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# 1 Introduction

War as a subject of study and research has held a fascination for scholars for hundreds of years. As a result one can find books, articles, pamphlets and websites on many different dimensions of war. Authors have addressed issues such as why nations go to war, how wars are fought, the personal experience of war, the impact of war and the evolution of warfare itself. Subsequent scholars have drawn upon the work of others as diverse as Thucydides, Clausewitz and Keegan in an effort to come to some conclusion about the nature of war, whether that be about tactics or strategy, causes or consequences. Some writers revel in the details of battles or the minutiae of gun calibres, while others look at grand schemes and epic encounters. This book addresses the history of America's participation in the major wars of the twentieth century, looking at the factors that brought America into those wars, what contribution America made to fighting the wars and what happened on the United States home front as a consequence of being engaged in fighting a war. It also investigates the moral implications of those wars. It seeks to apply the wider ideas of the field of just war theory to the specifics of the United States' involvement in the four major wars of the 1900s. Is it possible, by looking at United States' participation in the First World War, the Second World War and at the wars in Korea and Vietnam, to come to some overall conclusion about the impact of those wars on America? How did these wars affect the government's foreign policy and what impact did they have on the home front? Ultimately one wants to know what these wars did to change America and how the United States' participation reflected its major concerns at the time. In order to do this it is perhaps helpful to look at these wars and their impact on the United States in terms of just war theory on two levels.

In just war theory the argument is made that there is a right and a wrong way to fight wars. The justice of war (*jus ad bellum*) theory relies

on the basic idea that aggression is wrong and those countries that act aggressively and start wars are in the wrong. The justice in war (*jus in bello*) theory suggests that once wars have begun there is a right and a wrong way of fighting them. There are legitimate and illegitimate targets and participants. Within the theory there is now reference to how wars end (*jus post bellum*) suggesting that there is a right and a wrong way to bring the fighting to a conclusion. While this rather simplistic explanation of just war theory is further refined in the works of just war theorists, most people understand war at the basic level of justice of war and justice in war. It is the rules of war that we turn to when we discuss war, whether that be wars of the past or present. Although we may not articulate our beliefs by using the language of just war theorists, we do tend to pass judgements on governments and people with regard to their actions during war.

It is sometimes easier to recognise the bad behaviour of governments and soldiers than it is to explain it. For instance, most people would consider the news of atrocities or the mistreatment of prisoners of war in an unfavourable light. There are scores of examples from history of public outrage when details of events such as this are revealed. One has only to look at the daily newspaper accounts of the violence in Iraq in 2006–2007 and the unfolding story of mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners by United States and British forces to realise that these attitudes of outrage against injustice are very much alive today and not merely part of a theoretical investigation of historical events.

Furthermore, many years ago, Arthur Marwick, in his book *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War*, posited the suggestion that wars act as a catalyst for change. This could be both direct and indirect or short term and long term, but nonetheless wars have a profound influence on society. He suggested that ‘underprivileged’ segments of society especially are helped by their country’s participation in war, mostly because in modern wars their labour is essential. If you combine Marwick’s points with ideas about the justice of/in/after war, the question then becomes, can you apply the just war theory paradigm to the domestic front (*jus communitatis in bello*)? Is it possible to make judgements about the impact of war on the home front that directly challenge the notion of justice? One way of attempting to answer questions about the justice of war and justice in war in US history, as it applies to the major wars of the twentieth century, is to look at three elements of each war: how the war began, how the war was fought and the experience of those on the US home front.

One example of the application of just war theory can be found by looking at the fundamental principles of the justice of war. Just war theory relating to how wars begin (justice of wars) revolves around the idea of aggression. Those countries that are aggressors, and consequently initiate war, are seen to be fighting an unjust war. The rhetoric of governments involved in public discourse on specific wars often utilises the image of a just or unjust war. This is especially true when governments themselves become directly involved in the wars. This can readily be seen in the case of the United States and the major wars of the twentieth century.

In the First and Second World Wars, the United States did not get involved directly until several years had passed. These wars raged on while America proclaimed itself neutral. Neither Woodrow Wilson nor Franklin Roosevelt could declare war in the atmosphere of isolationism that prevailed within America. Both campaigned for a return to the White House while a world war raged (Wilson in 1916 and Roosevelt in 1940), declaring that they would not send American troops to fight in the European war. Despite the clear, naked aggression of the Central Powers in the First World War and that of the Axis governments in the Second World War, the American presidents did not try to precipitate American entry into these wars solely on the basis of the notion that they were unjust.

When events transpired to involve the United States in these two wars, the public discourses of the presidents changed. Their rhetoric of America fighting a just war was used to rally support and gather a consensus for participation in an ongoing conflict. While Wilson had called on Americans to remain impartial in thought as well as action at the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, by the time the United States entered the war in 1917 Wilson proclaimed that not only was the United States fighting a just war, it was also fighting a war to make the world safe for democracy, with the ultimate goal of fighting a war to end all wars. A war to end all wars is without doubt a just war. The aggressive act that precipitated this change in American involvement in the war was the German government's decision to reinstitute unrestricted submarine warfare in January 1917.

Over twenty years later Franklin Roosevelt was faced with a similar situation, although American neutrality was less forcefully argued once the war broke out in Europe. Before the United States entered the Second World War, government policy changed as the course of events in Europe unfolded. For example, America moved from neutrality as defined by the

series of Neutrality Acts passed by Congress in the 1930s to supporting Great Britain and her allies through the institution of Lend-Lease and the destroyers for bases arrangement. Ultimately, as Roosevelt said, the United States could become the arsenal of democracy, without actually entering the war itself. So, even before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the president had begun to use the concept of the justice of war to describe the European conflict. In his Four Freedoms speech of 6 January 1941 he noted in relation to the wider war that 'the justice of morality must and will win in the end'. With the attack on the United States naval and air bases in Hawaii the full rhetoric of righteousness could be heard as Roosevelt declared that 'December 7, 1941 – a date which will live in infamy' witnessed a sudden and deliberate attack by the Japanese. He predicted that 'America in her righteous might' would win the war. In the subsequent declaration of war against Germany, Roosevelt assured Americans of 'a world victory of the forces of justice and of righteousness over the forces of savagery and barbarism'.

In the Korean War the goal was to stop aggressive communism. It was, once again, an unjust war started by a nation aggressively seeking to attack and destroy democracy. Faced with a supreme emergency the United States responded with a 'police action' that was war in all but name. The goal this time, under Cold War policy, was to contain communism, to keep an aggressive/expansionist nation in check. Yet it could not be a war for democracy since South Korea was a manufactured democracy and crossing the 38th parallel calls into question the whole issue of just war. But Harry Truman did not find it difficult to justify American participation. He noted that the North Koreans had acted wantonly and that 'a return to the rule of force in international affairs would have far-reaching effects. The United States will continue to uphold the rule of law'.

While to many the Vietnam War may seem less clear-cut in terms of obvious acts of aggression, that did not stop the United States from labelling the North Vietnamese as aggressors. The Gulf of Tonkin incident that set the scene for American commitment of military personnel may have been a mere apparition but at the time it was real enough for the American government to consider that it had reasonable grounds for retaliation, which took the form of another war. Lyndon Johnson noted that 'this is not just a jungle war, but a struggle for freedom on every front' and that the United States was 'determined to bring about the end of Communist subversion and aggression in the area'. In the Tonkin Gulf resolution, section one, Congress agreed for the need to 'prevent further aggression'. In fact, the term aggression was used to justify America's par-

ticipation in the war in Vietnam in many documents and speeches. The State Department White Paper on Vietnam in 1965 was titled 'Aggression from the North', and in April 1965 Johnson stated that the United States was going to fight in 'defense of freedom'. Harkening back to Wilson and the outbreak of the First World War, Johnson also noted that 'we dream of an end to war. And we will try to make it so'.

However, when just war theory is applied to the justice of war, or how wars begin, it is meant to imply more than simply whose fault a war is, although this is a major part of the theory. Speaking about justice of war also relates to the subject of international law and neutrality in wartime. In addition, there are recognised categories of the justice of war that explain when rules can be modified, for instance what looks like aggression at the start of one war may actually be a legitimate pre-emptive strike, or aggression may justly occur when it takes place against a nation for humanitarian reasons.

Equally, the theory of just wars as applied to justice in war, or how wars are fought, encompasses a wide range of factors. It is not solely about the issue of who constitutes a legitimate enemy target and who qualifies as a non-combatant, although those are the basic tenets of the theory. It also can be applied to concerns about the methods of fighting wars, such as sieges and blockades. In addition, the concept of justice in war relates to technological advances applied to modern weaponry and even the morality of some weapons.

Justice after a war implies that the responsibilities of the victor and the rights of the defeated do not cease to exist once there has been a declared ceasefire or a negotiated armistice. Rather, it is imperative that the winning side takes steps to ensure that the peace itself is just and the settlements at the end of a war are morally sound. For example, the total destruction and obliteration of one's former enemy is not a legitimate way to end a war.

The question then arises as to why it is of interest to look at the United States' participation in the major wars of the twentieth century within the paradigm of just war theory. Most obviously it is because, as noted earlier, the government of the United States announced its participation in these, and other wars, using the words of just war theory. America spoke in each instance of fighting a just war. In each case, the First World War, the Second World War, Korea and Vietnam, the United States proclaimed that it was reluctant to go to war but had been provoked into war by acts of aggression on the part of others. The rhetoric used was one of pitting the righteousness of democracy against the evil of aggression,

expansionism, fascism, imperialism or communism. Once the United States was engaged in these wars, public discourse revolved around the very essence of just war theory.

However, this book goes further and makes the case that just war theory needs to be applied to the home front in order to formulate a complete theory and in order to come to some conclusions about whether a democracy can be considered to be fighting a just war, using just means while at the same time promoting injustice at home. The concept of justice on the home front attempts to apply just war theory in a modified form to the internal workings of a democratic nation at war. When a government passes laws to curtail the civil liberties and civil rights of its own people, when it passes laws to stifle dissent and when these acts are upheld by the highest court in the land, can any war, for whatever reason, be truly just? Does the nation at war need to have the open, public debate and freedom of speech and action that is a part of daily life in the same country when it is not at war?

An analysis of the impact of war on the home front would not be complete, however, by only looking at the laws under which the home front is operating. It is also necessary to look at the social and economic impact of war itself. In total war or even limited war in the twentieth century, an economy harnessed to the engines of war has consequences that can be felt on the home front. On the one hand war may offer minorities a chance for economic improvement while at the same time raising tensions between races and ethnicities. War can spur minority groups to band together to work for positive change, but it can also help to incite a conservative backlash to changes in the status quo. As Arthur Marwick notes, the first and foremost consequence of war is the destruction and dislocation it causes. This was as true on the home front in the twentieth century as it was on the battle field.

This book is an attempt to apply just war theory to American participation in the major wars of the twentieth century. It is not meant to do this on a battle-by-battle basis, however. Instead, it will endeavour to bring together the main tenets of just war theory with the main events and incidents of these four wars. It is impossible, in a book of this size, to catalogue every detail of American participation in the four major wars of the twentieth century. This mammoth task has been undertaken in the past by numerous historians, and library and bookshop shelves are weighted down with volumes of military history that explore the topics of this book in far greater detail, many of which are noted in the bibliography here. The same can be said of books outlining, arguing and revising

the theory of just war. It is by its very nature an incredibly complex issue with nuances and shades of grey that have stimulated debate since the days of Augustine in the fifth century, when he wrote on the issue of justice in war. This current work does not attempt to explore just war theory in all its permutations, such as international law, anticipations, interventions, utility and proportionality, supreme emergency or reprisals. Instead, what this volume seeks to provide, for readers who are unfamiliar with the topic, is a brief introduction to the ideas of just war theory, as applied to United States' participation in the major wars of the twentieth century. In addition, this work expands the usual territory of just war theory into the realms of the home front during war to test whether the application of the theory to the way governments treat their own citizens during war can provide previously unarticulated insights into the broader issue of just war.

Why is this important? Hopefully, this survey of America's wartime ethics in the twentieth century will equip readers with the knowledge necessary to stimulate discussion and investigations into other wars in the past as well as America's wars of the future.

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