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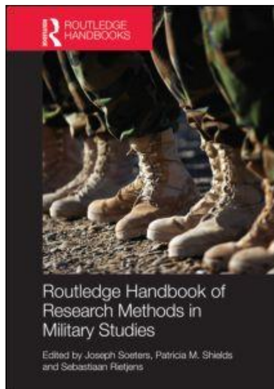

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A New Approach to Doing Military Ethics

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PART IV

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25

A NEW APPROACH TO DOING MILITARY ETHICS

Celestino Perez Jr.

Celestino Perez Jr. (2012) "The soldier as lethal warrior and cooperative political agent: On the soldier's ethical and political obligations toward the indigenous Other," *Armed Forces & Society* 38(2): 177–204.

This article explores the soldier's ethical and political obligations toward the indigenous other, a term signifying those persons who live and work where soldiers are deployed. The argument, a work of applied political theory, employs multiple methods to justify a cosmopolitan conception of the role of the soldier and the military.

The author argues that war entails destructive and constructive components. Although the soldier's destructive, lethal work is well understood, the soldier's constructive, political work is insufficiently appreciated and theorized. Since a war's successful conclusion must include a satisfactory confluence of governmental, economic, cultural, and ethical conditions, the policymaker and military professional must appreciate that politics is not an engineering project with specific timelines and outcomes. Politics is more an adventure full of uncertainty and unpredictability. This strategic and tactical situation, which relies ultimately on the realization of a set of developments that are hoped for yet unspecifiable beforehand, has ethical consequences for how soldier's intervene amidst an unknown population as well as for how soldiers prepare themselves ethically for such interventions.

The author first juxtaposes two contrasting views of the American military's professional ethic. One view, which is creedal in form, encompasses a set of obligations pertaining to the soldier's four roles: soldier, leader of character, servant of the nation, and member of the profession of arms. This patriotic view is strictly oriented on the United States, the U.S. Constitution, and the hardships and integrity of the American soldier. In contrast to this navel-gazing approach, a second view describes a cosmopolitan ethic, developed in the context of a counterinsurgency campaign, that is outward-looking. This view seeks to cultivate respect, trust, and an expectation of shared hardship between the soldier and the indigenous other as they strive to create suitably durable and humane conditions amidst conflict and violence.

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The author next employs the political theorist Hannah Arendt's distinction between Work and Action to show that war, a subset of politics, is not properly understood to be a variant of Work akin to the act of building a chair or engineering a water system. Action, to include significant dimensions of war and politics, entails collective efforts toward an unspecifiable end. Moreover, Action is the realm of uncertainty and unpredictability. Action is undertaken *for the sake of*, not *in order to*. It is the realm of cooperative political action, not domination or violence.

The author concludes by applying William Connolly's political theory to explore how best to think about strategic and tactical interventions in politics. Connolly's work also suggests how scholars and soldiers might think about the problem of ethical cultivation, especially in light of the political roles soldiers must perform.

The article's strengths are methodological. The research question arises from the real-world difficulties soldiers have encountered in Iraq and Afghanistan. The paper employs multiple sources, to include survey data, military leaders' statements, and official military documents. The author conducts a textual analysis of two contrasting views of a soldier's obligations and evaluates these views using the work of two prominent political theorists. The result is a new, empirically informed articulation of a military ethic. The article is informed by traditional approaches to military ethics, such as the combatant/non-combatant distinction, while introducing other concepts not usually employed in the field.

Introduction

This chapter advances a methodological ethos intended to guide enquiry into the quotidian and extraordinary problems soldiers confront in their organizations, training, and deployments. The aim is to encourage scholars of ethics to fold this ethos, which comprises the values of problem-driven research, analytic eclecticism, and attention to causality, into their habits of problem and method selection. Scholars who adopt this ethos strive to confront the messiness of real-world problems as illuminated – in varying and contestable ways – by scholars in other fields and disciplines.

If there is no single way to study and write about ethics, perhaps there are compelling, if arguable, criteria. Martin Cook and Henrik Syse, who edit the *Journal of Military Ethics*, observe that too many scholars and practitioners are confused about what military ethics is. The editors insist that the best submissions to their journal – however varied in approach and method – seek to inform real-world military practice and evince a granular understanding of soldiers' interactions (Cook and Syse 2010: 121–122).

While the editors value scholarship that is practically informative and informed, scholars such as Roger Wertheimer, who led the military ethics program at the United States Naval Academy from 2001 to 2003, demonstrate that an adequate exploration of the soldier's moral predicament must extend beyond rarefied debates over the just-war framework. Wertheimer, for instance, includes in his edited volume of just-war articles two of his own chapters that deliver a thoroughgoing critique of the presuppositions and practices that permeate the profession of arms and military education (Wertheimer 2010).

This chapter, following the example of Cook, Syse, and Wertheimer, advocates for research that energetically seeks to inform military practice, appreciates the soldier's context, and extends

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beyond the just-war framework to other topics. In the wake of exciting developments in the normative and empirical social sciences related to strategy, war, and ethics, swaths of territory are open for exploration.

This chapter argues that the scholarly treatment of military ethics should be philosophically and scientifically informed as well as politically aware and engaged. The study of military ethics should evince an appreciation not only for the philosophic tradition (e.g. Michael Walzer's and Jeff McMahan's just-war theorizing), but also for cutting-edge work in the social sciences as it relates to both violent conflict (e.g. Stathis Kalyvas's empirical work on civil wars) and real-world exigencies (e.g. proposed interventions into ongoing civil wars, counterinsurgency campaigns, strategic rebalancing, sexual assault, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide).

Ethical evaluation must penetrate more deeply into the sociopolitical interactions and contexts in which soldiers participate. A longstanding and necessary component of ethical enquiry relates to philosophical arguments about the proper definition and application of conceptual terms such as legitimate authority, proportionality, and intentionality. Such studies implicitly ask: does the soldier properly construe and apply Distinction *X* to a tightly bracketed Situation *A*?

Yet ethics extends beyond the syllogism, the right application of terms, and intentional action. The messiness of a soldier's context is attributable to the complex intermingling of material and biological structures, manmade rules and organizations, psychological hardwiring, as well as ideas, practices, and identities. These forces, in the aggregate, routinely corrode the links between intention, deliberate action, and actual outcomes. Hidden forces, counterintuitive dynamics, and unintended consequences permeate politics and war. Philosophic terms and their application are just a small part of the unbounded, fog- and friction-filled confluence, which – really – generates the force that drives newspaper headlines from day to day.

The first three sections describe the values of problem-driven research, analytic eclecticism, and attention to causality, respectively. Moreover, each section briefly suggests how a scholar might realize these values and identifies the values' attendant challenges. The chapter periodically illustrates these points by referencing the illustrative article, described in the text box, entitled, "The Soldier as Lethal Warrior and Cooperative Political Agent: On the Soldier's Ethical and Political Obligations toward the Indigenous Other" (Perez 2012).

Problem-driven research

Shapiro distinguishes between theory- and method-driven research on the one hand and problem-driven research on the other. Scholars who pursue theory- or method-driven research allow their approach to guide problem selection. A scholar might have a favorite theory about, say, the equality of combatants, or the combatant-noncombatant distinction, or the criteria for what constitutes legitimate authority. Another scholar may have a favorite method, whether it be definitional slicing and dicing, case studies, ethnography, discourse analysis, or genealogical enquiry. The prioritization goes not to illuminating real-world problems, but to scoring points over competing theories and methods. Shapiro instead recommends problem-driven research, which means "starting with a problem in the world, next coming to grips with previous attempts that have been made to study it, and then defining the research task by reference to the value added" (Shapiro 2005: 180).

Shapiro's advice is to foreground the problem, not the theory or method. He wants to avoid a state of affairs wherein "normative theorists spend too much time commenting on one another, as if they were themselves the appropriate objects of study" (Shapiro 2005: 179). The scholar's object of enquiry is not Michael Walzer, the political theorist, or Jeff McMahan, the

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philosopher, but real-world soldiers, the militaries in which they serve, and the civilians with whom they interact.

Applying problem-driven research

In some cases, problem-driven research points to real-world problems that a scholar of ethics, given her skills, can pursue immediately. For instance, "The Soldier as Lethal Warrior and Cooperative Political Agent" (hereafter *illustrative article*) is a work of applied political theory that explores the situation of soldiers serving as constructive, political agents in Iraq and Afghanistan. It entails a textual analysis of two military leaders' conceptions of the military profession in light of the work of two prominent political theorists. Given the political tasks soldiers at all levels have performed in Iraq and Afghanistan (political agenda-setting, governmental capacity-building, economic development, and reintegration of former adversaries), the article explores the soldier's ethical and political obligations to the indigenous other and dismantles the notion that nation-building is akin to an engineering project from which, with the right inputs and procedures (e.g. robust interagency coordination), a durable polity might arise. In fact, these themes accord with William Maley's contribution in Chapter 6 of this volume, "Studying Host-Nationals in Operational Areas: The Challenge of Afghanistan."

In other cases, problem-driven research requires the employment of unfamiliar methods or collaboration with other departments' colleagues. For instance, the monetary waste in Iraq and Afghanistan is well-documented (confer the work of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction and its Iraq counterpart). The ethical imperative to avoid massive waste is clear; however, if the ethicist is to understand how such waste occurs and propose recommendations, she might usefully collaborate with a political scientist or economist whose expertise is in institutional analysis. An institutionalist can describe how the various stakeholders within the contracting process respond rationally to perverse incentives that, in the aggregate, lead to enormous waste. The ethicist, seeking to advise soldiers who participate in or supervise contracting processes, must gain some understanding of the rules, principal-agent situations, and routine pathologies that plague the distribution of public goods and common pool resources (Gibson et al. 2005). Ethical action requires not simply the application of a conceptual distinction to a case, but also fine-grained understanding about how to identify, diagnose, and improve sub-optimal institutions.

Another problem relates to how military professionals have come to understand "culture." The military asserts that "leaders must be proficient in a variety of situations against myriad threats and with a diverse set of national, allied, and indigenous partners" (U.S. Army 2013: 5). Hence, soldiers have identified a need to attain some granular knowledge of the identities, institutions, and material structures that compose the world soldiers encounter during deployments. Unfortunately, military professionals tend to construe culture as a nebulous umbrella term that includes the sociopolitical and economic factors that compose foreign lands (e.g. Salmoni and Holmes-Eber 2008). Moreover, many anthropologists have denigrated the military's understanding of culture as outdated, static, and weaponized (Albro 2010). How soldiers, individually and corporately, come to see the "other" is ethically relevant.

Scholars of ethics might choose to collaborate with culture experts to theorize alternative conceptions of culture that are more favorable ethically and operationally. An ethicist might seek out Lisa Wedeen, who writes about "semiotic practices" (Wedeen 2002); or Jason Glynos and David Howarth, who write about "social, political, and fantasmatic logics" and their relation to ethical enquiry (Glynos and Howarth 2007); or Rogers Smith, who writes about "stories of peoplehood" and the exclusions these stories leave in their wake (Smith 2003).

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Scholars might also take notice of soldiers' "practices." To observe "practices" means to focus on "patterned actions that are embedded in particular organized contexts and, as such, are articulated into specific types of action and are socially developed through learning and training" (Adler 2011: 7). Since "practice rests on *background knowledge*, which it embodies, enacts, and reifies all at once" (Adler 2011: 8), observing practices can reveal the ethical presuppositions that inform military planning, the evaluation of courses of action, and everyday conversations about news events, scandals, families, units, and experiences.

A soldier's background knowledge is accessible also via the written or spoken word, to include military orders, commanders' letters to troops, professional journal articles, military doctrine, intelligence reports, speeches, etc. The scholar might apply Stephen White's concepts to these texts. One concept is the *lifeworld*, which he describes as "the unthought of our thought, the implicit of our explicit, the unconscious background of our conscious foreground" (White 2000: 54). White employs a second, related concept, which he calls an *ontology*. By using this term, which has a contested pedigree, he means to put his finger on a person's "most basic sense of human being" (White 2000: 8) or a person's "most basic conceptualizations of self, other, and world" (White 2000: 6).

An ethicist might employ White's methodology to examine, say, a doctrinal manual or a commander's speech in order to determine "whether ontological refiguration of a certain sort is in fact occurring, and how it is related to ethical-political judgments" (White 2000: 13). Put otherwise, the ethicist might read between the lines to uncover the presuppositions and assumptions a soldier possesses about the world, its dynamics, right conduct, and desired future states. The ethicist might then begin to think about the connections between the soldier's implicit ontology and the ethical aspects of the assessments the soldier renders (Perez 2009).

An examination of practices and ontologies might also illuminate the relationship between "the fact of pluralism" and a soldier's ethical formation, education, and training. The fact of pluralism captures the reality that the world comprises heterogeneous populations with a multiplicity of political, economic, religious, philosophical, and ethical commitments. This heterogeneity exists within the military and in those places to which soldiers deploy.

The fact of pluralism, which has had a significant impact on debates about the normative bases of liberal democratic polities (e.g. the work of John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas, Amy Guttmann, Dennis Thompson, and Chantal Mouffe), matters also to the military's efforts to craft a unifying table of professional ethics. Unfortunately, scholars of military ethics and military professionals have neglected the "fact of pluralism." It follows that scholars should explore the connections between a soldier's personal beliefs, his military's code of ethics, and the hegemonic and suppressed beliefs that exist in those places where he deploys.

Challenges in doing problem-driven research

Problem-driven research has the merit of addressing real-world problems, including monetary waste, inadequate conceptions of culture, deleterious ontologies and practices, and the failure to account for the fact of pluralism.

Challenges inherent in doing problem-driven research include the potential requirement to learn new skills (e.g. researching as a participant-observer) or collaborate with scholars from other disciplines (e.g. seeking out experts in institutional analysis or culture). Moreover, some objects of analysis are more difficult to access than others. Gaining access to active-duty units is difficult; however, access to observe the practices of mid-career officers attending professional military education is likely easier to attain. In all cases, access will require approval from the military institution, the establishment of human-subjects safeguards, and time spent gaining

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background knowledge. Of course, other objects of study are easily accessible via the Internet, including military doctrine, professional military journals, ceremonial speeches, investigative reports, biographies, etc.

Analytic eclectism

This chapter's methodological ethos includes also analytic eclecticism. Rudra Sil and Peter Katzenstein advocate for research that integrates the perspectives, concepts, and units of analysis employed across multiple research traditions. The authors distinguish between analytic eclecticism and multi-method research:

> The combinatorial logic of analytic eclecticism depends not on the multiplicity of methods but on the multiplicity of connections between the different mechanisms and social processes analyzed in isolation in separate research traditions. In principle, such a project can be advanced by the flexible application of a single method – be it formal modeling, multiple regression, historical case studies, or ethnography – so long as the problem and the explanandum feature efforts to connect *theoretical* constructs drawn from separate research traditions.
>
> (Sil and Katzenstein 2010: 415)

Analytic eclecticism invites the scholar to find ways to integrate unfamiliar concepts and unfamiliar units of analysis, albeit using the scholar's own familiar, well-trained methods to conduct the research.

Suppose a scholar adheres to Shapiro's call to explore a real-world problem. This scholar decides to supplement her *jus in bello* splicing and dicing with insights from, say, the practice turn in international-relations theory, or discourse analysis, or cognitive psychology, or the ethnographic study of soldiers in action. The just-war scholar need not become an expert in these fields or methods, but she can consider how their concepts and findings might reveal new aspects of the ethical problem she is interested in addressing.

The illustrative article employs analytic eclecticism by integrating multiple scholarly and practitioner inputs. The concepts and objects of enquiry come from many sources, including existing survey research on combat veterans' attitudes towards civilians and adversaries; the just-war framework's traditional distinction between combatant and noncombatant; the content of official military documents, military leaders' statements, and commanders' wartime decisions; textual analysis of a military historian's proposal for a professional code of ethics; textual analysis of a commanding general's counterinsurgency guidance to his troops; Hannah Arendt's political theory on the distinction between Work and Action; and William Connolly's adoption of complexity science to inform strategic and tactical interventions.

Applying analytic eclecticism

Political science provides the scholar of military ethics with a rich bank of templated interactions and contextual webs that, when explored through the lenses of the just-war framework, civil-military relations, and the professional military ethic, generate important research questions conducive to analytic eclecticism.

For instance, Stathis Kalyvas suggests that it is a fundamental error to simply consider the salience of the driving (or master) cleavage separating civil war adversaries into North versus South, Sunni versus Shi'a, Christian versus Muslim, or Communist versus Mujahadeen. In civil

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wars, the concrete actions that soldiers, civilians, and political leaders take are likely motivated not primarily by the war's master cleavage, but by local, specific grievances unrelated to the civil war's onset (Kalyvas 2003). The consequence for the strategist and the expeditionary soldier is that new, tactical variants of *jus ad bellum* considerations arise, albeit this time for ground-level military commanders who are usually – according to Walzer – excused from such considerations. In the course of deciding which armed group leaders to ally with, flip, or kill, the soldier must account for not only the war's driving cleavage at the national level, but also the byzantine, political cleavages at the local level. The commander risks, because of neglect or error, being duped into supporting unjust local actors and causes.

Fotini Christia (2012) describes a similar amoral dynamic in civil wars. Scholars of politics seem to divide along two dominant modes of research. One mode explains a person's action in terms of rationality and a structural or institutional obstacle course. The second mode interprets a person's actions as a function of meaning-soaked symbols and stories (Smith 2003). Scholars of ethics mine these stories for justificatory language, and military leaders – presuming that "culture matters" – order soldiers to be sensitive to persons and their narratives. Yet, Christia argues, these meaning-infused stories are less drivers of justly waged conflicts than post-hoc justifications for purely strategic moves taken to maximize an armed group's security and power (Christia 2012). The ground commander, who desires to be culturally aware and ethically consistent, will surely encounter a certain amount of ethical disturbance as he witnesses a dizzying series of alliance formations and break-ups, each rationalized with persuasive tales of grievance. This ethical disturbance should be of interest to scholars of ethics.

A third example is Paul Staniland's study of wartime political orders. It is not uncommon for military professionals to define war as a clash of wills and a desire to triumph through "decisive action." The presumption is that war is a clash of wills that ends with one side's succumbing to the other side's will. This view of war informs *jus ad bellum* considerations as well as tactical calculations relevant to defining a war's successful progress and the specification of military end states. Yet Staniland finds that it is not uncommon for wartime adversaries to adopt – sometimes simultaneously – one of six accommodations with each other. These accommodations may include varying degrees of agreed-upon coexistence, cooperation, and collusion in some areas while simultaneously engaging in lethal combat in others (Staniland 2012). These possibilities prompt the military professional to consider – especially over the course of a long war – the point at which mere stability, in contradistinction to more ambitious and principled aims, becomes acceptable as an end state.

Aaron Rapport's study, which examines how political and military leaders planned for postwar Iraq, finds that persons, as part of their psychological hardwiring, tend to evaluate short-term objectives in terms of nuts-and-bolts feasibility, whereas persons tend to evaluate long-term objectives in terms of desirability (Rapport 2012). The theory that our psychological hardwiring predisposes us toward a lack of due diligence when planning long-term strategic and tactical objectives should be of interest to scholars of ethics.

These studies point to a larger but less discernable ethical problem. Although the foregoing scholarship is directly relevant to the work military professionals do, professional military education neither requires nor invites sustained exposure to the social sciences. These studies not only provide templates for how politics, economics, and culture affect and are affected by lethal power, they also raise serious ethical questions. Hence, military professionals who neglect the ethical and empirical potentialities raised by these studies are at a disadvantage when asked to offer military advice or imagine the tertiary and hidden boomerang effects of contemplated actions.

For instance, if a president asks a military commander whether the state should intervene militarily in another state's affairs, the commander and his staff should include among their

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considerations Patricia Sullivan's finding that the nature of an objective significantly affects the chances of a powerful state's success. If an objective can be attained by military means alone (e.g. taking territory or destroying an army), the likelihood of success is great. However, if the objective entails securing the cooperation or compliance of a certain population, the strong state, despite its impressive military power, will likely lose (Sullivan 2007). These considerations are obviously relevant to *jus ad bellum* insofar as a just war must have a reasonable chance of success.

If a president asks about the possibility of a negotiated settlement in a certain country, the military commander should have in his mind Monica Duffy Toft's finding that negotiated settlements to civil wars often lead – when the horizon extends beyond five years – to renewed fighting and increased bloodshed (Toft 2010). Although these findings should by no means dictate action or advice, they should – as an ethical and operational imperative – cause soldiers to consider the norm, "First, do no harm."

If political leaders expect soldiers to operate among and understand communities comprising a kaleidoscope of linguistic, ethnic, religious, secular, and political identities, might it not be useful to familiarize soldiers with unfamiliar and uncomfortable modes of thinking about ethics? Yet military ethics instruction within the United States and among the force has become an ancillary duty of the Army's chaplaincy, whose members' formal (and possibly religious) study of ethics has likely not included sustained engagement with nonfoundationalist approaches like those of William Connolly, Richard Rorty, Chantal Mouffe, or Friedrich Nietzsche. Those American soldiers who do study ethics likely restrict their efforts to classically foundationalist approaches and the just-war framework. It follows that the soldier, who exists at the nexus of several ethical systems and beliefs, learns only about Kant, Mill, and Aristotle on the one hand and a strawman relativism on the other. The notion that nonfoundationalist thinkers might have something insightful to instruct about ethics never arises.

Since commanders and staff officers operate under the condition of bounded rationality, they are, as a routine practice, engaged in abductive reasoning. This form of reasoning occurs when a person attempts to discern and explain the causal dynamics of an existing or anticipated state of affairs (Shapiro and Wendt 2005; Cox 2011; Friedrichs and Kratochwil 2009). If abductive reasoning is to be done well (by both soldiers and scholars alike), it requires that the person's explanatory attempts be informed by a bank of mature (and often contradictory) theories, such as Arendt's, Connolly's, Kalyvas's, Christia's, Staniland's, Sullivan's, Toft's, and Connolly's. Taking a different but related tack, Patricia Shields and Joseph Soeters draw upon Morris Janowitz and the pragmastist tradition to recommend that soldiers employ theory to inform their peacekeeping operations (Shields and Soeters 2013). In any case, an ethical problem arises insofar as military professionals know neither that they conduct abductive reasoning nor that their work is inescapably intertwined with political, economic, and cultural factors that established scholarly theories can help illuminate.

Challenges inherent in practicing analytic eclecticism

Analytic eclecticism conduces to an increased appreciation for ethically relevant factors all too often ignored in military ethics; e.g. tactical *jus ad bellum* (Kalyvas 2003), strategic, amoral decisionmaking (Christia 2012), battlefield compromise (Staniland 2012), psychological hardwiring (Rapport 2012), strategic disadvantage (Sullivan 2007), deleterious negotiating (Toft 2010), nonfoundationalist ethics (Connolly), and abductive reasoning (Shapiro and Wendt 2005).

The principal challenge inherent in analytic eclecticism is the need to spend precious hours reading cutting-edge literature in other fields and consulting with colleagues in other departments. This chapter focuses mostly on the contributions of political science and political theory;

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however, other fields, to include cognitive science (e.g. Steve Pinker's study of violence and Joshua Greene's and his colleagues' functional neuroimaging and genotyping) and behavioral economics (e.g. Dan Ariely's study of dishonesty), are also relevant to ethical enquiry.

Of course, another challenge to analytic eclecticism is the fact that interdisciplinary work, which is more often lauded than practiced, is a problematic endeavor for most young scholars whose tenure committees favor disciplinary over interdisciplinary approaches.

Ethics and conventional causality

A third value prompts the scholar of military ethics to be attuned to problems of causality. An appreciation of causal complexity accords nicely with both analytic eclecticism and problem-driven research. Sil and Katzenstein, like Shapiro, desire for scholars to address "problems of wide scope." They propose an "intellectual stance" whereby scholars confront "more of the complexity and messiness of particular real-world situations." The authors advocate an approach that "complements existing traditions by seeking to leverage and integrate conceptual and theoretical elements in multiple traditions." The aim is to relate "academic debates to concrete matters of policy and practice" (Sil and Katzenstein 2010: 412). Such engagement will require scholars to confront "greater complexity," which is "precisely what policymakers and ordinary actors contend with as they address substantive problems in the course of everyday politics" (Sil and Katzenstein 2010: 421).

Explaining human action requires more than an analysis of moral judgment, which is the favored approach in much just-war scholarship. Not all of the forces acting upon a soldier are known to him. Some forces that prompt a soldier to action include error-inducing psychological hardwiring, heuristics, and biases of the sort that Dan Kahneman (2011), Dan Ariely (2008), and Blair Williams (2010) identify. A second set of causal forces is attributable to persons' ideas and identities. A third set of forces is attributable to structural factors such as terrain, income distribution, natural resources, and the formal and informal rules that bound interactions. Finally, to the extent that manmade institutions generate perverse incentives, some human action is attributable to the unintended, path-dependent consequences of persons behaving rationally within a sub-optimal institutional regime. Craig Parsons, a scholar who specializes in comparative politics, has denominated these discrete and comprehensive causal logics as, respectively, psychological, ideational, structural, and institutional (Parsons 2007).

Parsons's relevance to ethical enquiry is twofold. Since human action is not solely a cognitive endeavor wherein purely intellectual considerations are determinative, the scholar who evaluates such actions must strive for a fuller appreciation of the contextual forces that influence action. To identify that the alcoholic drunk driver breaches some Kantian, Aristotelian, or consequentialist principle fails to capture the ethically relevant confluence of physical, social, psychological, and neurobiological forces at play in the drunk driver's actions. Similarly, the scholar who investigates military ethics should strive to account for a fuller range of structural and institutional (exogenous) factors influencing ethical choice as well as the influence of affective, cognitive, and often undetected ideational and psychological (endogenous) factors that shape human action.

Ethics amidst causal complexity

Military commanders and staff officers routinely craft explanations for why a certain region is unstable. They must explain also why the actions they propose will lead to a better state of affairs. Were soldiers to use Parsons's logics to craft more nuanced and cogent explanations, efficacy and ethics might improve.

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Yet soldiers, like all political actors, often encounter a gap between the intended and actual effects of their actions. In politics, complexity accounts for the inability to – with confidence – trace the causal connections from a set of initial conditions to a final state and vice versa. This problem is central to ethical assessment, but it is relatively unexplored.

A commander can do nothing other than to think through – using something like Parsons's conventional causal logics – how best to employ his troops, resources, relationships, and speech to achieve a better state of affairs. Given the stakes, political leaders and civilian populations should encourage their military commanders and staff officers to propose tightly crafted causal explanations for why a set of actions will engender favorable results. The problem is that, in the realm of politics and war, intended action seldom achieves – in simple and clear ways – the hoped-for result. Predictability does not belong to the realm of politics and war.

The illustrative article addresses the gap between intentions and outcomes by bringing to the fore Connolly's notion, adapted from complexity theory, of spiraling (also "resonant" or "emergent") causation. Connolly understands the world to comprise open systems of various kinds, each of which has a certain degree of "agency" insofar as it can and does affect the world. Open systems are as varied as a virus, a climate pattern, an economic system, a religion, a neural-muscular network, and a soldier. Emergent causation, as Connolly understands it, occurs when two or more open systems come into contact and prompt embedded potentialities within one or more systems to become active in new, unforeseen ways. The effect is that one or more of the systems undergoes fundamental change or – most dramatically – engenders the existence of a wholly new system (Connolly 2011).

Emergent outcomes are unpredictable, yet they are ethically relevant. The illustrative article describes General Petraeus's intent to counter the downward "spiral" of violence in Afghanistan with an upward "spiraling" effect to be achieved through multifarious security, governance, and development efforts. Petraeus's approach suggests that no single action (describable in Parsons's conventional terms) can achieve success in Afghanistan. This fact, coupled with the reality of emergent causality, obliges the soldier to conceive of his tasks in a new light and with a reformed ethical sensibility. The unpredictable nature of causation in politics and war has ethical implications related to *jus ad bellum*, *jus in bello*, the laws of armed conflict, the self-understanding of the profession of arms, and a soldier's ethical formation.

Ethical enquiry should situate human decision and action amidst a richer context such that the soldier is not simply a philosophic agent weighing deontological commitments, anticipated consequences, or tables of virtue. The soldier is a thinking, moral agent, but she is also much more. Countless micro and macro systems impinge upon the soldier to engender their thoughts and deeds. It follows that causation, complexity, uncertainty, and unpredictability are at the very heart of ethical and political decision, and discerning these forces is never easy. Nevertheless, robust ethical enquiry is impossible without the attempt.

Challenges inherent in studying causality and complexity

Accounting for causality and complexity presents the same transaction costs inherent in problem-driven research and analytic eclecticism. The researcher needs to enter into face-to-face discussions with persons from unfamiliar research communities, perhaps including scholars from the natural sciences. It will require also the skill of wading through unfamiliar methodologies – some positivist and others interpretivist – to identify the sorts of causal claims scholars are making.

Most importantly, appreciating causal complexity entails the unique challenge of adopting a shift in how one views the world and the moral agent. The scholar of ethics must learn to see the

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world as comprising a multiplicity of dynamic, interacting open systems giving rise to unpredictable results. The scholar must appreciate the connections that exists between lower-level and perhaps linear causal mechanisms on the one hand and their contribution, via emergence, to system-level causal mechanisms and feedback loops. To see the world in this way is not to see metaphorically, but to appreciate how the world really does comprise a heterogeneous mix of micro and macro systems.

The scholar of ethics must switch between two views of the soldier. In some cases, the scholar may view the soldier as nothing more than a philosophic agent who, focusing on a single bracketed problem, weighs and applies the proper conceptual distinctions. In other cases, the scholar must begin to see the soldier as a single, partially agentic open system amidst a field of countless, partially agentic open systems. Ethical enquiry of this sort requires a sensitivity to the notion that the soldier is not simply a philosopher consumed with making and applying conceptual distinctions. On the contrary, the soldier is only one among multiple open systems, and the soldier's agency is only partial and oftentimes inefficacious.

Conclusion

This chapter argues for the adoption of a threefold methodological ethos. Every now and then, scholars should fearlessly allow real-world problems to dictate methods as opposed to allowing their favorite theory or method (or imagination) to restrict what they can study. The scholar interested in ethics might also become interested in other disciplines' perspectives, concepts, and objects of study since – given the world's complexity – the factors and dynamics these disciplines study are undeniably connected to more familiar, ethical factors. Finally, scholars should confront more of the world's complexity by expanding beyond conceptual slicing, dicing, and evaluation. An appreciation for the world as a mix of animate, inanimate, and immaterial open systems (of which the human person is only a part) promises a fruitful approach to ethical enquiry and the rise of important research questions.

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