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## Military Ethics: Looking toward the Future

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the impact of China's relations with the Third World and with the nations of the western Pacific.

Jurgen Domes, a sinologist at the Saar University, examines China's internal dynamics and predicts a collapse of the communist system in that country. The time of the demise of the current system will depend upon the outcome of the forthcoming struggle for succession.

A chapter entitled "The Sino-American Relationship: A Chinese Perspective," by Ding Xinghao, begins with the premise that good relations between the United States and China are of vital importance to peace and stability in East Asia and the Pacific. True to the current party line, Ding places the burden of maintaining this relationship on the United States and warns that using trade and high technology as a lever to pressure China for political purposes would be counterproductive and may force China to close its door again.

In a concluding chapter, Robert Pfaltzgraff notes that Tiananmen brought to the fore the long-standing dilemma that has beset Sino-American relations. Americans believe that the central problem of the relationship is the balancing of U.S. strategic interests with concern for human rights. With the decline of the Soviet threat, the strategic imperative has lost much (but not all) of its impact. The United States must continue to recognize that China remains an indispensable component of any emerging Asian-Pacific political-military balance.

This work is thought-provoking and informative and should prove useful to those interested in world affairs and the Sino-American relationship.

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Fotion, Nicholas G. *Military Ethics: Looking toward the Future*. Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1990. 122pp. \$18.95

This is an important but difficult work. It is important because it provides a solid, logically argued refutation of the pacifistic belief that all things military are immoral. It is difficult because of its dense prose, a veritable Socratic argument of endless "either-or" questions. The result is a volume that clearly defines the moral logic of conventional military capability, deterrence, nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, and strategic defenses. Though relatively short in length, it is not an easy read.

Nicholas Fotion is a professor of philosophy and an expert in the study of ethical behavior. He begins with the subtle premise that many (if not most) of America's intellectual elite have developed an aversion to the serious study of military matters and are therefore easily swayed by what he calls "the big argument" of new-wave pacifism: that modern weapons and military technology have made war more destructive, more costly, and therefore more immoral than ever before. The implication of the argument is that modern nations can no

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longer “afford” to fight wars. The hopeful side of this view is that there may be fewer wars; the cynical side is that “civilized” nations may have to acquiesce to the demands of have-not states or dictatorial regimes that threaten violence and destruction. As Fotion points out, this is not an argument directed at traditional pacifists—those individuals who declare their willingness to die rather than cause their enemies harm by defending themselves—but to citizens who are skeptical of the intentions of the world’s remaining dictatorial states yet sympathetic to the idea that all “military expenditures can be viewed as a waste, a taking away of money that could be spent on more humanitarian concerns.” The impact is on public support for the “opportunity costs of possessing standing military and industrial forces.” Fotion demolishes the big argument in a point-by-point refutation that illuminates how modern weapons—smarter, smaller in yield, and more discriminating—can actually make just wars less destructive, and thus, from the logical point of view, more “moral” than past conflicts. The book was published just weeks before Desert Storm verified in practice what Fotion identifies in theory. Since military strategists have long maintained that the use of smart weapons would reduce civilian casualties, Fotion’s discussion cannot be claimed as prophetic. However, his use of logical reasoning to demonstrate the ethics of American adoption of emerging military technology enhances the intellectual

credibility of modern strategy among those who seem so patently hostile to it, namely, academicians.

One area in which Fotion might claim some degree of prophecy is in his discussion of chemical weapons. He argues that deterrence via chemical weapons might even be more effective than that between nuclear arsenals, since chemical weapon agents are exclusively anti-personnel and cannot be used as counterforce weapons. Since chemical weapon agents cannot destroy an opponent’s chemical weapon arsenal per se, these weapons are not in the “use it or lose it” situation which is frequently used to describe strategic nuclear arms. Fotion states that history and logic indicate that the likelihood that chemical weapons would be used in battle against an opponent that also possesses them is very low. His implication is that if a Hitler refused to use chemical weapons, a Saddam Hussein would probably not—for all the same reasons. On the other hand, use of chemical weapons against an opponent unable to respond in kind, whether Ethiopians in the Italian-Abyssinian War or Kurds in Iraq, is likely. As Fotion describes it, antimilitary ideology does not apply in this case: “the cliché, ‘if you have a weapon, you will use it’ seems far from the truth.... Historical records on poison-gas use suggest a different cliché: ‘if you don’t have it, watch out!’ ”

For the naval audience, *Military Ethics* may seem like preaching to the choir. However, it is important for officers to be aware of and understand

the arguments that propel those individuals who have the greatest intellectual impact on public (defense) policy. Fotion carefully outlines both the pros and cons concerning future military investment and the maintenance of modernized, capable defenses. He is quite familiar with the specifics of modern weapon systems, although there are a few minor slips. At one point the author compares the Soviet SS-18 strategic missile to the American Titan system; in fact, the Titan is more similar to the SS-9. This does not in the least mar his exposition of the current debates. More importantly perhaps, the professional officer who seeks to examine intellectually what he or she knows "in the gut" to be true will find this work an excellent introduction to the morality of strategic logic. Not a code of ethics, this book is rather an invitation to ethical reasoning on the future of the common defense.

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MacKenzie, Donald. *Inventing Accuracy: A Historical Sociology of Nuclear Missile Guidance*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990. 464pp.  
(No price given)

Weapon system development is the result of a fascinating, complex, and varied dance of threat-driven requirements, strategic concepts, technological capabilities, cost, politics and institutional interests, personalities, formal research and development, and acquisition processes. Too often, descriptions of how weapon capabilities

develop are overly simplified and do not capture the essential driving factors. Thus, it is easy to misunderstand the development process and to explain why mismatches between America's strategies and the technical capabilities of her forces may arise.

Donald MacKenzie has undertaken the study of the development of the accuracy of nuclear-armed ballistic missiles. His focus is upon the social processes involved in the evolution of the V-2s of World War II into today's MX missiles and Trident IIs. MacKenzie included in his research written documents and 140 interviews with guidance and navigation technologists, navy and air force officers, and defense officials, including secretaries of defense and heads of defense research and development. It is an intricate work, full of captivating detail.

MacKenzie accepts the complexity of his subject and does not abuse it with simplistic "insights" that fail to consider all relevant material. In his conclusion he addresses five subjects: technology, politics, the paradoxical ordinariness of the technical and political worlds of nuclear weaponry, the relationship between technology and politics, and facts. (Technical facts are "hard," in contrast to the "soft" political facts.)

Many opponents of the nuclear arms race and the weapons it produces would describe its development as the wild frenzy of a military-industrial dervish. This work does not support the idea of an uncontrollable technological juggernaut pushing the