



# Steering America's Warship toward Moral Communication (and Real Success) in the 21st Century

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*Suppose I just told you that half of my platoon had been destroyed but didn't tell you the remaining half is so goddamned mad we're going to fight twice as hard. What meaning will be conveyed by statistics like "50 percent destroyed"? The only meaningful statistic in warfare is when the other side quits.<sup>1</sup>*

— Karl Marlantes, *What It Is Like to Go to War*

*To my knowledge, in the nine-plus months I've been here, [in] not a single case where we have engaged in an escalation of force incident and hurt someone has it turned out that the vehicle had a suicide bomb or weapons in it and, in many cases, [it] had families in it.<sup>2</sup>*

— General Stanley McChrystal, March 2010

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ART: *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, 1851, Oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Although tactically proficient, General George Washington's real brilliance was as a moral strategist. For example, his insistence that the Continental Army adhere more closely than the British Army to the laws of war strengthened American determination at the expense of British resolve.

**O**N 17 DECEMBER 2010, 26-year-old street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi stood in front of a government building in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, doused himself with paint thinner and set himself alight. According to his family, Bouazizi's desperate, defiant act was due to indignities he had long suffered at the hands of corrupt local officials. When he died in a hospital less than three weeks later, he died without knowing what the world was just finding out: he had done far more than set himself afire. He had sparked a blaze that would soon rage across much of the Arab world.

Within hours of Bouazizi's self-immolation, a small anti-government protest took place in Sidi Bouzid that was captured in a cell phone video and posted to the Internet. Within days, Tunisians from all economic classes were demonstrating against President Ben Ali in Tunis and other cities. Within weeks, the dictator had fled the country.

Eighteen days later, inspired by what had transpired in Tunisia, Egyptian demonstrators forced their autocratic ruler of 29 years, Hosni Mubarak, to step down. Protests soon engulfed Libya, too, but Libya's dictator, Muammar

Gaddafi, proved much tougher to dislodge, and the country quickly slid into civil war. Now he too is gone. In four other countries, protestors forced the resignation of government ministers. Many other Arab governments have struggled to appease their own mobs of angry demonstrators.

### The Databyte is Mightier than the Tank

When they analyze the “Arab Spring” or “Arab Awakening,” future historians will probably stress the crucial role information technology played in fanning its flames. Thanks to news outlets like Al Jazeera and social media such as Facebook, YouTube, and SMS networks, the gap between the dictatorships’ propaganda and reality has been relentlessly exposed. Although they tried, Arab autocrats have been unable to plausibly deny the scale of the demonstrations against them. Even more damaging to their regimes, they have been unable to suppress videos of the passionate protests. And when they ordered brutal security crackdowns, they have been unable to hide the graphic images

and sounds of oppression, the crack of gunfire, the visible fear of civilians, the cries of the wounded, and the disturbing sight of bloody corpses.

It may be counterintuitive, but more often than not, the databyte is proving mightier than the tank. How can this be? The answer is simple: armed conflict is more a matter of mind (perceptions and judgment) than weapons.

Pit protestors armed with placards against a tank, and if the tank’s crew chooses to fire upon the demonstrators, it is “game over.” Tank wins. However, consider the information-based decisions that must take place for a tank crew to kill protestors. The crew must first believe that they should do so, either because they sincerely think it is right and necessary or because their superiors will punish them for not following orders. Furthermore, for such an atrocity to continue, every leader in this crew’s chain-of-command must believe that it should continue. A single break in this chain and the tank becomes about as dangerous to demonstrators as a broken blender. Then, if the tank crew actually joins the protestors, it is an almost certain sign that the regime’s end is near.



(Mariam Soliman)

On 6 February 2011, a peaceful revolutionary stands on an Egyptian tank. Five days later, Egypt’s president of 30 years, Hosni Mubarak, stepped down.

In the information age, dictators are finding it increasingly difficult to keep their opposition's message from being heard—most critically, by members of their own security forces. Although it is too early to announce the death of the Stalinesque dictatorships and propaganda machines that rose to such prominence in the 20th century, their end is certainly nigh.

Another sign of the times has been the rise of Wikileaks, a website that publishes leaked information. The sheer number of classified U.S. documents the website has published is both unprecedented and mind-boggling. In 2010, the site released hundreds of thousands of classified reports covering six years of conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq, and then followed this by publishing the first of 251,287 classified diplomatic cables spanning 45 years from 274 U.S. embassies.<sup>3</sup> Demonstrating how connected the world has become, some of these cables played a crucial role in inspiring the “Arab Awakening.”<sup>4</sup>

The information age has also meant more deployments for U.S. forces. In the 1990s, disturbing media images provoked U.S. humanitarian interventions in Northern Iraq, Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. The power of the media (actually, the power of *truth*) is such today that it not only sends U.S. troops into combat zones, but it also brings them home.<sup>5</sup> Our humanitarian intervention in Somalia came to an end when American television viewers watched Somali mobs dragging the bodies of American soldiers through the streets of Mogadishu. Similarly, graphic stories of atrocities at such places as Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo, and Haditha increased the call to bring American troops home from Iraq and Afghanistan—and served as recruitment boons for our terrorist enemies as well.<sup>6</sup>

Such information-related trend lines—now accelerating—reflect the truly seismic political and social changes that have been afoot since at least the 1960s. During the Vietnam War, correspondents reported ugly truths on the ground that often luridly contradicted the glowing reports of U.S. leaders, creating a “credibility gap.”<sup>7</sup> Particularly damaging to American morale was the report of atrocities at My Lai, a horrific war crime that—like Abu Ghraib decades later—deepened American confusion about the war and heightened questions about its moral legitimacy.<sup>8</sup> The release of the “Pentagon Papers” in 1971 prefigured the

rise of Wikileaks, and today's “Arab Awakening” has much in common with glasnost and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s.

The U.S. military should be extracting powerful lessons from these seismic changes: morally unaware communication is ineffective communication.<sup>9</sup> “Culture training” is a type of moral awareness training and is thus very important.<sup>10</sup> Military actions and intentions must be transparent. Information engagement trumps weapons engagement. Actions speak louder than words. The ethical conduct of U.S. troops matters deeply.<sup>11</sup>

But sadly, although the Obama administration has demonstrated a fuller understanding of these lessons than its predecessor did, real change eludes our military.

## Missing the Moral Forest for the Kinetic Trees

The opening overview to the May 2010 U.S. National Security Directive, signed by President Barack Obama, states that the United States will “continue to underwrite global security.”<sup>12</sup> This bold statement is quickly qualified by the caveat that “no one nation . . . can meet global challenges alone.”<sup>13</sup>

Even thus qualified, the goal of “underwriting global security” is a lofty one, probably more ambitious in scale than any objective publicly pronounced by this or any other democracy in recent history. Such a goal must be supported by a huge budget, and certainly U.S. military “hard power” is well-resourced. Although Russia and China are sometimes referred to as “near peer” competitors, even combined, the military budgets of the two countries do not equal that of the United States. In fact, the United States spends almost as much each year on its military as the rest of the world does put together.<sup>14</sup>

Our nation's spending on “soft power” is far less robust, as is evidenced by the fact that the U.S. Department of State's and USAID's 2010 budgets combined were less than 10 percent of the DOD's budget.<sup>15</sup> Within the military, little money is spent on non-kinetic methods of applying power. Most military discretionary spending—a third of the total 2011 budget—goes toward procurement and research, development, testing, and evaluation.<sup>16</sup> In turn, nearly all this enormous budget slice goes toward big-dollar kinetic weapons programs, the three most expensive



(Photo courtesy of Colonel Laurence Mixon)

**BG Martin Dempsey (center) speaks with 501st MI Battalion leadership, CSM Pamela Washington and LTC Laurence Mixon, at the Task Force 1st Armored Division interrogation facility in Baghdad, Iraq, 2003. Four days after assuming command of the division, Dempsey had published a policy memorandum criminalizing detainee mistreatment. Consequently, none of his school-trained interrogators applied immoral, strategically disastrous, enhanced interrogation techniques.**

currently being the Ballistic Missile Defense system, the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, and the Virginia Class submarine program.<sup>17</sup>

Two of the Army's most expensive programs are related to information technology, which on the surface sounds like a good thing.<sup>18</sup> The Brigade Combat Team Modernization Program develops and fields robots, remote sensors, and advanced individual communications equipment previously associated with the Future Combat Systems program, while the Warfighter Information Network Program delivers robust communication architecture to support super-connected brigades.

However, how any of this will actually enhance our Army's ability to communicate with the world is unclear. Consider, for example, the sci-fi, cyborg-like appearance the American GI is steadily assuming. By making soldiers appear less human, our military is morally insulating itself from foreign populations rather than integrating with them. One might as well expect a

Star Wars village of Ewoks to embrace Imperial Storm Troopers as expect the village elders of third-world countries to accept heavily helmeted and encumbered American soldiers surrounded by small land robots and flying R2D2s. We need more than just a robust, kinetic-focused intranet. We need enhanced, morally aware communication with the world around us.

The current U.S. Army and Marine counterinsurgency manual states, "Sometimes, the more you protect your force, the less secure you may be."<sup>19</sup> It adds, "Lose moral legitimacy, lose the war."<sup>20</sup> Such adages reflect a long-overdue recognition of war's moral dimension—a recognition that led to improved tactics and, in Iraq if not yet in Afghanistan, greater success.

But our military has yet to truly capitalize on these moral insights, which many wrongly see as belonging to only one type of warfare—counterinsurgency. Many still do not realize that, when Dresden's citizens have video cell phones and

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are plugged into the Internet, the military that firebombs them probably does not get to continue its strategic bombing campaign.

Military procurement processes are proving especially resistant to moral ideas. With the exception of money spent making our weapons systems more accurate and our sensors more discriminating, total spending to ensure morally aware operations cannot be more than a tiny fraction of the cost of our most expensive weapons programs.<sup>21</sup>

This is not to say that the U.S. military is ignoring its need to communicate in a morally aware fashion. In February 2010, for example, the Department of Defense (DOD) gave service members permission to use social media, blogs, and other Internet capabilities for their own personal needs.<sup>22</sup> Allowing soldiers to share their stories with the world should go a long way toward convincing skeptics that U.S. troops conduct themselves in a morally legitimate fashion in combat zones—provided they are thus conducting themselves and have a good connection to the internet. Other promising developments include increased attention to Law of Armed Conflict instruction at commissioning sources and during the initial training of enlisted service members,<sup>23</sup> establishing of a center in 2008 “to reinforce the Army profession and its Ethic,”<sup>24</sup> and giving greater emphasis on “culture training” in both the Army and Marines.<sup>25</sup>

Nonetheless, unsupported by any substantial shift in resources or training, such steps are proving inadequate. Most troublingly, the moral “hits” our military receives due to misconduct or poor judgment in combat zones just keep on coming. Perhaps most shamefully, in early 2010, 12 U.S. soldiers were charged with complicity in the murder of three Afghans for what was apparently the sheer “fun” of killing them. Also in 2010, coalition forces in Afghanistan issued a number of apologies for the accidental killings of groups of civilians—killings that less discerning media

sources labeled as “atrocities.”<sup>26</sup>

Clearly, we must do better.

## **What We Say about Ourselves to Each Other**

To ensure our actions send the right message, we must first ensure that the words that guide us are the right words. That is, we must pay close attention to words since, as a noble in Shakespeare’s *Othello* put it, “Opinion, the sovereign mistress of effects” determines our actions.<sup>27</sup>

So, what words govern the U.S. profession of arms? Our laws, regulations, and doctrine do not speak with one clear voice on the subject.

Moral guidance for U.S. troops begins with national law, which includes the requirement to obey the Law of Armed Conflict (as accepted and understood in U.S. government treaties) and the Torture Convention of 1984. Federal statutes also require service members to swear an oath to “support and defend the Constitution of the United States,” a text containing powerful moral judgments concerning the basic rights of all Americans. But revealingly, although enlisted troops must swear to obey the lawful orders of their chain of command, service members are not required by oath to obey only moral orders. For new troops, this failure is the first sign that the institution that they have joined relies on an overly legalistic system of conduct.<sup>28</sup>

Presidential executive orders provide additional guidance. Executive Order 12674 outlines financial prohibitions, and Executive Order 10631 defines the U.S. military’s “code of conduct.”<sup>29</sup> This code is not comprehensive, but rather it addresses how U.S. service members should act when they “evade capture, resist while a prisoner, or escape from the enemy.”<sup>30</sup>

The DOD provides further guidance. DOD Regulation 5500.7-R, *Joint Ethics*, mostly consists of financial prohibitions. Chapter 2 of the regulation

contains a “code of ethics.”<sup>31</sup> However, this chapter’s list of financial prohibitions is as narrow in scope as the military’s “code of conduct.”<sup>32</sup> Little known to most service members, this regulation also defines 10 “primary ethical values” that govern our profession.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, it provides a similarly obscure 10-step ethical decision-making tool.<sup>34</sup>

Joint Publication 1, *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States*, defines five “values of joint service” that are “common to all the services.”<sup>35</sup> Only one, “integrity,” is a DOD primary ethical value, and it is unclear from the manual’s wording whether the other four values are supposed to augment or replace the DOD values. “Integrity” is rated the highest joint warfare value, with no precedence assigned to the remaining four.<sup>36</sup>

This joint publication also states, “Military power must be wielded in an unimpeachable moral fashion, with respect for human rights and adherence to the Geneva Conventions.”<sup>37</sup> This is followed by a refutation of legalism: “Morality should not be a matter of legality, but of conscience.”<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, these two bold statements of principle are practically hidden in the small print of this 106-page manual.

More robust guidance about what it means to be a U.S. military professional begins at the service level. The Army’s “capstone doctrine” for its professional ethic is Field Manual (FM) 1, *The Army*. Along with a narrative of how our profession historically evolved, this manual proposes three paradigms as the Army’s “most important guiding values and standards.”<sup>39</sup> They are “Army Values,” the “Soldier’s Creed,” and “The Warrior Ethos.”

The Army Values are Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage, thus contrived and arranged to spell LDRSHP (leadership).<sup>40</sup> Once again, it is unclear whether these values are meant to supplement or replace the values listed at higher command levels. The Army Values are also unranked, generating such questions as: What does a soldier do when his sense of loyalty to his fellow soldiers and unit is at odds with his sense of duty to his country? Does a soldier lie, if by doing so he thinks he will help his country? The paradigm’s answers to these and probably all difficult ethical questions are muddy.<sup>41</sup>

Additionally, while the manual defines “integrity” in order to encourage soldiers to do what is “morally right,” it does not provide any tools to help soldiers determine what the morally right (or best) course of action is for an ethical dilemma. Yes, the Uniform Code of Military Justice and scores of regulations provide thousands of pages of prohibitions, but just because an action is legal does not mean it is the right thing to do. If we expect soldiers to use the DOD’s 10-step ethical decision-making model, they need to know that the model exists and we must train them on how to use it.

It gets worse. While the Army Values paradigm is unhelpful in promoting ethical decision-making, the Soldier’s Creed and Warrior Ethos are downright counterproductive. They promote such immoral principles as blind obedience to authority, devotion to technical competence and kinetic military power, and winning at any cost. They teach soldiers to put mission accomplishment first (rather than, say, their sense of honor).<sup>42</sup> They offer only a dash of moral concern, stating that soldiers “live the Army Values” (a paradigm that, as we have just seen, provides very little in the way of ethical advice).<sup>43</sup> They also exhort soldiers to be disciplined and mentally tough. (Tough, one wonders, to the point of lacking compassion for locals and armed enemies?)<sup>44</sup> Additionally, they offer no “soft power” alternatives to defeating the enemy: soldiers must “stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy the enemies of the United States of America in close combat.”<sup>45</sup> In short, that these creeds could contribute to immoral actions is not hard to see. They clearly belong to the ill-prepared Cold War-shaped army that first embarked on the “War on Terrorism,” and not to the more experienced, wiser Army that we should be today.

This discussion thus far is only a brief summary of the inadequacies and inconsistencies of our military’s published professional ethic. Considering such shortcomings, the frequency with which some U.S. troops display moral confusion on today’s battlefields is not surprising. The surprise is that the vast majority of American service members manage to operate with moral legitimacy—or at least with consistently greater legitimacy than their armed enemies. It would seem that, even when amoral legalism reigns supreme and behavior is often fuelled more by a desire to avoid punishment

than by a desire to do what is right, one institutional triumph (that of routinely justifiable battlefield conduct) remains possible. But inevitably, legalism's tragic flaw becomes obvious when a service member believes that, in the remote corner of the world in which he finds himself, he can commit awful deeds and go unpunished.

What our military needs is better, not more, doctrine about our professional ethic. This new doctrine must be clearer, less morally schizophrenic, rationally sound, easily understood, and effectively communicated throughout all services. It should balance negative legal prohibitions with positive ethical principles and include a simple, well-understood ethical decision-making tool to help service members determine the best course of action for a given situation.

Such a written professional ethic would promote positive moral conduct at every level of command. Ultimately, the guiding principles of this ethic would become the "talking points" with which we engage the media and enhance our moral standing with foreign populations, the international community, our civilian leaders, and all other Americans—not so much because we say these talking points, but because we exhibit them, through our actions.

## Putting Our Dollars, Strategy, and Training Where Our Counterinsurgency Doctrine Is

Getting the words right is a critical first step, but it takes more than words to get actions right. It takes dollars, training, and morally designed military strategies.

In my essay, "Controlling the Beast Within: the Key to Success on 21st-Century Battlefields," I presented several ideas for improving the Army's ethics program. These ideas included the following:

- Ethics training is command business.
- Moral restraint "needs to be incorporated in all battle drills, such as tank tables, urban close-quarters combat lanes, and practice interrogations."
- Operations officers rather than lawyers and chaplains need to be the staff proponents for ethics.
- Installations should provide a multi-week ethics course for unit "ethics master gunners."
- Service schools should focus more on helping leaders to understand war's moral dimension.<sup>46</sup>

To these points, I add the following considerations.

***Ultimately, the guiding principles of this ethic would become the "talking points" with which we engage the media***

**Staff planning.** The U.S. Marines, Navy, and Air Force would benefit just as much from robust ethics programs. Across services, we should update staff planning models to reflect the importance of maintaining the moral advantage over the enemy. Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*, has a useful discussion on the importance of moral concerns to determining a side's "center of gravity," but such considerations are otherwise largely unaddressed in doctrine.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, when staffs assess courses of action, evaluation criteria should address questions like the following: Which course of action (COA) best promotes the legitimacy of the host nation government? Which COA will result in fewer U.S.-inflicted civilian deaths and suffering? In some cases, commanders and staffs should treat "moral legitimacy" as a distinct line of operation within a campaign plan or course of action. Since we "train as we fight," during staff exercises at home station and senior military colleges, questions related to moral legitimacy should be trainer-led foci.

**Measures of effectiveness.** The "measures of effectiveness" for a strategy, campaign, or mission order should emphasize moral questions. They should also be linked to the moral questions that staffs ask when assessing potential courses of action. For example, is the host nation government showing signs of increased political stability? Are non-combatant deaths and injuries resulting from the actions of coalition and host nation forces decreasing? Other measures could include the following: Is the host nation government growing less corrupt? Are its judiciary and criminal justice systems gaining public trust? Are coalition and host nation forces reducing collateral damage? Are enemy strength and morale decreasing? Are we actively investigating and punishing war crimes committed by host nation security forces? Is the desertion rate of host nation

security forces decreasing? Are allied governments providing more substantial materiel support?

**Information management.** We are by far the most classified military in U.S. history. Our default setting for keeping documents classified is decades rather than months or years. The earliest that classified documents are automatically declassified is 10 years after their classification, and if these documents fall into certain categories (which most do), the rule is 25 years.<sup>48</sup> Documents associated with Special Access Programs are automatically protected for even longer (40 years).<sup>49</sup> Making matters exponentially worse, nearly all of the computers and networks supporting combat operations are classified systems, and almost everyone using these systems routinely classifies the traffic they generate—even when there is no reason for secrecy.

Maintaining operational security is important, but we must also recognize that the value that such information holds for our enemies is usually highly perishable. If we are to build bridges and communicate better, we must get this fixed. One option is to have all reports in a classified archive drop into a declassified archive after only one year of classification—unless, that is, the creator of the report has coded his report with a special exception to this rule. Such transparency would highlight the good conduct of our troops and make our military appear more honest. It would also make sites like Wikileaks largely irrelevant.

**Designing moral strategies.** Moral considerations should trump short-term operational and force protection concerns when we design strategy. Consider, for example, our current practice of using drones to target militants in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). U.S. drone attacks have killed over 2,000 people in Pakistan.<sup>50</sup> Although estimates vary wildly, the number of non-militants killed in these attacks is probably about one-fifth of the total number of deaths.<sup>51</sup> Unsurprisingly, the deaths of such "innocents" are extremely unpopular in Pakistan. One Gallup poll showed only nine percent of Pakistanis supported these drone attacks.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile, it is not at all clear that the drone attacks in Pakistan have reduced insurgent attacks in Afghanistan. Since these attacks began, coalition deaths in Afghanistan have sky-rocketed from 60 in 2004 to 711 in 2010.<sup>53</sup> Deaths from IEDs (which often involve supplies and training

from the FATA) grew from four deaths in 2004 to 368 deaths in 2010.<sup>54</sup> Simply put, by most moral measures of effectiveness, this battlefield tactic is failing. Drone attacks are driving recruits to join our jihadist enemies, increasing instability in nuclear Pakistan, and decreasing America's moral authority. The moral cost of this quixotic quest to deny insurgents a safe haven in Pakistan is too steep a price to pay, especially when one notes that it is probably impossible to deny sanctuary to an armed enemy through airpower alone.

So, what will be the outcome of our moral myopia in Afghanistan? Our counterinsurgency manual does offer one general prediction: Lose moral legitimacy, lose the war.<sup>55</sup>

## Turning America's Warship

It has never been more important for the U.S. military to embrace war's moral qualities. However, this will take a seismic shift in our thinking every bit as profound as the changes currently sweeping the Arab world.

We can already feel the tremors of such a shift taking place. Well grounded in moral ideas, the 2006 counterinsurgency manual helped engineer a much more successful U.S. approach in Iraq. The Law of Armed Conflict instruction that service members receive upon entering the U.S. military has improved. DOD policy now makes it possible for service members to use the Internet to tell their personal stories. Also, the U.S. Army and Marines have improved "culture training."

But these steps are not nearly enough. We must commit far more resources to ensure we maintain not just a physical advantage over our enemies, but a moral advantage as well. We need to get our military profession's guiding principles—our written ethic—right. We need to extract ourselves from the largely unnecessary cloud of classified information that obscures our battlefield conduct (which is much better than most people guess it is). We must also ensure that our strategies, campaign plans, and mission orders display moral awareness.

With regard to resources, there is a reason for the U.S. military's ponderous rate of change. Sitting atop this change are immensely heavy forces of inertia, to include industrial profiteering, the electoral interests of congressional leaders, and decades-entrenched military service cultures.

There is hope, though, that real change will arrive more rapidly than our current moral trajectory suggests. For one, the field grade officers who began fighting our current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are now either general officers or senior field grade officers. (Mid-level Army and Marine management was the driving force behind the development of the counterinsurgency manual.)<sup>56</sup> For another, senior Generals Martin Dempsey and Raymond Odierno have already demonstrated their enthusiasm for counterinsurgency doctrine, information engagement, and the professionalization of our military. Their current roles see them well placed to make a difference in ensuring military resources, training, and strategy are what and where they need to be.

In 1988, General Dempsey, then a major at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, argued in his master's thesis "for a reconsideration of both the ethics curriculum in the Army schoolhouse and the Army Ethic . . . to better account for the importance of Duty in the profession of arms."<sup>57</sup> He concluded:

Someone once compared the effort of directing the Army to steering an aircraft carrier. As the

analogy goes, if the Captain turns the rudder too fast in either direction, the aircraft on deck will slide into the sea. If he turns the rudder back and forth, the ship will move from side to side, but the direction of travel will remain unchanged. If, however, the Captain moves the rudder just a little bit and holds it in that position for a long time, the ship will eventually begin to turn as he wants it to. To do that, of course, the Captain must have a vision of where he wants the ship to go, long before it gets there. The Army, too, needs a vision. In large measure, that vision is the Army Ethic.<sup>58</sup>

Not just our Army but also our entire military needs a change of direction. Napoleon once said that, in war, "morale is to the physical as three is to one." However, in the modern age, information technology generates far greater coherency of moral opinion than was possible during Napoleon's time. The empowerment of collective moral judgment by modern technology is a matter of the greatest import for the fighting spirit of nations, communities, organizations, and warriors. To say that, in war today, moral considerations are to the physical as ten is to one is no understatement—and this relative importance of moral concerns to physical ones promises

to only grow. Thus it is that the two great ethical questions of warfare (should we go to war, and, are we waging a war properly?) matter now more than ever.

Many still do not understand that the most profound impact of information technology on warfare can be seen in the rising importance of war's moral dimension. So, while there is hope that America's warship is starting to turn, the question remains: What will the final cost be in terms of casualties, mission failure, and the erosion of our nation's moral authority if our warship should stay on its current course?

After a decade of warfare and all the painful, sometimes shameful tribulations that these years have contained, it is troubling to think that these costs could be much higher still. **MR**



(AP Photo/Mohammad Sajjad)

Supporters of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf or Movement of Justice hold a poster showing what they claim are victims of attacks on innocent people and flash V-victory signs as they participate in a rally against the U.S. drone strikes in Pakistani tribal areas, 24 April 2011, Peshawar, Pakistan.

## NOTES

1. Karl Marlantes, *What It Is Like to Go to War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2011), 118-119.
2. Richard A. O'Connell, Jr., "Tighter Rules Fail to Stem Deaths of Innocent Afghans at Checkpoints," *The New York Times Website*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/27/world/asia/27afghan.html> (accessed 25 June 2011); Justin Elliott, "Gen. McChrystal: We've Shot 'An Amazing Number of People' Who Were Not Threats," *TPMMuckraker Website*, [http://tpmmuckraker.talkingpointsmemo.com/2010/04/gen\\_mcchrystal\\_weve\\_shot\\_an\\_amazing\\_number\\_of\\_peop.php](http://tpmmuckraker.talkingpointsmemo.com/2010/04/gen_mcchrystal_weve_shot_an_amazing_number_of_peop.php) (accessed 25 June 2011). General McChrystal's statement here does not reflect poorly upon his own performance as commander of coalition forces in Afghanistan. As Tadd Sholtis, a representative for McChrystal, noted in an emailed response to the TPMMuckraker website, McChrystal worked "harder at reducing civilian casualties than any wartime commander in a generation."
3. In July 2010, Wikileaks began releasing 91,731 SECRET-level Significant Action reports covering six years of conflict in Afghanistan (the "Afghanistan War Logs"). The site followed this in October 2010 with the release of 391,832 Secret SIGACT reports covering the same six years of conflict in Iraq (the "Iraq War Logs"). The release of CONFIDENTIAL-level diplomatic cables began in November 2010.
4. For example, one cable from an American ambassador described Ben Ali as aging, out of touch, and surrounded by corruption. The fact that the U.S. government apparently thought as little of Ben Ali as Tunisians themselves did was a revelation—and a source of shame—to many Tunisians.
5. It is not my contention here that reporters are never mistaken—quite the opposite. Every news report, even if it consists entirely of observable facts, has at least a subjective context. Metaphorically, I take a capitalistic view of "truth": just as Adam Smith argued that, in a free market, an "invisible hand" regulates the economy so that the nation and the citizen tend to receive greater wealth than they would in a closed market, in a society with a free press, an invisible hand regulates truth so that, generally, both the nation and its citizens receive a fuller version of it. As information technology improves, so does "truth," or, to continue the metaphor, so does the strength of truth's hand.
6. Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a 2009 interview, said, "The incidents there [at Abu Ghraib] likely inspired many young men and women to fight against us, and they still do, as a matter of fact." "Matthew Alexander," the pseudonym of the author of two books (including one describing how he led the interrogation team that successfully hunted down Musab al-Zarqawi), said, "I learned in Iraq that the No. 1 reason foreign fighters flocked there to fight were the abuses carried out at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo."
7. United Press International, "1966 Year in Review," *UPI Website*, [http://www.upi.com/Audio/Year\\_in\\_Review/Events-of-1966/Vietnam%3A-1966/12301447861822-2/](http://www.upi.com/Audio/Year_in_Review/Events-of-1966/Vietnam%3A-1966/12301447861822-2/) (accessed June 26, 2011). Arkansas senator William Fulbright coined the phrase "Credibility Gap," using it in the context of his been unable to "get a straight answer from the administration about the war." The phrase soon became part of America's political lexicon.
8. I refer to both political and moral legitimacy in this essay. As I use the term, "political legitimacy" is the judgment of a nation or community as to whether its government has the right to govern it. "Moral legitimacy," on the other hand, is the judgment of a nation or community as to whether a government's actions are right and proper. It is thus possible for a nation to see its government as politically legitimate and yet judge that this same government lacks moral legitimacy (such as when a nation accepts that a "bad" king has the divine right to rule or that a "bad" president can finish his term because he was constitutionally elected). Establishing or reinforcing a host nation government's political legitimacy is usually the first order of business for a counterinsurgent. However, in order to sustain the conflict, the counterinsurgents of mature democracies must work hard to maintain moral legitimacy.
9. The meaning of the word "moral" throughout this essay closely aligns with its traditional military meaning. To the great Prussian theorist, Carl von Clausewitz, "moral" referred to the psychology of right and wrong—specifically, the impressions, feelings, and judgment leading to action or inaction. Even more precisely matching the use of the word "moral" in this essay, Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Peter Fromm has written, "The term *moral* . . . refers to both its ethical and psychological denotations, which experience and language inextricably connect. The reason for these two meanings is that perceived *right action* and consistency in word and deed are the psychological glue holding together a community, even the community of states. Shared perceptions of right action bind individuals to groups and groups to communities. The moral *approbation* (or psychological approval) at the root of stable communities is the natural result of acting rightly."
10. "Culture training" is usually shorthand for teaching service members about the mores of a foreign ethnic community. As such, the establishment of this (albeit limited) program is a step forward in terms of helping troops to understand the moral environment within which they will operate.
11. This essay's emphasis on war's moral dimension represents nothing new in military theory. War theorists from Sun Tzu to Clausewitz to Colonel John R. Boyd have emphasized the moral dimension of war. To Boyd, for example, grand strategy needs to have "a moral design," and the "name of the game" in warfare is to "preserve or build-up our moral authority while compromising that of our adversaries in order to pump-up our resolve, drain-away adversaries' resolve, and attract them as well as others to our cause and way of life." (Slide 54, "The Strategic Game of? [www.dnipogo.org/boyd/strategic\_game.pdf]). What is new, however, is the growing importance of war's moral dimension in the information age.
12. Office of the President of the United States, "National Security Strategy, May 2010," *The White House Website*, [http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=1&sqi=2&ved=0CBsQFJAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.whitehouse.gov%2Ffiles%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Ffrss\\_viewer%2Fnational\\_security\\_strategy.pdf&ei=vwgHToS9C8rJhAF0p8y\\_DQ&usq=AFQjCNGFojGF51OBMDOOyDQZXRiPCQJPwQ](http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=1&sqi=2&ved=0CBsQFJAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.whitehouse.gov%2Ffiles%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Ffrss_viewer%2Fnational_security_strategy.pdf&ei=vwgHToS9C8rJhAF0p8y_DQ&usq=AFQjCNGFojGF51OBMDOOyDQZXRiPCQJPwQ) (accessed June 26, 2011).
13. *Ibid.*
14. Andrew Bacevich, *Washington Rules: America's Path to Permanent Wars* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 2010), 25. A quick search of various reputable websites confirms that the U.S. spends somewhere between 40-50% of the world's total military expenditure.
15. Foreign Service Officers and military leaders often describe power using the DIME paradigm (Diplomacy, Information, Military, Economic). The elements of "soft power" are diplomacy, information, and economic; military is the element of "hard power." Documents on [whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov) state that, in 2010, the U.S. military budget was \$533.7 billion and the combined U.S. DoS and USAID budget was \$49.3 billion.
16. United States Department of Defense, "Fiscal Year 2012 Budget Request," *Office of the Undersecretary of Defense (Comptroller) Website*, <http://comptroller.defense.gov/defbudget/fy2012/>
17. *Ibid.*, 3, 5-7.
18. *Ibid.*, 5-6.
19. Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2006), 1-27.
20. *Ibid.*, 7, 9.
21. Admittedly, this conclusion is a guess. It is probably impossible to tell from public documents exactly how much money the U.S. military spends on promoting morally aware actions. But when one looks at what has been done thus far (increasing the number of hours spent training on values and Law of Armed Conflict training at initial-entry courses and commissioning sources; constructing urban-combat training centers that typically under-train in target discrimination; establishing the small Center for the Army Professional Ethic; teaching at best a few hours of ethics-relating course materials at service schools; training and fielding a handful of human terrain teams, etc.), it is hard to imagine that the collective cost of these efforts could tally billions of dollars.
22. United States Department of Defense, "Directive-Type Memorandum (DTM) 09-026 - Responsible and Effective Use of Internet-based Capabilities," *DTIC Online Website*, February 22, 2011, <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/DTM-09-026.pdf> (accessed June 26, 2011).
23. Dick Couch, *In A Tactical Ethic: moral conduct in the insurgent battle space* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2010), 43-44. According to Couch, the U.S. Marines devote more than 40 hours in boot camp to values and warrior ethos training. In Army Basic Training, trainees receive 45 hours of values training. Army recruits are also required to carry and be quizzed on "Soldier Rules," an abridged version of the Law of Armed Conflict.
24. United States Army, "About the CAPE," *Center for the Army Profession and Ethic Website*, June 16, 2011, <http://cape.army.mil/aboutCape.html> (accessed June 26, 2011).
25. All Marines and Soldiers deploying to Iraq or Afghanistan must receive short culture and language orientation courses. In addition, a five-man "human terrain team" consisting of anthropologists and social scientists now supports the commander of each deployed combat brigade. Unfortunately, the members of this team are often the only members of a deploying brigade with a deep understanding of a particular culture—and this team's members are not decision-makers. Also disappointingly, the professional education of military intelligence service members typically focuses on the technical skills associated with their trades, not cultural (or rather, moral) understanding.
26. The most famous example of this media tendency involved a gunship video of U.S. attack helicopters targeting a mixed group of insurgents and civilians in Iraq. The pilots certainly made ethically inexcusable (and some would say illegal) judgment calls. However, there is little doubt but that the pilots thought that the entire group that they fired upon consisted of insurgents. Nonetheless, Wikileaks labeled the video "Collateral Murder" and a host of other websites have referred to the incident as a "war crime" or "atrocious."
27. William Shakespeare, "Othello, the Moor of Venice," *Google Books Website*, 2008, <http://books.google.com/books?id=xXzO8iSIRBOC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false> (accessed June 26, 2011), 26.
28. As I use the term, a purely "legalistic" system is one in which moral choices derive solely from the consideration of negative prohibitions. For any given situation, such a system can produce multiple courses of action of equal moral value so long as none of these options are specifically prohibited. On the other hand, a purely ethical system is one in which action is guided by positive principles. Thus, for any situation, such a system offers multiple courses of action rated from best to worst. I propose here that the U.S. military needs a better balance of the legal and the ethical.
29. Office of the President of the United States, "Executive Order 12674 of April 12, 1989 (as modified by E.O. 12731: Principles of Ethical Conduct for Government Officers and Employees)," *United States Office of Government Ethics Website*, [http://www.usoge.gov/laws\\_regs/exec\\_orders/eo12674.pdf](http://www.usoge.gov/laws_regs/exec_orders/eo12674.pdf) (accessed June 26, 2011); Office of the President of the United States, "Executive Order 10631--Code of Conduct for members of the Armed Forces of the United States, August 17, 1955," *National Archives*, <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/codification/executive-order/10631.html> (accessed June 26, 2011). Executive Orders 12017 and 12633 later slightly modified this code.
30. Office of the President of the United States, "Executive Order 10631--Code of Conduct for members of the Armed Forces of the United States, August 17, 1955."
31. United States Department of Defense, "Military Code of Ethics," *U.S. Department of Defense Website*, January 20, 2011, [https://kb.defense.gov/app/answers/detail/a\\_id/4611/-/military-code-of-ethics](https://kb.defense.gov/app/answers/detail/a_id/4611/-/military-code-of-ethics) (accessed June 26, 2011).
32. United States Department of Defense, "5500 7-R Joint Ethics Regulation," *U.S. Department of Defense Website*, November 29, 2007, [http://www.DOD.gov/DODgc/defense\\_ethics/ethics\\_regulation/jer1-6.doc](http://www.DOD.gov/DODgc/defense_ethics/ethics_regulation/jer1-6.doc) (accessed June 26, 2011), 19-30.

33. Ibid., 155-7. These ten values are "Honesty," "Integrity," "Loyalty," "Accountability," "Fairness," "Caring," "Respect," "Promise Keeping," "Responsible Citizenship," and the "Pursuit of Excellence."

34. Ibid., 157-8.

35. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, March 20, 2009), III-4 – III-7. These five values are "Integrity," "Competence," "Physical Courage," "Moral Courage," and "Teamwork."

36. Ibid., I-3.

37. Ibid., I-4.

38. Ibid.

39. Field Manual 1, *The Army* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, June 2005), 1-21.

40. Ibid., 1-16.

41. The U.S. Army's leadership manual does provide some guidance with regard to the precedence of these values, stating that an "officer's responsibility as a public servant is first to the Nation, then to the Army, and then to his unit and his Soldiers" (Field Manual 6-22, *Leadership*, Washington DC: Government Printing Office, October 2006, 3-2). However, this maxim pertains only to commissioned officers. Furthermore, the manual does not emphasize it and it is probably unknown to most soldiers.

42. Field Manual 1, *The Army*, 4-10. The first line of the Warrior Ethos states, "I will always place the mission first."

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. Douglas A. Pryer, "Controlling the Beast Within: The Key to Success on 21st-Century Battlefields," *Military Review* (January-February 2011): 2-12, 8-9.

47. Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*, (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, February 2008), 6-8.

48. Office of the President of the United States, "Executive Order 13526 of December 29, 2009," *The White House Office of the Press Secretary Website*, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/executive-order-classified-national-security-information> (accessed June 26, 2011).

49. Under Secretary of Defense, "Directive-Type Memorandum DTM07-021, April 26, 2007," *DTIC Online Website*, <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/correspdf/int070426sap.pdf> (accessed June 26, 2011).

50. Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, "The Year of the Drone," *New America Foundation Website*, January 10, 2011, <http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/drones> (accessed June 26, 2011). This site is as transparent in its calculations on this subject as any. Every drone attack in Pakistan since 2004 is plotted on a map; each plotting includes links to the news articles "from reliable media organizations with deep reporting capabilities in Pakistan" that form the basis of the article's calculations. One of the article's key summaries is as follows: "Our study shows that the 253 reported drone strikes in northwest Pakistan, including 42 in 2011, from 2004 to the present have killed approximately between 1,557 and 2,464 individuals, of whom around 1,264 to 1,993 were described as militants in reliable press accounts. Thus, the true non-militant fatality rate since 2004 according to our analysis is approximately 20 percent. In 2010, it was more like five percent." So, there is one positive moral note with regard to these attacks: target discrimination appears to be improving.

51. Ibid.

52. Al Jazeera, "Exclusive: Al Jazeera-Gallup Pakistan Survey," *Al Jazeera Website*, August 13, 2009, <http://english.aljazeera.net/focus/2009/08/2009888238994769.html> (accessed June 26, 2011).

53. Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, "Operation Enduring Freedom," *ICasualties Website*, June 23, 2011, <http://icasualties.org/oef/> (accessed June 26, 2011).

54. Ibid.

55. Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, 7-9.

56. Tim Harford, "Lessons from War's Factory Floor," *Financial Times*, May 23, 2011, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/76ec21b8-8565-11e0-ae32-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1QbRhjuwJ> (accessed June 27, 2011).

57. Martin E. Dempsey, "Duty: Understanding the Most Sublime Military Value," *DTIC Online Website*, June 3, 1988, <http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA197934> (accessed June 26, 2011), iii.

58. Ibid., 99.

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