

STUDIES AND REPORTS

CIVIL-MILITARY ASPECTS OF MILITARY ETHICS

(Volume 1)

**Edited by
Edwin R. Micewski**



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Foreword by the Editor

This book originates from the international civil-military relations seminar „Military Ethics I”, which was held from 6th to 8th November 2002 in Reichenau, Lower Austria. The seminar was the sixth in a series of seminars dedicated to issues of civil-military relations and politico-military cooperation. It was offered within the framework of the Partnership for Peace Initiative (Cooperation area “Democratic Control of Forces and Defense Structures”) and carried out on a joint basis by the Institute for Military Sociology & Defense Pedagogy (IMM) of the National Defense Academy, Vienna, and the Center for Civil-Military Relations of the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California.

It inevitably lies in the nature of the military world that military men and women are always close to the central issues of ethics and morality. In the overall context of military leadership responsibility, the altered face of armed conflict and war has brought about new moral and ethical challenges on all levels of the military establishment. As an example, we just have to think of the challenges arising from asymmetric warfare with non-state actors and irregular forces intentionally violating the laws of war, and thus, human rights and the idea of humanity. How to fight these forces? May we turn away from a military ethos in order to cope with such challenges? Can the end justify the implementation of all means? Beyond that, many people are irritated by the very idea of a military ethic. The obligation of obedience as the backbone of the profession in arms obviously clashes with an ethics in the sense of resorting to a personal moral judgment.

Nevertheless, despite of currently ongoing hot wars, taking a military objective by the use of fire and steel is rarely done by most professional soldiers; at least not on this side of the Atlantic. No wonder, therefore, that the military profession is increasingly simply seen as a business enterprise, a career opportunity equal to many others. And no surprise either that the utilitarian principles of the business world penetrate into the military as well. Standards of right and wrong tend to be decided by individual suitability rather than organizational interest. Self-promotion as a primary driving force for occupational action is supported by a social environment that features individualism, value relativism, and pluralism.

This publication gives an account of several topics related to the theme of military ethics. The selection ranges from basic considerations on the place and position of military ethics within a general system of ethics to subjects such as ethics and the return of strategy, the relation between conscience and obedience, and military morals versus societal values. The assortment is completed by articles on the OSCE Code of Conduct, an approach to military ethics from the part of military pedagogy, a description of the Swedish viewpoint and, last but not least, a comprehensive introduction to the understanding of ethics in military culture of India.

Together with the publication “Ethics and International Politics”, published within the Publication Series of the National Defense Academy (Literas: Vienna, 2001), the publication at hand is another effort in the subject area of military ethics to promote the overall goal of both enriching and aligning educational efforts in this field.

Since it appears that with regard to military leadership the ethical dimension will be at the core of future officer identity, the exploration of the subject of ethics, particularly in its applied form to the military world, will be continued in the future.

At last, I would like to express my gratefulness to all the presenters for their contributions, both in the seminar and in this publication. Although the opinions expressed in this volume represent the personal views of the authors and do not stand for official policies or stances on the subject matter, they should provide not only valuable substance for reflection but also direction for future dialogue and common educational activities.

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