

IS THE IRAN WAR A JUST WAR?

Historical Reflections by Fr. Dave Heney

Every war is a failure of national leaders to solve problems by diplomacy. But when one nation threatens another with deadly force, our Catholic faith permits strong self-defense actions, even if it causes death to the enemy. St. Augustine in the 4th century, and St. Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century highly refined the moral criteria that ensure the moral use of force in any nation's self-defense against a serious mortal threat, such as Radical Islamic Fundamentalism.

WHAT IS RADICAL ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM?

About 100 years ago, Muslim scholars wondered why Muslims were so poor and non-Muslim nations, especially the US, were so rich. They famously asked, "What Went Wrong?" However, radical extremist leaders felt that Muslim poverty was because Muslims were not devout enough, and so began *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism* which is an *extremely strict interpretation* of the Quran and other early writings. Unlike original Islam, radical Islam calls for a more forceful world conversion to Islam ...or be eliminated, starting in the Holy Land ...and then the entire world.

After Mohammed died, Islam split into two sects, the *SHIA* who felt the successor Imam (Leader) should be a relative of Mohammed, and the *SUNNI* who preferred wise elders instead. The most radical branch are the *SHIA TWELVERS* who believe that 11 Imams ruled from the beginning, but the 12th and final Imam, born in 870 AD, is now in hiding and will emerge with a *world-wide conflagration* and then rule the world along with Jesus, whom Muslims consider only a prophet.

WHY IS IRAN DIFFERENT?

Before 1979, Radical Islamic Fundamentalists were mostly small bands of terror cells causing minor disruptions. However, in 1979, the most radical of all *SHIA Twelver* leaders, Ayatollah Khomeini, took over the rich and militarily powerful country of Iran. Now the resources of an immense country were in service to Radical Islamists! They also started funding and training other groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, and Houthis. Iran has called for the total destruction of the US and Israel since 1979, but their actions were largely local to the Middle East. Then, several decades ago, Iran began a nuclear weapons program and the missiles to deliver them to Israel ...and the US. Iran, along with extremist ISIS and Al Qaeda Sunni branches, will use deadly force to spread their Islamic ideology in the Holy Land and the world.

Iran is motivated to start a world conflagration with a nuclear explosion in Israel or the US which will usher in the 12th Imam who will rule the world and finally eliminate all non-Muslims. The Iranian nuclear weapon program is a serious global mortal threat!

ARAB NATIONS

All Arab nations understand the Iranian threat to detonate a nuclear weapon. If Iran is not stopped they will buy nukes for themselves, probably from North Korea. Arab nations do not know how to secure nuclear weapons well so they will easily fall into even more radical groups.

All Arab nations now know that Muslim poverty was due to corrupt economic policies, so six Arab nations made peace with Israel to join in Israeli economic prosperity. Iran planned, funded, and trained Hamas terrorists for the October 7th GAZA War precisely to stop any more Arab states from making peace with Israel. Iran is a constant and major threat to world peace.

CATHOLIC JUST WAR PRINCIPLES *(Catechism sections 2307-2321)*

The Church never proclaims a war as just or unjust since it recognizes that these principles are highly subjective criteria where sincere people might honestly disagree, so they are areas calling for your thoughtful and prudential moral judgment. Popes, Bishops, Priests, and Lay People can honestly disagree on the application of all or some of these principles.

WAR MUST HAVE A JUST CAUSE

War must only be waged in *self-defense* of a nation under an *imminent mortal threat*, and never for conquest or plunder. The enemy attack does not have to actually happen, so a “First Strike” can have a just cause if there is reasonable evidence of an imminent mortal attack. A nation can also launch war in aid of another nation that is under an imminent mortal threat.

LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY

Only lawfully constituted governments can launch a war. The US has two ways for this. Congress can declare war, (last time was December 8, 1941). Congress also gives every President the *Authorized Use of Military Force* power for 60 days to counter an imminent mortal threat without Congressional approval, but requiring immediate Congressional *notification* of the attack.

LAST RESORT

Negotiations are always the preferred way for resolving conflicts. However, negotiations must be grounded in authentic desires for peace and not excuses to rearm for offensive operations. It is reasonable and moral to end negotiations if they prove to be useless or fake.

PROBABLE SUCCESS

Nations starting a moral defensive war must have a reasonable chance for achieving their peaceful goals. Fighting a massive enemy with limited resources is a recipe for needless slaughter.

PROPORTIONALITY

Attacks must target only clearly stated defensive war goals. However, for over a hundred years, factories, roads, trains, harbors, and airports are considered *dual-purpose* resources serving *both* military and civilian needs. Their destruction or even threat of destruction is often the fastest way to render an aggressor *incapable* of any further aggression, and so ending a war quickly.

NON-COMBATANT IMMUNITY

Nations must target only combatants and not civilians, and even warn civilians to leave war zones. Highly precise munitions today have greatly reduced civilian casualties. However, terror groups often use apartments, hospitals, schools, and even Mosques as hiding places for weapons and soldiers. Tragically, HAMAS considers *all* Palestinians in GAZA as combatants, meaning they consider *all* their civilians as soldiers. They stay in a war zone at their own risk.

CONCLUSION

These ideas are a sincere and reasonable best effort to *contain* the violence of war. They are often not easily applied since global events are often highly complex, and warfare technology has changed a lot since the time of St. Augustine and St. Thomas. Nevertheless, they offer these principles for your careful consideration and prudential judgment about global events today.