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Ethics and National Defense: The Timeless Issues

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Gaston, James C. and Hietala, Janis Bren, eds. *Ethics and National Defense: The Timeless Issues*. Washington, D.C.: National Defense Univ. Press, 1993. 250pp. \$8 (Order from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.)

In this volume, Gaston and Hietala have given us a broad selection of the best papers delivered in recent sessions of the Joint Services Conference on Professional Ethics (JSCOPE). JSCOPE is the principal forum for debating ethical matters among military professionals, a rewarding and appropriate activity. In the last decade the Joint Conference has heard and debated a number of papers, both controversial and noncontroversial. These essays are a broad selection dealing with recurring ethical problems—a few of which any serving officer is likely to encounter.

Participation in the conference is completely voluntary, and it is perhaps for that reason that the quality of the papers is uneven. However, Gaston and Hietala, editing with a light hand, have assured any interested reader ready access to the material.

All the authors appear to have a personal stake in the ethical issues they address. With a few exceptions, all the authors are serving officers. Those exceptions are notable, however. One is W. Hays Parks, who discusses teaching the law of war. He is a reserve officer better known for his distinguished work for the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General on the law of war. Another author is a former officer who is now an academic. He wrestles with what it is precisely that we

profess in the Oath of Office. A third example: two intelligence professionals in the CIA coming to terms with the ethics of clandestine and covert activities.

The essays are grouped under four headings. "Ethical Foundations of Military Service" includes two different but insightful papers on the oath of office, one on careerism, and a fourth paper on treason, based largely on Operation VALKYRIE, the attempted assassination of Hitler. The second group deals with "Professions within a Profession": an excellent treatment of client-loyalty conflicts, the parallel problem for military physicians, and the paper cited above by two CIA professionals on intelligence dilemmas.

The third group will draw the attention of many serving commanders, with its two essays that discuss "Training for Ethical Behavior in the Armed Forces." The first, by Dr. Daniel Callahan of the Hastings Center, is clearly expressed, grounded in experience, and unequivocally helpful and positive. If I were still giving Commander's Calls, I would post extracts of this essay on the inside cover of the notebook I kept for drafting remarks. The other essay is Hays Parks's "Teaching Law of War." Although narrower in focus, it is another positive, clearly written article.

Three papers make up the fourth and final section, "Contemporary Issues in Military Ethics." The three topics discussed are ethical dimensions of the strategic defense initiative, a moral strategy for American participation in small wars, and women in combat.

Colonel Michael Wheeler takes the reader from Kant by way of Joshua Chamberlain and his troops' bayonet charge at Gettysburg's Little Round Top, to sorting "offense as defense" from "offense as aggression." He then leads us through the nuclear dimension, to defending against nuclear ballistic

missiles. This is solid, basic ethics, offering more than the "preliminaries" promised in his title.

Next, Major Kuenning deftly argues that the ethical aspect of U.S. involvement in small wars often becomes a strategic issue, because our declared national objectives, as well as other institutional factors, can lead to a style of warfare that is inappropriate and appears to give adversaries a moral advantage. The examples are rich, and the author offers clear recommendations. Left for another treatment (perhaps yours?) is the hinted-at, tempting, exploration of strategic leverage.

The final paper makes an attempt to illuminate the propriety of placing women in combat roles through formal, set-logic parsing of the problem. I found this the least satisfying essay in the book. Some weak assertions are too prominent, and I hope more persuasive points exist to support placing women in combat roles.

Officers who care about their role in the profession of arms will find this book valuable. Some essays could be referred to day-to-day, while others will stimulate debate. Clear thinking on tough issues is a great strength in the military profession. This book is a light, fresh workout for those muscles.

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Stein, Janice Gross and Lebow, Richard Ned. *We All Lost the Cold War*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1994. 542pp. \$24.95

In this book the authors analyze two prominent nuclear-alert episodes of coercive diplomacy: the 1962 Cuban

missile crisis and the Soviet threat to intervene in the Yom Kippur War of 1973. Political scientists Stein and Lebow challenge the conventional wisdom that purports to explain the resolution of each crisis as one side's threat and the other's capitulation. This is valuable insight, because leaders on both sides learned invalid lessons from conventional thinking.

Nikita Khrushchev, who was frustrated by the power of the United States, tried to sneak weapons into Cuba and hoped that the United States would accept them as a *fait accompli*. Bellicose arguments for an air strike convinced President John F. Kennedy that even conventional warfare could become uncontrollable; he substituted a naval blockade. Deceiving even themselves into believing that in the end Khrushchev had simply yielded to escalating pressure, American officials soon after tried, disastrously, to coerce North Vietnam.

In fact, interviews with officials of the Bush administration after the Gulf war indicate that "the president and at least some of his advisors saw many parallels between the two confrontations and that the president hoped to replicate Kennedy's success." In their first chapter, the authors state that "President George Bush modeled his unsuccessful attempt to coerce Saddam Hussein to withdraw the Iraqi army from Kuwait on Kennedy's success in compelling Nikita Khrushchev to withdraw Soviet missiles from Cuba."

Interviews with former Soviet officials for this book offer an interesting check on U.S. estimates. Taking a commendably broad view, Lebow and Stein analyze Soviet motives, American and Soviet micromanagement of confrontations, and political influences on strategic decisions. Applying accepted psychological models of decision making, they notice, for example, that Khrushchev exaggerated his weapons'