

## SUN TZU AWARD

(Complete and submit to your respective Platoon Commander upon finishing a book on the Commandant's Reading List)

### United States Marine Corps Commandant's Professional Reading List Discussion Guide Updated 14 DEC 2012

This guide is intended to help Marines think about and discuss the books they read. All answers or responses should be embraced as *relevant*; there is no single right answer. All Sun Tzu Award submissions will be reviewed and boarded at the end of each month.

Date: 20140925

Rank: [REDACTED]

Name: [REDACTED]

Platoon/Section: [REDACTED]

Book: *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*

Author: Michael Walzer

1. In as few words as possible, what is this book about?

*Just and Unjust Wars* by Michael Walzer is a moral and philosophical look into acceptable justifications to engage in war (jus ad bellum) and acceptable wartime conduct (jus in bello).

2. What made you want to read it?

As a Marine, my business is war. It is my duty to become educated and proficient in all aspects of war; especially including its morality.

3. Did it live up to your expectations? Why? Why not?

The book met and exceeded my expectations. The approach to the morality of war was practical and consisted of actual judgements and justifications of historical examples of war, rather than dry disconnected political theory.

4. Did you learn anything new? If so, what?

I became more familiar with the specificities of the legalist paradigm and the theory of aggression in the field of international relations in regards to inter-state violence. The theory contains six key propositions;

- (1) An international society of states exists.
- (2) Within said society, laws exist which establish the rights of it's members; primarily territorial integrity and political sovereignty.
- (3) The use of force or the imminent threat of force against these rights is considered the aggression and is a crime.
- (4) Aggression justifies either a war in self-defense by the victim or a war of law enforcement by other members of international society.
- (5) Only the crime of aggression justifies war. There are no exceptions.
- (6) The aggressor may be punished by the victim or other members of international society once it has been defeated.

Each point was further expanded upon in the book, and was illustrated through examples from both history and contemporary international politics.

5. Which part of the book did you find most interesting?

I was interested by the sections of the book about acceptable conduct in wartime; more specifically the parts which applied to the actions of individual soldiers. Two examples of this were the chapters on guerilla warfare and on terrorism. These parts interested me because it directly relates to my current position within the Marine Corps as a junior enlisted Marine.

6. Did this book inspire you to want to do more research on the subject? Why? Why not?

This book brought to my attention the responsibility of the individual Marine to make moral decisions in regards to his actions during wartime. While this issue is briefly broached in boot camp, it is not gone over in detail and is quickly forgotten. Due to the attention that is given to the issue in this book, I have taken it upon myself to research more about Nuremberg Principle IV and the jurisprudence refuting the Nuremberg Defense.

7. Would you recommend it to a friend or another Marine? Why? Why not?

I unreservedly recommend this book to my friends and to other Marines. As American citizens it is our moral duty to understand the consequences of our country going to war, and as warfighting professionals it is again our duty to understand the moral ramifications of our conduct during war. To ignore either duty is irresponsible and unethical.

8. Does the subject of the book affect your life? If so, how? If no, why not?

As both an American citizen and as a warfighting professional, I am affected both by the decision to go to war and by the need to conduct myself in a moral manner during war. As with all manner of things, to develop an ability (in this instance, the ability to make moral decisions) training and practice is necessary. While it is absolutely possible to make correct moral decisions without any previous experience or training, it is obviously more desirable to be as prepared as possible for situations which may arise in the future. This book has been exceedingly useful in creating an internal dialogue and giving me some training in the field of the morality of warfare. For this reason I consider it necessary to 'mentally exercise' in preparation for the possible future.

9. What evidence does the author use to support their ideas?

Throughout the book, the author cites real-world examples to better illustrate the points which he is making. One such example is the author's application of his interpretation of just war theory to the 2003 American invasion and reconstructions of Iraq. The author asserts that regime change is intrinsically not a morally justifiable reason for going to war; that while a war is just when a regime is actively committing atrocities, the mere capacity to do so is not an acceptable reason. The 2003 invasion is also compared with the regime change, political reconstruction and democratization of post-WWII Germany, and the differences that exist between the two situations are explained.

10. Are the issues raised in the book controversial? Why?

The issues are controversial in two different ways; first, the author states that it is possible to judge war morally. This assertion itself is not shared by the realist school of thought in international relations theory, which considers warfare to be beyond, and outside of normal moral judgements.

The legalist paradigm which the author espouses is also controversial because of the severe restrictions that it places on warfare; both many contemporary international relations theories and many governments disagree with the author's definition of a 'just war'. Many private citizens will also take issue with the judgements that the author makes; in the preface the author uses the 2003 American invasion and reconstruction of Iraq as an example of an unjust war, something which some readers will disagree with.

11. Does the author offer solutions to the problems raised in the book? How probable is their success? Can you think of additional solutions?

The foundation of the book is the problem of applying morality to warfare, both in its conduct and its justifications. The author uses just war theory and the legalist paradigm to apply morality to warfare, and through this is able to make definitive moral judgements.

While the method used does successfully offer solutions to morally judging warfare, being able to judge an activity is merely an academic exercise until it affects the outside world and the conduct of states. As far as I am aware, just war theory is only used in academic circles and (in a limited manner) political discourse, and is not used to determine the course of action for states.

In my opinion when it comes to actually affecting the international system, states are far more likely to take a realist approach their conduct and to warfare. States have, and will continue to, act in their own self interest without any real higher power which holds them answerable for their actions in an inherently anarchic international system.

12. If you were to talk with the author, what would you ask him or her?

I would prefer to work my way through examples of warfare throughout history and attempt to apply just war theory to them. While I think that I currently have a decent grasp on his views, practical application of these theories along with his guidance will greatly aid my understanding.

13. Have you read the author's other books? Can you discern a similarity (in theme, writing style, structure, etc.) between them, or are they completely different?

I have not read any of the author's other books. However as far as I am aware, his political views are broadly similar throughout his other works. Since I enjoyed this work, I intend to read more of the author's books and articles.

14. After reading this book, have your views on the subject changed? Why? Why not?

After reading this book I do not think that my views have changed. However my views on the acceptable justifications for war and acceptable conduct in war have certainly matured. Whereas previously I had not devoted significant time to reflect on personal moral conduct in warfare (particularly as it applies to individual Marines or soldiers), now I consider it necessary for me and for my peers to spend time thinking about the subject.

Also prior to reading the book I considered myself to subscribe to the realist theory of international relations, where states act primarily in their own self-interests and where the international system exists in a state of anarchy without a legitimate higher central enforcement authority. After finishing the book, I understand the legalist paradigm and the theory of aggression point of view much better and accept that many of the basic propositions are worth considering and should be considered in any discussion about acceptable justifications to engage in war.

15. Why should Marines read this book?

It is our duty to become educated and proficient in all aspects of war; especially including its morality. It becomes exponentially easier to act morally in our wartime conduct if we have previously taken the time examining the moral issues with which we may be faced and have prepared ourselves for them.