

HSIR14: Professional Ethics

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WEAPON DEVELOPMENT AND ETHICS

**ENGINEERING ETHICS**

Engineering is the process of developing an efficient mechanism that quickens and eases the work using limited resources with the help of technology. Ethics are the principles accepted by society, which also equate to the moral standards of human beings. An engineer with ethics can help an organization in a better way. The study of Engineering ethics, where the engineers implement ethics, is necessary for the good of society. Engineering Ethics is the study of decisions, policies, and values that are morally desirable in engineering practice and research.

**WEAPON DEVELOPMENT**

Based on the size of expenditures, direct or indirect involvement of engineers, and innovative developments, military technology is an area that calls for serious discussion on engineering ethics. For some engineers, their participation with weapons develops conflicts with personal consciences, such as knowing that making weapons in a company is the job that would be done by someone else if he doesn't do it and cannot change the results.

One takes pride and honour in participating in the activities for the nation's defence. One believes that he fights war terrorism and thereby contributes to the peace and stability of the country. Ironically, the wars have never won peace. Only peace can prevail peace. The engineer reduces or eliminates the risk of enemy weapons through research and development and saves one's country from disaster. A government can force the rogue toward regulation by building-up arsenals and show of force.

**WHY IS WEAPON DEVELOPMENT ETHICS IS IMPORTANT FOR ENGINEER?**

Though war seems to be part of human nature, the development of weapons engineering can significantly reduce the harm produced by war. Hopefully, with the help of engineers, future wars can be fought more peacefully with more innovative weapons that protect the interests of soldiers and civilians alike.

**WHAT SHOULD WE PRIORITISE?**

These engineers face a multitude of ethical dilemmas. The primary aim of their daily work is to maximise the capabilities of the weapon owners to cause direct physical harm to people and structures. On the surface this obviously goes against fundamental respect for life.

One positive aspect of weapon advancement is that automated and remotely controlled technologies have enabled countries to defend themselves with fewer human soldiers risking their lives. Conversely, this also implies that nations can fight wars with far fewer soldiers, which could have resulted in wealthier countries being more easily convinced into engaging in conflicts.

However, from a utilitarian perspective the continued sustainment of a powerful military enables a country to defend its people as well as aiding in foreign conflicts that may be causing suffering for the population in that area, thereby doing the best for the most people. For these reasons it is ethically understandable why an engineer may wish to facilitate the continued development of technologies of violence.

With these advancements, infringements on the previously discussed moral 'law' against killing can be drastically reduced, perhaps allowing utilitarian priorities to take precedence. However, despite the vast reductions in fatalities, the question remains. Can any violent loss of life be considered acceptable?