

 INTRODUCTION 

By Timothy S. Mallard

*Darkness is not better than light, death is not better than life;
no praise from comfortable men can bring the
dead back to the sun they loved.*

—Sergeant Ernest Woodward
*We Will Remember Them: Voices from the
Aftermath of the Great War*

The profession of arms in the 21st century is at significant risk of losing its status as a *profession* due to several salient factors.¹ Because of the rapid development of technology in relation to warfare, for instance, there are growing questions as to how much control human beings will retain of future combat, particularly given the speed of decisionmaking required for victory on the modern battlefield. As well, with the rise of new geopolitical and military coalitions, many are concerned as to how much war will remain an act of and in accordance with the political interests, values, and histories of individual nation-states, especially considering the thornier problem of developing the same for coalitions or allied forces. Furthermore,

amid an increase in value-neutral societies (and the concomitant lack of personal moral formation of individual citizens), it may rightly be asked whether values-based institutions such as professional militaries can be adequately shaped to reflect any coherent national ethical consensus.

As a derivative of this problem, the increasing issue of strategic leader moral failure among professional military forces raises significant questions regarding the efficacy of standing programs for the ethical development of military leaders, not to mention the corrosion of trust in the institution by both their external clients (civic populations) and internal members (military formations) in the wake of such failures. Given the rise of fifth-domain warfare and multidomain battle (simultaneous, integrated combat action in and through land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace), there is basis to question whether traditional nation-state constructs such as land borders, the rule of law, and even regulating theories (for example, *jus ad bellum*, *in bello*, and *post bellum*) will allow militaries to retain control of warfare in concert with their national interests. In the aggregate, then, it may be candidly wondered whether the utility of the profession of arms has passed in its service to the post-Westphalian nation-state.

These are but a few of the major strategic questions facing the profession of arms today. Such questions, however, do not adequately address other challenges in contemporary warfare, such as transnational threats from weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, resource shortages, immigration, climate change, the rise of mega-urban population centers, or even the increasing costs of war—not only monetarily but also in the resulting moral and spiritual injury among combatants and noncombatants alike.² But exploring such other challenges will not be the purpose of this edited volume. Rather, its purpose is to focus on the dominant strategic ethical challenges to the profession of arms in the first half of this century. In short, as a profession, what strategic questions should be answered for war to *remain* both under human control and guided by the exercise of the discreet, reflective judgment of morally formed military leaders? Answering that question is the specific purpose of this work.

Event Report, Thesis, and Purpose

The centenary of the end of World War I offers an appropriate waypoint to address such questions. Since “the war to end all wars” witnessed the rise of global war among competing nation-states conducted in often tenuous alliances with nascent professional militaries—characteristics that continue to mark contemporary warfare a century later—then studying that conflict’s impact seems a relevant method to decide ways in which the profession of arms will develop in the next 25 to 50 years.³ Indeed, like a smoldering, persistent fire that threatens to re-erupt into a fresh conflagration, World War I continues to deeply shape and guide the profession of arms today. Consequently, the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps and Royal Army Chaplains’ Department of the British Army, in conjunction with the National Defense University in Washington, DC, decided to host a major academic and professional conference to undertake this project. The International Military Ethics Symposium occurred from July 30 through August 1, 2018, and its guiding theme encapsulates its purpose: “1918–2018: Lessons from the Great War—Ethical Imperatives for the Contemporary Profession of Arms.” This volume captures the proceedings of this symposium and is intended to be a guiding primer in the strategic ethics of the present and future practice of war.

Accordingly, we argue that World War I encompassed the salient strategic ethical issues that shape the profession of arms today and will continue to do so for decades. The study of this conflict is thus vital preparation for every interested professional to navigate the complex challenges that will mark warfare for the foreseeable future. How so? First, we wish to state that demonstrably the profession of arms, as a regulating force within and among nation-states, remains both vital and necessary to societal flourishing in an era of rapid development. Despite this claim, the profession of arms remains under threat and in need of continual correction, particularly as it relates to the formation of morally informed ethical leaders. Second, we wish likewise to sketch out some of the strategic considerations that such

leaders must be masters of if they are to perfect their craft in this present century. While the term *masters* may seem somewhat freighted—perhaps even peremptory—we believe that, in the vein of Samuel Huntington, the “management of violence” today remains the sole province of morally informed strategic military leaders and that there are no substitutes for such experts in the multiplicity of democratic polities today.⁴ Third, we hold that it is critical to examine how the profession of arms came to be in its present state, including ways in which World War I, as an epochal conflict in human history, continues to influence national and global relationships, even if such influence is not often clearly understood or articulated.⁵

Fourth, we believe that warfare has advanced to such a state that no national military force (or its leaders) will ever practice war again in a vacuum, as it were. Rather, the profession of arms will be from this point forward in human history an increasingly complex strategic act that melds the precise application of diplomatic, informational, military, economic, financial, intelligence, and law enforcement powers in pursuit of defined geopolitical objectives.⁶ Fifth, we believe that religion generally will remain an intractable problem in the calculus of political and military leaders precisely because it remains an organizing force in the locales where future coalition operations will occur. For example, most sociologists expect that by 2030 over 70 percent of the world’s Christians will reside not in the Western nation-states but in the Global South across South America, Africa, and Asia. Sixth, deriving from this phenomenon, the chaplaincies of existing professional militaries will continue to have a vital role to play in the profession of arms in the future.⁷ As the so-called conscience of the command, chaplains (along with their counterparts in moral philosophy) will increasingly need to remind military forces and the national leaders they advise of the summary costs of war.⁸ Put another way, war remains a necessary yet costly enterprise in a world replete with both good and evil, and the profession of arms and nation-states must always count such costs before committing military forces to war—that is our moral and ethical strategic duty.⁹

Centenary Historical Context

If this is our task in this work, then what is the context within which modern warfare will occur? World War I gave us several markers that remain operative today. As we have alluded to, contemporary warfare will both remain a coalition enterprise and generally be exercised on a global stage (if not, then it will surely have global impact). War is increasingly carried out by nations among nations, even if substate actors are major players in individual conflicts.¹⁰ Derivatively, warfare will increasingly be governed by coalition political alliances, aims, and military strategies. Increasingly distant is the age in which two competing enemy nations engaged in war for limited aims and with limited capabilities. As well, wars will likely remain decided by the application of force by professional militaries across multiple domains of conflict. However, this will surely be attenuated by the proliferation of technologies and capabilities for weapons of mass destruction to smaller nation-states and substate actors, a phenomenon I have termed previously the “democratization of war.”¹¹

Additionally, warfare will thus necessarily be guided toward the resolution of complex geopolitical strategic issues such as the interests of whole people groups, decisions about scarce resources, and even ultimate resolution regarding political philosophies or economies among great power competitors. Though substate actors will influence conflicts, it remains difficult to see how their aims for engaging in war will win out over those of the established nation-states, which continue to regulate the world order. Furthermore, present and future war will remain operative in an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment, and that environment will likely produce outcomes of war that yield few concrete markers of peace. Concomitantly, while the ancient Greek and Latin ideals of both *eudaimonia* (human flourishing) and *tranquillitas ordinis* (an ordered social peace) will remain aspirational ideals for the outcome of war, they will increasingly yield to a cessation of hostilities marked by many of the tensions that caused conflict in the first place.¹²

Finally, the centenary cataclysm of World War I—though now a distant memory for many—remains a vital social act to commemorate the suffering and death of over 15 million souls who, through their loss, shaped, if not purchased, the modern democratic order. Marking their sacrifice is a worthy occasion to exercise our collective capacity for memory, to recommit ourselves and our institutions to those ideals for which they died, and to calibrate the modern forces that are the inheritors of the modern joint force first established on the fields of Europe in 1914. If, then, these indeed remain markers of warfare in the immediate future context, they will only be the descendants of their antecedent progenitors from World War I, for surely that conflict contained each of these markers in at least microcosmic form.

Outline of the Book

We now turn to the works of this symposium's plenary speakers and outstanding breakout paper presenters whose contributions comprise this volume. Part I considers some of the Great War's strategic ethical derivations, including a penetrating examination of at least five major ethical issues (framed as questions) that continue to guide the contemporary conduct of war across all nation-states (Nigel Biggar); a consideration of the necessary virtue in killing, which should guide the moral formation of present and future warriors and the beneficial implications for societies of a hardened warrior class (Marc LiVecche); a provocative examination of the enduring role of nationalism in geopolitical affairs, particularly as it relates to the exercise of military solution sets for whole-of-government problems among diverse international coalitions (Paul Coyer); reflections on several enduring geopolitical effects of World War I that shape international relations today, including incompetence, technology, and a drive for the elusive and often ill-defined concept of justice (Eric Patterson); and the presentation of a new thesis that one of World War I's lasting legacies is its continuing impact on the concept of international law, and particularly how that conflict set the paradigm for the modern law of war (Michael Hoffman).

Part II considers how ethics is actually carried out today at the operational and tactical levels of war and how the Great War even inchoately shaped this part of the profession of arms. Here, topics include whether societies today, and the individuals who comprise them, are adequately prepared for the cost of war (David Richardson); the effect of de-emphasizing the cultivation of virtue in the moral formation of warriors (Thomas Statler); how World War I shaped the interwar (and subsequently World War II and beyond) consideration of care for enemy prisoners of war, displaced persons, and refugees (Victoria Barnett); the weaponization of information in pursuit of war aims (Graham Fairclough); and an expert consideration of how this conflict shaped the contemporary ethical parameters of the limited use of chemical weapons (John Mark Mattox).

No consideration of World War I's lasting ethical impact would be complete without considering its effects on warriors, their families, and the forces they serve in. Part III concludes along this trajectory, examining topics such as the professionalization of the military chaplaincy in the nascent cooperation of British and American chaplains on the Western Front (Michael Snape); the continuing need for moral guidance and warrior religious care in war (Andrew Totten); how warriors today can recover from the trauma of war, particularly the hidden wound of moral injury (Mark Lee); what legacy remains from the Great War around the increasing awareness of moral and spiritual injury as strategic ethical considerations (Timothy Mallard); how militaries can and will continue to push the ethical limits of warrior enhancement through the incorporation of new technologies (C. Anthony Pfaff); how, even in the emerging context of multidomain battle, the medical care of warriors will stand on enduring lessons of battlefield "point-of-injury" care begun on the Western Front (Patrick Naughton); and how resilience as a concept is growing in importance to the profession of arms but must retain its social, martial, and even theological roots (Nathan White).



Notes

¹ Don Snider, “Remarks on Acceptance of the Malham M. Wakin Lifetime Achievement Award,” speech before the Annual Meeting of the International Society of Military Ethics, Washington, DC, January 26, 2017. Snider’s concerns center around threats to the two central underpinnings to the maintenance of any profession: the retention of human control and the continuing exercise of human judgment in the discrete application of a profession’s expertise.

² The words of World War I veteran Rifleman Fred White, 10th Battalion, King’s Royal Rifle Corps, evoke the continuing societal cost of moral and spiritual injury on warriors, their families, and their communities: “Us fellows, it took us years to get over it. Years! Long after when you were working, married, had kids, you’d be lying in bed with your wife and you’d see it all before you. Couldn’t sleep. Couldn’t lie still. Many and many’s the time I’ve got up and tramped the streets till it came daylight. Walking, walking—anything to get away from your thoughts. And many’s the time I’ve met other fellows that were out there doing exactly the same thing. That went on for years, that did.” See “Reflections,” in Max Arthur, *We Will Remember Them: Voices from the Aftermath of the Great War* (London: Orion Books, 2009), 157–158.

³ Regarding World War I specifically, see Hew Strachan, *The First World War*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 64–102. Strachan’s discussion of the complex nature of political alliances and military commitments that underlay the July Crisis of 1914 is an excellent primer on the roots of the conflict. Also see Margaret MacMillan, *The War That Ended Peace: The Road to 1914* (New York: Random House, 2014), 80–109, for a good summary of German nationalist ambitions that were foundational to the conflict.

⁴ Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 15.

⁵ An excellent geopolitical analysis of the continuing shaping effects of World War I is David Reynolds, *The Long Shadow: The Legacies of the Great War in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Norton, 2014), 3–242.

⁶ *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military’s Competitive Edge* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2018), 4.

⁷ When Peter Berger advanced his notion that the world was becoming more religious rather than less so, many broadly contested his thesis; now he is seen as prescient. See his *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World*

Politics (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999) or “Globalization and Religion,” *The Hedgehog Review* 4, no. 2 (Summer 2002), 7–20. Regarding the rise of the Global South, see Alister McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism: The Rise and Fall of Disbelief in the Modern World* (New York: Doubleday, 2004).

⁸ Miroslav Volf, “Agents of Peace in Theaters of War: Re-Thinking the Role of Military Chaplains,” plenary paper presented at the International Military Chiefs of Chaplains Conference, Cape Town, South Africa, January 2, 2009. This role harkens back to that of their World War I counterparts. General John J. Pershing wrote regarding World War I chaplaincy: “Religious work in our Army before the war was carried on by chaplains, one to each regiment. To meet the greatly increased size of regiments, legislation was recommended by me to provide not less than one chaplain for each 1,200 men. . . . The religious work was directed and coordinate[d] by a Board of Chaplains at general headquarters, of which Bishop Charles H. Brent was the head. With great devotion to duty this work was maintained despite a lack of transportation and other facilities. Chaplains, as never before, became the moral and spiritual leaders of their organizations, and established a high standard of active usefulness in religious work that made for patriotism, discipline, and unselfish devotion to duty.” See U.S. Army War Department, *Final Report of GEN John J. Pershing, Commander-in-Chief, American Expeditionary Forces* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1919), 92–93. For additional reflection on World War I chaplain duties in the aftermath of battle, see B. Brooke, Escort and Guide, “Notation Regarding Post-War Battlefield Duties,” in Arthur, *We Will Remember Them*, 90–91.

⁹ To discount this lesson would be, ironically, to have forgotten one of the most enduring historical legacies of World War I and to abrogate the sacrifice of the more than 15 million souls lost globally in that conflagration. Chaplains today refuse to let such a lesson be lost; in the traditional words of the congregational declarative response in British army memorial services for their fallen comrades, “We will remember them.” Just so.

¹⁰ *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*. This document famously and publicly focused the defense of the Republic on the threat from great power nation-state competitors, particularly China and Russia.

¹¹ Timothy Mallard, “The Democratization of War: The Rise and Impact of Autonomous Weapons Systems,” paper presented at the International Military Ethics Symposium 2017, Washington, DC.

¹² Reynolds, *The Long Shadow*. Note particularly Reynolds's fine observation that the major contemporary geopolitical ideals of nation, democracy, empire, capitalism, civilization, and peace all find their roots in how this conflict ended. For a case study in how the nationalist ideals that undergirded World War I continue to directly influence contemporary geopolitics, see Serhii Plokhy, *Lost Kingdom: The Quest for Empire and the Making of the Russian Nation* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 93–94. Regarding the start of World War I and Russian/German nationalism, he suggests, “On both sides of the freshly drawn front lines, nationalism was on the rise, and nothing fed it better than war.” Plokhy accurately notes that contemporary Russian geopolitical designs are a direct outgrowth of President Vladimir Putin’s appropriation of the *Kievan Rus* myth.