

**Aspects of Leadership: Ethics, Law and Spirituality,**  
edited by Carroll Connelley and Paolo Tripodi, Quantico: Marine Corps  
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Leadership and ethics have inseparable connect and have been an integral part of the discourse on leadership in general and military leadership in particular. This consistent focus on the subject for military men is a manifestation of the role and responsibility of the armed forces. In the Indian context, it is all the more important since the armed forces have had a visible and critical role in nation-building since independence. This role has extended from safeguarding the country from external threats to internal security challenges in countering insurgency and terrorism. The armed forces, as has been witnessed over the past few days in Uttarakhand, have also played a stellar role in disaster management. The reason ethics, law and spirituality remain critical for these varied endeavours of the armed forces is the need to display the qualities which behove of an organization that is considered the instrument of last resort for the country at most times. In this role, the conduct of the forces, their professionalism and selfless dedication to duty becomes a critical factor in the successful accomplishment of their assigned role.

It is in this light that the volume on *Aspects of Leadership: Ethics, Law, and Spirituality*, edited by Carroll Connelley and Paolo Tripodi, provides insightful views on this often neglected subject. The book has been published by the US Marine Corps University Press and accordingly

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delves on issues with the armed forces audience in mind. The book has drawn on the recent experiences of the US armed forces in both Iraq and Afghanistan, which seem to have led to a strong desire for introspection.

The volume has been divided into three sections. The first deals with various facets of ethics as related to soldiering. Each chapter under the first section addresses issues which reflect challenges faced by soldiers and leaders in a counterinsurgency environment. While these may have their roots in the employment of the US and its allies in Iraq and Afghanistan, the universality of the questions raised remains relevant for armies across the world, given the similarity of challenges faced. The very first chapter deals with the issue of understanding the cultural and religious sensitivities in a country like Afghanistan. It highlights successful resolution of crisis situations through better awareness and greater respect for local customs and traditions. It also outlines the importance of incorporating locals in such circumstances, in order to facilitate communication and avoid misunderstandings. These issues are seemingly minor tactical improvisations. However, their impact can well become strategic, as has been highlighted by mistakes of individuals that caused the Bagram Air Base incident on 22 February 2012, at an international scale. This misjudgement witnessed while burning of the holy Quran in Afghanistan illustrated the negative impact of insensitivity to local customs and indicated unethical behaviour.

The chapter on 'Pedagogy of Practical Military Ethics' deals with the critical issue of military education techniques as related to both officers and men at various stages of their career. Its recommendations are equally valid for the US armed forces as for India. Some of the issues highlighted include the need to re-orient entry level training to 'critical thinking skills and increasing moral sensitivity, moral empathy, and open mindedness, while linking the organizations' values and principles to military rules and regulations' rather than 'a broad brushed class on metaethics and ethical theory (p. 67).' The author goes on to provide an interesting interpretation of Boyd's Observe, Orient, Decide and Act (OODA) loop, as an *Ethical OODA Loop*.

The counterinsurgency environment often leads soldiers into moral conflicts. These emerge from clashes between loyalty towards comrades and military duty. This aspect has been dealt with in detail in yet another chapter where J. Peter Bradley provides empirical evidence to highlight the tendency to protect fellow soldiers, despite their involvement in illegal and immoral conduct. It further goes on to prove that whistleblowers

are often subjected to persecution and their ability to withstand pressure becomes untenable in most cases. The chapter has relevance for all armies involved in counterinsurgency operations. While there has not been an analytical survey of this aspect in the Indian context, those of us who have served in similar circumstances would have experienced such conditions and understand the need for greater introspection and improvement.

The second section of the book deals with another relevant aspect related to application of law. The first chapter in this section delves into the issue of application of law and its impact on the execution of assigned tasks. The chapter on 'Training the Rules of Engagement for the Counterinsurgency Fight', highlights a common belief amongst soldiers that implementation of doctrinal principles and rules of engagement lead to infringement on freedom of action. The feeling of fighting with 'one hand tied behind the back' has been highlighted often enough in a number of armies. However, as the chapter illustrates, there is no fundamental contradiction between applying rule of law and achieving the desired results. In fact, experience in the Indian context proves that applicability of both law and rules of engagement improve effectiveness and help in bringing about much needed transparency and accountability. A farsighted quote from the book illustrates the essence of the issue at hand: 'If we could exercise a great deal more violence of action, I think we would be more successful at killing. I don't know how much more successful we'd be at winning the war' (p. 246).

The third section addresses the aspect of spirituality. The chapter on 'Spiritual Injuries: Wounds of the American Warrior on the Battlefield of the Soul', deals with the impact of counterinsurgency warfare, resulting in stress and combat trauma. Providing statistical evidence, it indicates the scale of the challenge faced by armed forces. More importantly, it deals with measures to limit the impact of stress and spiritual disorders. Some of the issues resonate with the challenges and solutions in the Indian context. The role of leadership, as discussed in the chapter as well as the role of chaplains is equally relevant for Indian soldiers. In fact, the importance of the religious teachers, the *mandir* parade as well as a close association between young officers and their men is often stressed upon in the Indian Army units. The aspects of spiritual rituals and practices are, yet again, recognized means adopted in the Indian context and have proved to be effective for alleviating stress and pressure in counterinsurgency environments.

The book provides a glimpse into areas of soldiering that are often neglected. It brings to the fore issues that are sidelined in the quest for more visible successes in operations. However, as the analysis in the book reveals, each of these issues remains a key determinant for not only success and failure, but also for the well being of soldiers who operate in environments they may not necessarily be familiar with.

The essays in the book have been written by professional marine corps officers, academics, legal luminaries and chaplains, amongst others. This brings a wealth of diversity and expertise to the volume. It is relevant for both individuals interested in the subject, officers at the middle and senior leadership level, academics and strategic study centres.