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# The Round Tablette

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## Welcome to the November session of the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table.

Tonight's speaker is Lt. General James M Dubik, author of *Just War Reconsidered*, who will discuss moral strategic leadership and the ethical waging of war, particularly when the chosen strategies are incompatible with stated war aims, or how should we wage *Just War*?

For those of you who are unfamiliar with our annual event, we offer a word of explanation. It was Dr. Deutsch's custom to speak on a topic of his choosing at the November meeting. These lectures were always well attended due to his renowned scholarly reputation. His knowledge on virtually any World War II topic was second to none. Many of his former students from the University of Minnesota came to this lecture. With his death, it was decided to remember him through, not only this Round Table, but also by a lecture series named after him.

Justifying the human suffering by all sides in a war has been a problematic field in moral philosophy as well as in military and political decision making in the West for literally thousands of years. During the Peloponnesian War (416 BC), Thucydides describes a dialogue when Athens presented the neutral Island of Melos with the stark choice of becoming part of Athenian Empire or facing annihilation. The Melians protested the injustice of Athens' aggression as Melos was neutral. The Athenians replied that questions of justice are only relevant between those in equal power, and "the strong do what they can, and the weak endure what they must." This clear depiction of raw power politics highlights some of the moral conundrums of warfare. Is power the only thing?

Christian theologians analyze the morality of war fighting against Jesus' instructions to "turn the other cheek" and "love your enemies". Early Christian communities were pacifist, even evading military service. When Christianity became the official religion of Rome in the Fourth Century, the necessities of government and statecraft now became the province of Christian leaders. In this context Saint Augustine (354-430) and later St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) will articulate the principles of Just War Theory (or Doctrine) to find rules of conduct in warfare

consistent with Christian values. Their expositions of the moral questions concerning the violence and evil of war continues to inform many modern approaches to these questions.

The foundational theory of Just War recognizes two specific areas of moral controversy: *Jus Ad Bellum* – whether war is justified and fought for morally good reasons; and *Jus in Bello* how a war is conducted and fought along moral lines. *Jus Ad Bellum* is seen by Augustine and many contemporary authors as requiring several key points.

Among these are:

- 1) A just cause for fighting (includes self-defense, protection of innocent lives, and defeating evil doers);
- 2) War is the last resort, (diplomacy and all other peaceful resolutions have failed);
- 3) The war was launched by competent, legal authority;
- 4) The war is fought with right intent – saving lives and promoting justice not merely to punish enemies; and
- 5) That the war has a high probability of success – that lives are not lost in vain or impossible missions.

These criteria all must be met for a war to be considered **Just**. These ideas, therefore, place a huge burden on the political–military leadership in requiring them to be truly clear minded with a coherent and cohesive strategy and moral clarity before war is launched. Even with a Just Cause, how you conduct the war, *Jus in Bello*, is also morally fraught.

Diplomatic efforts defining rules of warfare in modern times include The Hague Convention (1899-1900), The Geneva Conventions (1929 & 1949), and the United Nations Convention on Aggression (1957 & 1974), focusing on warfare between nation-states. These include:

- 1) Distinguishing between combatants and non-combatants, forbidding attacks on civilians or targets of no military value;
- 2) Proportionality of violence must be maintained, minimizing the amount of collateral damage in relation to the military value of the target;
- 3) Military necessity must be evident, avoiding any violence that does not directly attack the enemy;
- 4) Fair treatment of Prisoners of War and of civilians in occupied territory; and
- 5) No actions which are evil conduct of themselves (*Malum In Se* – torture, rape, and other crimes). Chemical and biological weapons are branded as *Malum In Se*.

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If you are a veteran, or know a veteran, of one of these campaigns – contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or [coldpatton@yahoo.com](mailto:coldpatton@yahoo.com)

Even when justified, violence is not a good in itself. The violence and suffering that war entails, therefore are only the means to achieve a greater goal of justice and peace – warfare should be avoided if at all possible. Violence, according to Catholic Just War Doctrine should only be used sparingly, precisely, at the lowest effective level possible: the goal is not the destruction of the enemy but the end of evil acts.

But can these theories and doctrines ever be really effective? How can we ever really fight this way? One of the terrible modern approaches to war is the Doctrine of Total War where virtually all components of an enemy's society and its economic infrastructure are deemed legitimate targets. With the advent of strategic bombing the practice of targeting civilian population centers was seen as legitimate

The conduct of the Second World War produces a maze of moral problems. While most see the Allied response to German and Japanese aggression as a clear cut case of self-defense and therefore Just War this moral clarity is obfuscated by Allied conduct in fighting the war. Indeed, as General Dubik discusses in his book, *Just War Reconsidered*, the decision to go to war and the methods of fighting it are not separate questions. Furthermore, to compound the morality issues of the Second World War, at its conclusion a legal framework was established to punish and criminalize the national leadership of Japan and Germany simultaneously for starting “unjust wars” (wars of aggression) and atrocious conduct both on the battlefield and to conquered populations. This in turn gave rise to an ancillary moral component of Just War Theory, namely *Jus Post Bellum*. This relates to the treatment of the defeated enemy and its population.

Post-war justice includes:

1. Revenge is not the motive for the peace settlement;
2. The evils that triggered the war should be remedied or removed;
3. Civilians should not be punished for the acts of their government;
4. War Crimes should be punished; and
5. The defeated aggressor regime is transformed and rehabilitated. After World War II, this included the demilitarization of Germany and Japan and transformation of their political cultures with the enforcement of human rights and democratic values.

The controversies and debates on Just War Theory today or as applied to World War II permit no easy resolutions. Were the Nuremberg Trials simply victors' justice? If not, as German lawyers pointed out, if Germans committing village massacres on the ground constituted war crimes, how did allied bombing of civilians in their homes not also qualify? Was starving the Japanese people through unrestricted submarine warfare and

firebombing their cities valid strategies of Total War, or were they unjustly inflicting suffering on non-combatants? War is legal killing and it must always be borne in mind that however justified, war brings death and suffering to both sides. Thus, among the most far-reaching moral questions that must always be answered is: “Was all this suffering and destruction justified?”

#### FURTHER READINGS:

James M. Dubik, *Just War Reconsidered: Strategy, Ethics, and Theory* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2016).

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Christian Classics, 1981).

Augustine of Hippo, *Reply to Faustus the Manichean XXII in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series* (Roberts, Donaldson, et alia, Hendrickson Publishers, 1995).

Davis Brown, *The Sword, the Cross, and the Eagle: The American Christian Just War Tradition* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008).

Mark Vorobej, “Was World War Two a Completely Just War?” *Journal of Military Ethics* Vol. 18 No. 4 Dec. 2019.

#### Announcements:

Twin Cities Civil War Round Table – 19

Nov. 2024, *Lincoln & the Dakota Uprising* – [www.tccwrt.com](http://www.tccwrt.com) - [info@tccwrt.com](mailto:info@tccwrt.com)

Minnesota Military Museum, Camp Ripley, 15000 Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345 -

320-616-6050. <http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/>.

8th AF Historical Society of MN, KC Hall Bloomington, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays at 1100 -

<https://www.8thmn.org>.

Friends of Ft. Snelling - [www.fortsnelling.org](http://www.fortsnelling.org)

Fagen Fighters WWII Museum, Granite Falls, MN - Air show – TBA 2025 – 320-564-6644

<http://www.fagenfighterswwiimuseum.org>.

Wings of the North Airshow - Eden Prairie – TBA 2025

- Flying Cloud Airport - 952-746-6100 - [www.wotn.org](http://www.wotn.org)

Alliance Française 612-332-0436 - [www.afmsp.org](http://www.afmsp.org)

Friends of the **National WW II Memorial** –

<http://www.wwiimemorialfriends.org.US>

Pittsburg Veterans Breakfast Club

- <http://www.vbcphg.org>.

Western Naval Historical Association –

[info@wnha.net](mailto:info@wnha.net)

WWII Discussion Forum – [wwiidf.org](http://www.wwiidf.org)

CAF - Commemorative Air Force - 651-455-6942 -

[www.cafmn.org](http://www.cafmn.org)

Honor Flight - Jerry Kyser - 651-338-2717

- [jkyser45@gmail.com](mailto:jkyser45@gmail.com)

**We need volunteers to drive our veterans to and from meetings. Please contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or [coldpatton@yahoo.com](mailto:coldpatton@yahoo.com)**

#### Round Table Schedule 2024-2025

##### 2024

10 Dec. Battle of the Bulge

##### 2025

14 Jan. Gliders & Computers in WWII

11 Feb. Ghost Army

11 Mar. Women at War in WWII

25 Mar. Submarines at Midway

8 Apr. 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division

13 May Patton's Tactician: War and Occupation

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