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Ethics in the Middle

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ETHICS IN THE MIDDLE
Aren’t all leaders ethical?

Remember
- Politicians, e.g., Bill Clinton and Richard Nixon
- Executives, e.g., Ken Lay and Dennis Kozlowski
- Military officers, e.g., Ollie North and NPS students

Presumptions
- Mid-grade officers are rarely moral bankrupts
- Slippery slopes and unintended / unforeseen consequences lead to groundings and collisions
- Hard moral choices are between 2 goods or 2 evils
Overview

Scanning the Horizon – 7 Constellations

1. Honesty/integrity
2. Just war
3. Use and abuse of power
4. Responsibility for money and things
5. Administration of justice
6. Instrument of social change
7. Leadership

Viewing Platforms: 3 Approaches to Ethics

- A Caveat
- Preventative Medicine
1) Honesty and Integrity

- Honesty: Survey
- Loyalty
  - Midshipman: Will you “rat” out a classmate?
  - Unit/group
- With whom are you completely honest?
  - Self? Are you the same person 24x7?
  - Others?
2) Just War

- Not should we fight, but how to fight
- Principles (for the warfighters!)
  - Reasonable chance of success
    - “I have not yet begun to fight”
    OR
    - “Live to fight another day”
  - Non-combatant immunity (Discrimination)
    - Missile emplacement in school or hospital
    - Human shields
    - John Paul Jones: a terrorist?
  - Proportionality
3) Use and Abuse of Power

- Privilege of position
  - Arnheiter affair

- Taking responsibility
  - “Own” your mistakes
  - Do you intervene when you observe a wrong?
    - By subordinates
    - By seniors?

- “Bending” the rules
  - Gun decking logs and PQS
  - Fraternization with subordinates
4) Responsibility for Money and Things

- Responsible for equipment and people
  - Osprey
  - Iowa

- DUTY
  - Primary virtue for military personnel. Duty to Constitution overrides other duties. Military subordinate to civilian authority yet Navy has institutional history of deceit.
5) Administration of Justice

- We investigate
  - Investigation implies guilt
  - Who should investigate?

- We administer NJP
  - What is equal treatment?
  - Justice versus Mercy

- We evaluate
  - Subordinate with moral failure -- FITREPs
  - Actions to block career not match words of praise -- Evals
  - Favoritism -- sea daddies
6) Instrument of Social Change

- Integration of racial minorities
  - How complete? Look at this group
  - Persistence of racism

- Integration of women
  - Stonewalling, continued prejudice, power of language
  - Private opinion contrary to public policy
  - Impact of pregnancy rates on operational readiness

- Gays: Don’t ask, don’t tell
7) Leadership

- Personal success at what price?
  - Careerism
    - Spin: best face for whom?
    - Ticket punching
    - Desired answer or real answer
  - Distributed responsibility (Kobar towers; policy formulation)

- Mission accomplishment vs. people
  - Operational, personnel and training tempo
  - Little Round Top

- Training/fiscal realities vs. Environmental issues
Viewing Platforms

- Law establishes ethical minimum not moral excellence
- Making moral choices
  - Is this allowed?
  - What will happen if we do this?
  - Would a person I respect do this?
Rule based – “Is it allowed?”

**Basis**

- A rule says the action is inherently right/wrong
- Legal authority
- Sacred traditions
- Culture

**Ethical Theories**

- Laws/Directives/Orders
- Duty (Deontological)
- Divine Command
- Mores/Common Morality
Result based – “What will happen?”

**Basis**

- Will it produce a desired result?
- Identify/predict goals, results and benefits
- Teleological: end justifies the means

**Ethical Theories**

- Consequentialism – balancing good and bad outcomes
- Utilitarian – maximize benefit for greatest number
- Egoism – do whatever is best for me and only me
- Pragmatism – what works must be right
Person based – “... a person I respect...”

**Basis**

- How treated, what they would say, their example
- Rights: Individual or Group
- Relationships
- Character

**Ethical Theories**

- Liberal Individualism – maximize individual rights
- Communitarianism – priority of community
- Ethics of Care – commitment to relationships
- Virtue – habits of choosing right; build moral character
A Caveat – Moral Risk Factors

- Urgent personal goal
- Critical juncture
- Unexpected and unwanted event
- Negative role model
- Possible way out
- Stress
- Time constraints
Preventative Medicine

- Establish accountability
- Making time for moral health
  - Spirituality
  - Reflection
  - Family
Where we’ve focused

- Scanning 7 Constellations of ethical issues
  - Honesty
  - Just war
  - Power
  - Taking leadership
  - Money and things
  - Administration of justice
  - Social change

- 3 Viewing Platforms for Ethical Decision Making
  - Rules
  - Results
  - Persons – Rights, Relationships, Character

- Risk Factors and Preventative Medicine
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- NS4903 Tough Choices – Ethics in the Middle
  offered Fall and Spring

- NS4904 Ethics Across Cultures -- Comparative Ethics and Religions
  offered Winter and Summer
Case studies

Two most critical issues in your case: honesty, use of power, war, caring for what is entrusted, rights, justice, leadership, etc.