

The laws of war and peace: how hugo grotius uses the natural law as a political p...

[Philosophy](#)



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What natural law is may be defined and comprehended in several different ways. It all originates from the “ natural” aspect. Natural is defined as something with a basis of nature; that produces a truth, fact, or certain belief uninfluenced by humankind. Law is defined as something that is an already existing condition or sanction that cannot be changed. When one integrates the two terms, a very prominent aspect of political philosophy is created. Natural law is law that is universal to all mankind. Natural law is a political philosophy that came prominently from Hugo Grotius, a renaissance era political philosopher. Grotius was a firm believer that war should be avoided by all means, with the exception of the preservation of the body, state, or highest form of rule. Many other political philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, Vattel, and Pufendorf have contributed to this law theory. This political philosophy derives from reason and a dormant characteristic of understanding common to all of humanity. This is said to be dormant within man because it is not completely visible and man does not always act in just ways. Reason is the key component of natural law. It is a unique feature common only to humans. No other beast or animal has the same ability that humans do. They are seen as savages and us as civil beings because of this. Natural law in its most common comprehension, would infer that there are moral obligations in the enforcement of natural law. Moral obligations are extremely important in conducting international relations. These moral obligations are also derived from the ability to reason. It is very simple to understand that for all to prosper, certain respects must be implemented and several self-interests must be sacrificed. Without this simple concept and understanding the world would be in absolute chaos. The world we live

in today, however, is not completely chaotic or peaceful. It is slowly leaning towards chaos with the rise of terrorism, and self-interested motives from several insufficient governments. I would relate the rise of chaos to a lack of moral obligations, and the aspect that most natural law is ceasing to exist when conducting international affairs.

Today we live in a world where everything is broadcasted over social media, the television or mobile devices. Every bit of breaking news good or bad is only a finger click away. With that comes a more aware world. The world we live in today has several issues needing immediate assessment and solutions. From one end of the world to the other, there are conflicts everywhere. Several of these conflicts could be resolved in my opinion, with simple natural laws. These natural laws that would imply morals and ethics are not presented in today's society.

The largest global threat today is presumably the several Islamic State terrorist groups, mainly ISIS. They all have a central jihadist motive. Jihad is a holy war waged upon nonbelievers. These terrorist organizations are direct examples of natural law ceasing to exist. Their actions can in no way be justified, are irrational, without reason, and undoubtedly conducted without any morals or ethics. Their religious beliefs alone would suggest an imposition of natural law. They justify their actions through religious law and the extremist Sunni Muslim faith. This creates a contradiction of natural law.

In Grotius' understanding nature was not an entity on its own, it was created by God. If God created nature, then he in return also created natural law.

These ISIS members and other extremists justify their actions through the

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Quran which states in summary that if one fails to convert to the Muslim faith that they should wreak the worst punishment, ultimately death. This is an absolute contradiction to the majority of faiths, beliefs, and people in general. The Christian faith states that it is unlawful to kill any man or woman, and that there should always be a level of tolerance amongst unbelievers. The main issue is justification of these actions. The majority sees these mass bombings, shootings, and even beheadings as immoral and without just reason. The Islamic radicals especially the Sunni Muslims however do not see it in the majority's light.

How we should incorporate these morals and natural laws is not as easy as it seems. The world we live in is more culturally diverse than ever before. Not only is the world culturally diverse it also has several language barriers making resolutions much more difficult. With cultural diversity brings crisis, conflict, and a plethora of misunderstandings. No two nations will ever see "eye-to-eye" on every issue therefore natural law must still exist for the world and its peoples to operate functionally and successfully.

Every human being has the ability to reason what is right and wrong. With this ability the world can use reason and comprehension to settle many pressing issues. This is not an overnight process and it will take years if not decades to achieve. The war in the Middle East and the global war against terrorism are the first stepping stones. To go any further in establishing a peaceful world these issues must be addressed properly and with moral obligations as the backbone.

International relations and foreign policy should always integrate natural law that can be universally understood. No coordinating nations should feel targeted or imposed upon, because of their cultural background or geographical region alone. This is where the stem of understanding and compromise should come in. The countries around the world are all very unique and each has historical traditions and beliefs. It is imperative to understand this when conducting international relations and foreign policy. Without this toes may be stepped on, and enemies can come about. There is an exception of this respect. When a country or organization becomes too radical such as the current Islamic state terror organizations these natural laws and moral obligations immediately cease to exist.

A solution to reach perpetual peace is harder than ever before. The Islamic state terror groups have shown zero moral obligations, zero reasoning, and the complete absence of natural law. They post video after video of beheadings, bombings, mass executions, and even throwing non-believers from rooftops. These are all inhuman practices and cannot be justified. How we should change this is simple in writing but seemingly impossible in actions. We have failed to put even the slightest dent in their organization, as it is growing and recruiting faster than ever.

An alliance needs to be put in place from multiple nations across the globe to shut this radical group down. If not shut them down entirely somehow shoe these organizations that there is a better way. There is a better way and it is apparent as it's presented in the past. When people lay down their religious beliefs or self-interests alone, the global societies have proven to prosper.

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The American Revolution for example is a direct representation of this. We separated church and state and founded one of the greatest nations in the world. Across the United States people live peacefully based on natural laws alone. They may not understand this because they cannot directly define natural law or the moral obligations that it brings, but there is that bottom line of reason. The United States is more diverse than any other country. We do have our civil conflicts here and there, but we ultimately prosper most when we work together for the common good. We have so many liberties and freedoms that these Middle-Eastern countries can only dream of given their current state.

For these underdeveloped countries that are so radicalized to truly succeed and prosper they must see it this way as well. There are certain beliefs that will have to cease immediately and some will end over time. This does not however mean an end all to the Islamic faith, but a revision, and better understanding of the world today. Natural law is imperative to the survival of the world's international relations such as trade, commerce, transportation, and many other resources. These underdeveloped countries that are labeled radical believers of the Islamic faith are not what they could be. These countries are very rich in certain resources that the world does not have. They instead of insisting their Islamic faith on the rest of the world could be using that same aggressive drive to fuel their countries economically. These countries are home to the most oil rich reserves unlike any other region. They hold almost a monopoly on the industry itself, yet fail to capitalize, compromise, and bring new horizons to their people. This would include jobs, technology, trade, and even the possibility of a whole new world.

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Ultimately to reach that level of sophistication, the unjust wars, mass executions, and terrorist actions must stop. They see them as beneficial when in return they only create more hatred for their faith and the people they represent. Not every Muslim or Middle-Eastern is a terrorist but with the never ending tragedies they create around the world it makes it very difficult for other nations to feel sympathy or remorse for the ones that are actually innocent. They are like the Klu-Klux-Klan of whites. The clan for almost sixty years made whites a hated group among the minorities in America. Even those who were not affiliated in any way with the clan were seen as racist and evil. When an alliance of support from civil rights the Clan was shut down, and everyone from the pawns to the king of the organization received proper punishment. Their claims were much like the Islamic terrorist organization. They believed the Aryan race was the only one that had the right to exist and expressed their beliefs in ways very similar to the Islamic Organizations.

The Islamic terror organizations have a much deeper history, almost three-thousand years old. Their beliefs and values have remained devout and religious wars have always played a part in their history. It started with the Sunnis and Shiites, and today has been mainly Sunni radicals that have continued this heritage. Jihad is no longer valid, and in saying that it would imply that the whole Quran is wrong. The world has evolved in such a way that such an extremist group should not be tolerated unless they understand the reasoning behind it.

The world today requires more morals and natural law than ever before. The most recent wars have had a religious background to them stemming from these countries in the Middle-East. The United States has failed to reinstall these morals and natural laws. Often negotiations are carried out without morals or ethics, they are based on the concerning nation's self-interests, and how it can benefit them without the second thought of what these actions might create in the long run. This has become a never ending cycle among high officials. When conducting foreign policy and international relations it is imperative that you take account what it might do to the citizens of your nation or the other nations involved. Natural-law should be the very backbone of these relations.

The backbone of natural-law is reason. Reason implies understanding compromise, and coordination, that can be neutral in its result to all corresponding parties. Never should an action between nations impose negativity or an eventual threat towards the other. It should remain neutral and unbiased until a new circumstance arises where it is again revised to meet these criteria. When there is neutrality among nations there is little to no conflict at all. The deeper and more detailed conflicts become the harder it is to resolve or overcome them. There will always be differences amongst nations but should never go so far as terrorism to insist that one nation or one faith is superior to the other. There must be equilibrium between all parties. Whether it is a complete treaty or zero-admittance policy like that of Cuba and the United States so be it. The end result should be peace. Once morals and ethics play the main role in relations peace will eventually be met.

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Perpetual peace is unlikely in the near future but with time an understanding must be met. A conflict between Radical Islam and the rest of the world is unacceptable; it hurts not only the nations fighting but the neutral ones that benefit from the resources these conflicting nations have to offer the rest of the world. It goes back to giving up several self-interests to reach this perpetual peace. There are standing borders that have been in place for centuries, within these boundaries lie multiple cultures and beliefs. Some differ in minimal ways while others are drastically different.

These cultures are rich and often have generations of heritage. To reach peace and stability globally we must understand this simple fact. Not only should we understand it but embrace it. Without several cultures we wouldn't have many of the technological, agricultural, and medicinal advances we have today. Working with IGO's and the United Nations has been a proven positive effort in sustain several relations and alliances. It is the underdeveloped radicalized countries that must understand this concept. It is simple in wording but complex to actually carry the plan out. That plan has yet to be devised but it too should stem from natural law, moral obligations, tolerance, compromise, and an understanding of how to incorporate all of these. Once that can be met the changes will be evident.

I do not believe that it is going to happen within the next presidential election or even the one to follow based on its sensitive manner. Going back to stepping on toes, sometimes you will have to do just that to reach positive solutions. It is a process of trial and error in foreign policy and conducting international relations. For perpetual peace to be actualized several actions

must happen immediately for them to function in the future. There will be failures in negotiations that will require multiple meetings to address the conflict at hand. There will often be “boots-on-ground” situations where solutions might fail, to again temporarily neutralize the situation. If that is to happen in a last resort scenario more meetings among the nations must happen to reach an ultimate truth, fact, treaty, or even sound legislation preventing any further conflict on the same issue. The way international relations are conducted and the few meetings between national officials are simply not enough. Much of the conflict arises from the citizens in the nations alone.

Citizens must also give up self-interests, be more religiously tolerant, understanding of cultures bizarre to them, and compromise when the need is there. People today are too self-entitled and base their day to day lives on what benefits them. An end all to this is impossible for obvious reasons, yet there is a point we can all reach. This point is far from today like previously stated, it will take time and learning. The learning aspect can stem from reason as well. To understand a culture very different than one familiar to one, that person must understand what their beliefs actually mean, what they represent, and how they live their lives according to that specific belief. The radicals of the Muslim faith are the ones that must grasp this concept. No other religion today expresses their beliefs so drastically as killing other simply because they do not share the same faith, and if they do they do not believe deeply enough.

Grotius only reason for breaking a treaty was if it the status of the state or highest form of rule was in jeopardy. The Islamic states that are waging Jihad are not in a state of distress and do not have outside threats other than the ones they created through their radical actions. This would infer that these Islamic terrorist organizations are in fact in direct violation of natural law. No outside sanction posed a threat or harmed these nations; some even went as far as sending aid and refugee programs. These terror groups don't see it that way unfortunately they claim there are only one god one faith and one holy land. It is the actions that the radicals create around the world such as bombings and mass shootings that have no other resort but for the nations to fight back. Then the terrorists again justify their actions to the people of their countries and eventually radicalize them into the same views. They are uneducated to the other cultures and norms of other nations around the world simply because their government and faith do not allow outside influence, almost making their nations ancient forms of government that have failed to adapt to the global society we have today.

The United States however will not let acts of terrorism go unnoticed. We usually react with military force, or leaders in international meetings to resolve or respond to these conflicts. There can be morals and ethics found in every war waged by the United States, whether we started the war or simply responded to an attack such as the attacks on September 11th, 2001. The United States response was that they would not tolerate this terrorist act, and would do everything in its power to put an end to such terrorist organizations. Our mission was not only to destroy terrorism, but restore faith, peace and stability among the people that were affected. There were

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some morally wrong actions in the process but those were so minute to the constant ones carried out by today's terrorist organizations around the world. Those organizations have one simple justification " Jihad" to the non-believers. This idea is unjust based solely on what natural law is defined as, and what it entitles.

The only way to reach perpetual peace is to lay down self-interests that are drastic in measure, religious tolerance and understanding, compromise, and coordination through every nation. When all these aspects come about perpetual peace will eventual exist. Trade will explode due to a cease of multiple grudges or hatred among nations. Commerce will rise. Technological advances will be more abundant and ever-expanding with scientists and doctors from every inch of the globe working together with the resources they have. Western and Eastern ideas can converge to create a peaceful and prosperous world. There would essentially be no need for the United Nations or any alliances if everyone was to benefit from each countries resource. Civil disputes within countries would slowly deplete, and overall a more beneficial world would come from this. Without these moral obligations and the implementation of natural law a perpetual peace will never exist. Time has shown how these obligations and laws have slowly faded from their origin and original intention. We must go back to their natural intent if we should ever hope of them actually existing again. It is extremely important to understand cultures and what is a norm somewhere may not be in another region. Differences do not and should not mean conflict it should drive progress in human nature and the world as it operates in the future.