

Is war ever justified



Wars can be justified through the utilitarian theory and cost benefit analysis. These are dependent on whether the intention of the war is right and the cause for the war is just. Further, wars are only justified when other forms of conflict management have been tried and have failed. There are many types of war, however this essay will focus on military war in particular. Utility Theory and Just War The theory of utility is one way to justify war. The utilitarian approach is defined as the pursuit of the greatest good of society for the greatest number of people in society. There are two branches of utility theory - act and rule.

Act utilitarianism looks closely at the Consequences of the act Of war in order to justify engaging in war. Rule utilitarianism will only condone war when the reason for entering a war is just in itself, is based on good intentions and not for selfish reasons. In essence, act utilitarianism can be summarized as the ends justifying the means, while rule utilitarianism can be summarized as genuine intentions justifying the means. For instance, the Allied Forces declaring war on Germany's invasion of their gibbous as well as on their anti-Semitic activities is an example of utilitarianism in action.

The declaration of war was to prevent further harm to the world even if it did mean a significant loss to the Allied Forces by engaging in such actions. The end of the German terror as well as the protection Of the persecuted justified the means through which this was achieved. The distinction between act and rule utilitarianism while easily distinguishable in theory, is much harder to apply in real life. The example given above can be categorized under both types of utility theory. The protection of a large persecuted number of people

justified entering into war against the anti- Semitic administration in Germany.

Viewing it in this manner allows rule utilitarianism to come into play. At the same time, looking at the consequences of war -? which would be the saving of not only Jews, but also the prevention of invasion of other countries in Europe allows act utilitarianism to justify the Allied Forces declaration on war on Nazi Germany. Utility theory does run the risk of being manipulated and abused and has been used by terrorists and Islamic fundamentalists to justify the use of power and force for " jihad" or what they call, " holy war".

However, it must be noted that utility theory condones war only if it causes the greatest good for the greatest number of society. Even if " jihad" is considered to be the greatest good, it is only from the perspective of a select few people with biased opinions. Hence, a terrorist's justification of war via utility theory cannot be said to be a true justification at all. Be it act or rule utilitarianism, so long as the ends result in the greatest good for the largest number of people in society and are made with the best intentions in mind, war is justified.

Cost-benefit Analysis and Just War The benefits should outweigh the costs in order to justify engaging in war. Cost-benefit analysis is a way of weighing the strengths and weaknesses of alternatives. It helps us determine whether an approach was worth the adoption and practice in terms of benefits in labor, time, Cost savings and so on. It is largely considered an economic analysis and is an approach that can be taken when determining whether a war is justified because of the high socio-economic costs involved in war.

A good way to go about analyzing this would be to look at a case study of the Iraq war. The Gulf war resulted in 220,000 Iraqi casualties and a few hundred thousand wounded Iraqis. The costs of war amounted to 6 trillion US dollars. These numbers are neither small nor insignificant. The benefits, however, are the exact opposite. As far as tangible benefits go, the Iraqi economy saw a slight growth in its GDP since the end of the war. Part of this, is a windfall due to high oil prices but if the war had not taken place, oil sanctions imposed on Iraq would have severely curtailed Iraqi oil sale.

This would have further crushed the already dying economy pre-war. Of course, since Cost-Benefit analysis is primarily economic in nature, on paper, the growth in Iraq's GDP is touted by pro-war candidates as being worth the effort. However it would be ridiculous to imagine that Iraq's economy would have grown enough to cover the costs of war even, much less to actually grow enough to recover and sustain the country post-war. Further, as cost-benefit analysis also should include some elements of intangibility, one must take note of the accessory costs that came along with the war.

Besides the devastation and disease that struck Iraq, neighbors Iran also saw acceleration in its nuclear program because it saw that as the only way to prevent an imminent US invasion. This is not good for the global economy because it makes the Middle East a very dangerous place. Further, there is a high continuing rate of violence in Iraq because society sees it as the only form of protection for them. Of course, regime change and the demise of Saddam Hussein must be considered in the benefit analysis but despite that, Iraq is still in shambles –? both economically as well as socially.

Overall, a cost-benefit analysis allows us another opportunity to evaluate a war and to decide if it can be justified. In the example of Iraq, we can see how it can be used to prove that it cannot be justified. Counter argument However, despite these two analytical methods of justifying war, they come with a caveat. The caveat being that they are only used to justify war when negotiations have failed between parties; all peaceful methods have been already exhausted and war is the final and only option available to them. Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

Many a time, countries prepare for war while negotiations are ongoing. Worse still, they may not even engage in any peaceful forms of collaboration or settlement at all. The notions of war always remain at the back of countries' minds. The Cold War may seem like a successful instance where there were no missiles or bombs unloaded on either the USSR or the US. However, there was a war nonetheless and a war which lasted 30 years. Despite supposed 'peaceful' negotiations between the two superpowers, the thought of missile warfare was always at the back of their minds.

It would not be far-fetched to imagine that this severely impacted the success of their discussions. One cannot fully and calmly negotiate with a finger on the trigger. It was merely a combination of luck, timing and the right set of leaders that prevented the outbreak of a disastrous third world war. Conclusion War can be justified through two methods - utility theory and cost-benefit analysis. These allow an intangible and tangible account of the ways in which a war can be explained as being necessary.