



## 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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