

Lisa Causley
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Todd Kukula
Philosophy

Can Terrorism Be Justified By the “Just War” Theory?

Guidelines have existed for centuries in regard to the justifications for war. The Just War theory provides a litmus test for war justification. In order for a war to be justified, 2 criteria should exist before hand, the right to go to war and the actions of conduct once a war has begun. These 2 criteria are termed “Jus ad bellum” and “Jus in bello”. First and foremost, a war has to have certain particulars. “War is a phenomenon which occurs *only* between political communities, defined as those entities which either are states or intend to become states (in order to allow for civil war).

” (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/war/>) so, according to the generally accepted definition, in order for war to begin to be justified it must first be a conflict between two accepted “states”. “The state refers much more narrowly to the machinery of government which organizes life in a given territory.” (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/war/>) Jus ad bellum defines the reasoning for going to war. Before going to war a state must have: 1.) a just reason for going to war; 2.) be comparative in reasoning and capabilities; 3.) a legitimate authority; 4.) justifiable intentions; 5.) somewhat sure of the success probability; 6.) use war as a last resort to the conflict; 7.) retaliation must be equal to the antagonism. Jus in bello defines the conduct that takes place in war. Once in war, a state has a responsibility to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner; 1.) Any act of war has to be directed only at the enemy, not civilians; 2.) the attacks must be proportional; 3.) strictly military encounters with minimal civilian exposure.

Although, the definition clearly states that only those groups recognized as a legitimate state can enter into war, what happens when a “legitimate” state disenfranchises a group not considered a state?

When an established state confronts a non-established state should the non-established be deemed a terrorist state?

When the United States “discovered” America were they considered terrorist?

Were they considered terrorist when they invaded Mexico? It is my belief that the question and uncertainty really lies in the true definition of “statehood”. Who determines who gets statehood?

The conflict that has constant in modern history is the fact that all too often those “established” states are not abiding

by the “jus in bello”. Their conduct has mimicked the profile of tyrants all too often.

Yet on the other hand, terrorist have not abided by the rules of engagement either. To blow up innocent civilians in public places is just as bad as the former. It is in my opinion that before one is considered to be an official state, the past practices must be investigated to discover and past improprieties and or abuse of Just War theory. In my opinion, terrorism or “just war” can never be justified by any group that has abused the rules of engagement.