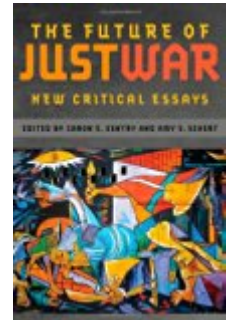


Caron E. Gentry, Amy E. Eckert, eds.. *The Future of Just War: New Critical Essays*. Studies in Security and International Affairs Series. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2014. 200 pp. \$24.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-8203-4560-4.



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The just war tradition is the predominant Western body of thought concerning the ethics of armed conflict. Boasting a lineage that can be traced to the sunset of the Roman Empire, it reflects two millennia of reflection on the rights and wrongs of war. A beguiling conundrum lies at its very core: can the use of military force ever be an instrument of justice? Though scholars often quibble about its exact composition, a broad consensus has emerged that the just war tradition hinges on three distinct but connected questions. The first question, which stands for the *jus ad bellum* pole of just war reasoning, asks whether and under what conditions the recourse to war might ever be justified. The second question, reflecting the *jus in bello* dimension of analysis, asks how a war, once begun, might be waged in a just manner. The third and final question, the *jus post bellum* challenge, invites reflection on how wars should be concluded and a just peace cultivated. The *jus ad bellum* pole of just war analysis turns on five key precepts, “just cause,” “proper authority,” “right intention,” “reasonable chance of suc-

cess,” and “last resort.” The *jus in bello* dimension of just war reasoning pivots on the twin requirements of “discrimination” and “proportionality.” The *jus post bellum* component reflects a vague set of desiderata bearing on the value of reconciliation, reconstruction, and rehabilitation.

Framed in these terms, the just war tradition may appear to some observers as an obtuse exercise in scholasticism, a philosopher’s parlor game that is far removed from the rough and tumble of international politics. Yet this would be a misapprehension. Though formerly confined to Catholic seminaries, just war discourse has emerged as the *lingua franca* of political and military leaders in the post-Cold War era. Most striking in this regard is President Barack Obama’s 2009 Nobel Peace Prize address, which celebrated just war principles as the lodestar for U.S. foreign policy. More generally, the just war idiom has acquired sufficient prominence, not just in the corridors of power but also in the print media and general po-

litical discourse, that scholars of international relations can no longer afford to ignore it.

Despite or perhaps because of its recent success, scholars have identified this as a precarious moment for the just war tradition. As the vocabulary of choice for generals and presidents alike, it is more vulnerable to both abuse and refutation than ever before. On the one hand, unscrupulous politicians are wont to cite just war principles in a disingenuous manner in a bid to impart the sheen of legitimacy to their preferred policies. On the other hand, critics are prone to reject just war discourse on the grounds that it enables rather than constrains precisely this kind of conduct. Proponents of just war have, naturally enough, responded to these challenges by seeking to reaffirm the tradition's worth. In the course of so doing, they have engaged in vigorous debates about the identity and remit of the tradition. Some have argued that just war is properly understood as a conservative tradition, others as a critical tool, while the question of whether it needs a radical overhaul to meet the security challenges of the twenty-first century has also been bitterly contested. Consequently, while the foes of just war are united by a shared disdain for the tradition, its friends are divided among themselves and preoccupied by internecine squabbling.[1]

It is into this troubled water that Caron E. Gentry and Amy E. Eckert wade with their recent edited volume, *The Future of Just War: New Critical Essays*. They position themselves as neither friends nor enemies of the tradition, but as internal critics. They suppose that, insofar as it provides a medium for speaking truth to power, the tradition serves a valuable, even vital, function. They also express concern, however, that the tradition is in thrall to an outdated "epistemic perspective." Captive, they argue, to the assumption that the state is "*the* legitimate authority able to possess right intention, justify cause, and manoeuvre last resort, and the sole entity in possession of the ability to direct proportionate and dis-

criminate violence," the tradition has lost its critical edge (p. 1). The challenge that arises from this, they continue, is to recast the idea of just war so that it can overcome these limitations.

The set of essays gathered in this volume are faithful to this mandate. They reflect a shared commitment to rebooting the tradition and to renewing its critical edge. Success in this endeavor will aid scholars in their efforts to address three challenges that the editors contend have profound implications for the future of just war thinking. The first and perhaps most fundamental challenge is the erosion of mutuality of risk in warfare. According to the editors and their contributors, the loss of reciprocity undermines traditional moral justifications for killing in war, thus destabilizing the foundations of just war thought. The second challenge pertains to the development of new military technologies and modes of warfare that raise profound questions about autonomy and moral agency. If the ability to ascribe responsibility for rights and wrongs committed in the course of combat is integral to thinking ethically about war, does the emergence of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), also known as drones, jeopardize this enterprise? Finally, the third challenge bears on changing conceptions of political authority. Given the recent shift away from Westphalian norms and the emergence of the Responsibility to Protect agenda, is the relation posited in just war thinking between sovereignty and legitimacy a dead hand on the tradition, or can it be renegotiated?

These themes are elaborated over the course of ten chapters by a stellar collection of contributors. Though it is an engagement with these themes that lends the text its coherence, the chapters are divided into three sections corresponding to the *jus ad bellum*, *jus in bello*, and *jus post bellum* domains. This works well insofar as it enables the reader to situate the arguments proffered by these chapters within the orthodox framing of the field. The chapters themselves are uni-

formly of superior quality. Gentry offers a set of critical reflections on the conventional understanding of proper authority in just war thought. Kimberly Hudson and Dan Henk unpack how changing conceptions of security and the corollary evolution of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* norms have created pressures for militaries to adopt new roles and functions. Luke Glanville's contribution makes a strong case for a more robust articulation of the grounds for humanitarian intervention, one that states that where the use of military force to halt an egregious violation of human rights is permissible, it must also be morally obligatory. Eckert demonstrates the complexities of thinking about reasonable chance of success in a security environment populated by private as well as public actors. Sebastian Kaempf, Brent Steele and Eric Heinze, and Alexa Royden contribute fascinating discussions of, respectively, the false promise and pernicious effect of risk-free warfare, the implications of drone warfare, and the problems associated with the United States' current move toward developing "super" conventional ballistic missiles. Harry Gould supplies a characteristically astute analysis of the doctrine of double effect, while Laura Sjoberg's feminist critique of the principle of noncombatant immunity is both thought provoking and unsettling. Robert Williams concludes proceedings with a judicious account of *jus post bellum* analysis.

These chapters have much to commend. Most comprise a strong empirical element, demonstrating how abstract just war principles translate into practice. This is a welcome contribution in its own right. Additionally, many of the chapters here, most notably, Gould's, go beyond the just war literature by situating its principles in relation to broader debates taking place in philosophy and other disciplines. Again, this is very welcome. Rather than dwell on their accomplishments, however, it may be more instructive to suggest areas where this volume and the chapters that comprise it are lacking.

Two principal critiques spring to mind. Both turn on oversights. First, the decision to frame this collection of essays as an exercise in internal critique has the unintended but foreseeable effect of drawing a line between insiders and outsiders, and precluding engagement with the latter. As is so often the case, the chief casualty is the pacifist position. This volume contains no entry that could be described as pacifist in inclination. This is a missed opportunity for it is often at the areas of overlap between just war and pacifist thinking that the critical action happens. Second, there is no mention in this volume of what many would see as the major division in the field of just war studies today. This is the animated debate that is currently taking place between the so-called anti-traditionalists (led from the front by Jeff McMahan and Seth Lazar, among others) and more orthodox just war thinkers (primarily Michael Walzer, but also anyone who shares the basic premise that the *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* poles of just war thought are independent of one another). Again, this is a missed opportunity, because, even if they would presumably approach the matter very differently, the contributors to this volume share with the anti-traditionalists a conviction that just war thinking has to date been hampered by its traditionalism and excessive regard for established truths and ways of doing things. These are not minor omissions, but significant oversights. Nevertheless, as a volume such as this cannot possibly cover every single issue, their exclusion is understandable.

Minor grumbles aside, this is a very fine book and a welcome addition to the field. It sets out a robust agenda for critical engagement with the just war tradition. This is a progressive move, and a vital one for the future of just war thinking. This, then, is a text that all scholars of the just war tradition, advanced undergraduates and distinguished specialists alike, should read. More conservative theorists will no doubt be resistant to its central message, but this merely underscores the

importance of delivering it—and indeed of arguing it out.

Notes

[1]. James Turner Johnson, “Contemporary Just War Thinking: Which Is Worse, to Have Friends or Critics?” *Ethics & International Affairs* 27, no. 1 (February 14, 2013): 25-46; and Cian O’Driscoll, “Divisions within the Ranks? The Just War Tradition and the Use and Abuse of History,” *Ethics & International Affairs* 27, no. 1 (February 14, 2013): 47-67.

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