KCIS 2013: Ethical Warriors – The Profession of Arms in Contemporary Perspective

Key Insights

- A key factor motivating armed personnel is a sense of shared identity, which in turn gives rise to common system of principles, or ‘propriety,’ that is used to determine how best to tackle existing challenges and dictates the appropriate means to do so.

- Heightened stress makes individuals more likely to act based on instinct rather than logic, meaning that unethical behaviour is more likely to occur in high-tension environments. Witnessing or participating in unethical acts is also linked to psychological stress among soldiers, with the corresponding risk to the long-term mental health of military personnel.

- This in turn highlights the importance of providing additional training to soldiers deployed in a combat situation. Preventative action has the potential to reduce the likelihood of ethical lapses and ensure that soldiers have the tools necessary to perform their tasks in a morally acceptable manner.

- Although it is important to foster a culture of ethical behaviour throughout the armed services as a whole, effective leadership is a vital component of this process. The presence of moral leadership helps to ensure that appropriate values are disseminated to all levels of the armed forces.
Introduction

The eighth annual Kingston Conference on International Security (KCIS), entitled “Ethical Warriors – The Profession of Arms in Contemporary Perspective,” was held on June 10-12, 2013 in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. The conference was organized by the Queen’s Centre for International and Defence Policy, Queen’s University’s Chair of Defence Management Studies, the Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) of the U.S. Army War College and the Land Force Doctrine and Training System of the Canadian Forces. Its primary aim was to explore the question of ethical behaviour on the battlefields of the 21st century and outline strategies for promoting ethical behaviour among military personnel both at home and abroad. This conference was attended by more than 150 government officials, academic experts, think tank members and US and Canadian military personnel, and included a number of presentations outlining strategies for cultivating a culture of ethical behaviour among members of the armed forces.

The question of what constitutes ethical behaviour on the battlefield is one that has been debated by theorists and policy practitioners for centuries. On the one hand, the act of war implies organized, state-sanctioned violence against an opposing group, circumstances that almost inevitably lead to sustained acts of violence and the corresponding loss of life. On the other hand, the changing nature of modern warfare, ranging from shifts in technology to the emergence of non-state actors promoting violence for ideological and religious reasons, has dramatically altered the tasks soldiers are expected to perform. Are existing codes of military ethics still relevant in a threat environment characterized by failed and fragile states, transnational terrorist organizations and drone technology that allow unmanned precision strikes
on a previously unimaginable scale? If not, how should existing theories of ethical behaviour in the armed forces evolve in response to these new challenges? More importantly, to what extent can morality and ethics be promoted among members of the armed forces and, if ethical behaviour can indeed be taught, what is the most effective means of doing so? What role does effective leadership play in instilling solders with the values they need to carry out their mandate in an ethical manner, and what are the ramifications when they fail to do so? Finally, what are the triggers that lead to ethical lapses and what steps can policymakers take to prevent unethical behaviour from occurring? Ultimately, it was the aim of KCIS 2013 to explore these questions and suggest different ways forward as military establishments struggle with the ethical implications of a changing threat environment. In that sense, this conference represented a valuable opportunity to discuss policy options with a wide range of experts, observers and stakeholders and contribute to a dialogue on how best to cope with the changes currently taking place in battlefields across the globe.

The Keynote Addresses

While the majority of KCIS 2013 was dedicated to a series of discussion panels, there were a number of keynote speakers that addressed topics related to the role of identity and values among military personnel and role of leaders in promoting ethical behaviour. The keynote speakers and their presentations included (1) Dr. Asa Kasher, Tel Aviv University (Israel) and (2) General (ret) Walter Natynczyk, former Chief of the Defence Staff of the Canadian Forces, “Military Leaders and the Ethics of Messaging: Reflections on Ethics, Messaging and Leadership.”
Given the overall theme of the KCIS 2013, it was appropriate that the first keynote speaker addressed the question of identity formation in the armed forces. For Dr. Kasher, the key factor motivating armed personnel is a sense of shared identity, which in turn gives rise to common system of principles, or ‘propriety,’ that is used to determine how best to tackle existing challenges and dictates the appropriate means to do so. In this sense, propriety is the guide to action, in that it shapes how soldiers respond to the challenges they face while fulfilling their objectives. However, while this sense of shared identity has a powerful influence in framing possible responses, Kasher argued that values are not immutable – instead, professional identity can, and does, shift as mission parameters change, albeit within a fixed range. This in turn raises interesting questions regarding how best to respond to the changing nature of modern conflicts. Should new and unconventional missions be carried out by existing forces, retrained units or a new force entirely? Kasher argued that there are two ways to respond to this challenge; applying a conservative perspective or engaging in a transformative process. The conservative approach involves overcoming new problems by applying existing doctrines, while a transformative policy would mean creating new doctrines to meet newly emerging threats. In either case, it is vital to recognize the limits of reciprocity when developing doctrines in response to new threats; Kasher forcefully argued that facing opponents that disregard the ‘rules of war’ does not justify Western militaries doing so themselves. Complicating this process is the fact that it is often difficult to justify coercive action to civilians in a democratic state, particularly if force is employed in a pre-emptive or preventative manner, thereby adding another layer of values to the debate. In effect, Kasher argued that values stem from militaries themselves and as such are a product of the culture prevalent in the armed forces, but can be affected by the nature of a particular mission and may shift over time.
While the first keynote speaker addressed the shifting role of identity in military culture, the second focused on best to foster a positive environment through moral leadership, which involves leading by example and inspiring others to engage in moral behaviour. Drawing on his experience as a former Chief of the Defence Staff of the Canadian Forces, General Natynczyk argued that in order to effectively lead, one must live the values of the force you command, thereby establishing moral authority and exercising effective leadership. In that sense, a key virtue of a leader is humility; one must act to build trust by discouraging ambition and careerism among the senior leadership. This is because ambition and careerism can negatively influence ethical behaviour – if a leader is motivated by these considerations he or she cannot effectively ensure ethical conduct among soldiers under their command. Instead, Natynczyk suggested that ethical leaders should accept responsibility for failure and ‘speak to truth to power,’ even it means raising points that are not welcomed by civilian policymakers. At the same time, leaders must inspire their soldiers, listen to and address their concerns and foster long-term relationships among allies abroad. In this context, mentoring is central – provided it is done with the compassion essential to exercising moral responsibility. In effect, Natynczyk argued ethical leadership involves acting as an embodiment of the values of the institution of which you are a part, thereby inspiring those under your command and enabling other to reach their full potential.

While the two keynotes speakers addressed different aspects of the question of ethics in the armed forces, several common themes emerged throughout each presentation. First, both agreed that identity is not fixed, but rather evolves over time depending on factors such as the operational culture, the type of objectives soldiers are expected to achieve and the character and tone of its leadership. At the same time, both Kasher and Natynczyk stressed the importance of values in shaping the actions of military personnel, with the former emphasising the tensions
between military and civilians views on the use of force and the latter the role of leaders in inspiring ethical behaviour. These observations are especially pertinent to any discussion of military ethics because they suggest that morality and ethics can be developed among soldiers through training and firm leadership, a point that was raised by several panellists throughout the conference. Of course, it also means that it is incumbent on military leaders to lead by example and develop clear codes of conduct, which can then be transmitted to lower ranking personnel. By doing so, it should be possible to create a culture in the armed forces that reinforces existing standards of ethics, while at the same time reducing instances of unethical behaviour. Still, as Kasher suggested, it is important to recognize the influence of existing identities among military personnel, particularly when armed forces are called upon to perform tasks that are outside their realm of experience. This in turn reinforces Natynczyk’s point about the importance of moral leadership, since military policymakers bear much of the responsibility in ensuring soldiers are given the tools necessary to carry out their duties in an ethical and upright manner.

Panel I: Just War and the Profession of Arms

The first panel addressed the rules that govern warfare in the modern era, as well as the manner in which soldiers understand their own role as practitioners in the profession of arms. Panel members and their presentations included: (1) Dr. David Whetham, King's College London at the Joint Services Command and Staff College (UK), “Just War Tradition and Contemporary Challenges” and (2) Dr. Stéphanie A.H. Bélanger, Royal Military College of Canada, “Just Wars and Just Soldiers: Reconciling loose ends in post-modern warfare.”
Throughout the course of his presentation, Dr. Whetham explored the applicability of Just War Theory (JWT) to the practice of modern warfare. In doing so, he sought to highlight the continued influence of JWT while at the same time identifying the challenges it faces in the contemporary threat environment. For Dr. Whetham, JWT represents a middle ground between pacifism, which holds that violence should be avoided at all costs, and realism, which generally seeks to divorce morally from the use of force. In doing so, it imposes obligations on combatants, particularly in the manner in which force is utilized, while at the same time conferring legitimacy on those adhering to these norms. In doing so, it seeks to provide leaders with a framework for morally appropriate conduct during times of war, with the broader goal of fostering a lasting peace in the future. However, while JWT still has resonance in the modern era, Dr. Whetham argued that technological change, as well as changes in the moral landscape governing inter- and intra-state conflict, poses significant challenges to this model. On the one hand, atrocities committed in the GWOT have eroded perceptions of moral equivalency between the West and its adversaries, thereby undermining the notion of moral equality that a rules-based model of warfare requires. At the same time, technological innovation, not least in the area of drone technology, allows Western militaries to carry out attacks with greater precision and less risk, but also calls into question the very idea of who or what constitutes a legitimate target in times of conflict. Taken together, these changes have the potential to blur the lines between combatant and non-combatant, as well as the morality of the use of force, which will in turn force JWT to evolve in order to meet a changing operational and moral environment.

If the first presentation focused more on the theoretical underpinnings of conflict, the second sought to provide insight into how individual practitioners view themselves and their profession. Drawing on information obtained from a series of interviews conducted with both
Francophone and Anglophone members of the Canadian Forces (CF), Dr. Bélanger sought to explore how soldiers from each of these groups viewed their role on and off the battlefield. In doing so, she presented findings that indicated that, while certain commonalities exist between these groups, significant cleavages are present as well. Although both stress the importance of their ‘warrior culture,’ which includes virtues such as strength, professionalism and fitness, Anglophone soldiers tend to focus more on their role as soldiers, while francophones favour the peacekeeping aspect on their role. At the same time, each group placed a high emphasis on the importance of allies and regarded war a moral exercise, suggesting a high degree of pride in their role as soldiers. In closing, Bélanger suggested that one of the more interesting unanswered questions is whether the shared perspective among each group of soldiers is ‘embedded or indoctrinated,’ essentially whether it is innate or learned behaviour. This is relevant because the latter suggests a potential for change, while the former is fixed.

Given the broader themes addressed in KCIS 2013, it was appropriate that the first panel did so much to set the stage for the discussion that came afterward. Whetham’s presentation, which dealt with the challenges facing policymakers trying to employ JWT in an age of rapidly evolving technological development, raised important questions regarding who should be regarded as a legitimate target in the age of drone warfare and what restraints, if any, should be put in place. Meanwhile, Bélanger’s research provided insight into how soldiers view their role as combatants, highlighting both the cleavages and the commonalities between soldiers in the CF. Equally importantly, the second panellist raised the question of learned versus fixed behaviour, a key point in any discussion of how best to train soldiers to function in an ethical manner both on and off the battlefield.
Panel II: Civil-Military Relations

The second panel discussed the manner in which civilian and military agencies interact in a conflict zone, with a particular emphasis on how best to ensure smooth cooperation between groups with very different operational cultures. Panel members included: (1) Ambassador Tim Martin, Canadian Ambassador to the Republic of Colombia, “The Role of Canada’s Comprehensive Approach in Kandahar” and (2) Dr. Steve Saideman, Paterson Chair in International Affairs, Carleton University (Canada), “Civil-Military Relations after Afghanistan.”

Drawing on his experience as the former Representative of Canada in Kandahar (RoCK), the aim of Ambassador Martin’s presentation was to highlight the successes of Canada’s deployment in Afghanistan and lay out the lessons that can be drawn from this experience. In this context, the utilization of various civilian and military agencies in clearly defined roles was particularly important, as it allowed Canada to bring its resources to bear in a holistic manner consistent with the ‘whole of government’ (WOG) approach. For Martin, Canada’s experience in Kandahar demonstrated how diverse government actors can effectively collaborate in order to achieve clearly defined goals in partnership with Afghan stakeholders, while at the same time overcoming inter-departmental tensions through enhanced communication. In doing so, Canada aimed to touch off an evolutionary process wherein Afghan capabilities where enhanced, which would in turn improve the ability of Afghanistan’s government to effectively meet the needs of its people. In essence, he presented Canada’s collaborative WOG approach as a template for
future deployments, with a particular emphasis on the value of deploying civilian personnel abroad to compliment the efforts undertaken by armed services such as the CF.

If Ambassador Martin offered a very positive evaluation of civil-military relations throughout Canada’s deployment in Afghanistan, Dr. Saideman’s assessment was more mixed. On the one hand, he addressed the perception that Canada’s sojourn in Afghanistan has led to a number of positive developments for the armed forces as a whole. These include enhanced public appreciation for the CF and more realistic expectations of the role Canadian soldiers can be expected to play abroad, as well as greater credibility with Canada’s NATO allies. On the other hand, however, he argued that the Kandahar deployment was marked by a degree of confusion between government agencies, tensions between military and civilian leaderships and by a Parliament that played a secondary role in the deployment. As such, Saideman argued that the value of the WOG approach has been overplayed, as it was less effective at the beginning and at the end of the deployment that is generally recognized, while the ‘lessons learned’ have not been properly examined or disseminated within government. At the same time, the challenges facing Western governments, including austerity and the debates surrounding burden-sharing and ‘smart defence,’ have the potential to lead to exhaustion with the idea of prolonged intervention in failed or fragile states, particularly since the long-term stability of Afghanistan in still very much in doubt.

Taken together, the two panellists offered very different assessments of Canada’s deployment in Afghanistan. For Ambassador Martin, Canadian operations in Kandahar represent a successful application of the WOG approach, with multiple branches of government, including but not limited to civilian agencies and military personnel, bringing their expertise to
bear on the difficult task of promoting stability in the region. Dr. Saideman, on the other hand, believed that the value of the WOG has been oversold, with numerous problems of coordination and cooperation obscured by the relative success enjoyed in certain periods of the deployment. However, while these perspectives do differ in their assessment of the overall effectiveness of the WOG approach Canada pursued in Afghanistan, they do agree on the need to properly assimilate the lessons learned throughout the course of the deployment. Whether or not one chooses to regard its activities in Kandahar as an unalloyed success, it does seem clear that the knowledge gained will prove useful in future deployments, particularly if Canada is once again called upon to undertake state-building activities in failed or fragile states.

Panel III: Perspectives from Other Allies

The third panel outlined how America’s allies tackle the issue of promoting ethical behaviour among their soldiers, with an emphasis on the training and doctrines used in various countries. Panel members and their presentations included: (1) Brigadier Barry Le Greys, British Defence Advisor, British High Commission, (2) Dr. Henrik Heidenkamp, Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI) and (3) Lt. Colonel Steve Mott, Australian Army Liaison to the Canadian Forces.

For the first presenter, one key method for promoting ethical behaviour is to instill the proper values in soldiers of all ranks, with a particular focus on those in a leadership position. Brigadier Le Greys began his presentation by outlining the challenges facing the United Kingdom, a country with a considerable military establishment and a strong tradition of expeditionary warfare. Like many Western states, Britain has been forced to grapple with the
constraints imposed by austerity, which include shrinking defence budgets and having to ‘do more with less,’ while at the same time preparing to combat a wide range of unconventional threats, such as cyber warfare, terrorism and natural disasters. However, while preparing for these challenges requires a proactive policy stance, Le Greys also stressed the importance of promoting ethical behaviour among British soldiers, particularly since reports of abuse can have a disproportionate impact on the international reputation of the UK. Essentially, the goal of the British military is to encourage its soldiers to ‘live by their values’ both at home and abroad and encourage integrity through strong leadership. Accordingly, efforts have been made to reform training regimens at Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) to reflect a renewed emphasis on ethical behaviour, with the ultimate goal of internalizing positive values among soldiers. Although this focus on ‘Lawful, Appropriate and Professional’ conduct is relevant to all ranks, Le Greys stressed the importance of strong leadership, as this helps to ensure that appropriate values are disseminated to all levels of the UK’s armed forces.

If Brigadier Le Greys focused on the challenges facing Britain in the future, as well as the most appropriate manner to promote ethical behaviour among its soldiers, the second and third presenters focused slightly different facets of the debate surrounding ethics and the use of force. For Dr. Heidenkamp, a key issue facing Germany in the aftermath of its intervention in Afghanistan is the need to re-evaluate its role abroad, as well as the emerging discourse surrounding the role and purpose of the German armed forces. Like Britain, Germany has been forced to restructure its military in the face of severe financial pressure, a process that has been accelerated by its experience of counter-insurgency warfare in Afghanistan. At the same time, its Afghan deployment has also forced German society to grapple with the implications of a changing role for the Bundeswehr and, in particular, the re-emergence of a ‘warrior role’ for
German soldiers. For Heidenkamp, this is positive, as it will encourage a debate on what exactly constitutes Germany’s national interest and how best it should be pursued. Of course, since the German public appears to be more concerned with domestic issues at the present, it is most likely that this debate will take the form of a ‘top-down’ process, albeit one with significant room for input from the population as a whole. While Heidenkamp’s presentation focused on the changing role of the German military, Lt. Colonel Steve Mott opted to focus on the efforts currently underway to promote ethical behaviour among members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF). Like Le Greys, Mott emphasized the importance of strong leadership, although he also pointed out that massacres have often occurred when soldiers obeyed orders to commit atrocities. As such, a failure in ethics also constitutes a failure in leadership, since unethical behaviour has the potential to undermine an otherwise successful mission. At the same time, good leadership alone is not sufficient to ensure adherence to ethical norms, since abuse can occur at lower levels as well. Accordingly, the ADF has instituted Project Achilles, a program designed to promote ethical behaviour among soldiers of all ranks, rather than focusing primarily on officers. By drawing on personal testimony from soldiers who have faced ethical dilemmas, as well as case studies drawn from the experiences of Australia and other countries, Achilles aims to promote ethical behaviour among all ranks, based on the premise that good morals can be taught.

While each presenter examined a different facet of the challenges facing America’s allies, common themes did emerge in their discussions. Both Le Greys and Mott emphasized the importance of strong leadership in preventing ethical lapses, although the latter expanded this point to include the need to encourage all soldiers to internalize positive values, regardless of their rank. At the same time, both implicitly agreed with the idea, also raised in later panels, that
ethical behaviour can be taught, which in turn suggests that values are malleable rather than fixed. Finally, both Le Greys and Heidenkamp touched on the fiscal challenges currently facing America’s allies in Europe, a central theme of last year’s KCIS conference. In the context of this year’s focus on ethical warriors, this is relevant in that it suggests that the British, and to a lesser extent the German, militaries are undergoing shifts not just in their capabilities, but in how their soldiers are trained to see themselves and their role in the world.

Panel IV: Ethical Warriors: Developing the Ethic


While previous presenters tended to focus on the best means to prevent unethical behaviour from occurring, the first member of this panel focused her presentation on why ethical lapses occur among otherwise reputable military personnel. In seeking to determine why soldiers would act unethically in the field, Dr. Messervey began by distinguishing between automatic and deliberative processing, or the distinction between actions driven by intuition and those stemming from conscious reasoning. Automatic processing, which is associated with emotions such anger and frustration, is said to occur quickly and effortlessly, often below the
level of awareness. Deliberative processing, on the other hand, tends to occur more slowly and involves a more conscious examination of possible courses of action. This is relevant because heightened stress makes individuals more likely to rely on automatic processing. This can in turn lead to actions driven by instinct rather than logic, with a corresponding risk of unethical behaviour. At the same time, while individuals generally internalize societal values, which tend to be positive, applying these values requires deliberative processing that must be ‘activated’ in order to function. Finally, it must be noted that certain individuals are prone to ‘moral disengagement,’ which involves ‘shutting off’ learned values in favour of baser instincts, which in turn can encourage unethical behaviour. Overall, Messervey argued that a greater understanding of moral disengagement is needed, as well as more realistic training designed to help soldiers apply deliberative reasoning in high stress environments. However, she also suggested that relying solely on deliberative reasoning is not enough, since exceptional circumstances can lead to responses driven by instinct rather than logic, thereby undermining learned behaviour.

In contrast to the first presenter, who focused on why unethical behaviour occurs, the second and third presenters sought to outline how best to foster the values that will encourage ethical behaviour among military personnel. Drawing on her experience as a Professor of Strategic Leadership and Leader Development at the U.S. Naval War College, Dr. Johnson discussed efforts currently underway to implement a system of professional ethics training among USN personnel. The key challenge facing policymakers in this area is that while a system is already in place to respond to ethical or disciplinary lapses, the USN has traditionally lacked a standardized system to teach and measure ethical behaviour. Established expectations for leaders did not exist, or were vaguely defined, while no formal leadership and guidance was
available to naval officers. In response, Johnson and her colleagues have sought to develop a ‘Navy Leader Development Strategy’ that aligns experience, education, training and personal development. The NLDS calls for a long-term view of ethics and leadership training, which would involve approaching the issue of ethical behaviour from multiple angles and co-opting the command culture of the USN to reinvigorate the naval profession as a whole. Mr. Clermont’s presentation, on the other hand, focused on the changing role of combat soldiers stationed overseas and the need for enhanced training to allow them to interact with the indigenous population in a positive and productive manner. For Clermont, the changing nature of contemporary warfare, and in particular the lessons learned from long-term deployments in failed or fragile states, means that soldiers must have the skills necessary to effectively operate in cultural environments that are alien to their own. In effect, front-line soldiers must be ‘warrior-diplomats’ capable of utilizing both hard and soft skills, not least in the area of local diplomacy. While some effort has been made to develop these skills, America’s Af-Pak program being one example, Clermont believes more should be done, particularly since such training is likely to prove beneficial in future deployments. With this in mind, it is particularly important to address the shortcomings of existing training programs and facilitate the development of ‘meta-skills’ such as diplomacy, communication and messaging, areas in which significant progress must still be made.

Taken together, this panel offered an interesting mix of practical insights into why unethical behaviour occurs and thoughts on how best to train soldiers to prevent ethical lapses from occurring. While Messervey’s presentation highlighted the challenges associated with overcoming automatic, instinctual responses in favour of more deliberative reasoning, it also stressed the need for more understanding of why ‘moral disengagement’ occurs among soldiers.
Johnson and Clermont, on the other hand, outlined existing efforts to give military personnel the skills they need to act in an ethical manner, as well as the attempts being made to improve their effectiveness in the field. Presumably, implementing a properly structured leadership training program will further enable military personnel to internalize the positive norms essential to moral action, while at the same time fostering the soft skills necessary to reduce stress and prevent undue automatic processing among front-line personnel.

**Panel V: Expanding the Ethic: Health and Well-being**

This fifth panel focused on the medical and mental health implications of military service, with a focus on how governments care for personnel who have been physically or mentally injured, as well as the triggers that can result in severe mental health programs among soldiers. Panellists and their presentations included (1) Dr. Alice Aiken, Director, Canadian Institute for Military and Veterans Health, “The ethics of caring for those who serve” and (2) Dr. Peter Bradley, Royal Military College of Canada, “NATO HFM-RTG 179; moral decisions in military operations and mental health.”

While few would deny that the training received by soldiers is a great importance to any discussion of military ethics, consideration must also be given to the treatment provided to soldiers wounded in the line of duty. As Dr. Aiken pointed out in her presentation, soldiers implicitly agree to a policy of ‘unlimited liability,’ in that they could die in the course of their duties, while at the same time serving in an occupation where traditional health and safety codes do not apply. As such, she argued that, from an ethical standpoint, a covenant exists between soldiers and the societies they serve; injured military personnel should be provided for by the
government whose people they fought to protect. However, while Aiken suggested that the Canadian government has a fairly robust system in place to care for those active in the regular forces, she also argued that this system is less effective in addressing the needs of reservists or the families of military personnel. Reservists generally do not return to their units full-time and, when injured, fall under the jurisdiction of the provincial health care systems, which often lack an understanding of the sorts of challenges injured soldiers face. The families of soldiers, on the other hand, have no access to the military health care system and may find their own care compromised due to the frequent reassignment of their spouses. Taken together, this suggests that while efforts are being made to meet the need of full-time members of the CF, more progress must be made to accommodate reservists injured in the line of duty, as well as the families of military personnel. In addition, efforts must be made to maintain continuity of support for those who exit the armed forces, particularly since the range of injuries to which soldiers can be subjected are so varied in nature and severity.

Much like the first presenter, the second panellist focused on injuries sustained during active operations, with a focus on the psychological challenges facing soldiers who have served abroad. Central to Dr. Bradley’s research is the question of mental health and the triggers that can lead to ‘moral injuries’ among soldiers. Moral injuries, defined as traumatic responses to unprecedented life experiences, are generally experienced by those who have been exposed to acts that challenge their existing moral and ethical frameworks. The likelihood of experiencing moral injury can be affected by factors such as combat exposure, duration of combat and ‘distress’ stemming from witnessing or participating in ethically questionable behaviour. Accordingly, the primary goal of Bradley’s research is to enhance our understanding of the factors that lead to mental distress among soldiers and provide guidance in the training of
personnel. Since his research indicated a correlation between unethical behaviour and future mental health problems, Bradley strongly advocated mental health, anger management and ethics training in order to help develop the ‘moral compasses’ of soldiers before deployment. Specifically, efforts should be made to enhance the awareness and judgement of military personnel, a process that has seen some success, as well as their motivations and actions, which has proven more difficult. In doing so, it should be possible to reduce the frequency of unethical behaviour, thereby lessening the chance the military personnel with experience moral injuries during periods of active service.

When viewed as a whole, both panelists addressed issues related to the long-term health of military personnel, although each examined this phenomenon from a different starting point. For her part, Dr. Aiken focused primarily on how best to treat soldiers who have already sustained a serious injury, an issue that has been the subject of significant debate in countries such as the United States. Aiken’s research also raised an important point regarding the ethical duty governments owe soldiers who are injured in the line of duty, which in turn suggests that any discussion of military ethics must extend beyond the conduct of soldiers on the battlefield. Dr. Bradley, on the other hand, reinforced the point made by Dr. Messervey on Panel IV, especially in terms of the importance of providing additional training to soldiers deployed in a combat situation. Since his research suggested a strong link between exposure to unethical behaviour and the development of mental health issues, there is a clear need to develop the ‘moral compasses’ of soldiers in order to prevent later complications for themselves and inappropriate conduct in theatre. This preventative action would prevent soldiers from suffering psychological trauma in the first place, while at the same time reducing the likelihood of ethical lapses.
Panel VI: Meeting the Challenges

The sixth panel focused on how best to approach the subject of ethics training for soldiers, with an emphasis on professional development, the evolution of ideas and the importance of critical thought in responding to ethical dilemmas. Panellists and their presentations included (1) Brigadier-General Eric Tremblay, Commandant of the Royal Military College of Canada, (2) Prof. William Braun III, Deputy Director, Strategic Studies Institute at the U.S. Army War College and (3) Dr. Joel Sokolsky, Principal of the Royal Military College of Canada, “Lessons from the Academic Trenches.”

Building on the arguments put forward by previous panellists, Brigadier-General Tremblay’s presentation focused on the question of leadership among military personnel. In this instance, the primary focus was on professional development, as well as the challenges militaries such as the CF will face in coming years. For Tremblay, leadership requires both courage and an ethical approach, which in turn necessitates a recognition of, and openness to, change and a willingness to learn among all parties involved. Military forces must identify the most urgent challenges that they are likely to face in the future, while at the same adopting appropriate policy prescriptions and avoiding an undue amount of ‘navel gazing.’ Tremblay suggests that the most effective means of achieving these goals involve a holistic WOG approach, the streamlining of existing practices and investment in human capital. This in turn will facilitate the emergence of ‘community of learners’ that are able to implement a synergistic WOG approach that crosses departmental lines.
The second member of the panel, Prof. Braun, elected to focus more on the theoretical underpinning of ethical behaviour, echoing the emphasis on JWT put forward by Dr. Whetham on Panel I. Like Whetham, Braun suggested that proliferation of new technology, the expansion of the armed forces into areas such as social engineering and the emergence of new threats have forced governments to re-evaluate existing ethical frameworks. As such, Braun argued that existing doctrines of JWT can be useful in meeting these challenges and might provide the starting point for a new model of how professional ethics should evolve over time. However, any new model must be capable of both interacting with and informing JWT, thereby bridging any disconnect between principles and the actions that occur. Essentially, Braun called for the codification of a baseline of military ethics, which would involve understanding our own motivations, infusing it into military education and engaging in abstract thinking in order to tackle tough ideas. This emphasis on the value of abstract thought was also touched upon by the third panelist, who discussed the value of academic training in professional military education. For Dr. Sokolsky, the value of advanced education for military personnel is threefold; it increases the capacity for critical thinking, promotes individual reflection and leads to empathy with (and understanding of) differing perspectives. By increasing the capacity for critical judgment, post-secondary education also provides the tools needed for leadership and introduces nuance to a worldview that might otherwise be defined in absolute terms. As empathy, the capacity for critical thought and nuance are vital to any debate regarding military ethics, Sokolsky had little doubt academic training has great value to any member of armed forces, particularly those in a leadership role.

As was the case with previous panels, each of the presenters touched on a different aspect of the debate surrounding how best to promote ethical behaviour in the armed forces. In this
context, Brigadier-General Tremblay’s remarks stressing the role of leadership echoed those of previous presenters such as Brigadier Le Greys and Dr. Johnson, both of whom emphasized the need for ethical behaviour among military leaders. Prof. Braun, meanwhile, advocated a policy prescription that shared Dr. Whetham’s strong emphasis on JWT, particularly in his argument that changing circumstances necessitate a reappraisal of that model. Finally, Dr. Sokolsky’s presentation on the value of post-secondary education recalled earlier commentators who stressed the importance of additional training for members of the armed forces, in order to provide the tools necessary for ethical leadership on and off the battlefield. However, one common theme among all three presentations was the need for further capacity building among military personnel. Whether through education, personal development or the codification of a new framework of military ethics, much still remains to be done in order to ensure that military personnel are equipped with the tools necessary to perform their duties in an ethical manner.

Conclusions: Ethical Warriors and International Conflict

Defining a comprehensive code of military ethics is a task that is fraught with challenges, particularly in an age of rapid technological, ideological and societal change. While existing theories of ethical warfare still have resonance, changing circumstances are forcing policymakers to contemplate new methods for promoting ethical behaviour among soldiers operating in unfamiliar and challenging environments. In seeking to address the implications of ethical warfare in the 21st century, a number of common themes emerged among the various panellists and speakers. The first theme is the need for additional training to give soldiers the tools they need to act in an ethical manner on and off the battlefield. Given the link between elevated stress
levels and impulsive actions, as well as the corresponding correlation between impulsive actions and ethical lapses, it is vitally important to ensure that soldiers possess the necessary analytical and critical capacity to make ethical choices in difficult circumstances. Failure to do so can not only have negative consequences for individual soldiers, who become more prone to psychological trauma when witnessing or participating in unethical behaviour, but can also tarnish the reputation of the country they serve. As such, it is of key importance that existing training regimes be updated to reflect the challenges soldiers will face in the contemporary threat environment. A second theme is the importance of effective leadership in instilling positive values among members of the armed forces as a whole. Although several speakers highlighted the need to instill positive moral values in every soldier serving his or her country, there was widespread agreement that leaders have the responsibility to act as an example for those under their command. In Canada, America, Australia and the UK there is a widespread recognition that it is vital to ensure that military leaders ‘live the values’ of their armed services, while at the same time transmitting these values to those under their authority. In doing so, command staff can facilitate a culture of ethical behaviour and provide a clear model for every soldier to follow. Finally, the third major theme was the need to engage in a concerted effort to develop a renewed framework of ethics in the years to come. Several presenters highlighted the need to re-evaluate existing ethical frameworks in an era of rapid technological and societal change, in order to ensure that military personnel have a clear understanding of what exactly ethical behaviour entails. While doctrines such as JWT clearly have some value in this regard, these theories may have to evolve to better fit a changing environment. At the very least, it is important to continue a dialogue in this area, a task the KCIS 2013 undertook with considerable success by bringing
together a wide range of experts with a keen interest in the question of military ethics in the modern age.