

Just wars for just
cause



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Can “ good” or “ just” wars exist? Throughout history, wars have often been called “ just”. Can a just cause justify a just war? In Howard Zinn’s personal journey he asks his readers and himself these questions. Although pacifists like Zinn may not support just wars, sometimes the option for war for a just cause might be the only way for the world to have peace. I believe that World War II is an example of a just war. I believe this because of the need to stop Hitler and fascism and for the United States to protect itself from further attacks like Pearl Harbour.

The evils of Hitler, such as killing Jews in Germany and throughout Europe, attacking neighbouring countries of Germany with his military actions, and setting up a dictatorship in Germany that threatened world peace, forced the United States to make the difficult decision to enter the war. The atrocities of fascism, spreading across the continent of Europe taking away the land, freedom and lives of the people living in countries there, such as Italy, Spanish and Yugoslavia, made the United States government feel that military support was necessary because the United States didn’t agree with the principles of fascism.

Finally, the horrible surprise attack on the American military base at Pearl Harbour by the Japanese was the deciding factor that pushed the United States into the war because the United States needed to protect Americans from foreign attacks. Another just war that I believe the United States became involved in is the Afghanistan war because Americans tried to help citizens stop terrorism in their country. I agree with Falk’s statement “ The war in Afghanistan against apocalyptic terrorism qualifies in my understanding as the first truly just war since World War II.

The response of the United States government after the September 11th attack on the World Trade Center in New York City is an example of just military action. If the United States didn't use military action, I think that the terrorists would continue to use acts of violence, such as bombing buildings, schools and other public places, for reasons we don't understand. I agree with Falk when he says that a non-violent approach would not work in response to the September 11th attack. What is it that makes a war just?

I believe that a war in which people are fighting for peace in their own country or in the world, or against evil like fascism or terrorism is a war that is just. However, before using military actions, non-violent means of achieving peace must be tried. Falk believes that in order for a war to be just, it needs to follow four principles: discrimination, proportionality, humanity and necessity. When he talks about discrimination he means to focus on military targets and avoid civilian targets. Proportionality means that the force should be appropriate and not more than what is needed.

By humanity, he means that if you can capture someone without military force you should do so. Lastly, necessity means that you only use force if nonviolent options do not exist or have not worked. Although everyone does not share Falk's beliefs, if war is inevitable, I think these principles must be followed. Zinn clearly believes that a just cause does not justify a just war. "War may be undertaken for what appears a good cause, against violence, against cruelty, but war itself multiplies the violence, multiplies the cruelty" (Zinn 100).

He did not always feel this way, however. Earlier in Zinn's life he a pilot and bomber in World War II. His view of just wars changed. "By the 1960's my

old belief in a ' just war' was falling apart. I was concluding that while there are certainly vicious enemies of liberty and human rights in the world, war itself is the most vicious of enemies" (Zinn 98). Zinn believes that war is not the answer; just wars are not just because people get killed and human rights are violated. So, a just cause doesn't mean that war is justified according to Zinn.

He speaks especially about how the military uses the " military targets" as an excuse for war. These targets affect civilians by either killing them or destroying what they need to live. Zinn also argues that pacifism is not appeasement, but a rejection of war. Wars are never good, but they can be just. A just cause for war should bring about a just and lasting peace. In reading Howard Zinn's writing and Richard Falk's article, I learned that wars are complicated are dangerous, and if people are going to survive in this world, we need nonviolent solutions to just cause situations that can lead to war.