

# War!

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

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Bhante Bodhidhamma Not the summeriest of subjects! But the whole appalling situation in Gaza and the pitiless game that Presidents Trump and Putin are playing in Ukraine plus the polarisation social media is expert at developing, has prompted me to revisit this whole area of conflict. St. Thomas Aquinas, the Medieval philosopher, developed the rules for a just war and what the limits were within the war. These form the basis for such international laws as the Geneva Conventions. With so many conflicts, each with their own reasons, it might be good to have some guidance that allows us to take a considered position. For there is always the danger of wisdom being overclouded by anger and grief, which may be understandable but biasing our judgement. Here we must distinguish between being partial and judgemental from being impartial and judicious. This does not mean we become stonehearted! Quite the opposite for it gives the heart freedom to express itself fully without moral regret. Thanks to AI:

1. Jus ad Bellum (Conditions for going to war):
  - Just Cause: The war must be a response to a wrong suffered, such as defending against aggression or restoring a violated right.
  - Legitimate Authority: The decision to go to war must be made by a recognized authority, like a government, not by private individuals.
  - Right Intention: The purpose of the war must be to achieve good, such as restoring peace or justice, and not for personal gain or aggression.
  - Last Resort: All peaceful options, like negotiation and diplomacy, must be exhausted before resorting to war.
  - Probability of Success: There must be a reasonable chance of achieving the intended just outcome through war.
2. Jus in Bello (Conduct during war):
  - Proportionality: The force used in war should be proportionate to the wrong being addressed and should not cause more harm than necessary.
  - Discrimination: Attacks should be directed at legitimate military targets, minimizing harm to civilians, emphasizing the need for careful consideration, restraint, and a commitment to peace even amidst conflict.

These guidelines seem pretty straight forward, yet when we take the reasons given by both sides into consideration, it can be very hard to make a fair judgement. And in the midst of all this there is the knotty problem of whether the ends justify the means. What position do we take? Anything is allowable to achieve a just end. Or are there moral boundaries that must not be crossed? We don't have to come to a conclusion. We can keep our minds open. But once we are clear, we should do whatever little we can to express our understanding. This, of course, can bring us into conflict with friends and family so it is also important to come from a position of equanimity, careful to realise when we are being aggressive rather than assertive. We need to actively listen to the other and accept that we might have to agree to disagree. It is when polarisation is fuelled by self-righteous anger – moral outrage! that we give cause for personal wars!

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