

*Ethics and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Religious and Secular Perspectives*,  
Sohail H. Hashmi and Steven P. Lee, eds. (New York: Cambridge University Press,  
2004), 534 pp., \$85 cloth, \$37.99 paper.

Chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons have long been the subject of special scrutiny. The arguments about the moral standing of nuclear weapons go back to the 1940s, and there is a long-standing consensus that chemical weapons are morally different from conventional arms: the Romans condemned poisoning even enemy wells in war, and the moral arguments against chemical weapons underlay the banning of their first use in war through the Geneva Convention of 1925. More recently, in 2003, the Bush administration asserted that searching for WMD was reason enough for military intervention in Iraq. However, the moral reasoning behind the reactions against chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons has not always been clearly articulated. This collection systematically elucidates ethical arguments about WMD and war.

There are two elements that set this volume apart from the many books and articles written in the 1980s and 1990s on the morality of nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence. The first is the very wide range of religious and secular ethical traditions applied to the issues. The authors make arguments about WMD from the perspectives of Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, feminism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, liberalism, natural law, pacifism, and realism. The result is a splendid, thoughtful contribution to the literature on ethics in war. The second innovation is the explicit inclusion of chemical and biological weapons along with nuclear arms in the analysis. The results are somewhat uneven because many of the contributors have not grappled with the implications of the technical material on chemical and biological

weapons presented by Susan B. Martin in the first chapter.

Not all chemical and biological weapons have the same effects. Their capabilities range from causing stinging eyes and flu-like illness, to death within seconds of direct exposure, to plagues that could devastate humanity. In the introduction and conclusion, however, Steven P. Lee explains why the editors believe that chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons belong in the same category in ethical terms. All are indiscriminate, in the sense that they do not have a specific human target. Moreover, he argues, the psychological connection between even the mildest chemical or biological weapons and the most extreme is tight, so that “slippery slope”-type arguments about initiating nonlethal chemical or biological attacks are plausible (pp. 9–11). Reasonable people may differ on the substance of Lee’s conclusion. The distinctions among and between the effects of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons are significant enough, however, that a moral argument needs to consider them, if only to discount their ethical importance. Yet, most of the authors in the volume analyze the morality of using strategic nuclear weapons in war and for deterrent purposes, and then simply extend their conclusions, without further argument, to all types of chemical and biological weapons.

One of the greatest strengths of *Ethics and Weapons of Mass Destruction* is that it explores the differing conceptions of war and violence *within* the various traditions. For example, Buddhism encompasses warrior monks and pacifists. Western realists wrestle with the dangers of WMD just as Western liberals do. Contemporary Islam

contains three broad views on war and the use of WMD. So, too, the volume recognizes that different individuals may legitimately have somewhat different understandings of the traditions and the significance of traditional perspectives for warfare. Two authors, a primary expositor and a responder, consider each of the eleven traditions. This format allows even a reader not well versed in a tradition to pick up substantive nuances that otherwise might well be missed. Two views of the same tradition also encourage more experienced readers to engage actively in reflection on the authors' arguments. Despite the diversity of perspectives it addresses, the book coheres well because each of the authors was asked to address the same six questions about war and violence and WMD use, possession, and deterrence.

Robert Holmes and Duane Cady both explain why pacifists do not recognize the legitimacy of war, and therefore categorically object to attempts to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable weaponry. Not surprisingly, the authors of the chapters on the other traditions find their respective traditions internally divided. Buddhism, Christianity, natural law, liberalism, and feminism each developed pacifist and pragmatic schools of thought about war itself, even though there is more unanimity on WMD. The authors show that the beliefs of Buddhists, Christians, Confucians, Hindus, Jews, liberals, Muslims, proponents of natural law, and even realists lend weight to a presumption against using such weapons in war. The authors of these chapters draw a

different conclusion on deterrence. All find at least conditional support for some form of WMD possession and threat to deter international actors who do not have qualms about the use of such weapons in war. The degree of parallel thinking among the traditions is genuinely striking.

A reader determined to do so can make small quibbles. Sohail H. Hashmi does not distinguish between Muslim pragmatism and pragmatists who happen to be Muslim. The chapters on the natural law tradition, Christianity, political liberalism, and pragmatic feminism are somewhat repetitious because the development of these traditions throughout history was so intertwined. For example, it is certainly appropriate to discuss Western just war theory from the perspective of each, and also from a Western pacifist perspective; the result, however, is eight accounts of just war theory. Concentrating on this overlapping conception leaves otherwise hard to explain gaps: no one explores the thinking of utilitarian liberals, such as John Stuart Mill, or pacifist Christian communities, such as the Quakers or Mennonites.

*Ethics and Weapons of Mass Destruction* will interest specialists in comparative ethics, the ethics of war, and the moral questions raised by nuclear weapons. This, however, is a book that should be much more widely read. It is hard to think of a topic so little understood that is more timely for practitioners and their staffs.

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*Green Giants? Environmental Policies of the United States and the European Union*, Norman J. Vig and Michael G. Faure, eds. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 398 pp., \$67 cloth, \$27 paper.

Two of the major players in current international environmental politics are the United

States and the European Union. Between them, these two actors account for almost