
(JUST) PEACE THEORY: THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF WAR

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This article revises and expands parts of two projects I have done. One project was my 2007 *Infantry Magazine* article “Proactive Peace,” in which I delineated peace as naïve, cold war, transitional, and proactive. The second was a presentation I made at the 2011 American Sociological Association conference. I argued for a general theory of ethics in terms of resolving what I call the goal-act problem. Resolution in one area brings us to the goal to defeat the enemy through nonviolent, daily, routine acts of doing good which turn potential foes away from eventual violence. In that presentation, I briefly alluded to the Just War Theory associated with preventing terrorism.¹

Since September 11, scholars have been discussing the Just War Theory with unprecedented regularity. My problem is the significance we are giving to Just War, as though it is all but unassociated with other academic discourse and all but stands by itself. Scholars imply that understanding Just War requires that we start and end with that theory. They do not appreciate that Just War is, indeed, an aspect of a larger topic: Just Peace Theory.

This article explores a theory of peace as a fourfold taxonomy of goal and acts: goal alone, co-proactive peace, reactive war, and anarchy. My views should not be interpreted as anti-military nor pacifism. In the real world, war is probably inevitable and the military essential. Correcting our views of peace and war brings us to emphasize the former while appreciating the need for Just War should enemies attack. In the real world, the reasons for war become increasingly clear. A technological age and its sophisticated weapons including nuclear-biological-chemical abilities, coupled with threats of terrorism, bring urgency to the realization that nonviolent, social programs before and during war are the best answers toward defeating the enemy.

GOAL ALONE: ONGOING WAR. Thomas Hobbes argues that human beings live in a state of war.² People contract into the state to protect themselves against others. In goal alone, we “defeat” the enemy simply by the mechanical, technical, perpetual killing of enemies. Society raises children and tells them an enemy exists to be killed. The enemy dies during war. The good guys “defeat” the bad guys.

GOAL ALONE: JUST PASSIVE PEACE. The state alone prevents war and violence. Governments alone have the duty to be proactive and defeat an enemy by turning potential foes away from violence. Individuals or citizens have no responsibility to prevent war. We do not limit peoples’ opportunities, only their actions. The state alone will say “no” when individuals or groups violate rules, laws, etiquette, etc., instead of when they apply for jobs, residences, and the like. The state nonviolently turns a potential enemy from violence or war. The good guy (the state) “defeats” the potentially bad guy by government preventing war without the help of citizens.

GOAL AS A FUNCTION OF STATE AND COACTIVE ACTS: JUST PEACE. In Just Coactive Peace, the state is only one of two partners preventing war. Individuals are responsible for doing their part. The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) announces with regularity, “if you see something, say something.”

Jessica Stern’s 2003 book *Terror in the Name of God* notes how some terrorist groups provide social programs during peace time to recruit youth into their groups for future violence against the West. Such social programs in the West could help turn youth away from violence. Stern mentioned social structures and programs including schools, athletics, and hospitals. This is akin to the phenomenological movement in philosophy, where Edmund Husserl wrote that society consists of social structures such as schools, athletics, hospitals, etc.³ People are human beings and not just numbers. The state, in partnership with its citizens, nonviolently turns potential enemies from violence or war. The good guys, both state and individuals, peacefully defeat the potential enemy.

FROM PEACETIME TO WARTIME: DUALISM OF TIME. Many wars have been those — such as World Wars I and II and the war on terrorism after September 11 — where an enemy evolves and attacks during peace. Here, a period of peace is followed by a period of war. Nations must then, during war, engage in just war. But in so doing, why was there war in the first place? Let me consider three points.

From Unjust to Just War — We must reintroduce unjust war into just war. That is, reintroduce realpolitik into just war. In doing so, we reintroduce unconstrained killing (negating life) into constrained killing (negating life). Realpolitik or political realism says that we ought to fight wars with little constraint on killing the enemy. Augustine and Aquinas tell us to object to unjust war. Christians ought to object to war. Since war appears inevitable, it ought to be justified — or just war. This is akin to analyzing homicide. Murder is unjustified; justifiable homicide, taking of life when the innocent are threatened, is justified. Just war can involve “transitional war” as the nation seeks to integrate social programs for helping minimize violence. A just war can also involve a cold war if two superpowers find their troops confronting each other in battle.

From Wartime to Peacetime — First, defeating a potential enemy ought to occur during peace to prevent war. The enemy is nonviolently stopped from evolving into a real or actual one. However, in other cases such as WWI and II and September 11, an enemy evolves and attacks, and the nation must go from peace to war. A “transitional peace” can occur as a nation reintroduces war into peace, attempting to transition from naïve (unjust and overly just) peace, to a proactive “just peace.” Peace has become distorted from just peace to either unjust or overly just peace. Defeat of the enemy is nonviolent during just peace while violence is used to

defeat the enemy in unjust war and not defeated at all during overly peace. Once the enemy evolves and attacks, defeat then transforms from nonviolent social programs to violence and killing. This is dualism of time, which needs to be resolved.

Philosophy has two ways of resolving dualism. The field of philosophy has phenomenological and analytic thinking. Both seek to resolve the mind/body problem found in the philosophy of Rene Descartes. Descartes said mind and body were two different substances that coexist. Gilbert Ryle is an analytic thinker who resolves coexisting dualism by eliminating mind.⁴ Analytic philosophers generally believe that only physical, visible objects are real. Ryle argues that a visitor to Oxford University sees individual buildings and playing fields, but no “university” separate from what he or she sees. The university, says Ryle, is the way the buildings and fields are organized. For Ryle, defeating the enemy ought to be just the way nonviolent, peacetime acts are organized — preventing war. Paul Ricoeur is a phenomenologist who says we overcome mind-body dualism by reintroducing mind into body: the person is an embodied thinker or someone with an anatomy, physiology, etc., who thinks.⁵ In Just Peace Theory’s dualism, we acknowledge that society has made a dualism of two “times,” peacetime and a time of violently defeating the enemy. That is, we have a chronological goal (defeating the enemy by killing him after he attacks and breaks the peace) and act (daily acts during peace which did not prevent war) dualism. For Ricoeur, we need to reintroduce “defeat” of wartime into “acts” of peacetime (as found in Stern’s book), to overcome goal-act dualism.

From Unjust to Just Peace — But reintroducing defeat (as killing and war) into peacetime acts is only part of it. Peace can be just, unjust, and overly just peace. Thus, if we reintroduce defeat (as killing) into peace and nonviolence, we must then reintroduce unjust peace (saying no to people’s just acts and opportunities) into just peace (saying no only to illegal and unethical acts). Thus, just peace becomes foundations of peace and the foundations of preventing war. Just peace also, in preventing war, is the prevention of even just war.

ANARCHY AS OVERLY JUST WAR. In anarchy as overly just war, a nation is not defeating an enemy in a typical sense of taking life such as in just war. There is much risk to its soldiers as they confront an enemy. Where unjust war says there are few if any constraints on taking life (violent defeat of the enemy), overly just war would maintain the opposite. There are so many constraints on taking life that we are overly just toward the enemy. Rules of engagement are such that they favor the enemy and put an innocent nation’s soldiers at maximum risk. In Aristotle’s virtue ethics and the golden mean, overly just peace is deficit justice in war.⁶ Just war is the golden mean between unjust and overly just war.

ANARCHY AS OVERLY JUST PEACE. In anarchy as overly just peace, a nation is not defeating an enemy — or at least not in a typical sense of preventing war. Where overly just war means virtually no constraints (rules of engagement)

on the enemy, overly just peace involves virtually no constraints on potential enemies during peace. People

will violate the law, and society may or may not arrest them. After arrests, the courts will not impose appropriate sentences on them. This

is the opposite of unjust peace. Given Aristotle’s golden

mean rejecting excesses and deficits in behavior, overly just peace is deficit justice. Just peace is the golden mean between unjust and overly just peace.

ANARCHY AS NAÏVE PEACE. No enemy exists. There is no enemy to defeat even nonviolently. If Hobbes said that we live in a state of war, the opposite pole would say we live in a state of peace. A naïve state of nature is a peaceful state. Potential enemies do not exist in an extreme form of naïve peace.

The Just War Theory cannot stand by itself. As with World Wars I and II and the war on terrorism, this violence results from peace gone wrong. Society needs just peace as the foundations of preventing even just war. Preventing war, even just war, is insufficient. A nation must co-prevent just war through citizen participation in prevention. Just war cannot be analyzed by itself as though having no connection with (just) peace.

Peace as the social context of war, specifically just war, consists of the taxonomy of four ways of looking at the goal of defeating an enemy: goal alone (war and passive prevention), goal through just peace, reactive war, and anarchy. This does not mean humanity will or can eliminate war or that I advocate an anti-military stance. In the real world, war will probably recur time and time again, and we will require a sound, sophisticated, well-trained military. However, in discussing just war, both scholar and layperson need to rethink the social context of defeating an enemy. Such dialogue in and out of academia emphasizing just peace is a step toward realizing the importance of analyzing and co-preventing even just war.

Notes

¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II.

² Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1909).

³ Edmund Husserl, *Crisis in European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

⁴ Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1966).

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