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# The Philosophy of War and Peace: Ethical Challenges of Armed Conflicts in the Twenty-First Century: *Just War, Asymmetric Violence, and the Limits of Moral Reasoning*

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## Abstract

This paper explores whether a morally coherent philosophy of armed conflict remains viable in the twenty-first century. It is claimed that the crisis of just war theory is not only ethical nevertheless fundamentally epistemological, arising from the transformation of communication in contexts of hybrid and information warfare. The classical just war tradition, while still illuminating normatively, is not adequate conceptually after warfare turns asymmetric, hybrid, cybernetic and algorithmically mediated. Methodologically, the study brought analytical philosophy into dialogue with continental phenomenology and hermeneutic critique. Classical scholars such as Augustine, Aquinas, Grotius, Vattel, Walzer, McMahan, Levinas, Arendt, and Ricoeur were accessed. In constructive terms,

Kant's idea of perpetual peace and Galtung's notion of structural violence are resorted in order to argue that peace must not be understood as a passive absence of hostilities but as an active praxis, which is normatively grounded. Contemporary scholars' thoughts concerning the philosophical-political and philosophical-legal aspects of information warfare are as well included in order to demonstrate how communication itself has become an operational domain of conflict. The article concludes that ethical inquiry must move beyond justifications of violence to a philosophy of peace based on the reconstruction of communicative and epistemological conditions.

**Keywords:** just war theory, ethics of violence, hybrid war, peace philosophy, levinas, arendt, moral agency

## 1. INTRODUCTION

“The face is what forbids us to kill” [1, p. 199]. Fewer philosophical propositions confront the moral architecture of war more directly than this one. Levinas’s statement is not just a condemnation of cruelty, or excess; it is a blow to the very endeavor of justifying killing under rational conditions. The claim that ethics comes into being where the Other’s vulnerability appears [2, 3] implies that violence cannot be comprehended as a morally neutral tool that is subsequently regulated by the doctrine. The challenge of war does not begin with strategy, legality, or even finding victory in the first place. Alternatively, it springs from a deeper and more unsettling question: can organized violence be rendered morally intelligible without first neutralizing the ethical claim of the Other?

This inquiry has inspired the just war tradition for Centuries. The tradition was an attempt to avert violence from metamorphosing into arbitrariness, from Augustine’s dismal account of force in a fallen world, to Aquinas’ endeavour to regulate war through legitimate authority, just cause, and right intention [4, 5]. In the early modern period, Grotius and Vattel converted this legacy into a more secular and legal language which enabled war to be regulated within a system of sovereign states [6, 7]. In the 20th century, Walzer returned moral argument to the centre of public reflection on war, while McMahan revealed the instability of the moral equality of combatants and forced renewed attention to liability, responsibility, and unjust threat [8, 9]. This tradition has existed for a long time but it cannot be wrong detected. What it was endowed with as grammar of justified force may no longer be conceptually proportionate to today’s wars.

The consequence of this declaration is that not only will the conflict continue to endure; it will also change in form. The conflict of the twenty-first century is not just about warfare. The scope of it reaches to digital infrastructure, hospitals, schools, supply chains, communication & post-war civic restoration. The contemporary conflict is asymmetric, hybrid, cybernetic and mediated in systems in which agency is distributed and harm, which may be delayed, indirect or epistemically unstable [10]. The conventional criteria of the just war theory come under stress precisely where they once claimed to offer moral clarity, under these conditions. Discrimination weakens when the divide between combatant/civilian is less than clear [11, 12]. In addition to the above, proportionality becomes unstable when vulnerability is radically unequal and damage is infrastructural; and just cause itself becomes harder to assess when truth becomes manipulated as part of the conflict process [10, 13].

Scholars and contemporary case studies show how war extends well beyond actual battles. For instance, the war in Ukraine demonstrates both the continuing normative relevance and the practical strain on international humanitarian law under contemporary conditions of infrastructure targeting, cyber pressure, displacement, and hybridisation of violence [14, 15]. The post-war ethical obligation can no longer be simply seen in terms of a ceasefire and legal settlement. Indeed, reconstruction increasingly invests in models of corporate responsibility and wider forms of civic repair [49]. The wartime medicine also illustrates that the morality of a war cannot only be in relationship to combatants; the treatment of soldiers’ infected wounds belongs to the moral universe of war just as much as activities in the field of battle [43]. Despite the conflict, higher education remained resilient during the war. E-learning adapted under conditions of martial law. Such events reflect that the war reaches into the temporal reproduction of political community. The resilience, adaptation, and implementation of an imaginative projection of futural politics by polities are indicative of continuity [16]. The impact of war is not limited. They form part among other ways with which war now works [17].

Consequently, a lot of philosophical problems are deeper than improving a established doctrine. The question being posed, however, is whether a tradition centred around a limited and legible set of conflicts can still adequately account for violence in an age when war is networked, algorithmically mediated and narrated. The just war framework has received a lot of criticism. Many ethical arguments made in the contemporary period suggest that it can be changed [12]. This essay takes on a more critical analysis. It concludes that the crisis is not just an application one, but also of foundation. The structural circumstances of contemporary warfare call into question expectations about agency, visibility, reciprocity and public judgment on which just war reasoning rests.

This article uses a hybrid philosophical approach. It employs analytical philosophy for clarifying the concepts of liability, proportionality, and moral responsibility, and continental phenomenology and hermeneutics for yielding a trans-procedural concept of violence. As per the views expressed by Walzer and McMahan, the authors Levinas, Arendt and Ricoeur reveal how such image cannot grasp their essential ethical priority of the Other, the violence–power distinction, and the narrative afterlife of war [8, 9, 12]. The goal of this article is not to carry out a sociological analysis and interpretation of conflict but to examine whether the inherited moral vocabulary of justified force is still philosophically acceptable.

The paper claims that the just war tradition can no longer be philosophically reconciled with the structural realities of warfare in the twenty-first century without a radical rethinking of moral agency, responsibility, and political community. Given the above, the paper moves towards the shift from the ethics of justified killing to the philosophy of peace understood, not as the absence of fighting but as a praxis that is actively and normatively-grounded.

With respect to the future and how it may be constructed, not only does the above shift find resources in Kant’s regulative idea of perpetual peace and Galtung’s account of structural violence; one also requires a more searching phenomenological

sensitivity to what any calculus of justified force leaves behind [17–20]. The question is no longer simply when war might be justifiable, rather how political and moral thought might be reconceived so that violence is no longer considered the normal horizon of collective life. The philosophical framework and its critical tensions are in the Table 1.

**Table 1.** *Philosophical framework and its critical tensions*

| Philosopher | Concept           | Role               | Philosophical tension           |
|-------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Augustine   | Bellum iustum     | Foundation         | Violence justified as necessity |
| Walzer      | Moral equality    | Normative core     | Can unjust combatants be equal? |
| Levinas     | Face of the Other | Ethical rupture    | Violence cannot be justified    |
| Arendt      | Violence vs Power | Political critique | Violence signals failure        |
| Kant        | Perpetual peace   | Normative horizon  | Ideal vs reality tension        |

## 2. THE CLASSICAL FRAMEWORK: FROM BELLUM IUSTUM TO MODERN JUST WAR THEORY

**Augustine and Aquinas: violence as tragic necessity.** Augustine's significance is that he never judged war morally clean. War was not an ideal, but rather a symptom of a fallen world. Though, he similarly rejected the idea that one could avoid responsibility for political order by appealing to moral purity. In order to protect the innocent, punish severe wrongs, or to restore peace, coercion might, unfortunately, be necessary. What is more important is not victory but orientation, force was to remain subordinate to, that is, use and justice and charity [4].

Aquinas articulated this sentiment in a more systematic sense. War is not sanctified by legitimate authority, just cause and right intention; rather, they impose strict conditions on its moral toleration. War was not justified because it was useful, glorious or politically expedient. The force used by public authority was permissible only when it was for a serious cause and if it is ordered to a just peace rather than hatred, cruelty or domination. The Thomistic framework has remained foundational because it maintains a tragic register: war may be permitted, even if not called for [5].

The present argument entails the tragic register. Much of today's strategic discussion is dominated by talk of precision, deterrence, efficiency and optimization in a way that drains all moral gravity from the classical tradition. Augustine and Aquinas emphasise that violence, even tolerated violence, is morally damaging. Consequently, their framework is at its strongest where it remembers loss and at its weakest where it translates into a frictionless technique of authorization.

**Grotius and Vattel: the juridification of war.** During the early modern period, this inheritance was secularized. Many medieval concerns were accepted by Grotius in an order of natural law, rights and inter-state order. The state pattern is what Vattel brought together by making the rights and duties of sovereigns crucial to the regulation of war. The transition has been of historic magnitude. Because of it, the ethics of war became legible within an international order that is increasingly plural, and not necessarily governed by a single theological horizon [6, 7].

Despite the legalisation of war, a constant tension arose. While war may indeed become legalised due to law, being legal does not equal moral. Though a war may be formally licensed, it may be ethically disordered; a lawful strike may yet participate in domination. The subtle danger is that the offer of legal form to justice can replace a moral critique with a procedural one. The use of compliance rhetoric rather than asking deep questions of hierarchy, vulnerability and the political economy of violence keep this danger with us.

Accordingly, Grotius and Vattel have a double importance at present. It is an achievement of civilization that an armed conflict is legally regulated, without which there would be no civilizational progress. However, they are limited. This is because the legal form of war does not, in itself, answer what contemporary hostilities are doing to the meaning of agency, to the visibility of harm, or the boundaries between war and social life.

**Michael Walzer's revival and the moral equality of combatants reconsidered.** In the twentieth century, Michael Walzer restored moral argument to the centre of public reflection on war, thereby invigorating just war theory. In contradiction to realist approaches, most notably Kenneth Waltz, which treat war as a sphere of necessity subject to 'realistic' norms beyond ordinary morality, Walzer insisted that aggression, self-defence, occupation, terrorism and civilian immunity all remain matters for moral judgment. Due to the combination of political intelligibility with philosophical seriousness, his account became canonical. According to Walzer [18], it enabled moral language to speak about actual wars without going utopian.

One of Walzer's most controversial statements is that combatants are morally equal. According to him, when ordinary soldiers fight under public authority and follow the rules of war, they may be morally equal in war even when their states' causes are different. The idea is not that causes do not matter but that combatants are often placed within institutions they did not choose and cannot easily evaluate from the perspective of ultimate justice. The doctrine permits humane conduct even in an unjust war.

McMahan's revisionism throws this compromise into question. If one side is fighting unjustly to attack and the other side is fighting in defence, their fighters cannot be moral equals, not only because the one side puts the other side in danger, but also because they are both obedient. Being accountable must match the on-ground responsibility for an unjust threat of serious harm to a person and not merely actual membership in the army. The critique presented by McMahan is one which does not separate *jus ad bellum* from *jus in bello*. Nonetheless, it also intensifies an issue of practicality which will be vital throughout this piece: the diffusion of responsibility in modern day warfare, the fragmented nature of evidence, and the justice of cause that is mediated by propaganda, secrecy, and institutional ignorance [9].

The debate between Walzer and McMahan represents a significant watershed in contemporary war ethics. The moral equality of combatants must either be preserved, or the ethical valuation of behavior risks becoming detached from the justice of the cause for which it is undertaken. However, this will risk placing crushing epistemic burdens on ordinary agents whose actions are already mediated by complex institutions. This dilemma is magnified by contemporary warfare because these institutions are now increasingly digital, networked and opaque. Table 2 shows the evolution of just war theory and its contemporary stress points.

**Table 2.** *The Evolution of Just War Theory and its contemporary stress points*

| Historical phase     | Key thinkers       | Normative gain                           | Contemporary stress point                      | Philosophical anchor                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Medieval/Patristic   | Augustine; Aquinas | War as tragic necessity ordered to peace | Assumes stable authority and embodied conflict | "The peace of all things is the tranquillity of order" [4, p. 13]                                                                                        |
| Early modern         | Grotius; Vattel    | Legal regulation of war                  | Legality may mask injustice                    | "War is undertaken for the sake of peace" [6]                                                                                                            |
| Contemporary revival | Walzer             | Civilian immunity, moral vocabulary      | Relies on clear combatant roles                | "War is hell" [21, p. 22]                                                                                                                                |
| Revisionist critique | McMahan; Frowe     | Individual liability and unjust threat   | Responsibility becomes epistemically unstable  | "There is no moral belief that is more universal, stable, and unquestioned, . . . {} than the belief that killing people is normally wrong" [22, p. 189] |

### 3. ETHICAL FRACTURES OF CONTEMPORARY WARFARE

**Asymmetric conflict and the collapse of the combatant/non-combatant distinction** . Asymmetric conflicts undermine the principle of distinction more radically than commonly believed. The theory of classical just war presents an ideal. It assumes moral status in the war is at least roughly what is publicly visible. So, the soldier fights and the civilian do not. Modern inequality leads to that misalignment. According to Orend [23], non-state fighters may not be uniformed; civilian infrastructures may be essential military nodes; contractors, logistics chains, and informal networks blur the lines of support and participation. The results concern operational vagueness, but also ontological vagueness about who exactly counts as a combatant.

It is important because the protection of civilians was never merely a prudential convenience. This statement conveys the notion that warfare should, in principle, be aimed against those responsible for the danger rather than against social life as such [47]. Asymmetry which turns entire urban ecologies into supposed support systems weakens the normative category of civilians. Hostile environments may be the new label for populations. Consequently, even if the principle of discrimination lasts to be affirmed rhetorically, its conceptual fundamentals are progressively being eroded.

Asymmetry also affects proportion. The party who has less strength may take advantage of the remaining commitments of the greater party to restraint. The stronger party will then face an awful temptation that is to refrain and lose strategic advantage or strike and claim that enemy's illegal embedding transfers responsibility. All the aspects of this dilemma can be described by Just war theory, but is much less clear about what it means for ideas of restraint to become part of the theatre of war.

The pressure of war in Ukraine has been clearly exposed. The international humanitarian law is still far from irrelevant. Yet, the interplay of conventional force, informational warfare, targeting of infrastructure, occupation of civic spaces and prolonged imposition on education, health and mobility shows how brittle the distinction between combatants and non-combatants becomes in hybrid conditions [52].

**Drone warfare and the problem of remote killing: Jeff McMahan's individualist revisionism.** The use of drones to kill alters the nature of violence in war, separating the act of killing from bodily exposure. Advocates of drones often say that they can be accurate and can create less collateral damage. While certain military operations are more selective than older forms of bombardment, this empirical point does not settle the philosophical question. What happens to agency, reciprocity and moral risk when one side can kill from a remarkably safe distance, while the other side is subjected to a continuous wave of surveillance, uncertainty, anticipation and fear?

The ethical principle of mutual danger is attributed to the classical battlefield. Using the drone may make the operating



areas unsafe. The link between permission to kill and willingness to share risk has been integrated into just war theory either explicitly or implicitly. The remote war has entangled the relationship of the country. It creates imbalance not only in capabilities but also in immunization against existential threats. Johnston and Eckert [46] states that an operator may feel a sense of success after constantly seeing a target. However, not demonstrated that a target may die instantly. Despite their temporal separation, the operator remains psychologically intertwined with the target over the long visual length. Johnston challenges the idea that remoteness affects one's agency.

Recent literature challenges the view that distance can undermine agency. Studies of drone operators reveal the distance is affiliated to trauma, moral injury and heavy responsibility, and not mere emotional insulation. As Saini et al. [51] argues, remote warfare may not remove the ethical burden but rather reallocates it in a dysfunctional manner characterized by prolonged observation, asynchronous violence, and bureaucratically segmented authorization.

McMahan's revisionism, in this case, highlights the weakness of moral equality, because the justice of the cause still matters. Even revisionism faces problems in attributing blame – whether to operators or intelligence analysts, programmers or lawyers, and commanders. The warfare exhibiting a drone is proof of modern war as it is. The action with moral significance cannot be justified as the act of choice of the agent alone. A technical and organizational assemblage is contributing more and more to its growth.

**Cyber warfare: When violence has no body.** Cyber warfare has made it more difficult to have a strong moral belief that the representation of violence in physical terms is wrong. A cyber-attack can take down hospitals, transport systems, water networks and financial markers with no visible weapons. The code is the immediate medium, but the consequences could involve panic, deprivation, injury, and death [26]. There is a philosophical reason why it is disruptive, not merely novel. The hostile agency of the cyber conflict is taken from the spectacular event of the body's destruction. For centuries, it has accounted as the most morally neutral of all war crimes.

A just war theory might seek to extend its categories into cyberspace and ask whether the cyber operation under consideration is being assessed as aggression, whether its harms are proportionate, or whether civilian immunity is being respected. Every single extension, however, reveals friction. The attribution is often ambiguous. Consequences may take time to arrive, may accumulate before reach a certain number, and may take place at various locations. a malicious intrusion may be harmfree at the moment of execution but may create severe vulnerabilities downstream. In a world where conflict increasingly lacks direct weapon contact and instead, relies on intervened infrastructures and dependencies, the inherited categories of the doctrine start to appear event-driven [24, 27].

The cyber warfare of today shows that violence can be ecological. It works through social situations or systems that people absolutely want to lead physically safe and medically treated lives that are politically informed and economically alive. No longer the soldier alone bears the moral burdens of war. The social entities of interdependent institutions also shoulder the burden in question. When this is made clear, the ethics of war ought to examine a kind of warfare that seeks to damage the conditions of life rather than simply those who happen to be present.

**Hybrid war: The truth as the first casualty (epistemological and moral dimensions).** The hybrid war increases the ethical and philosophical complexities of modern-day wars by adopting cyberattacks, economic coercion, propaganda and platformised information warfare along with conventional warfare. It does not only get different tactics together but also seeks to reshape the conditions under which societies know, trust, deliberate and coordinate collective action. Under hybrid conditions, truth is not simply a victim of war anymore. It is becoming one of the principal objects of war [28] because narratives are now engineered to push agenda that disrupt meaningful judgment and deteriorate social fabric [29, 30].

The philosophical significance of this development is that Just War Theory supposes that responsible agents can identify aggression (at least in principle), assign authorship, evaluate evidence, and deliberate about alternatives. Hybrid warfare disrupts these beliefs. Because synthetic media, bot-driven rumours, algorithmically engineered publics, and coordinated disinformation campaigns destabilise epistemic environments in themselves. Consequently, decisions regarding just cause, last resort, proportionality, and responsibility are made within an environment of deliberately corrupt information. Hybrid warfare directly undermines the truth that undergirds the just war tradition and confounds the courts.

Ricoeur's idea of narrative identity is handy here since conflict is always partly fought through narrative. Political communities rely on stories to remember their community, justify their actions, identify their enemies, and interpret their suffering. In hybrid war, however, narrative is not only retrospective in character but operational. By relying on narratives strategically, actors define who counts as a victim, who is marked as an enemy, what is (or should be) considered sacrifice, what is dismissed as waste, and what is regarded as defence or aggression. Consequently, it is a necessity to think ethically about war today which is also to think epistemically just – who gets believed, how evidence circulates and how manipulation alters the moral visibility of suffering [31].

Thus, the fractures of contemporary warfare could be summed up under three headings—blurriness of status, distributed agency and weaponised truth. All these conditions exert pressure on a fundamental criterion of the Just War Theory. The

disfigurement of identities and changing functions obscures discrimination. Disproportionate asymmetry and infrastructural damage lessen proportionality. Purposely polluting epistemic habitats makes less reliable the judgment about what constitutes just cause. This does not imply that we cannot make moral judgments. What this rather means is that a doctrine designed for bounded, legible and agent-centred forms of conflict can no longer claim conceptual mastery over the moral realities of modern War. The contemporary types of war and the just war criteria they destabilise are laid out in Table 3.

**Table 3.** *Contemporary Modes of War and the just war criteria they destabilise*

| Mode of conflict    | Structural feature            | Criterion under pressure        | Philosophical consequence                           | Philosophical anchor                                                           |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Asymmetric conflict | Blurred civilian roles        | Discrimination                  | Civil protection de-stabilises                      | "The face is what forbids us to kill" [1, p. 199]                              |
| Drone warfare       | Remote lethality              | Proportionality, responsibility | Ethical impartiality and asymmetrical vulnerability | Killing is no longer reciprocal [32]                                           |
| Cyber warfare       | Delayed, infrastructural harm | Just cause, proportionality     | Violence becomes systemic and invisible             | "Violence can destroy power, but utterly incapable of creating it" [33, p. 56] |
| Hybrid war          | Narrative manipulation        | Public judgment                 | Truth itself becomes a weapon                       | Narrative shape's moral identity [31]                                          |

The previous analysis has shown that hybrid warfare is not only a destabilizer of the material circumstances of conflict but also of the information environments, which give meaning to the conflict. However, strategic innovation or technological development is not the primary reason for this destabilisation. Far from indicating progress, this points to something much deeper: the deterioration of the epistemic conditions for moral and legal judgment. To comprehend modern warfare in its entirety, it is crucial to go beyond examining forms of operations and to take communication itself as a constitutive element of warfare into account.

**Communication and epistemic collapse in modern warfare.** Failure to examine the communicative transformation of warfare itself is to not properly understand the current conditions of warfare. The text preceding this has highlighted that the advances of technological asymmetries, cyber operations, and hybrid strategies are threatening the stability of classical just war theory. In fact, these developments indicate there is a more fundamental destabilization in play, namely one concerning what we shall call the epistemic conditions under which moral judgment becomes possible.

The classical theory of the just war is based on some epistemic assumptions. It is assumed that the actors could, at least in principle, identify aggression, distinguish between combatants and noncombatants, and weigh proportionality, on the basis of facts that are relatively stable and public. These assumptions are not just utilitarian, they are crucial for the theory's moral coherence. In the absence of a minimally shared horizon of truth, the criteria of just cause, discrimination and proportionality lose their operational meaning.

In this way, the conclusions of the philosophy of communication become essential. In the argument of Yuriy Bidzilya, the postmodern communication does not consist of transmitting an unchanging meaning but producing and spreading different reality interpretations. When communication does not take place, the intent and function of the parties at a particular time may not be conveyed by words or their meanings through which communication occurs. This transition results in the dispersal of epistemic power and the emergence of what can be termed as alternative information systems [34]. When it is the case, the epistemic environment of war becomes unstable. The use of communication in hybrid conflict is pro-active, not just co-operative - it is expressly intended to engage the target. The findings shown in the document "Political and Legal Aspects of Information Warfare" show that information warfare works through systematic disinformation, deliberate legal obscurity and manipulation of media infrastructure. These processes are not secondary to military activities but are aimed at attacking the cognitive and normative capacities of societies to create distrust, distort perceptions and obliterate the possibility for shared judgement [35]. The outcome is not simply a spurting of misinformation, but an undercutting of truth as such. When the information environment is full of strategic narratives, it becomes difficult to tell fact from fiction. It examines the difficulty of being certain about one's ultimate ascription of responsibility, the crux of moral and legal judgments. It becomes challenging for the agents to make their choices as a result of incorrect information created and misleading information that they are provided with. Consequently, this epistemic downfall has implications on the moral framework of just war theory. First, the just cause criterion presupposes that there is an objective way to identify aggression. However, the identification process must specifically be politically and communicatively mediated, when the aggressor's narrative itself is contested and manipulated. The second principle is that of the visibility of morally relevant categories. When communication systems are reframing actors through narratives, labels and other kinds of symbolic constructions, the distinction between combatants and non-combatants becomes discursively unstable. On the third factor, proportionality must assess that harm. However, if it were indirect, postponed, concealed from us by information, its harm assessment will not be certain.

The just war theory crisis of the twenty-first century should therefore be understood not only as a reaction to technology but as the result of a newly transformed communicative ontology. The modern war is fought in a space where the very

meaning is contested and the conditions for rational moral debate is systematically undermined.

From this point of view, modern conflict shows a basic unity of physical and communicative violence. The epistemic battlefield encompasses the battle where destruction involves a complete destruction of shared reality. An adequate philosophical explanation of war, it is clear, must not only contain an ethics of violence, but also an ethics of communication. The issue is no longer only justifying the use of force, but whether the communicative conditions for such justifications can be sustained.

#### 4. THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF WAR: BEYOND CALCULUS

**Hegel on war as the “ethical health of peoples”: a critical reading.** Hegel’s suggestion that war can be the “ethical health of peoples” is thought-provoking as it identifies a temptation that recurs in political thought: that conflict restores seriousness, solidarity, and collective purpose. Communities facing adversity often develop bonds of commitment and sacrifice that everyday life obscures. When this insight gets transformed into an ethical evocation of war itself, it becomes dangerous [36].

The modern-day warfare makes it clear why the temptation must be resisted. The experience of communal purpose that such industrialised remote and hybrid conflict offers does not simply reveal. It also normalises emergency, bureaucratises killing, and intensifies dehumanisation. Even though war can expose a person’s fundamental loyalties, it does so only by exposing those loyalties to an ethical test. Conflict in nationalist and civilizational rhetoric clarifies who we “are”. However, that clarification often comes at the cost of reducing both ourselves and our enemies to morally simplistic abstractions.

A careful reading of Hegel, therefore, serves the present argument by identifying the moment at which political communities confuse violence for energy. The ethical health of a people cannot be measured by its capacity for organized hostility. A community proves its ethical maturity not through its capacity for mobilization but through its ability to realize justice without fetishising animosity.

**Levinas and the face of the enemy: ethics before ontology.** Levinas interrupts the logic of war at a deeper level than can be accessed by procedural critique alone. The other’s face is not a first empirical object; it is a demand. It notifies in advance about classification, project, and tactical calculations. This means that we should not ground ethics on contract, reciprocity, or state membership. According to LEVINAS [1], existence starts from exposure to vulnerability. This insight, when placed in the context of war, is explosive. The adversary cannot entirely be reduced to a target profile, a threat matrix, or a category of legitimate force [47]. The use of calculative frameworks can be politically essential. However, they do not reach the origin of ethical seriousness.

The regulation of violence comes after the claim of the other is already established. As a result of the just war theory, an argument surfaced that attempts to claim there are instances of justified killing. But Levinas shows us that this cannot finally deal with the unmasterable moral loss in every justified killing. This does not equate to mere pacifism. Institutions, justice, and protection are still needed. However, Levinas prevents the rationalization and justification of violence. It becomes all the more urgent for him to interrupt as warfare today is screen, database and algorithm classification. The remote and data-driven conflict increases the trend of turning people into profiles. Levinas returns the scandal of singularity instead of that conversion.

**Hannah Arendt on Violence and Power: an ontological distinction.** Arendt’s differentiation of power and violence unravels another limitation of just war theory. Arendt sees power as a function of people acting together in a common world; it is inextricable from legitimacy and plurality. In contrast, the violence is instrumental. It has the capacity to force, disrupt, and annihilate, but is incapable of producing enduring legitimacy. Violence is rather the last resort of the politically frustrated [33].

It is important, especially for technologically-mediated warfare. The ability to effectively kill, at speed and over distance, can both enhance the capability to destroy and simultaneously reduce public accountability space. One should not confuse this expansion with political power. In contrast, when remote and opaque systems are relied upon excessively, it generally signals the decline of common worlds where such things as persuasion and contestation are still possible.

Therefore, modern conflict confirms an Arendtian suspicion, as violence is often the substitute for weakened power, not its full expression. So long as just war theory continues to address the conditions that justify, cautioning against the use of violence, it risks ignoring the prior question of political worlds that become so damaged that violence appears the principal instrument.

**Paul Ricoeur: Narrative identity and the memory of war.** Ricoeur brings a temporal and interpretative dimension, absent which the ethics of warfare is unfinished. The shooting may stop, but wars never end. They still exist in terms of testimony, trauma, commemoration, denial, archive, and curriculum. Based on what violence we can narrate, communities become



who we mourn, who we forget, who is counted as a victim, and who is authorized to speak, and what future is narratively possible [31].

This insight renders the so-called aftermath of war centrally, rather than secondarily, philosophical. The healing of wounds, the fixing of institutions, the continuity of education, and the rebuilding of social trust all belong to the moral significance of war. The wartime medical practices show that action continues under circumstances where destruction and care uncomfortably coexist [43].

In the same way, the preservation of higher education and digital learning under martial conditions is not mere an administrative resilience. Its purpose is to protect the temporal horizon of the political community from a compression of life into emergency and survival [16, 37].

Ricoeur's work develops the idea that wars are staged with future outcomes in mind. A society is one that fails to teach, remember, mourn, and recreate. War is gaining more than victory in the battlefield. Even Time has been colonized.

## 5. TOWARD A PHILOSOPHY OF PEACE AS POSITIVE DUTY

**Kant's "Perpetual Peace" in the age of fragmented sovereignty.** Moral philosophy, if the above discussion is correct, must turn not just to refining the conditions for what should count as justified killing but also to a richer account of peace. Kant's idea of a perpetual peace is most important here, not because it offers a naive forecast of history, but because it names a regulative ideal. Peace cannot be understood merely as the absence of war. According to Kant [18], institutions must be oriented towards politics and law to the extent that war becomes progressively less thinkable and less necessary. Complications arise in Kant's framework due to modern conditions. Sovereignty is fragmented, proxy actors proliferate with impunity, platforms wield power, cyber operations threaten but do not destroy, and transnational infrastructures are ever more prevalent; this is the world in which we live.

Nevertheless, Kant was not referring to a perfect institution symmetry for a difference. In its contribution to modern political and military thought, it would be more convincing to assert that it refuses to consider war as the ordinary boundary of political reason. Even when perpetual peace is not reached, it is the standard against which strategies, institutions, and emergency claims are judged.

Kant holds significance as he associates peace with public right and not only private virtue. Peace is not merely an internal feeling. It is a legal and political system that demands institution, accountability, and the disciplining of power. In this, Kant adds Levinas and Arendt: ethical encounter and public action require a normative horizon, and perpetual peace is just that horizon.

**The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) as a Philosophical, not merely legal concept.** The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is often considered to be a doctrine of either international law or policy. Nonetheless, it also has a philosophical significance because it represents steps toward rethinking sovereignty in light of vulnerability. If there is a political authority to protect against such atrocities, that cannot mean that sovereignty means the non-interference. It has an obligation. This action has ethical importance, as it helps enlarge the sphere of care beyond territorial self-regard [45].

At the same time R2P replicates the central paradox of modern war ethics. Protection sometimes requires force, but force in the name of humanity can also lead to greater domination or selectivity. As such, the doctrine cannot be justified philosophically by a humanitarian intention alone. It should be evaluated in terms of power imbalance, epistemic reliability, and the risk that violence interventions could occupy the space of moral concern they aim to save.

What R2P ultimately contributes to the present argument is not a final answer but rather a pressure point. This means that peace cannot be understood only in terms of non-intervention. But it also means that the passage from protection to coercion is, ethically, unstable. Consequently, the philosophy of peace must direct at prevention, resilience, institution-building, structural justice rather than imagine force as its first vehicle.

**Peace as praxis: From negative to positive (Johan Galtung's structural legacy).** Galtung's distinction between negative and positive peace represents a very clear conceptual move beyond just peace. Negative peace denotes the absence of direct violence. Positive peace occurs when there are transformations taking place in the structural conditions that lead to violence happening, benefiting, or becoming normal. It encapsulates a large spectrum of oppression, exclusion and indignity to the fragility of infrastructure, epistemic marginalisation and certain forms of institutional abandonment that render a people permanently vulnerable. [19]

Under present circumstances, this difference becomes necessary. Present-day warfare intersects with murder, but it also exposes structural issues that are preexisting. In addition, it casts lengthy shadows on the health, education, economic and public order fronts. Overall, as a result of the war, responsibility cannot entirely be what is material. The complexity of the issue lies in the moral and institutional architectures in which violence is incubating. For instance, corporate responsibilities in reconstruction do not only concern businesses but moreover cross-examine how economic actors contribute to repairing damage to civic spaces [49].

Peace is a praxis that demands a more extensive cartography of responsibility than classical war ethics usually prescribes. It contains medicine as healing the wounded contests war in its effort to reduce bodies to waste. The communities that are impacted upon are protecting their future by preserving the institutions that convey meaning and skill and citizenship. Digital learning is included in it, for continuity of knowledge can itself become a mode of civic resistance under military pressure. Furthermore, it encompasses economic reconstruction, as it cannot be ethical for social order after the war to overlook how material, money, and labour re-enter [38].

**Table 4.** *From negative peace to positive peace as an active ethical duty*

| Dimension           | Negative peace      | Positive peace              | Implication for contemporary ethics | Philosophical anchor                                                                                                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Basic meaning       | Absence of violence | Presence of justice         | Peace becomes an ethical project    | "The access to the face is straightway ethical" [1, p. 85]                                                               |
| Primary focus       | Ceasefire           | Justice, institutions, care | Ethics expands beyond war           | "The tie with the Other is knotted only as responsibility" [1, p. 97]                                                    |
| Temporal horizon    | Immediate           | Long-term                   | Ethics beyond battlefield           | "Perpetual peace is not an empty idea" [18]                                                                              |
| Ethical orientation | Reactive            | Transformative              | Peace as obligation                 | "Responsibility is initially for the Other, that is, I am responsible for his very responsibility" LEVINAS, 1985, p. 96) |

This map distorts the seriousness of armed conflict by trivializing the intensity of the battles ultimately took place. It functions in opposition to that. It recognizes that moral import of war is greater than organized killing. If peace is merely the absence of fire, war is still conceptually first. If peace is a positive duty, moral and political thought can finally cease to orbit the justificatory grammar of violence and begin the harder work of constructing the institutions, relations, and epistemic conditions in which violence loses a good deal of its ordinary plausibility. In this sense, contemporary warfare not only disrupts moral norms but also threatens the possible conditions under which such norms can be meaningfully articulated. Table 4 shows negative peace and positive peace as active duty and their implications for contemporary ethics.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The just war tradition has always played an essential role in the argument. Nevertheless, it can no longer claim that it is conceptually adequate. What's more, it cannot make this claim under the structural conditions of twenty-first-century conflict. The fundamental principles, just cause, discrimination, and proportionality, were formulated with the assumption that the battles that were regulated were bound to a special physical space battlefield to which either side has no realistic access other than combatants. Warfare that takes asymmetric, remote, cyber, and hybrid forms does not simply make difficult cases for that geometry. The conduct of war is not their only capacity to alter; it would also change the geometry through which war is conceived, organised, justified and morally evaluated. The ethical destabilisation that ensues cannot be addressed through doctrinal readjustment alone. The issue is not simply to fine-tune pre-existing criteria. Instead, it is about the change in conditions under which those criteria become meaningful. Through asymmetric operations, the identity of the combatant is obfuscated. In technological warfare, the responsibility is passed off to technical devices. In the domain of cyber warfare, life delivery systems are turned into destruction systems. One sees a perversion of truth in hybrid war that weaponizes the very truth; that makes moral reasoning increasingly unstable. An inquiry in to Levinas, Arendt and Ricoeur reveals why this transformation matters philosophically, for "violence" cannot be fully explored by calculation alone, but needs to be understood in relation to singular vulnerability, the destruction of common worlds, and the narratives by which political communities remember, justify, and project their futures.

The point being made here is not that philosophy should simply give up on this language of restraint or deny the continuing importance of restricting violence, but that it should stop regarding the justification of force as the central horizon of ethics. According to Kant's conception of peace - and Galtung's theory of positive peace - we ought to see peace as more than just the end of the fighting. That is, if we can cultivate peace not only as a normative and institutional praxis but also as an active one. A horizon such as this does not deny the reality of conflict, aggression, or the need to protect against violence. Rather, it insists that the deepest task of ethical and political thought is not to perfect the grammar of justified killing. Rather, it is to transform the institutions, infrastructures, and relations that make recurring violence thinkable, governable, and ordinary.

As a result of the expansion and technical sophistication of violence, the enfeeblement of the communicative and epistemic conditions through which truth, responsibility, and moral judgment become possible, justice is threatened with the emergence of hybrid and informational warfare. If war now proceeds through the fragmentation of the shared reality itself, the defence of peace must also become the defence of epistemic integrity, public truth and the ethical structures of communication on which political coexistence depends.

There are several unreciprocated questions. Is it possible to assign the responsibility in an automated war? Can public truth endure strategic manipulation on the scale of digital platforms? Can reconstruction overlook the hierarchies that

enabled the conflict in the first instance? The issues matter significantly after a war; they are central questions for a philosophy of peace. If the just war tradition once sought to restrict violence in the conduct of war, the task today is more demanding. Specifically, to imagine forms of political life for which peace is not merely the stoppage of emergencies but rather principally the work of justice.

In this paper, we made an original contribution by arguing that the crisis of just war theory in the twenty-first century is not simply a problem of applying old criteria to new weapons, but rather an in-depth crisis of the epistemic and communicative conditions that enable moral judgment. We proposed an epistemic philosophy of peace: a switch from questions of when violence can be justified to how truth, responsibility, public judgement, and a shared communicative reality can be reconstructed in hybrid, cyber, and information warfare conditions. Consequently, rather than a further improvement of just-war principles, the solution to the problem is a positive praxis of peace which safeguards the ethical relation to the Other, reconstitutes institutions of trust, resists the weaponization of truth, and restores the public conditions under which moral and political responsibility can once again be meaningfully exercised. The solution is thus a paradigm shift from a narrow ethics of justified war to positive philosophy of peace.

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