



The Future of Military Ethics

Advance announcement of EuroISME's 12th conference, Athens, May 10-12, 2023

in cooperation with the Hellenic Air Force Academy

“Sir, when are times going to get quiet and normal again?” the Private asked.

“Never son, never,” the General answered.

This conversation took place in Europe shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall. At that time most West European countries decided not only to downsize their armed forces, but also to give those armed forces new tasks. The relative certainties of the Cold War were replaced by an ever increasing range of new uncertainties.

In the decades which followed, these new tasks included fighting domestic terrorism, for example with serving military personnel highly visible on the streets of Paris, Madrid and Brussels. The new concept of ‘peacebuilding’ emerged from the UN Secretary General’s report *An agenda for peace* (1992) – soon to be followed by the controversial concept of ‘Responsibility to Protect’ in the wake of the Kosovo crisis.

One consequence was that future military interventions could be portrayed as moral – a portrayal which stood in contrast with the traditional concept of justifiable self-defence. The idea of ‘humanitarian intervention’ emerged and was little more than an attempt to rewrite Just War Doctrine. A telling detail was that in some of European countries such interventions were financed from the budget for overseas development assistance – not the budget of the Ministry of Defence. International terrorism also became a major force driver, whether as a direct result of attacks such as 9/11 or the emergence of powerful and ruthless groups such as ISIS (Daesh).

Thus, the complementary pillars of international law and military ethics were no longer the stable frames of reference they had been. We have entered a period of turbulence, as the following points illustrate:

- Since the adoption of the United Nations Charter until the end of the Cold War the assumption was that wars would only be considered legitimate if sanctioned by the UN. Since the Kosovo crisis (1999) this assumption has been called into question, partly because of the emergence of the concept of R2P. The whole question of legitimacy is further called into question by the

ability of permanent members of the Security Council to either veto a mandate for action or block condemnation of actions already undertaken.

- Modern technologies set new demands on both the laws of war and military ethics. What does the concept of an ‘armed attack’ under Article 51 of the UN Charter mean, if the attack is non-kinetic? Modern technologies also imply that the concept of a ‘battlefield’ is becoming obsolete: no longer is a ‘battlefield’ a geographical location: a cyber-attack can spread quickly over the world as a whole. Modern technologies also imply that the human being can be ‘out of the loop’ of a weapons system; which raises the question whether ethics is, then, out of the loop as well.
- The US-led attack on Iraq and the overthrow of President Saddam Hussein was based on questionable legal grounds. This, in turn, eroded the premise which has held sway since the Second World War, namely that the professional military must be able to presume that orders given by a democratically elected government are lawful. That premise was eroded further in the wake of the fall of Kabul, when the professional military was ordered to leave thousands of local workers and their dependents behind, in scenes which were reminiscent of the fall of Saigon (1975).
- Peacekeeping forces are supposed to be neutral and impartial. But what does that mean when a peacekeeper is faced with murder, rape and pillage? Should he/she stand idly by, in accordance with his mandate, and let the crimes take place? Or should he intervene, taking basic principles of justice into account?
- What does the concept of justice actually mean, if the international community does not intervene, as when chemical weapons were used during the Syrian civil war?
- Irregular forces – frequently armies in sandals – do not merely undermine the distinction between combatants and non-combatants. They also undermine fundamental concepts of military ethics. The *International Review of the Red Cross* wrote: “The notion of heroism, traditionally associated with obedience to a warrior’s code of honour, now seems either to be absent, or to have been completely to be perverted by those who portray cowardly murders as so many glorious victories and proudly broadcast videos of their crimes on YouTube.”

What is clear is that new ways of waging war are being added to the existing spectrum of conflict. This can prompt one of two responses – either that military ethics as traditionally defined will become decreasingly relevant or that we need to radically change what we understand by military ethics in order to maintain relevance.

We naturally prefer the second of the two options. A world of conflict without ethical boundaries is literally too horrible to contemplate. But how do we keep ethics relevant in these circumstances? How do we continue to move ethics from the realms of philosophy to that of intensely practical application?

At EuroISME’s 12th annual conference in Athens we aim to discuss these fundamental questions.

Dates and venue

On the eve of the conference, Tuesday May 9th, 2023 we will hold an informal reception for all conference participants and their partners. We aim to have this reception at the Hellenic Armed Forces Officers' Club in the centre of Athens, with a view of Aristoteles' Lyceum. The actual conference will begin on Wednesday morning May 10th, and will end on Friday May 12th, around lunch time, at the Hellenic Air Force Academy, on the outskirts of Athens.

Details of the Call for Papers & deadline

All members of EuroISME's audience are invited to submit a paper on the above-mentioned conference theme. Given the increasing number of submissions which EuroISME receives for its annual conferences, and also given limitations of time & space, our policy for submissions is as follows. The following submissions are welcomed:

- **Professional submissions.** This concerns submissions of both the military (active or retired) or academics. The submissions are 850-1000 words (that is two or three pages) in length. These submissions need to give: 1) discuss the societal relevance of the proposed topic; 2) a definition of the research problem; and 3) a summary of conclusions. For academics, we appreciate a description of the research method. Professional submissions will be given a right of priority if the number of submissions received exceeds the number of time-slots available. The authors of these submissions are, of course, invited to submit the full version of their manuscript to the planned conference volume in EuroISME's book series, after the conference. The volume will be published by Martinus Nijhoff.
- **Full panel submissions.** We define a panel session as a time-slot of 90 minutes. A panel has preferably 3, though a maximum of 4, presentations, to be followed by some 20 minutes for questions and answers. In practice, this implies that with three presentations, each presenter has 20 minutes (15 minutes with 4 presentations). A full panel submission will contain the submissions of each of the panellists *plus* the title of the full panel and the Point of Contact on behalf of that panel. A full panel submission should be made by means of a comprehensive email, which includes all the presentation which will be made in that panel. Preference will be given to panels where the panellists come from two or more countries. At request, EuroISME can assist in seeking a moderator or a presenter for a near-complete panel proposal. Here too, the authors are invited to publish with EuroISME's book series.
- **Brief submissions.** Submissions of 250-350 words will be welcomed by the Programme Committee in much the same way as in previous years. If however, the number of submissions received is greater than the number of time-slots available, a preference will be given to professional submissions.
- **Student's submissions.** EuroISME specifically invites cadets, midshipmen and civilian students (Executive Masters or Academic Masters) to submit. This may concern: (1) a submission on research which has been recently concluded, but also (2) on on-going research, whereby the author would appreciate receive input from the audience, including experienced professionals. Thus, we hope to stimulate the involvement of students in the study and application of military ethics. To this effect, the Programme Committee plans to organise a poster session during the conference. During this session, each selected student will receive 10 minutes to present his/her research to the plenary. Subsequently, each student will be offered a corner in the conference hall, where they can – literally with the

poster which summarises their research – can engage interested members of the audience and solicit their advice. Student’s submissions will be 250 words in length. The authors are strongly encouraged to have a sheet of paper, perhaps from a flip-over, (approx. size A2) plus crayons or markers in various colours available during the conference. Providing sufficient interest exists, a member of EuroISME’s Board of Directors will arrange an informal meeting with the students concerned.

All submissions shall be made in the English language, unless specific prior agreement has been made with the chairman of the Programme Committee, Dr. Ted van Baarda prior to the deadline. Upon request, simultaneous translation from the French or German languages can be arranged. All PowerPoint slides must be in English, however.

All submissions shall contain, at the top of the front page: the name, rank and title of the author(s), plus the institution to which they are affiliated, plus contact details. They will also state in which category of submission the author intends to fit.

We do not anticipate remote presentations.

The deadline for submissions is February 1st, 2023; submissions can be sent to Ms. Ivana Gošić at admin@euroisme.eu

Registration

Details on how to register will be announced during the early spring of 2023 on EuroISME’s website www.euroisme.eu

Assistance with travel costs

EuroISME has a limited budget available for prospective presenters at our conference, who cannot attend for financial reasons. Details concerning the application for financial assistance can be found here https://euroisme.eu/images/Documents/EuroISME_Criteria_funding_travelcosts.pdf. Applicants shall bear in mind that all applications must be made before the deadline for submissions expires: 1 February 2023. Applicants will be informed of the decision by EuroISME whether the application has been accepted.

Visa

Greece is a member of the Schengen Area. Conference participants from outside the Schengen Area who need a formal invitation from EuroISME in order to apply for a visa, are advised to contact Ms. Ivana Gošić. Given the fact that the application for a visa may take time, participants are advised to ask for a formal invitation from EuroISME no later than 5 weeks in advance.

All participants are urged to check the COVID-19 regulations in their country of origin before travelling.

Information package and joining instructions

When the dates of the conference draw nearer, all registered conference participants will receive an information package plus joining instructions. This will include information on your transfer from Athens international airport to the city as well as a number of hotels which are suitably close to the Hellenic Air Force Academy. Since there exists no public transport to the Air Force Academy, EuroISME will arrange for shuttle busses from some key hotels.