

The Re-Examination of the Israel-Hamas War in the Light of the Just War Theory

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Abstract

The Israel-Hamas conflict presents a complex ethical dilemma when viewed through the lens of the just war theory. This essay examines the conflict in light of the theory's principles, including *jus ad bellum*, *jus in bello*, and *jus post bellum*. Justifying the resort to war requires careful consideration of factors such as just cause, legitimate authority, and right intention. However, interpretations of these criteria vary widely, reflecting divergent narratives and interests on both sides. Once hostilities commence, adherence to principles of proportionality and discrimination becomes paramount, yet the asymmetrical nature of the conflict complicates efforts to minimize harm to non-combatants. The concept of *jus post bellum* emphasizes the importance of achieving a just and sustainable peace, but persistent cycles of violence and political divisions impede progress toward reconciliation. By examining the Israel-Hamas conflict through the prism of just war theory, this paper highlights the challenges of applying ethical principles to contemporary conflicts and underscores the need for nuanced and context-specific approaches to promoting peace and justice. In conclusion, it is important for world leaders to abide by the principles of just war as they navigate conflict and warfare within their territories; and by upholding the ethical guidelines of proportionality, discrimination, and just cause, these leaders have the opportunity to reduce and minimize civilian casualties.

Keywords: Israel, Hamas, conflict, just war theory, politics, history

1. Introduction

The Israel-Hamas conflict has far-reaching implications across various regions, including the Middle East, Europe, China, and the United States. Each party involved has distinct interests, but none seek to prolong or escalate the conflict (Leonard, 2023). Primarily, the Middle East faces immediate repercussions. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's longstanding assumption that Israel could forge ties with Arab nations without addressing the Palestinian issue has been shattered. The conflict underscores the inescapable reality of the Palestinian question, prompting Israel to reconsider its approach to the stagnant Middle East peace process. Saudi Arabia, poised to normalize relations with Israel, may now demand concessions for Palestinians before proceeding, wary of backlash from its populace and the broader Muslim world (Leonard, 2023).

The conflict has also become a flashpoint for heated debate in the United States, causing divisions among Americans and reaching a boiling point at Columbia University in New York City. This Ivy League campus, known for its political significance and diverse student body, has become a microcosm of the broader societal challenges facing higher education institutions in the 21st century (Schermelle, 2024). Columbia's location in a city with a significant Jewish and Muslim population adds layers to the conflict, amplifying tensions both on and off campus. Recent protests and arrests have underscored the complexity of navigating issues such as freedom of speech, safety concerns, and political interference in academia (Schermelle, 2024). As Columbia grapples with its role in addressing antisemitism, ensuring student safety, and upholding academic freedom, the reverberations of its decisions are felt far beyond its gates. The

outcome of this ongoing saga will not only impact the university's reputation but also shape the future of academic discourse and activism nationwide (Schermele, 2024).

In 2023, a shocking and coordinated assault orchestrated by the Palestinian militant group Hamas struck Israel, marking one of the most audacious and lethal attacks in recent memory (Westfall et al., 2023). The assault reignited a cycle of violence, leading to Israeli military actions against Gaza in retaliation. This resurgence of conflict thrust the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian dispute back into the global spotlight. The roots of this enduring conflict stretch far into history, predating even the establishment of the modern state of Israel in 1948. Both Palestinians and Israelis lay claim to the same contested land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, each viewing it as their rightful territory. Moreover, the region holds profound religious significance for Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike, further complicating the matter (Westfall et al., 2023). Over the past seven decades, the conflict has manifested in various forms: from full-blown wars to sporadic uprisings, punctuated by fleeting moments of optimism for a peaceful resolution. However, deep-seated mistrust and the complex entanglement of political, historical, and religious factors continue to thwart efforts for lasting peace. The recent escalation serves as a stark reminder of the unresolved tensions and the urgent need for genuine dialogue and reconciliation to break this cycle of violence (Westfall et al., 2023).

The Israel-Palestine conflict is one of the most protracted and complex conflicts in modern history, characterized by deep-seated grievances, competing nationalisms, and territorial disputes. Its roots can be traced back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries when waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine, then under Ottoman rule, surged amidst the rise of the Zionist movement, which sought to establish a national homeland for the Jewish people.

The sudden attack on Israel by Hamas on 7th of October 2023, triggered a retaliation from the Israeli defense force, which at the onset of the war seemed justifiable, however, the Palestinian civilians should not be made to suffer the consequences of the unlawful acts carried out by Hamas. Pattison (2018), as cited in Tzenios (2023), stated that “nations base their justification for waging wars on the just war theory”.

2. History of Israel- Palestine Conflict

2.1 Origins and British Mandate (Late 19th - Early 20th Century)

The influx of Jewish settlers into Palestine stirred tensions with the indigenous Arab population, leading to sporadic clashes and land disputes. In 1917, the British issued the Balfour Declaration, expressing support for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. After World War I, the League of Nations granted Britain a mandate over Palestine, with the objective of facilitating the establishment of a Jewish national home while respecting the rights of the existing Arab population.

2.2 1948 Arab-Israeli War (Israeli War of Independence)

In 1947, the United Nations proposed a partition plan dividing Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states. Jewish leaders accepted the plan, but Arab leaders rejected it, leading to the outbreak of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. Following Israel's declaration of independence, neighboring Arab states intervened, resulting in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, known as the Nakba (catastrophe), and the establishment of the State of Israel (Britannica, 2024a).

2.3 Occupation and Settlement Expansion (1967 - Present)

The Six-Day War in 1967 marked a pivotal moment in the conflict, with Israel capturing the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights (Britannica, 2024a). The occupation of these territories led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and the establishment of Israeli settlements, which are considered illegal under international law. Efforts to negotiate a peaceful resolution, including the Oslo Accords in the 1990s, have been hindered by ongoing settlement expansion and disagreements over the status of Jerusalem, borders, and refugees.

2.4 Palestinian Resistance and Nationalism

The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), led by figures such as Yasser Arafat, emerged as the primary representative of Palestinian nationalist aspirations. The PLO engaged in armed struggle and diplomatic efforts to achieve Palestinian self-determination and the establishment of an independent state. However, internal divisions within the Palestinian leadership, as well as disagreements over strategy and tactics, have complicated efforts to achieve unity and a cohesive national movement (Britannica, 2024b).

2.5 Intifadas and Popular Uprisings

The First Intifada (1987-1993) and the Second Intifada (2000-2005) were popular uprisings characterized by widespread Palestinian protests, civil disobedience, and armed resistance against Israeli occupation (Araj & Brym, 2024). These periods of unrest led to significant loss of life on both sides and underscored the failure of diplomatic efforts to address the root causes of the conflict.

On September 13, 1993, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Negotiator Mahmoud Abbas signed the Oslo Accord at the White House. This agreement marked Israel's acceptance of the PLO as the representative of Palestinians, while the PLO renounced terrorism and acknowledged Israel's right to exist peacefully. The accord also outlined the establishment of a Palestinian Authority (PA) over a five-year period to govern the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Office of the Historian, U.S State Department, 2000). While the Oslo Peace Process initially raised hopes for a negotiated settlement, the failure to address key issues, such as settlements and the status of Jerusalem, contributed to the outbreak of violence.

2.6 Peace Process and Diplomatic Efforts

Peace initiatives and diplomatic efforts have taken place for many years, including the Accords of Camp David, the Conference of Madrid, and the Roadmap for Peace (Office of the Historian, U.S State Department, 1980). All these attempts, however, have fallen through because of deep-seated mistrust, hardened positions, and conflicting narratives. The United States has played a central role in mediating peace talks, but progress has been elusive, with both sides blaming each other for the failure to reach a comprehensive agreement (Niv-Solomon, 2019).

2.7 Humanitarian and Security Concerns

The Israel-Palestine conflict has exacted a heavy toll on civilian populations, with frequent outbreaks of violence leading to loss of life, displacement, and economic hardship. Palestinians in the occupied territories face restrictions on movement, access to basic services, and economic opportunities, while Israelis contend with security threats, including rocket attacks and suicide bombings. The blockade of Gaza, imposed by Israel and Egypt, has exacerbated humanitarian conditions, leading to widespread poverty and deprivation (Amnesty International, 2018; United Nations, 2018; Wispelwey & Jamei, 2020; Bouri & Roy, 2024). Some officials of the United Nations report that there is likely to be a famine in Gaza if no significant action is taken to call for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas (UNSC, 2024).

2.8 International Involvement and Diplomatic Impasse

Efforts to resolve the conflict have involved numerous international actors, including the United Nations, the European Union, and regional powers such as Egypt and Jordan (Council of the European Union, 2003; Akgül-Açıkmeşe & Özel, 2024). Basic disagreements among the members of the international community, especially the major allies of Israel and those advocating a just solution to the Palestinian question, were factors in not concluding a lasting peace settlement. Issues at stake were the question of Palestinian statehood, the status of Jerusalem, borders, refugees, and security.

The Israel-Palestine conflict remains a deeply entrenched and multifaceted dispute with no easy solutions. Despite intermittent efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement, the conflict persists, perpetuating cycles of violence, suffering, and instability in the region. Addressing the root causes of the conflict, including territorial disputes, national aspirations, and security concerns, will require sustained diplomatic engagement, dialogue, and compromise from all parties involved.

3. The Just War Theory and Criteria for a Just War

3.1 The Just War Theory

The Just War Theory, a longstanding framework guiding ethical conduct in warfare, has evolved into a tradition emphasizing justice, a concept with varying interpretations. Scholars like Walzer (2006) refer to the multifaceted nature of justice as an “anarchy of moral meanings.” Before

delving into what constitutes justice, it's crucial to explore its primary meanings.

Aristotle deemed justice as “the very criterion of what is right,” a definition that begs the question of what constitutes rightness (Chroust & Osborn, 1942). Kant traced the origins of civil governance and public justice to the dawn of human history, suggesting its pivotal role in societal evolution (Cumiskey, 2008). Rawls (1999) identified justice as the foremost virtue of social institutions, echoing Morgenthau's acknowledgment of justice as a fundamental human aspiration (Morgenthau, 1970).

Examining the element of justice within the Doctrine of Just War Theory reveals its intricate application through core principles, as elucidated by Rawls (1999). Justice, according to Rawls, necessitates safeguarding each individual's basic liberties while ensuring social and economic opportunities are accessible to all, with injustice tolerated only when necessary to prevent greater injustices.

Returning to the focal point of our analysis above, Thomas Aquinas' argument of the just war theory, features prominently in his theory of natural law. Aquinas posits that reason, illuminated by natural light, leads to the truth, with human reasoning capable of discerning fundamental moral truths independently of divine revelation (Dierksmeier & Celano, 2014). He asserts that faith should be grounded in worldly knowledge, aligning with the tenets of theoretical philosophy accessible through reason alone.

Aquinas's conception of divine reason governing the universe underscores his faith in human rationality to discern between good and evil, albeit with inherent risks. However, his view neglects the complexity of human nature and the necessity of checks and balances. Aquinas elevates human life due to its capacity for rational understanding of natural laws, which guide individuals toward their inherent goods (Yaakop et al., 2020). Moreover, human ethical norms evolve from the synthesis of principled insight, situational judgment, and factual understanding. The very fundamental principle to all goods, that is, doing good and avoidance of evil, is the basis of ethical behavior. It takes into emphasis natural goods, suchlike preservation, procreation, social responsibility, spiritual growth while deterring harm to others.

Commonly known, the Just War Theory (Schutz & Ramsey, 1961) was a doctrine within military ethics that has helped provide some kind of normative framework through which to judge the justifiability of using force in warfare. It is rooted in philosophical and religious backgrounds, and through history, it has affected the state-to-state relations and the laws regarding war and conflict.

Therefore, the theory is usually categorized under *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*. *Jus ad bellum* explains what one needs to satisfy, so that their war can be termed as just: having a just cause, legitimate authority, right intention, probability of success, proportionality, and last resort. On the other hand, *jus in bello* deals with the just conduct in war, which includes proportionality and discrimination as well as treatment of prisoners and people who are not taking part in the war.

3.2 Criteria for a Just War

3.2.1 Ethical Foundations of Just Authority and Reasonable Cause

The Just War Theory, depending on the work of Saint Thomas Aquinas, emphasizes elements of just authority and reasonable cause on which to determine the moral legitimacy of warfare. In the context of just authority, determinations to engage in war are granted through the right political and legal channels. Reichberg (2010) delves into the complexities surrounding this principle, emphasizing the need for decision-makers to adhere to established protocols and consider the broader implications of their actions. The rightful authority also has the role of ensuring that the declaration of war is never on arbitrary or selfish grounds but for legitimate purposes, including self-defense or the correction of injustice. The principle of the reasonable cause is, therefore, in the same vein that the justification of war has to have its basis on moral and ethical reasons. Kunkel (2014) argues that wars must be fought for justifiable reasons, such as defending against aggression or protecting fundamental human rights, rather than mere personal animosity or geopolitical gain. By emphasizing the importance of just authority and reasonable cause, Just War Theory provides a robust ethical framework for evaluating the initiation of armed conflict and upholding principles of justice and morality.

3.2.2 Evaluating Practical Considerations: Likelihood of Success and Proportionality

Besides the moral premise of just authority and reasonable cause, the Just War Theory considers practical problems about how warfare is conducted. The success probability principle requires factored consideration by decision-makers of whether there may be more success than failure of the war's purposes given military power and strategic ends. As Forge (2018) observes, entering into a war without genuine prospects of winning not only undermines the very basis of morality in the war but could, in fact, intensify the suffering further and lead to destabilization of a region. The principle of proportionality, based on an ethical question, reposes on compatibility of the entailment between the military means and the desired ends. Forge (2018) elucidates this principle by highlighting the need to minimize harm to civilians and non-combatants while ensuring that the force exerted corresponds proportionally to the intended objectives. By integrating these practical considerations into the ethical framework of the Just War Theory, decision-makers can navigate the complexities of armed conflict with prudence and responsibility, mitigating the human cost of war and upholding principles of justice and morality.

3.2.3 Embracing Non-Violent Alternatives: Last Resort and the Pursuit of Peace

Apart from being a matter of ethics and practicality, the Just War Theory also emphasizes a method that puts first the use of non-violent means, utilizing diplomacy and conflict-resolution structures. The principle of last resort represents the view that war can only be a last resort after all the available options that would promote peace are exhausted. In reality, Rengger (2013) argues, there exists a moral obligation on the part of leaders to exhaust all available channels of diplomatic resolutions and all non-violent methods for resolving disputes before the actual

exercise of military force. Moreover, scholars such as Aloyo (2015) emphasize the inherent destructiveness of war and advocate for its avoidance whenever possible, highlighting the profound human suffering and loss that accompany armed conflict. By prioritizing dialogue, negotiation, and mediation, decision-makers uphold the sanctity of human life and demonstrate a commitment to fostering peace and stability in a world rife with conflict. Thus, with non-violent alternatives and the principle of last resort, leaders can ultimately man oeuvre the complex and ethically challenging world of armed conflict with integrity and compassion toward the realization of a more just and peaceful world.

3.3 Leaders and Incidents Violating the Principles of the Just War Theory

The International Criminal Court (ICC) and other legal bodies continue to strive for accountability, though political and practical challenges persist. These cases underscore the importance of adherence to Just War principles to prevent gross human rights violations and ensure justice for victims. The principles of the Just War Theory, which include legitimate authority, just cause, right intention, proportionality, and distinction between combatants and non-combatants, are often violated by leaders during conflicts. Historical and modern examples illustrate the widespread breaches of these principles. The following Table 1 shows leaders and incidents that have violated the principles behind the just war theory:

Table 1. Leaders and Incidents Violating the Just War Theory Principles

Name	Country	Position	Violation	Year(s)
Alexander the Great	Macedonia	King	Conquests and mass killings during his campaigns across Persia, Egypt, and India	336-323 BCE
Genghis Khan	Mongolia	Great Khan	Massive invasions and large-scale massacres during the Mongol conquests	1206-1227
Napoleon Bonaparte	France	Emperor	Waging aggressive wars across Europe, resulting in widespread devastation and loss of life	1804-1815
James K. Polk	United States	President	Initiating the Mexican-American War under disputed circumstances, often seen as an act of aggression for territorial expansion rather than a just cause	1846-1848
William McKinley	United States	President	Conducting the Philippine-American War with brutal tactics, leading to significant civilian casualties and accusations of disproportionate use of force.	1899-1902

Leopold II of Belgium	Belgium	King	Atrocities and exploitation in the Congo Free State, leading to the deaths of millions	1885-1908
Woodrow Wilson	United States	President	Intervening in the Mexican Revolution with military incursions that were viewed as lacking a clear just cause and legitimate authority.	1914-1917
Benito Mussolini	Italy	Prime Minister and Duce	Aggressive military campaigns and war crimes during World War II, including the invasion of Ethiopia and atrocities in the Balkans	1935-1936 1941-1943
Francisco Franco	Spain	General and Head of State	Brutal repression and mass executions during and after the Spanish Civil War	1936-1939
Adolf Hitler	Nazi Germany	Leader	Unprovoked invasion of Poland (which marked the beginning of the second world war)	1939
			The use of Blitzkrieg (lightning war) tactics in the invasion of Poland, France and other countries, which involved overwhelming military force and targeting of civilian infrastructure	1939-1940
			The German Luftwaffe's bombing campaign against the united kingdom, particularly the Blitz, which targeted civilian areas in London and other cities	1940-1941
			Operation Barbarossa (the invasion of the Soviet Union, which led to large-scale atrocities against Soviet soldiers and civilians, including mass executions, starvation, and scorched-earth tactics)	1941
			The Holocaust (the systemic genocide of six million European Jews during World War II)	1941-1945
			Terror bombing in occupied territories, such as Warsaw and Rotterdam	1940-1945

Harry Truman	S. United States	President	Ordering the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, that resulted in massive civilian casualties and raised questions about proportionality and distinction between combatants and non-combatants.	1945
Lyndon B. Johnson	United States	President	He escalated the Vietnam War through tactics such as carpet bombing and use of chemical weapons- most notably, Agent Orange that became the principal source of the wide destruction and suffering of civilians.	1964-1973
Richard Nixon	United States	President	Expanding the Vietnam War into Cambodia and Laos without Congressional approval, leading to significant civilian casualties and raising issues of legitimate authority and proportionality.	1969-1973
Pol Pot	Cambodia	Leader of the Khmer Rouge	Genocide and crimes against humanity, leading to the deaths of an estimated 1.7 million people	1975-1979
Idi Amin	Uganda	President	Mass killings, torture, ethnic persecution	1971-1979
Charles Taylor	Liberia	President	War crimes and crimes against humanity during the Sierra Leone Civil War	1991-2002
Yakubu Gowon	Nigeria	Head of State	Massacres and starvation tactics during the Nigerian-Biafra War Asaba Massacre (Mass killing of civilians by Nigerian federal troops)	1967-1970 October 1967
Slobodan Milošević	Serbia (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia)	President	Ethnic cleansing and war crimes during the Bosnian War Croatian War of Independence and Kosovo conflict	1992-1995 1991-1995 1998-1999

Théoneste Bagosora, Robert Kajuga, Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza, and Hassan Ngeze	Rwanda	Military officer (under the Huti-led government)	Systematic killing of Tutsi ethnic group by Hutu extremists	1994
Laurent-Désiré Kabila	DR Congo	President	Violence and human rights abuses during First Congo War and subsequent conflict	1996-1997
Kim Jong-il	North Korea	Supreme Leader	Systematic human rights abuses, including torture, forced labor, and arbitrary detention	1994-2011
Daniel Ortega;	Nicaragua	President	Human rights abuses, including violent crackdowns on protests, arbitrary arrests, and suppression of political opposition	2007 onwards.
Bashar al-Assad	Syria	President	War crimes and crimes against humanity during the Syrian Civil War, including the use of chemical weapons against civilians	2011 onwards
Kim Jong-un	North Korea	Supreme Leader	Systematic human rights abuses, including torture, forced labor, and arbitrary detention	2011 onwards
Vladimir Putin	Russia	President	Accusations of war crimes and violations of international law during the annexation of Crimea and the ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine Recent Russia invasion of Ukraine in an escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian war that started in 2014	2014 2014 onwards February 2022
Rodrigo Duterte	Philippines	President	Extrajudicial killings and human rights abuses in the “War on Drugs”	2016 onwards

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	Turkey	President	Accusations of war crimes and human rights abuses in operations against Kurdish populations in Syria and Turkey	2016 onwards
Mengistu Haile Mariam	Ethiopia	President	Red Terror campaign (1977-1978) involving mass killings, torture, and imprisonment of political opponents.	1977-1978
George W. Bush	United States	President	Launching a war in Iraq based on controversial accusations of weapons of mass destruction raises questions of just cause and right intention. The conduct of the war also raised concerns about proportionality and civilian casualties.	2003
Omar al-Bashir	Sudan	President	Genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity in Darfur	2003 onwards
Hu Jintao	China	President	Human rights abuses, including crackdowns on Tibet and the suppression of political dissidents	2003-2013
Barack Obama	United States	President	Conducted drone strikes in countries such as Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia that have resulted in civilian casualties and have blurred the line of proportionality as well as clearly delineating who is a combatant and who is not a combatant.	2009-2017
Hassan Rouhani	Iran;	President	Human rights abuses, including crackdowns on protests and political dissent	2013-2021
Xi Jinping	China	President	Human rights abuses against Uighurs in Xinjiang, including mass internment, forced labor, and cultural genocide	2013 onwards

4. Understanding the Israel-Hamas War in the Light of the Just War Theory

In the conflict between Israel and Hamas, both parties have been accused of violating the principles of the Just War Theory. The targeting of civilians, the disproportionate use of force, and the lack of efforts to seek peaceful resolutions all complicate the ethical considerations of the

conflict (Verbruggen, 2023; Sánchez-Vallejo, 2023; Deutsch & van den Berg, 2023).

There are fundamental questions of morality arising from the Israel-Hamas conflict and lying at the crossroads of the just war theory. The theory bases its grounds on philosophical and religious traditions, which tend to give moral guidelines for both the reasons and order of conduction of the war. Appreciating the just war theory as regards to the Israel-Hamas conflict means proper justification for recourse to war and governance in regard to conduct.

One of the key elements of the just war theory, as stated earlier is the principle of *jus ad bellum*, which concerns the justification for going to war (Jokic & Anthony, 2001; Moseley, n.d.; Parry, 2015). According to this principle, war is justified only if certain conditions are met, such as having a just cause, a legitimate authority, and a right intention. In the case of the Israel-Hamas conflict, both sides have invoked these criteria to justify their actions. Israel often argues that its military operations are in self-defense against Hamas rocket attacks and to protect its citizens from terrorism. Meanwhile, Hamas insists that it is fighting against Israeli occupation for the rights of Palestinians. However, the interpretation of these principles can vary widely, and both sides have been accused of violating them at different times.

Another aspect of the just war theory, as stated earlier is the principle of *jus in bello*, which governs the conduct of war once it has begun. It describes the fact that all harm to noncombatants must be minimized, there must be a clear-cut distinction between combatants and non-combatants, and the use of force should also be proportional. In the case of the Israel-Hamas conflict, both parties are accused by one another of directly attacking civilian citizens; all these charges are therefore considered to be the application of force in a disproportionate manner. It is particularly challenging for this to take place in the densely civilian-populated areas of Gaza, but international humanitarian law nonetheless demands that parties in a conflict should take all feasible precautions to ensure minimal civilian injury.

Additionally, the concept of *jus post bellum* addresses the principles that should guide the resolution of conflicts and the transition to peace once hostilities have ceased (Stahn, 2006; Rojas-Orozco, 2021). This includes considerations such as the restoration of justice, reconciliation, and the establishment of a just and lasting peace. However, achieving these goals in the context of the Israel-Hamas conflict has proven elusive, with multiple ceasefire agreements often followed by renewed violence and a lack of progress towards a comprehensive resolution (Stahn, 2008).

The just war theory, when applied to the Israel-Hamas conflict, goes to show that the theory itself, despite offering very valuable moral truths, application to concrete conditions, is problematic. The very nature of what would constitute a just cause or a proportionate response is shrouded in the fog of war, the complexities of the conflict, the very deeply held beliefs and narratives on both sides of the issue. Further, the absence of clearly marked paths to sustainable peace further complicates the efforts to apply the principles of *jus post bellum*.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is absolutely necessary and important that abiding by the principles of the Just War Theory is essential for world leaders especially the likes of Vladimir Putin, Benjamin Netanyahu etc. as they navigate conflict and warfare within their countries and territories. By respecting and following the ethical guidelines of proportionality, discrimination, and just cause, these leaders have the opportunity to reduce and minimize civilian casualties especially the killings of children and women, uphold human rights, human dignity and work towards sustainable peace, harmony and order. It is imperative for these leaders as a matter of utmost urgency peace talks, prioritize diplomacy, dialogue, and international cooperation over aggression (that sometimes are not justified) and unilateral action.

5.1 Recommendations for world leaders around the world

They should see as a priority investing in conflict resolution mechanisms, fostering dialogue with opposing parties, and engaging with international organizations to mediate disputes and exercise utmost caution. Emphasizing human rights and the protection of non-combatants should be central to military strategies, with a focus on minimizing collateral damage and ensuring accountability for violations of international law. Additionally, leaders should consider the long-term consequences of their actions and prioritize peaceful resolutions that address root causes of conflict. For example Israel and Palestinian should consider a two state solution.

In the final analysis, by embodying the principles of the Just War Theory, world leaders can set a positive example for future and unborn generations, promote global peace and stability, and pave the way for a more just and peaceful world. It is through ethical leadership, moral courage, and commitment to international norms that lasting peace and harmony can be achieved in the midst of ongoing warfare in Ukraine, Gaza, Rafah and other wars going on elsewhere around the world.

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