the rocks, including such concepts as sovereignty and the national interest. . . .
>
> If what we say is true, that manifestly, the world is one stage and the actions of all its inhabitants part of the same drama, does it not then follow that each of us . . . should begin to define the national interest to include the genuine happiness of others, however distant in time and space their domicile might be?[9]

Mandela's vision of the new world order has much to commend it. To a great degree it seems to reflect accurately the global convergence we daily witness around us. It reflects, too, the growing sense that the existing structures of international relations are increasingly inadequate to the tasks now facing them in the post-Cold War world. But it leaves much unresolved at the practical level. Are the armed forces and leaders of individual nation-states prepared to enlist in the service of such a vision? Can we ask the soldiers of our state, or of any state, to fight and die in the name of such a global vision of our interests?

For the moment, we're left with two answers to the question: Why serve the state? We have a Westphalian answer in defense of the common life of our nation. And we have a universalizing answer in terms of transcendent moral and political values. I would simply note that they are quite different. They correspond to differing understandings of the proper uses of military power. Different political leaders appeal to one or the other (or try, somewhat disingenuously, to combine them).

Both kinds of reasons will be adduced to justify a wide range of interventions and uses of force in the foreseeable future. For those readers who are future strategic leaders, the clearer you can become in your own thinking about this question, the better you will be able to advise political leaders on wise and morally persuasive courses of action.

Ethics in the Military

We turn now, and more briefly, to the question of ethics *in* the military. The profession of soldiering puts unique moral demands on military personnel. No other group in society is given as much latitude to define its own standards of conduct and talks so frequently and openly about the core values that define it. And in American history, no institution has been viewed as a bigger threat to American political values than the standing Army.

Recall President Eisenhower's farewell address. His strongest words of warning concerned the growing power of the military-industrial complex and the threat it posed to American political life.

At the time of the ratification of the Constitution, recall the great anxiety that the stronger federal government the Constitution proposed would allow a standing federal army. Alexander Hamilton, arguing for the Constitution, called a large standing army one of the "engines of despotism" (Federalist Paper No. 8), and argued strongly that only absolute civilian control by Congress over military matters would protect American liberty.

In 1943, General George Marshall gave one of the finest statements of the importance of the highest ethical standards in military service and of the special character of the American military in particular. It occurred in a conversation with Major General John Hilldring:

> In the spring of 1943, George Marshall called John Hilldring to his office. It was the middle of World War II. The Germans were still deep in Russia; the British and Americans had cleared North Africa, but had not yet invaded Sicily or Italy. The Japanese controlled most of the Western Pacific. Marshall was Chief of Staff of the US Army. Hilldring, a two-star general, had just been given the job of organizing military governments for countries to be liberated or conquered. Years afterward Hilldring reported what Marshall said to him:
>
> "I'm turning over to you a sacred trust and I want you to bear that in mind every day and every hour you preside over this military government and civil affairs venture. . . . [We] have a great asset and that is that

our people, our countrymen, do not distrust us and do not fear us. Our countrymen, our fellow citizens, are not afraid of us. They don't harbor any ideas that we intend to alter the government of the country or the nature of this government in any way. This is a sacred trust that I turn over to you today . . . . I don't want you to do anything, and I don't want to permit the enormous corps of military governors that you are in the process of training and that you are going to dispatch all over the world, to damage this high regard in which the professional soldiers in the Army are held by our people, and it could happen, it could happen Hilldring, if you don't understand what you are about."[10]

Opinion polls have shown for many years that the US military is the most highly respected professional group in the United States. That respect ebbs and flows a bit, of course, when scandals and conspicuous moral failures such as Aberdeen or Tailhook tarnish the military's image.

And there are big challenges ahead in terms of the growing gap between civilian and military cultures as fewer and fewer individuals in the general population and in the civilian branches of government have direct experience and understanding of the military. There is the risk that the military may come to view itself as too set apart from, and morally superior to, the civilian culture it is charged to protect.

That high regard in which American citizens hold soldiers and the military profession is, in Marshall's words, a truly sacred trust. It has real practical benefits, of course, in terms of arguing the military's case for resources and in making sure professional military advice is heeded in national security matters. But it is far more than that.

Only when the military articulates and lives up to it highest values can it retain the nobility of the profession of arms. Only when it retains a proper sense of its role in American democratic life does it retain the trust and respect Marshall spoke of. Only a military that daily lives out its values and feels its connection to the citizens is a military that engenders the respect and loyalty of the nation and keeps it from being feared.

Such respect and trust are the real foundations of morale, retention, and voluntary service. Young people may be drawn to military service by promises of education and training, by opportunities for adventure and travel. But they stay because in military service they come to see a kind of ideal human community, grounded in service to others and mutual respect.

Journalist Thomas Ricks has written eloquently of the power of military training on 18-year-old recruits. Ricks chronicles how those young people, drawn from some of the most unpromising neighborhoods and backgrounds in our society, are inspired and transformed by military training. For the first time in their lives, they experience and embrace a higher moral vision of life.[11]

For them as individuals, military service is a route out of what well might have been very unfulfilling lives. For our society, such young people form a nucleus of moral strength for the nation.

Only if the promise of moral community holds true for them as they experience the day-to-day routines of military service will such young people keep the vision and stay in military service. On issues of racial integration, of equal opportunity, of respectful treatment of every service member, the US military has been a guide to the nation at its best moments. Excellence in human relations and moral integrity can and do inspire the idealism of the young people who choose to be a part of this service. This alone points to the deep connection between ethics in the military and the more practical issues of recruitment and retention.

At a still larger level, ethics in the military is the absolute requirement if we are to retain the precious resource of the long American tradition of civil-military relations. There are few nations in the world with the same historical tradition and conviction that our citizens do not fear their military forces, and that they respect and admire them. The military's treatment of its own soldiers must reflect the highest degree of respect and fairness if that trust and respect is to be maintained.

Military operations must also be conducted in accordance with the values of the American people and international law if that trust is to be sustained. Some of us often complain about the CNN effect, but it is not all bad. Knowing that our military's conduct will be scrutinized closely by our citizens and by people all over the world insures that just war

restraints are respected. It also forces military leaders to educate the American public to the limits of the possible in military operations.

As alluded to above, the connection between the American military and the general public is undergoing a particular strain unprecedented since the end of the Vietnam War. As the military becomes smaller, fewer and fewer civilians and civilian leaders have direct experience of military service. Consequently, there is the danger of a growing gap in values and mutual understanding. The costs to the military, the culture, and the nation will be great and long-lasting if some measure of mutual trust and respect is lost as a result.

In sum, the highest standards of ethical climate and conduct are essential to maintaining a healthy military service and to attracting and retaining the best and most talented of each new generation of Americans. The cultural gap needs explicit attention if it is not to undermine the trust and respect of the nation for its military. Only if the connection and trust between the populace and the military are maintained can military service remain the honorable and respected profession of arms that causes good people to enter service and to advance to senior levels of leadership. Issues centered on human relations, respect for others, command integrity, and the conduct of combat operations all raise ethical challenges that decisively affect that trust. Such issues will continue to pose significant challenges for current and future military leaders.

NOTES

1. I am grateful to the US Air Force Academy, Department of Philosophy and Fine Art, which commissioned me to deliver their Seventh Annual Joseph A. Reich, Sr., Distinguished Lecture on War, Morality, and the Military Profession in 1994. Some of the argument which follows was first developed in that lecture.

2. William James, "The Moral Equivalent of War," in *War and Morality*, ed. Richard Wasserstrom (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1970), p. 7.

3. Augustine, *The City of God*, Book IV, sect. 4.

4. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 1, 1(1).

5. "The Moral World of Epictetus: Reflections on Survival and Leadership," in *War, Morality and the Military Profession*, ed. Malham M. Wakin (2d ed.; Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1986), p. 20-21.

6. Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (2d ed.; Basic Books, 1977), p. 54.

7. Ibid.

8. Cited in Walzer, p. 37.

9. US Congress, *Congressional Record*, 103d Cong., 2d sess., 6 October 1994, 140, Part 144, H11008.

10. Richard Neustadt and Ernest May, *Thinking in Time* (New York: Free Press, 1986), p. 247.

11. Thomas E. Ricks, "The Widening Gap between the Military and Society," *The Atlantic Monthly*, July 1997, pp. 66-78.

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