

War, Peace, and Pacifism

Comments by Dan Young: 11/8/06

1. Political institutions and actions are either *not* subject to moral evaluation or they *are* subject to such evaluation. The mainstream of the Christian tradition has held they are indeed subject to such evaluation. This includes the relations between states.
2. The tools of foreign policy are diplomacy, sanctions, and war. The “just war” tradition, perhaps better called the “justifiable war” tradition, is an attempt to reflect morally on the use of the tools of statecraft.
3. A primary function of government is to protect the innocent from harm to person or property and to vindicate those innocent who have been harmed. Hence there are military and police forces to protect citizens from external and internal foes. Fulfilling this function may involve the threat or use of force, perhaps even deadly force. This would seem to rule out pacifism, unless one is willing to argue that the use of deadly force is a greater evil than the harming of the innocent.
4. Vindicating the innocent who have been harmed involves some form of judicial structure to vindicate the innocent who have been harmed. Such structures, i.e., law courts, are well-developed domestically (at least in well-governed states). Internationally, the judicial power falls to the sovereign state, although there are embryonic forms of law courts. This judicial function may also involve the use of possibly deadly force, so as to apprehend or restrain the accused or convicted.
5. Over the course of several centuries, a tradition of thought has developed as to when and how force against other states may be used in the service of justice. A summary of the criteria follows. These criteria are only a guide to decision-making, not a checklist that will prove that a particular war is just or unjust.

I. Justice in Going to War (Is Fighting Justifiable?) (ius ad bellum)

A. Deontological Criteria

•Just Cause

- Punishment of evil
- Retaking that which is wrongly taken
- Defense of the innocent against armed attack

•Right Authority

- Only public authority may use force (big debate: UN or sovereign state?)

•Right Intention

- Actual intent must be to further the just cause

B. Prudential Criteria

•**Proportionality of Ends**

–The good achieved by use of force must be greater than harm done

•**Last Resort**

–A determination that no other means will succeed

•**Reasonable Hope of Success**

–A judgment that the use of force will succeed in its objectives

•**The Aim of Peace**

–The intended post-war scenario (security, etc)

II. Justice in War (Fighting Justly) (ius in bello)

•**Non-combatant immunity**

–Only targeting military targets

•**Proportionality of means**

–Prohibition of unnecessary harm

6. Within contemporary just war thought there is a debate as to whether there is a presumption towards justice or towards peace.