

1978

## Morality and Foreign Policy

J. P. Morse  
*U.S. Navy*

Ernest W. Lefever

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

---

### Recommended Citation

Morse, J. P. and Lefever, Ernest W. (1978) "Morality and Foreign Policy," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 31 : No. 1 , Article 23.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol31/iss1/23>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu](mailto:repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu).

## 120 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

information and analysis presented in readable prose. This reviewer hopes that military professionals will read both works to see the arguments that can be made for different defense budgets and why it is so hard to answer that simple question, "How much is enough?"

JOHN A. WALGREN  
Wheaton College

Lefever, Ernest W. ed. *Morality and Foreign Policy*. Washington: Georgetown University Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1977. 76pp.

Few speeches made today could bear the detailed scrutiny that President Carter's Notre Dame commencement speech is subjected to in this first edition of a monograph series of Georgetown University's Ethics and Public Policy Center. The editor, Ernest Lefever, offered Carter's first comprehensive expression of the future course of U.S. foreign policy to 15 "observers" of American politics for their comment, and 9 of the responses are included in this small reader. Three other pieces on the broad subject of ethics and foreign policy add to the concise commentary of the body in a somewhat tangential sense. Although among the essayists one finds such respected and familiar names as Robert L. Bartley, C.B. Marshall, Daniel P. Moynihan, and Eugene Rostow, I found none of the essays particularly remarkable in either analytical value or perspective.

Some took Carter to task for the time and place of his sententious pronouncements; others argue that his prescription for a "foreign policy that is democratic, that is based on fundamental values, and that uses power and influence which we have for humane purposes" is nothing new in American politics; some question his assessment of a unifying threat of conflict with the Soviet Union which "has become less intensive even though the competition has become more extensive"; some do

not agree that "we can no longer separate the traditional issues of war and peace from the new global questions of justice, equity, and human rights"; others feel that his "five cardinal premises" are limited and narrow in their scope and that they promote a selective morality, a double standard; finally, some conclude that our national ethnocentrism questions the universal application of human rights abroad.

Yet the strength of this symposium lies not in the breadth of criticism or support. Beneath the semantics, the nitpicks of historical analysis, and the dilemma between human rights and *realpolitik*, most of these commentators share some common concerns: that morality or ethics should be an important consideration in the formulation of our foreign policy; that it must be balanced with security interests and cannot be the sole policy determinant; that Mr. Carter's speech will not become the oft-quoted Gettysburg Address of 1977.

Despite the diversity of view, the interest of these writers in morality is instructive and useful: each seemed to be consistent in the view that there is such a thing as national will or ethical foundation which can be articulated; the debate was generated by the President's conception of its method of translation or strength of application. The essays provide a balanced view of Carter's stance, and curiously, a guarded consensus which was totally unexpected. Henry Kissinger's "Morality and Power" sums up that consensus view: "morality without security is ineffectual; security without morality is empty. To establish the relationship and proportion between these goals is perhaps the most profound challenge before our government and our nation."

J.P. MORSE  
Lieutenant, U.S. Navy