



Mains Practice Question

Q. What do you understand by the term Just War Theory?

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Approach

- Start your answer by giving a brief about just war.
- Discuss the various aspects of just war approaches.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

The just war theory is a doctrine, also referred to as a tradition, of military ethics which is studied by military leaders, theologians, ethicists and policymakers. The purpose of the doctrine is to ensure that a war is morally justifiable through a series of criteria, all of which must be met for a war to be considered just.

Body

- **Justice towards war (Jus ad bellum):** When political leaders are trying to decide whether to go to war or not, war theory requires them to test their decision by applying several principles.
 - **Just Cause:** This requires war only be used in response to serious wrongs. The most common example of just cause is self-defence, though coming to the defence of another innocent nation is also seen as a just cause by many.
 - **Right Intention:** This requires that war-time political leaders be solely motivated, at a personal level, by reasons that make a war just. For example, even if war is waged in defence of another innocent country, leaders cannot resort to war because it will assist their re-election campaign.
- **Justice in war (Jus in bello):** These are the ethical principles that govern the way combatants conduct themselves in the 'theatre of war'.
 - Discrimination requires combatants only to attack legitimate targets. Civilians, medics and aid workers, for example, cannot be the deliberate targets of military attack. However, according to the principle of double-effect, military attacks that kill some civilians as a side-effect may be permissible if they are both necessary and proportionate.
- **Justice after war (Jus post bellum):**
 - It refers to justice during the phase of war termination. It covers the manners of ending war and smoothly transiting from war to peace, international law scarcely touches upon this area; however, the following principles can be mentioned.
 - **Discrimination:** A peace agreement has to distinguish leaders and soldiers of the defeated nation from its civilians.
 - **Compensation:** A reasonable and fair financial levy can be imposed on the defeated aggressor nation to compensate the victim's financial losses.

Conclusion

The Just War theory bridges theoretical and applied ethics, since it demands an adherence, or at least a

consideration of meta-ethical conditions and models, as well as prompting concern for the practicalities of war. The theory helps the nation-states to assert their power and control where they believe their national interest resides.

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