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Ethics into the 21st Century Battlefield

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Outline:

1. Thesis Statement: The future battlefield is still to be determined but our enemy, as seen today, may forever change our ethical behavior and how we prepare ourselves to defeat them. Should the Army change how we train our personnel, continuing to be committed to our nation's values and principles, in battlefield ethics and ethical reasoning preparing for the 21st Century.

2. Discussion

A. Introduction

B. Character development and beliefs

C. Militant ideology

D. Media's role

E. Ethical training

3. Conclusion

Abstract

Today's battlefield is ever changing with an unseen enemy engaging in asymmetric warfare in order to defeat the United States war power. The future battlefield will likely have an enemy with a militant ideology, such as fundamentalist Islam, using guerrilla and terroristic tactics for their cause to defeat modernization. Intuitively, we understand the corrosive effects of irregular warfare engaging an unseen enemy that won't respect the laws of war tempting U.S. troops to abandon its professional ethic. Soldiers will be faced with many diverse ethical dilemmas engaging the enemy into the 21st century battlefield. How can we prepare ourselves, defending our nation's values and principles, in demonstrating ethical behavior in combat under the watchful eye of the international community?

Ethics into the 21st Century

Today, nothing may be as important as proper ethical behavior for defeating the spread of militant Islamic ideologies globally. One cannot read a newspaper and magazine or watch the television news without hearing about unethical behavior with our military personnel overseas. The entire World is questioning the ethical and moral values of our Nations Military, especially the U.S. Army. Are we to be continually embarrassed with the unethical behavior involving a few individuals compared to the thousands of individuals conducting themselves with high ethical and moral standards in combat? What perception are we leaving the majority Muslim population internationally, sitting on the fence towards moderation, deciding on supporting globalization or the return to an orthodox Islamic lifestyle? By changing how we educate and train ourselves in ethical behavior and reasoning we may be able to defeat militant Islamic ideology in the future beginning with character development.

Character Development

The U.S. will never succeed in stabilizing Iraq if they don't take seriously the need to win the hearts and minds of Iraqis. The reports of the killing and wounding of innocent civilians along with the numerous abuses by troops, U.S. leaders have a right to be concerned with the future and our ethical behavior on the battlefield. Is the correct response to double our education and training efforts focusing on character development and ethical behavior? Character development begins long before individuals enlist in the military. Individuals are pre-shaped by their background, beliefs, education, and experiences. People of character is not an overnight process but one being a long process involving self-development, counseling, coaching, and mentoring. The U.S. military establishes high standards maintaining an ethical climate promoting the development of such character building in their personnel. Values and beliefs are

central to good character. Good character traits lead to proper reasoning making the right decisions upon ethical dilemmas. By demonstrating to the international community what right looks like will support the U.S. to successfully defeat the spread of militant ideology.

Militant Ideology

In order to change our focus in ethical training it is important we understand the root causes driving the spread of militant ideology globally. Our Nation's beliefs are valued based on the Constitution which reflects the guarantee of freedom of religion. The U.S. military defends the Nation's high value placed on the rights of individuals to observe and practice their religious faiths while respecting their differences in moral background and personal conviction. So why do we deploy our troops long distances, to unknown territories, in order to destroy the religious and ideological practices of a minority population in the world. One approach in defining militant ideology, Jihadi or Salafis ideology, is the yearning to create and govern an Islamic state(s) based on the Qur'an and as believed by the generations of Muslims close to Muhammad.

Today, Muslims fail to agree over the final form of these states and the appropriate methods of political action for attaining them. Where we are mistaken is assuming the United States ability to intellectually confront Salafism. The Salafis faction increased their popularity during the last hundred years which now constitutes a majority of the Muslim population in the Middle East and North Africa. We assume our government has the cultural knowledge and skill of patience to weaken the popularity of Salafism.

To identify moderate Muslims we must understand how we measure moderation and what type of standard you use. If we understand moderation as an acceptance of secularism, capitalism, democracy, gender equality, and a commitment to religious pluralism, then Salafis would be extremists on all counts. The Jihadi message is so fragile and unpleasant that violence

must be the driving force in order to persuade people claiming to be saving Islam. Can the US and the international community, especially military forces, incorporate education and training to be successful in their efforts in reducing the Jihadist popularity amongst the Muslim world? One avenue may be through Information Operations influencing the moderate Muslim population to jump the fence and counter the spread of Jihadi ideology.

Media's role on the Battlefield

Information Operations, such as the media, is another mechanism for U.S. leaders to directly engage militant ideology. The media can deliver the command messages containing both straightforward and accurate information. Is it an assumption to state that U.S. military personnel are acting with the right intent and have nothing to conceal. Terrible events will occur during combat and not everything will proceed to go our way. Confronting the media to cover regretful events that occur and express to the international community our side of the story can only benefit our position. The media is a force multiplier when incorporated and synchronized with Information Operations as long as it is within the limits of the mission, safety, and operations security.

With the increased media presence on the battlefield, should U.S. troops be concerned with constantly being under the watchful eye of the international community? Obviously, unethical behavior captured on television would be credible evidence not only for punitive action to the violator(s) but could be used to engage as propaganda towards supporting Jihadi ideology. Soldiers were initially unsure how to respond to the media during questionable actions. Of course there have been many times the media has influenced the populace opinion by recording images of the faces of Soldiers displaying deep concern for injured civilians on the battlefield. These recordings demonstrated the primary concerns was to provide medical care to both injured

military and civilians alike producing a strong message of care, security, and the welfare of the Muslim populace displaying what right looks like as stated earlier.

Ethical Training

The last five years has been one of enormous transformation to which the Army profession has yet to adjust fully. Today, and in the future, the Army is expected to function effectively across the full spectrum of operations, from major theater conflicts to domestic disaster relief. What the Army is unsure of is the how in its attempts to adapt to these austere changes of radical Islam spreading globally and presenting a major sign of failure in our effectiveness to adapt. This spreading of militant ideology can become a potentially dangerous situation which seems to remain largely unrecognized by the military institution.

If the U.S. military is to conquer its current problems, it must make organizational professionalism the principal condition in decision making. The recently updated counter-insurgency manual states that we must focus on the protection of civilians but we continue to discount the human element of war. The emphasis on the military-technical element of war has obscured the importance of the human or moral element. Hatred and desire, fear and courage, genius and ambition are all moral factors that play important roles in any conflict. We are comfortable with the idea of confronting an enemy who has tanks, planes, uniforms, a forward-edge-of-the-battle area, and lines of communication. This comfort on the battlefield continues where the good guys are distinguishable from bad guys, where combatants are separate from noncombatants, and where political restraints do not interfere with our ability to generate and apply combat power. Where we are not comfortable is fighting women and children armed with rifles, in cities and jungles where our tanks find it difficult to maneuver, and in austere environments where aircraft and intelligence-collection assets don't always work.

Why are we ignoring the lessons of history? Our current doctrinal approaches are blatantly anti historical. Keep the human element in focus. War is the ultimate human struggle. Public support is also a moral and human element not to be ignored. We must identify this possibility and take measures to ensure that our public supports the policies that will expose our sons and daughters to danger. Our training efforts must focus on giving the soldier and the tactical decision-maker the skills, knowledge and support to function effectively on a rapidly changing battlefield that will likely require human compassion, discretion, judgment, ethics and sound values.

Conclusion

The contemporary emergence of terrorism, fundamentalist jihad, criminal cartels, and failed states represents a greater threat to U.S. interests than the threat of conventional war with a peer competitor. It is ironic that our nation won its independence a little more than two centuries ago by practicing similar forms of asymmetrical warfare. The US is ahead of everyone else in this revolution, and we will undoubtedly make the correct decisions to maximize the opportunities and minimize the vulnerabilities. Expecting to get it wrong will temper this dangerous arrogance and provide us with the agility of mind and action to recognize when someone else has got it right and to adapt quickly. We are hopeful of getting far more right than wrong, but it is dangerous to base our plan for the future on the assumption that we will always be right. As the future senior leadership for our institution we should not be afraid to raise a dissenting opinion on the way we approach educating and training our Soldiers on ethical reasoning on the battlefield. If we remain silent and should the Army's future and doctrine writers take us down the wrong road, we will have only ourselves to blame.

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