

Australian Centre for the Study of Armed Conflict and Society

Occasional Paper Series No: 1

Never Stand Still

Australian Centre for the Study of Armed Conflict and Society (ACSACS)

‘Soldiers, Squadrons and Strategists’

Building an Ethical Backbone for the Armies of the
Twenty-First Century – An Anglo-Australian Practitioner’s View

Major Tom McDermott DSO MA



Occasional Papers Series

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These papers are available in identical HTML and print-ready PDF formats and include an author note, illustrative material and references for further reading. The series is promoted through UNSW Canberra and ACSACS Twitter accounts operated by the Centre Manager.

Submission Guidelines

Researchers interested in having their work appear in the series are encouraged to contact the Director of ACSACS in the first instance. Prospective contributors need to decide whether their submissions are to be assessed as Position, Working or Occasional Papers. Copies of the UNSW Press Author Pack containing guidelines on style and format are available from the Centre Manager.



About the author

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Cover image

ISAF Soldier, Afghanistan, 2015, Department of Defence

Introduction: The 'Global War on Terror' and the Weariness of the Western World

The Western world is weary of conflict. Over more than a decade the 'Global War On Terror' (clumsily abbreviated to the 'GWOT') has consumed the blood and treasure of many developed countries. Financial, social and emotional expenditure on the 'War' has been staggering, particularly for the United States. In sum, the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns will be the most expensive in American history, costing somewhere between \$US4 and \$US6 trillion dollars (Jones, 2010). The United States is not alone. The British Government has spent over £2,000 per taxpaying household on Afghanistan and a similar amount on Iraq (Ledwidge, 2013:218). There is also the human cost. With over 10,000 coalition deaths and tens of thousands more injured, caring for the widowed, injured and wounded will be a responsibility borne by the next generation, representing a lifetime of social debt that will be unwelcome in challenging times (Bilmes, 2013).

Perhaps more profound than the economic burden is the impact of these conflicts on the body politic of the participating nations. These contentious 'wars of choice' have created friction between citizens and their governments.¹ I would contend that these conflicts have had a corruptive influence on Western social character, especially on interpretations of what is right and wrong in international relations. Guantanamo Bay, 'Enhanced' Interrogation Techniques, Abu Ghraib Prison, unregulated Special Forces (SF) night raids and notorious incidents such as the murders committed by American soldiers in Mahmudiyah in the 'Triangle of Death' in Baghdad² have cast a dark shadow over the West's claim to superior moral standards. Less shadowy, but of equal concern, have been advances in Western technological capacity to 'kill for political effect' sans frontier. Our ability, through intelligence-driven targeting, drone strikes and SF raiding, to apply force with minimal risk across national boundaries has steadily degraded the critical principles of sovereignty that have been the bedrock of the rules-based international system. In *The Accidental Guerrilla*, David Kilcullen argues that the real impact of '9/11' was the corruption of consensus about right and wrong through the internal impact of visceral emotions such as fear, resentment and desperation. He contends: 'It seems clear that transnational terrorism does indeed pose an existential threat to the West, but not in the way Suskind describes. Rather ... the existential danger is that our response to terrorism could cause us to take such measures that, in important ways, we would cease to be ourselves.' (Kilcullen, 2009:273) With the passage of time, this conclusion seems increasingly correct.



Sergeant Ivan 'Chip' Frederick, pictured 'conditioning' a detainee at Abu Ghraib.

The societal group that most starkly reflects the impact of the GWOT is, not surprisingly, the military. You need to sit in the military bubble to understand how much the last fifteen years of conflict have shaped the cultures, structures and practises of Western militaries. In smaller armies simultaneous commitments to Iraq and Afghanistan became all consuming. The British Army, faced with strategic failure in Afghanistan in 2009, was forced to instigate what it called 'Operation Entirety'.

This was a remarkable plan that re-designed the Army purely for success in a single operational theatre.³ Brigades were re-formed to be lighter, money ring-fenced for long-term procurement programs was re-directed into hastily acquired counter-IED vehicles, and doctrine/training priorities became slaves to training for Afghan-specific, counter-insurgency activities. Across the International Coalition, the entire weight of military intellectual capacity was brought to bear on ‘the Afghan problem’, with anything that was unrelated (including, at times, the development of broader strategic thought) ‘kicked into the long grass’. In the United States, counter-insurgency doctrine (including the famed ‘Field Manual 3-24: Counter-Insurgency’) became the American warrior creed and was recited with conviction.⁴

Winning the war was front and centre. Preparing for an unknown future war was set aside. The marks of Afghanistan and Iraq are seen everywhere in Western armies; from the vehicles and weapons being used, through the doctrine and tactics being applied; and, into the language, dress and culture of the combatants. Not so visible, but significantly more frightening, is the way the GWOT has deepened and institutionalised the Western crisis in strategic thinking, a crisis that started with the end of the Cold War and found its apogee in the astrategic war against terror. The decision to use military force, on a global level, against an invisible and indefinable emotional enemy rather than a political regime, is one that has haunted militaries and governments ever since.⁵



The British Army Mastiff, an example of the Afghan-specific protected mobility vehicle. Courtesy of Defence Images (Crown Copyright).

The Aftermath: Culture and A Military Identity Crisis

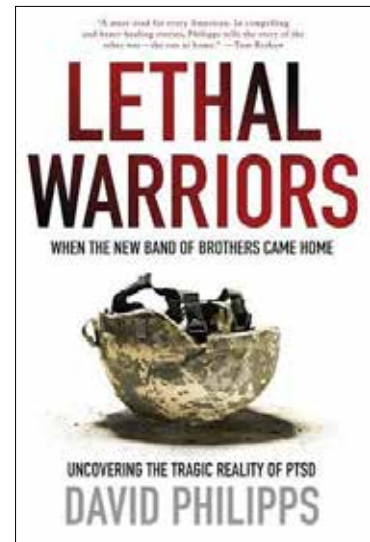
The International Coalition has now formally ceased the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan directly borne from the terrorist attacks of 9 September 2001. Consequently, most Western militaries have been left confronting yet another identity crisis. They again face a potential spectrum of threat ranging from a muscle-flexing, conventionally armed Russia through to ruthless, semi-state 'caliphates' intent on butchering their way across the world. Western armies are rapidly realising that they are not ready for these emerging threats to state stability or global order. The vehicles acquired for the dusty streets of Baghdad and Kabul were purpose-built and are limited in what they can do. The time and money available for new or different vehicles is severely limited. In most countries the Defence budget is fixed or declining while military doctrine is out-of-date, and there is no time for a thoroughgoing revision from first principles. To complicate the challenges further, many militaries are also finding that their organisational cultures, and the moral foundations of their forces, have been damaged by the GWOT. The evidence is not hard to find. It takes the forms of poor leadership, moral failure and criminal activity. Failings run from top to bottom. In the senior leadership of the United States Army, for instance, 129 commanders of brigades and battalions have been relieved of duty for moral failings since 2003 (including 25 in combat zones). Another nine general officers have been sacked with two court-martialled (Allen, 2015:69).

The situation is no better among subordinate ranks. Over the last ten years militaries have needed significant numbers of uniformed personnel to fight the GWOT, preventing them from vetting potential soldiers on the basis of 'strong character' and 'good standing' (often pre-cursors of resilience both in and post-combat).⁶ The United States Department of Defence normally precludes from service those who have been convicted of felonies (that is, violent crimes or crimes leading to a sentence of over one year); a measure designed to keep those with criminal or psychopathic tendencies, and those predisposed to react violently under stress, away from the pressures of war (United States Department of Defence, 2015). At the height of the dual Iraq and Afghan campaigns, however, this standard was increasingly driven down. In 2006, for example, the US military granted 34,476 'moral waivers' to those who failed to meet the usual threshold; 19.6 per cent of all enlistments, and a major spike from the 7.8 per cent 'waivered' in 1997. In the United States Marine Corps, 54.3 percent of enlistments in 2006 were waived previous convictions, up from 11.7 percent in 1997 (Boucai, 2007:205-206). This institutional tapping of a recruitment pool of ex-felons, many of whom were young males from disadvantaged backgrounds, has the potential to impose considerable, long-term risk on the American military (and others); particularly in the psychological aftermath of the most vicious period of fighting seen since the conflict in South Vietnam.

The affects are already coming to light. A recent study published in the journal *Psychological Medicine* examined the backgrounds of almost a million American soldiers who served between 2004 and 2013. It concluded that usually young and poor soldiers of low rank with a history of criminal and disciplinary activity, and mental health issues (5 percent of the test group held these characteristics) were responsible for 51 percent of violent crimes conducted during that period (Kessler *et al*, 2016:303-316). While the data has not been compared, it would seem logical that many of this 5 percent were those who received 'moral waivers' to enter the military. Another relevant text, *Lethal Warriors*, which examines the impact of post-operational stress on violent crime around Fort Bragg in 2007, reveals a spike in violent crime (including 11 murders) committed by soldiers from the 506th Infantry Regiment (made famous by the HBO television series 'Band of Brothers') around the base following multiple deployments to warzones (Phillips, 2015). In short, the American military (and others) have recruited a morally vulnerable and high-risk group over the Iraq and Afghan period, and has then put them through the psychological fire of combat.

The human consequences of this decision are becoming increasingly clear. More worrying yet, members of this damaged cohort of human beings will be promoted and gain greater authority as NCOs and officers, setting examples as leaders and shaping the moral culture of the future force. This may be a ticking time bomb set to explode during the next major conflagration.

Those who fought both conflicts might also point to something more malignant embedded in these campaigns. Neither the wars in Iraq nor Afghanistan appear to qualify readily as *'just wars'*. While a highly nuanced argument can be constructed to make them look just, on first inspection they appear decidedly unjust (with many non-partisan commentators and scholars coming to that view). Iraq, for example, was fought against significant public and international opposition. The invasion was not accompanied by a United Nations Security Council resolution; no Weapons of Mass Destruction were found; there was no credible evidence that Iraq was intending to launch a pre-emptive military strike against its neighbours; and the conflict has since 'metastasised' into the continuing war against *Daesh* (also known as the Islamic State or ISIL).



Lethal Warriors, the story of the 506th Infantry Regiment. Courtesy of David Phillipps.

The WikiLeaks exposure of questionable Coalition tactics, the haunting images of Abu Ghraib detainees being mistreated, and the sheer scale of death across Iraq has tarnished the *jus in bello* reputation of Western moral thinking and acting. Afghanistan, while initially supported by a Security Council Resolution, is little better in terms of its consistency with just war principles. After more than a decade of conflict, and with the Taliban resurgent and prepared to fight on relentlessly,⁷ the expenditure of so many Coalition and Afghan lives is increasingly difficult to justify. Against either a deontological or consequential approach to ethics, neither is a compelling example of 'just' military action. Many of those who fought look back on their involvement with, if not a sense of shame, at least an absence of pride.

My sense that veterans do not feel the usual professional pride that accompanies a 'job well done' is built on my own experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, and reflecting on countless discussions with my peers. This sense, however, is difficult to prove without further research and a detailed examination of the dynamics of guilt and shame. But I would contend that many militaries are suffering from a form of 'moral injury', at least on an institutional level, in the wake of the GWOT.⁸ Their ethos and culture have been damaged by the nature of their deployments, the strategy these deployments were borne from, and what the soldiers were obliged to do there. The British military, so confident in its ability to win 'Small Wars' in the wake of the Malayan Emergency and Northern Ireland, bears the professional scars from its negotiation with the 'Mahdi Army' at Basra in 2006. Frank Ledwidge's excellent essay 'Losing Small Wars' is a hard read for any British military officer but its insights are worth pondering (Ledwidge, 2012). For the United States, the Iraq War became such an unbearable burden that its military disengaged from both its causes and consequences. Iraq became known as 'Over There' and a place no one wanted to really talk about. The Iraq experience has had a deeply corrosive effect on each of the American armed services.⁹ Like the feared Lord Voldemort in the 'Harry Potter' series of novels, the Iraq War became the 'One Who Must Not Be Named'.

The Need: Adapting to New Challenges, the Role of Military Ethics, and the Three Ways

Having realised how 'out-of-shape' they are for the future, most militaries are doing what they do best; seeking to review, change and adapt in order to correct their deficiencies. As they consider the problem, military commands have realised that 'culture' must sit high on the priority list for review and adjustment. History has shown time and again that it is through a robust and flexible culture that militaries are able to adapt rapidly to changing situations. Many forces are simultaneously (and symbiotically through forums such as the ABCA [American, British, Canadian and Australian] Armies forum) running root and branch reviews of their internal culture and dynamics. In the United States, the Joint Chiefs have appointed a 'three-star' focal point to specifically review and then address culture across the three million strong force (Allen, 2015:70). The Australian Defence Force (ADF) is still working through a series of defence culture reviews that have taken place over the last five years, driven by an alarming undercurrent of bullying, sexism and abuse of authority.¹⁰ The British Army, following a comprehensive review, has recently published a new 'Leadership Code' and is revising the 'Army Values and Standards' (see below).¹¹ For most (and this is logical) 'leadership' is established as the potential cure of choice, closely followed by 'defence values'. Ministries are increasingly convinced that, if they can get these two facets right, the culture will follow.



Private First Class Stephen Green, who raped and murdered Abeer Hamza in Mahmudiyah in 2006, pictured following his discharge from the Army and pre-arrest.

All of the above should make military ethicists sit up and take note. They have a major role to play in the resolution of this 'identity crisis'. The time to engage is now. Steadily bubbling up under the core concepts of 'leadership' and 'defence values' is the re-realisation, at the highest levels, that you need a clearly defined 'ethic' to tie culture together. The motivation for this is mostly practical. The experience of recent wartime atrocities such as Abu Ghraib, the murders at Mahmudiyah, the Haditha 'Massacre', Baha Mousa and the conviction of 'Marine A' in Britain have reminded militaries that individual and systemic ethical failure can equal strategic failure.¹² These incidents must not be repeated if militaries want to succeed in the current wars of perception (and ideology).

The British Army is a case in point. General Sir Nick Carter (who is emerging as one of the more enlightened Service Chiefs of the time) recently appointed a respected ethicist, who is also a serving officer and PhD-qualified, as his 'Chief of Army Ethics'. The first task has been to establish an ethical framework within which to situate the Army's long-standing 'Values and Standards'. The aim is to provide context to the 'virtue-ethic' aspiration of the British Army, providing a more normative idea of what is 'right' and 'wrong' both at home and in war (McCormack, 2015). The desired outcome is the prevention of another Baha Mousa or 'Marine A' in the future. The British Army is but one example. The ears of military high commands are increasingly open to ideas that might help to influence and develop the ethical foundations of their soldiers, sailors, airmen and civilian staffs. Given the increasing interconnectedness of western coalitions, there is a moment approaching where a well-targeted and organised network of military ethicists, such as the newly formed 'Compass Group', might have a disproportionate impact on how, and indeed why, we fight wars in the future.

This influence might be applied in three connected ways, linked to the three ways in which institutional adaptation takes place in most militaries. Adaptation is normally done through the development of *individuals* (the ‘soldiers’ from the title), the development of *groups* (the ‘squadrons’) and through the development of the *strategy* (the linking of ‘ends, ways and means’) that ties it all together (the ‘strategists’). The first (the *individuals*) are the standard fare of the military ethical educator. Through teaching at ‘defence universities’ like the Australian Defence Force Academy, academies like the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and staff colleges like the United States’ Command and General Staff College, military ethicists have a direct and invaluable input into the moral maturity of young leaders, sub-unit and unit commanders as well as the defence chiefs of the future. At the *individual*-level, officers are thus well served. It could be argued, however, that this preparation does not go far enough. The current officer focus of ethical education is the ‘comfort zone’ of the international faculty; the focus must extend to junior ranks and, particularly, to the continuous professional education of NCOs (a consistently underdone subject in most militaries). If the soldier’s life is a series of ethical dilemmas, then it is the young, disadvantaged and minimally educated 18-year-old ‘warrior’ who is least prepared. Helping him or her to make the right decisions, through a simple conceptual framework, is vital to future success. The ‘seconding’ of ethical educators to Phase 1 and Phase 2 training environments could be invaluable to developing the moral bedrock that militaries need for the future.



Emblem of the US Army's Command and General Staff College, courtesy of US Department of Defence.

The next area of potential influence is at the group level. Most militaries set a staffing distinction between what they call individual and collective training. Collective training is designed to prepare groups to conduct military activities. It is almost always progressive. Most militaries start at the fireteam level (a group of about eight) and build up through platoon/troop, sub-unit and unit all the way up to military groupings that are thousands strong (brigade, amphibious task group, air combat group). As the groups get bigger, specialist collective training organisations are increasingly responsible for training delivery and certification.¹³ Culmination exercises might involve tens of thousands of troops, thousands of vehicles and millions of dollars' worth of expenditure with sophistication in combat as the accepted 'currency' of success.

But collective training should not just about the practicalities of coordinating drones and dropping bombs. It should also prepare these groups, of all sizes, for the stresses of combat and the challenges of maintaining an 'ethical compass' under pressure. Collective training should build group cohesiveness through shared experience and developed leadership; it is this cohesiveness that provides 'ethical resilience' and allows soldiers to withstand the corrupting influence of the situation of war. Immersion in 'ethical decision making' is at the heart of this, and this is where the professional military ethicist might come in. Defence academies and staff colleges provide an ideal 'bridge' into the collective training agencies, and there is no reason why military ethicists (pitched properly) could not be called upon to consult on exercise design and evaluation. Such an interject would have benefit from top to bottom; from the decisions of the starred-rank commander, all the way down to the most junior rifleman.

The final, and most challenging, opportunity for military ethicists is in influencing the strategy (and the *strategists*) that is fundamental to the use of political violence. Through both direct engagement (in discussion and advice to senior commanders) and indirect engagements (through writing and briefing), the military ethics community has the chance to help re-develop and shape the strategic dialogue between militaries and governments regarding decisions to go to war and how wars should be fought. Most of the elite in the realm of strategic studies, including Professor Sir Hew Strachan (Oxford University), Professor Michael Clarke (Royal United Services Institute), Professor Colin S Gray (University of Reading) and many retired senior military officers who have entered academia, have argued that Iraq and Afghanistan represent a new low-point in strategic thinking among Western nations. Indeed, some have gone so far as labelling the GWOT 'astrategic' by which they mean the very antithesis of strategy.¹⁴ Arguably, the outcome of this flawed strategic thinking has been two wars fought on ethically shaky grounds employing ethically dubious methods. The campaign of the next decade is to re-discover a strategic dialogue fit for the twenty-first century. I believe the strategist Colin Gray is right when he contends that as part of this exercise 'ethics are a strategic necessity, not a luxury' (Gray, 2011:97). Unless the Western nations fight just wars in just ways they risk undermining the entire international system upon which their security is founded and within which their defining values are expressed. Through writing, lobbying and their own special type of soft power, the combined effort of the military ethical community has the potential to help shape the unequal dialogue of the future. I am arguing that this should be the main effort although it is without doubt a complex and demanding undertaking vulnerable to the intrusion of political opportunism at almost every point. To be effective, military ethicists may need to be more deeply embedded in the discipline of strategic studies because there must be a shared lexicon of common understanding for the discussion I am proposing to take place and for the dialogue to be effective.

Three Ethical Challenges: Host Nation Mentoring, Massive Coalitions and Autonomous Future War

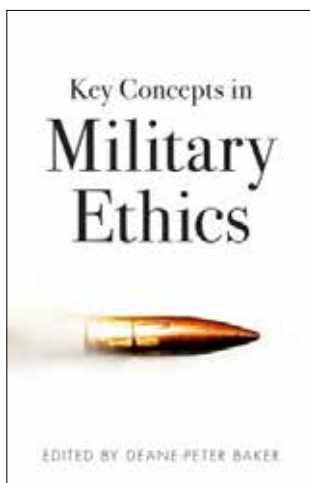
I have examined how military ethicists (particularly when coordinated) might influence the conduct of war in the future at the individual, group and strategic levels. But I also concede that resources are limited and recognise that this influence needs to be carefully targeted to be effective. That being so, there are three macro-themes that stand out as the core ethical challenges of the future.

The first core challenge is in the operational mentoring of host nation security forces. One positive outcome of the Iraq and Afghan Campaigns is that host nation security force development is now being re-considered as a core task for most western armies. Following the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review, the British Army was split into two distinct parts; a 'responsive' armoured force to fight major combat operations, and a light 'adaptive' force designed to conduct training missions to develop host nation capacity in potential flash points. 'Short Term Training Teams' (also known as STTTs) are now the core peacetime task of the light infantry regiments of the British 'Adaptive Brigades'. The United States military, with its superior manpower and funding, are considering taking this one step further. Building on the 'Train, Advise, Assist' (TAA) experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States Army is once again considering developing specialist brigades and battalions to form an 'Advisory Corps'. These specialist Brigades, supported substantially by the National Guard, would be a major part of the 'upstream engagement' and soft capacity of American foreign policy.¹⁵

This renewed focus on mentoring presents specific ethical challenges for military operators and policy makers. At the tactical level are the ethical issues of developing forces who have starkly differing values sets from the mentors. The young soldiers and officers who mentored the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) were required on a daily basis to deal with issues of drug abuse, child abuse and corruption. There were issues were morally confronting and most were ill-prepared to respond. Reactions of disgust and anger from among the mentors sometimes led to violence. The most extreme example was the escalation of heated disagreements over homosexuality and sexual abuse leading to the murder of Warrant Officer Class 1 (RSM) Daz Chant and five of his Grenadier Guards colleagues by an Afghan policeman in a mentored patrol base.¹⁶ Ethical challenges persisted at both the operational and political levels. Throughout the Afghan campaign, policy makers (both military and diplomatic) were required to work with, and often around, an Afghan military that was prepared to sanction the routine torture of detainees to elicit intelligence. This practise continues (UNAMA, 2015). Cultural clashes of these kinds and of this magnitude place soldiers and policy makers firmly within the 'greyer' zones of military ethics (Green *et al*, 2010). Deployed personnel need more support than they have received to this point.



Image reported to show Afghan Security Forces abusing detainees in 2013. Courtesy of Rolling Stone magazine.



Key Concepts in Military Ethics, the supporting text for UNSW's 2016 MOOC in Military Ethics. Courtesy of UNSW Canberra

The ethics community can assist in addressing this challenge in three ways. The first is through support to training design and content. The pre-deployment preparation at the individual and group levels in western militaries would benefit from more direct input from military ethicists. Simply by running soldiers through *realistic* ethical challenges (dilemmas in the true sense), they will be more adequately forewarned and forearmed. Secondly, ethicists might provide more direct intervention into policy making, using ethical theory and empirical historical example to support those faced with the challenge of navigating the risky path between morality and pragmatic national interest. Finally and notwithstanding the hazards, military ethicists might provide greater educational support to developing militaries themselves. In many instances these developing forces have no tradition of military ethics and no access to professional ethical educators. Face-to-face teaching is easily the best way to achieve results. But the delivery of such programs comes with the threat of physical danger from a rogue student. But it is not beyond the realms of possibility to imagine a Western ethicist on the staff of the UK-led Afghan National Army Officer's Academy in Kabul. Technology also provides a range of other solutions.

The work currently being conducted on Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) by both Dr David Whetham (King's College London, Centre for Military Ethics) and Dr Deane-Peter Baker (UNSW Canberra at ADFA, Australian Centre for the Study of Armed Conflict and Society) has great potential to allow simple ethical concepts to reach a broad, and previously untapped, audience.¹⁷ The difficulty will be in making the material relevant to multiple cultures, targeting the programs to where they are needed, and then keeping the student body engaged. A small success could make a huge difference.

The second core ethical challenge of the future is how to respond to the increasing growth of what might be termed as 'modern, massive, multinational militaries'. Western governments are increasingly choosing to fight their wars in coalition. This approach has a number of benefits: it saves money, spreads the burden and builds legitimacy in the eyes of the international community. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan is a prime example. As the largest coordinated military force in modern history, it eventually brought together fifty nations from regions as diverse as Mongolia and Montenegro.¹⁸ Such multinational coordination certainly has clear military and financial benefits but carries inherent ethical risks as well.

The decision on *how* a war is to be fought (in terms of risk-taking, rules of engagement and conduct) should ideally be taken by a coherent society; a 'proper authority' in just war parlance. These modern, massive coalitions lose this 'ethical purity', however, they are required instead to take the same decisions by committee. As members of a coalition, representatives of sometimes starkly-divided societies have to negotiate their way to an agreed ethical standpoint on the decision to go to war and in the conduct of the war. Inherent flaws in this process are stark. Compromise can often be the only route to consensus. Purist views of ethics are steadily diluted leading to a dangerous form of 'ethical creep' as a campaign progresses. Internal politics can play an uncomfortably prominent role with moral standards being traded for political influence. Personal and national accountability can easily be reduced with controversial decisions 'slipping through the coalition cracks'. Of greatest concern in the ISAF experience is the possibility of coalitions becoming so large and unwieldy – a little like some of the international financial institutions before the global financial crisis of 2009¹⁹ – that they develop a momentum of their own. Organisational 'group-think' can acquire the ability to make decisions; an ability that becomes so well developed and inertial that no one nation is strong enough to challenge the group's momentum. Detention and interrogation policy in Afghanistan, which saw dramatic 'ethical creep' over the years, is perhaps the most striking example from the ISAF era.²⁰ With defence costs rising and available funds falling, coalitions are the way of the future. Helping these coalitions to fight *just wars*, and to remain accountable for their actions, is likely to be a major challenge for the contemporary military ethicist.

The final, and perhaps most important, core challenge has been consistently highlighted within the work of Peter W Singer on the automation of war and military robotics (Singer, 2009). For some time military theorists have been enthralled by the 'Revolution in Military Affairs' and preoccupied with the proposition that technological advances in military equipment have fundamentally changed the nature of war. The arguments were flawed and they were mistaken. Despite obvious technological development since the end of the Cold War with the continuing refinement of long-range weapons, fifth-generation aircraft and destructive power, war remains the same human activity it has always been (Gray, 2010:170). Armed conflict still embodies Clausewitz's 'contest of wills' between social groups (Clausewitz, Paret and Howard, 1976). And if Iraq and Afghanistan have shown anything about emerging trends in warfare, it is the limitation of the much-lauded technological edge developed at astronomical cost by Western militaries over the last thirty years. Singer argues, however, that a true automation of war in terms of independent, robotic decision making is increasingly inevitable.

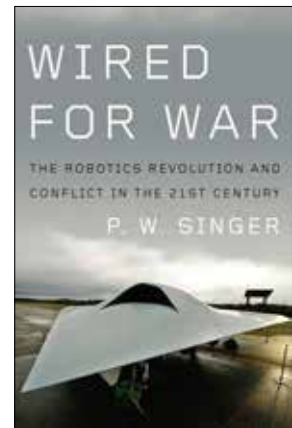
If this was to happen, and the result was a degradation or even removal of the inherent human aspect of conflict, then such a shift might represent a true 'revolution'. If war can be conducted without human risk, and if automated decisions can remove responsibility from the protagonists, the nature of war might change. The change would arise from the absence of any concern for the human cost of fighting. Injury and death would no longer be an issue for the combatants. This is an outcome with potentially catastrophic results. Establishing an ethical, legal and moral regulatory framework to contend with the automation of war is critical. Indeed, it may be the most important challenge of the future.

Conclusion

While the Western world is weary of conflict, Western nations are finding that conflict isn't wearying of them. With a resurgent Russia determined to reshape the European order, a fundamentalist Islamic caliphate inciting violence across the world, and disputes over the South China Sea threatening consensus on shared use of international waters, Western militaries face an array of complex challenges that they could not and did not envisage even five years ago. The 'dividend of time' many expected on the back of the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns has not been delivered. There has been a seamless transition from one phase of war to another. Most Western militaries are now attempting to look back, learn, reflect and change while fighting shooting wars on multiple fronts and watching their backs for rapidly emerging new threats to domestic peace and international order. How well they succeed in reshaping themselves while in contact with their adversaries may well set the tone for global safety and security for the remainder of the twenty-first century.

Ethics must play a core role in this reflection and adaptation, particularly given some of the errors and excesses of the last fifteen years. Academics, and military ethicists must play their part. Those who prepare young men and women for armed conflict must ensure that trainees understand the corrupting power of war-fighting and that they are forewarned and forearmed to negotiate the ethical dilemmas they might face. They must be formed in robust groups that are led by ethical leaders with strong moral compasses. Personal leadership is the foremost means of guarding against atrocity in war. Finally, the re-development of a strategic dialogue between militaries and governments needs greater institutional supports. The dialogue I have in mind includes a modernised conceptual language of just war theory, one that reflects the changing character of conflict including the use of mentored 'proxy' forces, massive coalitions and autonomous robotic systems.

Academia must modernise if it is to play its part and discharge its responsibilities. Traditional teaching still provides the backbone for academic engagement. But at this critical point of reflection and development, a more direct and energetic approach is required. At the *individual* level ethical education needs to be driven lower, targeting the young soldiers who (by dint of background and education) are perhaps less well prepared to face ethical dilemmas. At the *group* level, ethicists could play a major role in shaping *collective* training design; helping the military to re-create and anticipate in training the ethical challenges of the future. Perhaps most importantly, ethicists need to take a key advisory role in the refinement of strategy and in the conduct of war. Over the past decade militaries have become increasingly re-reliant on Political Advisors (POLADs) to improve the military-political interface and to help them navigate their way past the policy pitfalls of modern operations. Most of the pressing issues, like detention and interrogation, are at their heart ethical issues. In my judgement there is no less pressing need for an Ethical Advisor (ETHAD) to ensure success in battles of perception and moral standing. Armed conflict has not and will not end soon. Traditional thinking and conventional wisdom needs to be challenged if the West is to avoid repeating the astrategic suffering of the Global War On Terror.



Wired for War, a key work on future warfare by P. W. Singer. Courtesy of P. W. Singer.

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Endnotes

- ¹ On 15 February 2003, a coordinated day of protests was held globally protesting against the imminent war in Iraq. Protests were held in over 600 cities. According to BBC News, between six and ten million people took part (see <http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2765215> accessed 11 Apr 16). The largest protests took place in Europe. Three million protested in Rome, one and a half million in Madrid and up to two million in London. The scale of anti-war sentiment is reflective of the schism the decision to invade Iraq created between the governments involved and their constituents.
- ² In 2006 soldiers from a United States Army unit raped and murdered a young Afghan girl in the village of Mahmudiyah, South Baghdad. Her family were also killed in what was a premeditated attack. The incident is depicted in graphic detail in Frederick, 2010.
- ³ The details of 'Operation Entirety' remain Restricted. An outline can be seen in Part 1 of the recently published 'Operation Herrick Campaign Study', United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, 2015.
- ⁴ The development and publication of the United States Army's *Field Manual 3.24 Countering Insurgency* represented a step change in the development and execution of doctrine. Led by Lieutenant General David Patreus, the Team consulted widely across military and academia. The resulting doctrine was (for the first time) openly published, and then executed by General Patreus in Iraq during the surge in 2009.
- ⁵ For an excellent explanation of the Western crisis in strategic thought, see the series of essays by Hew Strachan in *The Direction of War: Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. For the depiction of the 'GWOT' as 'astrategic', see p. 14.
- ⁶ For an examination of personal and organisational determinates of 'resilience' in military personnel, see Part 1 (chapters 2 – 5) of Sinclair and Britt, 2013.
- ⁷ At the time of writing, the Taliban had re-taken much of the north of Helmand Province, were on the verge of reoccupying Sangin (a key battleground during the Campaign) and were threatening the provincial capital of Lashkah Gah. Situational updates can be found at the Institute for the Study of War:
www.understandingwar.org.
- ⁸ For an examination of 'moral injury', see Tom Frame, *Moral Injury: Unseen Wounds in an Age of Barbarism*, Sydney: New South Publishing, 2015.
- ⁹ The phrase 'Over There' to describe Iraq became rapidly endemic in American military and civilian culture. It was so well known that it was used for the title of a 2005 Fox TV dramatisation of the Iraq War, see IMDb description at <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0446241/>, accessed 1 January 2016.
- ¹⁰ The Australian Defence Force reviews of culture and behaviour were eventually brought together into the Australian Department of Defence '*Pathways to Change: Evolving Defence Culture*' found at <http://www.defence.gov.au/pathwaytochange/docs/120410%20Pathway%20to%20Change%20-%20Evolving%20Defence%20Culture%20-%20web%20version.pdf>, accessed 1 January 2016.

- ¹¹ The decision to review and redesign the British Army Leadership Code and Values and Standards was made on the basis of the work of Lieutenant Colonel Philip McCormack PhD in *Grounding British Army Values Upon an Ethical Good* (2015) found at <http://www.cgscfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/McCormack-GroundingBritishArmyValues.pdf>, accessed 1 January 2016.
- ¹² Discussion around the inter-relationship between ethics and the development of strategy is often under-developed. The subject is covered in brief in Colin S Gray, 'Some Thoughts on Moral Choice and War', *Comparative Strategy* 30, No. 1, 4 March 2011: pp. 94-97, DOI: 10.1080/01495933.2011.545690.
- ¹³ For example, the Collective Training Group (CTG) for the British Army, the Combat Training Centre (CTC) for the Australian Army, and the National Training Centre (NTC) for the United States Army.
- ¹⁴ For analyses of the state of strategy in the GWOT, see Strachan, *The Direction of War: Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective*, Michael Clarke, 'The Helmand Decision', *Whitehall Papers*, vol. 77, no. 1, 2011, pp. 5 – 29, DOI: 10.1080/02681307.2011.640819, Colin S Gray, 'Strategic Thoughts for Defence Planners', *Survival*, vol. 52, no. 3, 2010, p. 170, DOI: 10.1080/00396338.2010.494883 and Paul Newton, Paul Colley and Andrew Sharpe, 'Reclaiming the Art of British Strategic Thinking', *RUSI Journal*, vol. 155, no. 1, 2010, p. 49 DOI: 10.1080/03071841003683435.
- ¹⁵ The consideration of 'Mentoring Brigades' within the United States Army can be found in the report from 'Breaking Defense' at <http://breakingdefense.com/2015/12/army-mulls-train-advise-brigades-gen-milley/>, accessed 1 January 2016.
- ¹⁶ See reporting from the *Daily Telegraph* (London) on the inquest of the deaths of WO1 (RSM) Daz Chant and his colleagues at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/onthe frontline/8519876/Rogue-Afghan-policeman-machine-gunned-British-soldiers-inquest-hears.html>, accessed 1 January 2016.
- ¹⁷ More information on the developing King's College London Centre for Military Ethics MOOC is available at www.militaryethics.uk. More information is available at <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/military-ethics>.
- ¹⁸ For details on the breadth of the NATO coalition in Afghanistan, see 'ISAF Key Facts and Figures' at http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2014_10/20141014_141006-ISAF-Placemat-final.pdf, accessed 1 November 2015.
- ¹⁹ For an understanding of how moral decision-making can collapse due to the nature of 'massive' organisations, see the 2011 Academy Award winning documentary on the Global Financial Crisis 'Inside Job' directed by Charles Ferguson.
- ²⁰ See chapter 6 of Sibylle Scheipers, *Unlawful Combatants: A Genealogy of the Irregular Fighter*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015, for NATO's attempts to develop a coherent coalition policy on detention and interrogation.

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