

**James M. Dubik.** *Just War Reconsidered: Strategy, Ethics, and Theory*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016. 236 pp. \$25.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-8131-7501-0.

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In *Just War Reconsidered*, retired lieutenant general James Dubik explains the ethics of *waging* war as distinct from initiating war and executing war. To emphasize the distinction, he begins with Michael Walzer's clear delineation between political and military activities during war's execution, arguing that the distinction between the responsibilities of political and military leaders is not as clear as Walzer contends. He advances his argument by reviewing the civil-military relations scholarship of Samuel Huntington, Peter Feaver, and Eliot Cohen—favoring Cohen's model of civil-military relations. He uses examples from the Civil War, WWII, Vietnam, Desert Storm, and America's current wars throughout his argument. He offers Cohen's "unequal dialogue" as the best civil-military relations model for ethical war-waging because it best accounts for all of the responsibilities in waging war ethically. However, it is not complete because Cohen does not put enough emphasis on execution. Dubik expands on Cohen's "unequal dialogue" theory of civil-military relations by proposing what he calls a "decision-execution regime." He states, "A performance-oriented, dialogue-execution regime increases the probability of identifying the right set of war aims, strategies, policies, and military campaigns—ones that have a higher probability of success" (p. 129). Such a regime permits political leaders adequate

decision-making input, execution oversight, and adaptability to the changing environment. Such a regime also is necessary to avoid sustained imprudence in war-waging and squandering the lives of citizens-turned-soldiers: "This kind of error is the kind of failure that deserves moral blame, even if it does not reflect legal guilt" (p. 175). Given the moral implications of waging war poorly, Dubik concludes that current just war theory has not adequately represented the war-waging responsibilities of political and military leaders, and offers his model to fill this gap.

*Just War Reconsidered* is a fantastic, well-reasoned, well-supported argument for viewing civil-military relations through an ethical lens, but would require further adaptation if it is to fit properly in just war doctrine. Accepting the distinct line that Michael Walzer draws between political and military activity certainly influences the way one reasons about civil-military relations. Dubik rightly stretches this distinct line into a shaded area of gray that encompasses both civil and military leadership responsibilities. He proposes that the strategic responsibilities of both political and military leaders during war's execution have as much ethical importance as the tactical actions of the soldiers in the field, and the fact that this is not considered in Walzerian just war theory, he argues, represents a significant gap in

*jus in bello* reasoning: “*Jus in bello* must include not only the responsibilities of soldiers and their leaders in battle, but also the responsibilities that senior military leaders have at the strategic level. ... Morality should demand ... that there be some way to assess the number and frequency of mistakes made by those who wage war as well as the speed or slowness with which those who wage war learn and improve” (p. 26). It is their moral duty to their society to strive for the best war aims, strategies, and policies. To neglect this duty is to incur moral guilt. He highlights Lyndon Johnson and his generals during Vietnam, and the Bush administration in the Rumsfeld era as examples of poor war-waging worthy of moral scrutiny. Ultimately, Dubik makes a sound argument that to accept a distinct line between political and military activities during war is to miss the clear moral relevance of waging war properly. Yet he not only highlights this deficiency; he also proposes a solution.

To wage war well, states must account for the complexity of war in both the political and military domains. This requires a civil-military relations construct adequate to the task. Dubik begins with Huntington’s objective control theory and notes how it lays the foundation for Walzer’s distinction between political and military responsibilities. But, as noted above, such a framework does not adequately represent the common war-waging responsibilities of both political and military leaders. Dubik also assesses Peter Feaver’s “principal-agent” framework and determines that it is overly focused on military obedience, and that it risks excluding essential elements of waging war morally. Finally, Dubik assesses Eliot Cohen’s “unequal dialogue” and finds that its purpose is to “arrive at a set of decisions that have the greatest probability of protecting the life of the political community and using well the lives of the innocent and of citizens-who-become-soldiers—not merely to establish who is dominant over whom” (p. 94). He goes on to modify the construct, noting that Cohen does not emphasize the

ongoing responsibilities during execution, and proposes what he calls the “decision-execution regime” as a model to address this oversight. The primary difference is that significant effort must be put into ensuring execution of decisions if they are going to have their intended effects. This involves diligence in ensuring the bureaucracies execute appropriately: “The probability of wartime success ... is at the heart of the strategic dimension of *jus in bello*—prudence in waging war. The probability of success increases when a properly conducted performance-oriented, dialogue-execution regime is used” (p. 133). He demonstrates and supports this conclusion well. However, his argument lacks the “meta” perspective required to be adopted as just war theory.

Just war theory proposes the principles that define just decisions and actions in initiating war (*jus ad bellum*) and executing war (*jus in bello*). The principles offered by each category supervene internal state ordering and function and have been intentionally framed to remain agnostic to regime type. Dubik’s proposed principles offer a way for a populace to judge its government in war time, but lack the scope to be used by one state to judge another without requiring detailed consideration of internal ordering. The most telling way to determine the relevance of this addition to just war theory is to propose the question, “Is this how I want my enemy to act in war?” When considering the traditional principles of just war theory, the answer is yes—I want my enemy to initiate war only for just reasons, and I want them to prosecute war justly by respecting the rights of noncombatants and limiting their actions to only those necessary to achieve legitimate military objectives. However, one should be hesitant to answer affirmatively the question, “Do I want my enemy to internally order itself such that it can achieve the best strategy to optimize its likelihood for success?” Such a position is unreasonable, and it is the sort of position Dubik proposes if his model were to be adopted in just war theory. Yet, he rightly notes earlier in the book that wag-

ing war poorly can prolong it unnecessarily and incur further unnecessary loss of life. This aspect of war-waging is more likely to have “meta-applicability” such that it could drive a reconsideration of the principles of just war if it were developed more fully. This criticism, however, does not in any way diminish the relevance and even necessity of adopting Dubik’s civil-military relations theory into government processes. This is, perhaps, a moral imperative.

Americans, having been engaged in multiple wars across South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa over the past decade and a half, should reflect on how we wage war. Dubik proposes a model that challenges not only political and military leaders to dialogue, but also requires the massive government bureaucracies to execute—both areas which have been problematic since the wars began. This book is most applicable to senior military and political professionals as well as the bureaucracies they lead. The lives of citizens-turned-soldiers are at stake and it is the moral responsibility of all involved in the decision and execution processes to ensure that aims, strategies, and policies are well reasoned and well executed.

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