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Book Review: The Ethics of Intelligence: A New Framework (Studies in Intelligence Series)

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Review of *The Ethics of Intelligence: A New Framework (Studies in Intelligence Series)*

The Ethics of Intelligence: A New Framework (Studies in Intelligence Series), First Edition. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. 2014. ISBN: 978-0-415-82104-9. 204 pages.

The Ethics of Intelligence by Ross W. Bellaby provides a launching point for philosophical and ethical debate regarding intelligence practices in the collection phase of the intelligence cycle using methods in electronic (ELINT), human (HUMINT), and imagery (IMINT) means to develop intelligence in the name of national security. The central question revolves around when and *if* intelligence operations, specifically collection activities, should be conducted and at what acceptable level of harm they should they be permitted. Ross W. Bellaby, Ph.D. is a lecturer of International Relations in the Political Science Department at the University of Sheffield and posits the intelligence profession should develop and recognize a systematic ethical review, much in the same vein as the military does to determine kinetic and non-kinetic force during combat operations. Just War principles are based on proportionality of harm weighed against the benefits achieved to guide the practice of warfare, but in this instance, Bellaby considers the practice of intelligence operations. *The Ethics of Intelligence* is a suitable book for all levels of intelligence professionals and students, from novices developing critical thinking for decision-making purposes to seasoned officers as a reminder to replenish the perishable skills of considering the ethics of intelligence activities.

As a means to measure and substantiate the moral dilemmas in the proportionality between harm and the greater good, Bellaby relates the levels of harm as a structure he calls the Ladder of Escalation. This ladder moves from levels one through six, each rung of the ladder bringing a greater degree of harm to a target during an intelligence collection effort: from the mild such as betrayal and distrust to the extreme such as death or mutilation. To determine the rung on which an activity should be placed, one must define what constitutes a “just target” versus an “unjust target” for exploitation. For example, the use of known government officials in their overt capacity is considered level 1: by position, those individuals should expect to be targeted. In contrast, a private citizen recorded in their own domicile is unjust because they have a reasonable expectation of privacy and protection in that particular setting.

The Just War principles serve as a comparison to the Just Intelligence principles based on the belief that individuals have, at a certain level, an innate right to privacy and freedom from extreme levels of harm to maintain free will. At what point does the harm to a collection target or method outweigh the greater good produced for national security? At what point is the harm too great to produce benefits for national security, and if the collection efforts reach that level, who is ultimately responsible?

A thoughtful examination of the methods used to collect also aids in determining where the example will be placed on the Ladder of Escalation. These range from CCTV footage in a public place and voluntary “walk-in” recruits at the lowest level of harm, whereas physical, emotional, and psychological torture is unacceptable in all circumstances for both reliability of information and human morality and ethical conscience; this serves no purpose and therefore ranks at the highest level of harm. Bellaby provides real-life accounts of the examples to explain why the examples deserve the placement they are given.

The backdrop of the book is a review of basic human needs and how psychology plays a role in decisions to conduct activities that produce some level of harm and suspension of free will against another human being in the name of national security. In light of alleged atrocities in Guantanamo Bay, Abu Ghraib, and the abuse of agency powers to monitor U.S. person activities at home and abroad, *The Ethics of Intelligence* encourages the reader to think critically about the role intelligence plays in national security as well as ponder where the limitations of its use should reside in strategic and operational level decisions. Despite technological advances and the evolutionary threat environment, ethical decision-making skills will always be applicable for intelligence professionals. *The Ethics of Intelligence* should be a recommended reading for all levels of intelligence-related curriculum.

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