

Through focussing on
a specific
international issue
essay sample



Explain How Ethical Issues Are Significant For International Relations In The Middle East The Arab Israeli conflict is “ one of the most bitter, protracted and intractable conflicts of modern times” (Atack, 2005), being a dominant theme of IR in the Middle East it posses a range of core principal levels that contain ethical issues used as reasons to justify positions from both sides of the conflict. The conflict in essence is a clash “ Between Jewish and Palestinians national movements over the land of Palestine” (Fawcett, 2005) the searches for settlement is complicated by inter Arab relations, Western Nations, and more recently inter Palestinian fragmentation. The issue of Hamas being an illegal terrorist entity has been a source failure for many peace initiatives as well as a reason for escalation to the use of force within that conflict ever since they formed in 1989. With “ Israel, the EU, the US and their allies” (Akhtar, 2008) deeming Hamas as a terrorist entity what this essay will attempt to analyse is; can Hamas’s position be justified by using the principles of the ‘ Just war theory’, the essay will analyse the first section of the theory concerned with justice in going to war, and see whether Hamas as a non state actor can satisfy its criterion and what effects it has on international relations on a global stage.

The just war theory is not a single theory but rather a tradition within which contains a range of interpretation. Its origins and principles originate “ with classical Greek philosophers like Plato and Cicero and were added to by Christian theologians like Augustine and Thomas Aquinas” (Un-authored 1, 2009), while the latter two theologians had developed the theory within the framework of the church for a Christianised Roman Empire, the theory itself is in essence multi cultural, multi national and developed over long history.

Plato, Cicero and Aristotle wrote about “ the moral issues facing soldiers when going to war” (Valls, 2000), in China Mo Tzu and Mencius wrote “ about the injustices facing the people and necessity, at times of taking up arms to remedy them” (Valls, 2000), while in India ‘ The Laws of Manu’ and the Bhadvad Gita’ discuss the laws of war and role of ethics in times of hostility. The theory itself posses a certain amount of uniformity, and most contemporary followers agree on its structure and principles. Its purpose is to provide a guide to the way states should react in potential conflict situations, it is not intended to justify wars but rather to prevent them by implying “ that war is always bad, A just war however is permissible because it’s a lesser evil but still an evil” (Un-authored 1, 2000).

However when a conflict is inevitable what the theory provides is framework of morality and codes of ethical conduct if which an actor were to follow would conclude that reasons for going to war and its active participation within that war would be morally and ethically deemed as ‘ Just’. Its structure is divided in to two sections jus ad bellum (Justice of war: six criteria’s) and jus in bello (Justice in war). The first section relates to ‘ just cause’. A just cause for war is usually a defensive one. The right for a state to defend itself is the right of self determination, while the Just War theory relates to only states and not non state actors, the UN definition of ‘ Just Cause’ recognizes the rights of people as well as states. In article 7 of the definition of aggression the UN refers to “ the right to self determination, freedom, and independence as derived from the Charter, of peoples forcibly deprived of that right” (Khatchidoriun, 1998), therefore as the UN is generally considered to be the highest State institution that sets precedence on issues that its

members should follow, then both legally and morally peoples or nations within or with out a state are granted a right to self determination.

Hamas was officially created with its inception date as “ 14 December 1987” (Abdullah, 2005) in the days following the first intifada from a Palestinian group known as “ Ikwan al-Muslimoon” (Akhtar, 2009) which was a philanthropic social project dedicated to providing Palestinians under occupation with a structured social, health and education programme. They decided that there was a pressing need to create a new organisation in order to change tactic and face the occupation head on. Hamas was formed on the basis of resistance to a very aggressive State policy on the occupied lands of the Palestinian people, Jimmy Carter stated on the Palestine Israel Issue “ a system of apartheid, with two people occupying the same land but completely separated from each other, with Israelis totally dominant and depriving Palestinians of their Human Rights” (Carter, 2007), the Arch Bishop Desmond TuTu upon visiting the occupied territories stated that the Palestinians suffering “ was like that of the black South Africans during Apartheid” (Smith, 2007), and the Israeli offensive in Gaza in 2008 was investigated by the UN with the outcome in the infamous Goldstone report heavily criticizing Israeli action concluding with the IDF offensive being “ planned in all of its phases as a deliberately disproportionate (Palestinian deaths totaling over 1400 with thousands more injured, while Israel suffered 13 casualties 4 of which resulted from friendly fire)and systematic attacks aimed at punishing, humiliating and terrorizing the Palestinian civilian population” (Un-authored 2, 2009).

From this basis of disproportionate aggression on occupied land, together with the historic systematic loss of Palestinian territory after the legal yet controversial 1947 UN mandate, to the current illegal occupation under international law of Gaza, West Bank and East Jerusalem Islamic Interpretation of the Quran deems that resistance is permissible “ Permission (to fight) is given to those against whom war is wrongfully waged, and verily God has indeed the power to succour them, those who have been driven from their homelands against all right for no other reason except” their belief (22: 39, Quran). Therefore Hamas positions may be justified as a means of resistance to an illegal occupation and a tool for implementation of the right self-determination of the people of Palestine. The legal authority requirement is usually interpreted to mean only a state can go to war justly. While the Palestine “ is officially recognized as a state by 94 different countries” (Christinson, 2000) the UN has still not officially granted it state hood.

However interpretation of the Just War theory in effect monopolizes the use of force to the state and in essence is one of the most argued terms amongst scholars in the modern age. From another perspective we can argue that both state and a non-state actors may both equally be legitimate authorities. A legitimate authority of any state from a moral and ethical perspective is that it is a government that represents the interests and rights of the people. From this position Hamas has a very plausible case for representing the rights of the Palestinian people; On the 26 of January 2006 Palestinians took part in democratic elections which “ were widely acclaimed for their fairness and transparency” (Abdullah, 2005) from which a majority led Hamas government was elected. The consequences however were disastrous,

influential states within the international community refused Hamas recognition, the ensuing sanctions and disruption almost led to a civil war within the occupied territory.

The result being Hamas taking charge of the Gaza strip with Fatah controlling the West Bank as the official recognized emergency government. While many commentators saw such action by the international community as a punishment on Palestinians for exercising their democratic choice, it remains that from a moral viewpoint Hamas satisfied the provisions required to be deemed a legitimate authority as their claim to act on behalf of the people was substantiated by the elections, therefore the rest of the world should recognize Hamas as a legitimate authority of the people, even for the purpose of assessing its entitlement to engage in hostile resistance on their behalf. If a national group can have a just cause, and Hamas can be seen as a legitimate authority to act on behalf of that group it seems unproblematic then the third part of the criteria which is 'Right intention' can not be satisfied. All that is needed is for Hamas to remain motivated by the 'Just cause' and not some other agenda. The fourth criterion is 'Last resort'; the use of violence must only be used when all other channels have been exhausted. While "politics is an art of repetition" (Walzer, 1980) it is heavily biased in favor of a recognized state. If a state may reach a point of deciding that all non-violent measures of action have failed then why can't non-state actors do the same.

The fact must be asked, has all reasonable measures been tried an equitable number of times. Hamas will argue that, since 1947 there have been 5 wars over the Palestine issue with Israel and its neighbors, 2 Palestinian Intifadas, <https://assignbuster.com/through-focussing-on-a-specific-international-issue-essay-sample/>

numerous peace processes and countless UN resolutions that continue to be ignored or vetoed. Hamas sees no other alternative, the current siege of Gaza, and continued establishments of settlements in the West Bank are complemented by consistent military operations being carried out by the IDF destroying the already incomplete fragile elements of the Palestinian infrastructure, the situation in Gaza has been systematically abandoned by the international community and stripped of the resources it needs in order to sustain the live of its citizens. The last area is probability of success and proportionality. Hamas has realized that the essential outcome that they initially hoped for which is the return of the Historical land of Palestine is probably impossible. Israel has managed to securitize and cement its position economically through trade with the west, military through defensive pacts and by being the only State with nuclear weapons in the region thus acting as a strong detent against future attack, and politically by being a well established recognized state in both the UN and EU.

Hamas has no official State allies as such, but success may still be probable if not in the near future, partial success in the future is a feasible presumption. Therefore this criterion may well be for filled. Some elements of the International community have responded in an independent manor against the mainstream consensus of the influential superpowers, the Gaza invasion of 2008 saw “ Venezuela, Mauritania, Bolivia, Qatar” (Un-authored 4, 2008) expel Israeli diplomats from their respective countries as a result of the offensive, while Turkeys relationship is becoming increasingly strained as their Prime Ministers Recep Erdogan’s Islamic party becomes increasingly frustrated with Israeli modes of practice against the Palestinians. Turkey’s

historical alliance with Israel will be tested as Turkey progresses in its Islamic political revolution. While it is obvious that Hamas is seeing some sort of success on an international front, from a grass roots level globally it continues to build support.

The Palestinian cause is one of the most widely supported causes globally, while Governments may not publicly endorse it, millions upon millions of people continue to support it. Masjid Al Aqsua situated on the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem is Islam's third most holiest site, in that respect it is the responsibility of Muslims the world over to protect it, from this position it is inevitable that while success may be viable in some form or manor, failure is not an option. This has answered the last criterion of jus ad bellum, proportionality; with failure not being an option the overall cost of securing the Holy land religiously outweighs the cost of war. Death is deemed as martyrdom for Muslims involved and therefore not a deterrent.

From a non-religious aspect, if modern warfare can be justified with huge casualties, resistance movements such as Hamas where conflicts are relatively on a smaller scale are just as easily able to satisfy the last criterion. In conclusion although there are many question and areas that were not touched in this essay, one can see that the Jus ad bellum criteria of the Just war theories criteria can be fulfilled by analyzing it from certain perspectives. Historically organizations within conquered nations have engaged in violence in order to free themselves and force independence that is now deemed as 'just', in the same manor Nelson Mandela, or Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia are seen as freedom fighters liberating southern Africa, Hamas works within the same principle. If a state is suppressing its people, <https://assignbuster.com/through-focussing-on-a-specific-international-issue-essay-sample/>

then self determination is that peoples given right, the Palestine issue converges not only political, humanitarian, justice and societal issues but also religious issues that are deep and intense, a peaceful solution will take sacrifice and effort from both sides, but in order for progress hostilities must end from both all sides involved.

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