

# **Explanations for terrorist violence and possible implications for Christian responses**

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## **1. Introduction**

This paper seeks to offer some thoughts on how a faith perspective might inform our understanding of terrorism and of state and civil responses to terrorist incidents. Churches in the UK grapple with an assessment of military and civil conflict in order to guide appropriate advocacy responses. Appropriate action is informed through the commissioning of studies<sup>1</sup> and through interaction with international church partners. This work enables churches to better develop advocacy positions on a range of issues relating to domestic security or foreign affairs.

In assessing terrorism and responses, this paper asks whether there are circumstances in which terrorist acts could be justified. The just war tradition<sup>2</sup> is one means by which we might engage with scripture and provide perspectives on appropriate security responses to terrorism and terrorist groups. Critical questions need to be asked regarding security measures employed to counter terrorism both in the UK and with respect to UK military action overseas.

This paper seeks to develop a better understanding of the phenomenon of terrorist violence by examining the experiences of those recruited to carry out such acts in the UK. We elaborate on some of the motivations behind perpetrators of bombings and other violent acts against civilians.

The association of 'extremism' with a propensity towards violence is often assumed but crucially we conclude that this needs to be questioned particularly when devising government responses. It is both unusual and unnatural for any person to inflict injury and death on another human individual outside the realm of self-defence, especially on those with whom they have no personal knowledge or relationship. We propose that a deliberate process of conditioning within a controlling peer group structure is usually necessary and that it is unwise to place too much weight on ideology or religion as a primary cause to explain violence. This understanding should contribute to a consideration of the responses that Christians, churches and others might develop. It also helps us to appreciate the limitations of the influence mainstream religious organisations in this regard.

The Prevent programme was introduced as one of four elements of the UK government's counter-terrorism strategy in 2009. It has implications for chaplains and others in the church and, in 2019, the government announced a further review and consultation of this programme. This paper's conclusions imply that there will be limitations attached to a programme that seeks to suppress terrorism by identifying individuals who hold 'extreme' views. While Prevent may be helpful in challenging extremism, its contribution in reducing the likelihood of violence is questionable. In all likelihood most who hold views that might be classified as 'extreme' probably do not endorse violence.

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<sup>1</sup> Reports commissioned by the Baptist, Methodist Church and United Reformed Church include Peacemaking: A Christian Vocation (2006), Drones: Ethical Dilemmas in the Use of Lethal Force (2011), Statement on Syria, (2015)

<sup>2</sup> The term just war tradition is used here to encompass the development of ethical thinking around conflict, security and justice over two millennia and applied across vastly differing systems of governance. In this respect it is much broader than 'just war theory' that is typically defined by a set of jus ad bellum and jus in bello principles.

In defence of the government strategy, 'Prevent' is only one part of the picture. It is only one of four programmes within the UK government's counter-terrorism strategy, operating alongside other measures.

## **2. When is the use of violence justified?**

### **2.1 What do we mean by 'terrorism'?**

The subject is so emotive that any public discussion of terrorism risks heightening fears rather than promoting understanding. It is perhaps unsurprising then that a number of news agencies, including the BBC, recommend that as far as possible the word 'terrorist' is avoided in reports with words such as 'hijacker', 'attacker', and 'bomber' chosen instead.

Nevertheless 'terrorism' is a term with a recognised legal definition. Terrorist acts, as defined in British law have three key components: the act, which is the use or threat of use of violence; the intention, to influence a government or governmental organisation or intimidate the public or a section of the public; and the purpose, of advancing a political, religious, racial or ideological cause. According to this definition then, the primary features are a non-personal motivation (whether religious, ideological or political) coupled with an intention to influence, frustrate or dismantle a locus of power (usually national government) or to intimidate the public or a section of the public.

### **2.2 Can acts of terrorism ever be justified?**

Under certain circumstances violence is justified in the Christian just war tradition<sup>3</sup> so what is it about terrorism that makes it unjustifiable? An obvious response might be to point out the lack of discrimination or proportion in terrorist actions (see also 6.2 below). But is it not more profitable to approach this question from the perspective of the motivations of those engaged in such acts?

Those who engage in terrorism will consider themselves to be justified in their use of violence. They might well argue that they engage in acts of terror as the means of last resort to overcome structural injustice when all other means have failed. Terrorism is the tool of those who are militarily weak and who perceive that they have no other means to overturn the corrupt regimes of the powerful. But how are such judgements to be mediated?

The just war tradition pre-dates the Westphalian political order and considers that any military action will always be an "extraordinary extension" of ordinary acts of judgement. A criminal act requires judgement firstly by a police action and then ultimately by a magistrate. Military action requires no less a judicial mind-set. There must be an attempt to establish whether wrong has been committed, what is necessary for the punishment and restitution of this wrong, and what the requirements of future peace might be. Our systems of democracy, however imperfect, provide reasonable capacity for the authority of the UK state to exercise such judgement. Consequently, in the UK at least, the institutions of the state act as the 'legitimate authority' and are the only domain in which judgements on the use of force can be made. In the UK we can have some expectation that coercive action on the part of our government will be submitted to the scrutiny of established principles in international law.

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix for a discussion on the limitations of the just war tradition in addressing chronic insecurity.

We could engage in a discussion around the relative merits or otherwise of terrorist acts perpetrated by Nelson Mandela's ANC, the Palestinian Authority/PLO with respect to the first and second intifadas or armed ethnic groups acting in the lawless ethnic violence of eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. In these situations the state, or state authorities, have been willing partners or impotent bystanders while gross abuses of human rights go unchecked. Regrettably, consideration of the ethics around civilian use of force in response to these situations would require a longer discussion that can be afforded here.

However, the UK context is markedly different from that of apartheid South Africa, Israel's occupation of Palestine or the lack of state influence in eastern DRC. In the UK the individual can, in the words of Thomas Aquinas, seek redress of his rights "from the Tribunal of his superior". Aquinas quotes Romans 13:4 in this respect, "He beareth not the sword in vain: for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil".<sup>4</sup> Paul later subjected himself to the same authorities and sought to plead his own case. The question of whether or not you agree with those who exercise authority over you has to be separated from the claim of that authority to legitimacy; the authority is deemed legitimate if it has some proven capacity and mandate to determine the public good.

It is also relevant to note the support for 'public order' throughout just war tradition beginning with Augustine's argument that a demonstration of public order might help individuals to better understand the designs of God. Some terrorist movements are driven by a vision to dismantle the order of the state while others simply want to reform or replace authority structures to achieve what they believe to be just goals. Either way in the context of modern Britain the rule of law is overseen by democratic accountability and cannot justly be reformed by force. The resort to taking up arms against innocent parties even to pursue what might be argued to be a just cause, represents a private use of force and therefore will always be sinful.<sup>5</sup>

### **3. What is the experience of terrorism in the UK?**

#### **3.1 Motivations behind terrorist acts in the UK: A historical perspective**

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon in the UK. For over 100 years we have faced the threat of terrorist violence. From the acts of the far right to attacks from international terrorists, to even the bombs of the suffragettes, the threat has shifted in terms of motivation and levels of violence. Whilst we can identify historic trends it is worth noting that the greatest casualty count in terms of a single terror attack on British soil was not from an Islamist organisation as we understand it now, nor from an organisation related to Ireland, nor from a right wing organisation. Rather it was the Lockerbie bombing, carried out in the skies of Scotland which caused the deaths of 270 people.

The first truly terrorist attack in the United Kingdom was the assassination of two high ranking British officials in Dublin in the Phoenix Park Murders in 1882 by the Invincibles (a militant offshoot of the Irish Republican Brotherhood).<sup>6</sup> However, terrorism related to Ireland did not dominate during this period. Indeed, the first terrorist bomb to explode in Ireland was planted by the suffragettes. They also attempted to bomb the Bank of England, St Paul's Cathedral and succeeded in bombing the Chancellor of the Exchequer Lloyd George's house in 1913. With the advent of the First World War,

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<sup>4</sup> Summa (II. IIae, 40)

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<sup>6</sup> Also known as the "Fenians". Crucially the attack was labelled a terrorist incident at the time.

and the subsequent extension of the franchise to women this particular strand of violence disappeared.

Since the Second World War two forms of terrorism have dominated within the UK: terrorism related to Northern Ireland, and more recently Islamic terrorism. Irish terrorism was at its height during the Troubles with attacks focused in the north of Ireland but also throughout the United Kingdom. In more recent years, Islamist inspired violence with the 7/7 attacks and the more recent London Bridge and Manchester Arena attacks.<sup>7</sup>

How do we make sense of the journey taken by perpetrators of terrorist violence in the Northern Ireland context or Islamist-claimed violence? What drives people to a point where they are prepared to carry out acts that are designed or are likely to kill civilians without distinction? We attempt to assess this through a more detailed examination of the networks that support terrorist violence in each of these two contexts.

## **4. The experience of the troubles in Ireland**

### **4.1 The extent and wider impact of violence**

The history of the relationship between the peoples of Ireland and their more powerful neighbours in Great Britain has often spilled over into violence. The 'Troubles' a particularly violent period starting 1960's were brought to a close by the signing of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. From 1962 through to 1999 the level of violence in the north of Ireland was unprecedented in the modern era. In total 3,200 people were killed by republican or loyalist para-militaries or by the security forces. Considering the relatively small population no industrial democracy has experienced terrorism remotely comparable to this scale. The long period of continual violence has left a long term legacy of high rates of mental illness and a suicide rate so high that more have died at their own hands since the ceasefire than were killed by violence before.<sup>8</sup>

Just over half the deaths from terror incidents are attributable to one group, the Provisional IRA. Various loyalist paramilitaries are responsible for 929 deaths while the security forces<sup>9</sup> are responsible for 363 deaths.

### **4.2 Grievances and civil rights protest**

In the decades prior to the Troubles the Catholic Nationalist community had suffered discrimination which many attributed to the bigotry and bias inherent in the Unionist-led government. In the 1960s for many in the community the objective of equal rights in employment and education had become the primary political goal as this demand had greater purchase than the cause of Irish nationalism. For Nationalists the civil rights marches of the 1960s were synonymous with Martin Luther King's movement and other civil rights movements elsewhere at the time. However, those on the Loyalist side failed to appreciate this potential shift. The seeds of violence germinated in an environment

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<sup>7</sup> In the last few years there has been an emerging threat from far right terrorism that must not be overlooked. Two attacks have been carried out: the killing of a man in Finsbury Park, and the murder of Jo Cox MP during the EU referendum campaign. Security services have also reported foiling an increased number of right wing attacks <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-security/britain-is-facing-serious-far-right-terrorism-threat-says-top-uk-officer-idUKKCN1GA2K9>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.research.hscni.net/sites/default/files/Summary%20Report2.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> The British Army, Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR)

where each community perceived the other to be motivated by inherent hostility. Sectarianism grew stronger as actions and events reinforced a perception that the opposing community presented a hostile threat.

### **4.3 Sectarianism - dismissing the 'other'**

Nationalist anger was perceived by the other side as a sign of inherent support for the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and hostility towards the Union. For many Loyalists, the Nationalist grievances of discrimination were not accepted as, after all, areas of deprivation existed within Protestant communities too. The increasing tension around civil rights marches confirmed for many Loyalists that the Nationalists' primary goal was, in the words of the IRA, "Brits Out". More extreme Loyalist leaders attempted to 'other' the Nationalist community, portraying the whole community as troublemakers and asserting that its activists had to be controlled by security measures, either military or vigilante.

The constant civil rights marches gave many on the Nationalist side an exposure to violence and the opportunity to take part at various levels. An aggressive response on the part of security services benefited the narrative of the leaders of the IRA. An early incident in 1969 and a key turning point in the Troubles, was the violent ambush of peaceful republican civil rights marchers at Burntollet Bridge outside Derry while the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) stood idly by. Tony Miller, an IRA member convicted of bombings, recalls how he was first encouraged towards violence by his experiences of 'The Battle of the Bogside.' The confrontation between Catholic youths and the RUC instilled in him a "serious hatred" for the police and desire to "take revenge because you saw people getting battered and choked with CS gas."<sup>10</sup> The Bloody Sunday killing of 14 unarmed civilians<sup>11</sup> by the British Army in 1972 led to a recruitment surge for the IRA.

### **4.4 The utilisation of violence**

Even in this charged atmosphere, turning an individual's anger and hatred into a willingness to carry out acts of violence is not straight-forward. The dynamics of the paramilitary recruitment varied across the organisations but some features are clear in all. The organisations had a highly structured and controlling leadership,<sup>12</sup> they fostered a sense of belonging among members and could offer protection and in some cases financial reward (the UVF through drug running for example). The sense of existential threat from a hostile community on the other side was essential to recruitment. It provided the glue of 'belonging' to a paramilitary organisation and this was probably more important than a political strategy behind violence. For example, many IRA operatives only came to understand the political goals of the IRA once incarcerated in the H Blocks of the Maze prison where they could gain a political education. One recalls "Most of us, if we are truthful, who joined the Republican Movement at an early age; I was 16 and spotted at the front of riots, hadn't a clue about 'isms' socialism or otherwise. It wasn't until the prison system swallowed us up that I heard of such things."

While there were attempts to enforce loyalty in a paramilitary organisation, a more important factor in securing and retaining individuals' commitment to acts of violence was the psychological attachment to a group of paramilitary friends. One Republican activist reflects "There's times I've said to myself, 'Why? You're mad in the head, like.' But . . . I just can't turn my back on it . . . there's too

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<sup>10</sup> McManus, C. Conceptualising Islamic "Radicalisation" in Europe through "Othering": Lessons from the Conflict in Northern Ireland, *Terrorism and Political Violence* (2017)

<sup>11</sup> An additional 14 people were shot and injured in this tragic attack

<sup>12</sup> 10% of those killed by the IRA were Catholics (for example suspected informants or those who ignored IRA rules against selling drugs)

many of my friends in jail, there's too many of my mates given their lives, and I've walked behind too many funerals to turn my back on it now."

There are no straight-forward parallels between terrorism in the north of Ireland and the dynamics of Islamist inspired terror. Nevertheless a number of people involved in peace-building efforts in the north of Ireland context see similarities in the way in which groups in each context condition their members to take part in or otherwise support violence.

## **5. Islamist inspired terrorism**

### **5.1 Islamist violence in the UK**

The young men who carried out the 7 July 2005 attacks in London had different economic backgrounds, employment histories and faith journeys. The diversity among this group of attackers is illustrative of the complex set of motivations that lie behind terror attacks carried out more generally in the name of Islam. That there is such diversity whilst Islamist theology is a connecting feature can easily result in an assumption that religious ideology is the primary motivating factor. However the research findings would challenge the validity of such a claim. Global politics combined with domestic socio-economic factors are often essential drivers and are sufficient for an individual to be guided on a journey towards extremism. At the outset religious ideology may or may not play a part.

At a community level Muslims in the UK have a poor economic status and suffer discrimination in employment. Muslim people are much more likely to be unemployed than any other faith group in the country. 46% of Muslims in the UK live in the 10 most deprived local authority districts in England.<sup>13</sup> The explanations for this relative deprivation are not straight-forward but it has a clear impact on young Muslims. A grievance may be felt not with respect to their own personal experience but often through their sense of responsibility towards the community as a whole.

Meanwhile in an increasingly secular Britain the attitudes of Government, academia and the media are characterised by a grudging acceptance of religion as long as it is practiced behind the closed doors of religious establishments. Problematically, there is at times a complete ignorance towards faith, causing minority faiths groups in particular to be treated with suspicion and fear.

Young Muslims in Britain typically negotiate multiple identities well but for some the above challenges bear unhelpfully on a struggle to work out national identity and their identity as a Muslim. Against this backdrop, groups that offer fundamental certainties in their political and religious agendas can provide a sense of belonging, reassurance and aspiration.

### **5.2 'Othering' by Islamists – "Western society is an enemy of Islam"**

Certain ideas which are sometimes associated with terrorism are, in fact, held by large numbers of people who renounce terrorism. Many young Muslims support the application of Sharia law (not the puritanical form assumed by a broad section of the British public<sup>14</sup>) and the Caliphate but usually in an

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<sup>13</sup> Muslims in Britain: What the figures tell us. BBC 12 February 2015. [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-31435929](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-31435929)

<sup>14</sup> "Indignation about the proposal to include Shariah Law in Britain" Chapter 7 in Kabir NA "Young British Muslims: Identity, politics, culture and religion" (Edinburgh University Press, 2010)

aspirational or nostalgic sense and not by force.<sup>15</sup> But attachments to these concepts can facilitate the endorsement of violence if they encourage the disparaging of non-Muslims and blame whole populations for injustices or the perceived plight of Muslims.

Young minds that are open to exploring alternative philosophies are particularly susceptible to manipulation by violent extremist organisations.<sup>16</sup> Many might engage briefly and then pull away. But extremist groups in the UK and elsewhere use the positive reward of social bonds between group members to reinforce an impression of the moral rightness of a Jihadi Islamist ideology. This care and nurture of group members provides an experiential proof of the positive ethos of extremist organisations and seeks to convince group members that only the in-group can be trusted.

Al Qaeda and ISIS have a political ideology that casts not only Western governments but also their entire non-Muslim populations as enemies of the cause of Islam and of the establishment of a Caliphate that is seen as essential for justice and order. In the ideology of Al Qaeda or ISIS, democracy itself becomes an argument for indiscriminate targeting as the whole population is judged to be responsible for the actions of their Government. This line of argument can be seen for example in a video message left by Siddique Khan that is full of contradictions.<sup>17</sup> He addressed the publics of Western democracies stating that their support for their governments makes them directly responsible. But the 'othering' of whole populations in this way can only thrive in a group context that is highly authoritarian in its structure and where any dissent is seen as a sign of disloyalty to your fellow 'in-group' members. The conversion of an individual from mere support to participatory action is usually achieved over time as the person deepens relationships and is encouraged and rewarded for their increased contribution.

## **6. Some tentative conclusions**

### **6.1 Conditioning towards violence within a social group as a key factor**

Key factors that encourage terrorist violence are much researched, debated and contested. No one set of factors can easily explain the emergence of new terrorist groups or the willingness of individuals to join them. Rather, there is a complex set of dynamics involving the permissive factors (pre-conditions the social/economic environment that can give rise to terrorism) and the precipitant factors that are necessary for terrorist organisations to form and to grow (such as attacks or other events that aid mobilisation, leadership, funding, etc).

The permissive factors might include wealth/income inequality, social inequality and exclusion, ethnic or religious discrimination, dispossession, oppression and human rights abuses. These typically result in protest that is essentially peaceful in its nature, and the presence of these factors in a community still does not fully explain why some individuals will resort to indiscriminate violence.

The Prevent programme seeks to identify those who might be vulnerable to persuasion to engage in acts of violence. But what we discover is that there is no predictor at the individual level that can explain this well, and that individuals with diverse histories and apparently behaving rationally can be encouraged to engage in violence through a conditioning process. The two forms of terrorism

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<sup>15</sup> Bartlett J. Birdwell J. and King M. "The edge of violence: a radical approach to extremism" (London: Demos, April 2010)

<sup>16</sup> Reynolds L. "*There's no silver bullet to prevent radicalisation*" (Demos, [www.demos.co.uk](http://www.demos.co.uk), May 2016)

<sup>17</sup> One of those responsible for the London attack in July 2005.

examined above have very different political and religious contexts and strategic aims. Yet the process of conditioning towards violence through allegiance to a controlling group bears similarity in each case. Support for terrorism requires a process of social bonding with a group and a deliberate process that is organised by an authority structure that conditions individuals to carry out violent acts. In conclusion if we are looking to identify causes of terrorism, our search is much more productive when examining the institutional rather than the individual level and when acknowledging the permissive factors in society that give rise to grievance.

## **6.2 A perspective on conditioning towards violence offered by the just war tradition**

For Augustine, for example, war can only be waged in a spirit of benevolence “with a sort of kind harshness”.<sup>18</sup> The ‘love’ of the Christian warrior must extend to the enemy.<sup>19</sup>

How do we know when this spirit of benevolence is present? As humans we possess an innate natural inhibition to cause death or suffering to fellow human beings. Soldiers in battle are required to overcome this inhibition. This is achieved through their allegiance to a disciplined social group with a hierarchical structure and which trains and supports individuals in killing when necessary. The process is not dissimilar for those who join ISIS or other proscribed organisations that groom members to carry out acts of killing.

The distinction, it might be argued, is in the nature of the organisation and its aims and ethos. There will be some degree of subjectivity in any attempt to assess the moral or evils of an organisation engaged in violence. Most would agree that there is a vast distinction between UK military forces and ISIS. If an objective test is required here, its construction should be fairly straight-forward. If the members of an organisation can engage in the deliberate and targeted killing of civilians who are not presenting any immediate military threat then the organisation cannot claim its aims to be ‘just’ as it has lost a sense of common humanity on which justice depends. One of the distinctive attributes of the just war tradition is its sense that what makes an act morally unjustifiable is not only the nature of the act (usually a legal judgement) but, crucially, the motivation of the person or group in carrying it out.

Terrorist acts against innocent persons must be roundly condemned. On several occasions in recent years, leading representatives of faith groups have come together following a terror incident, either locally or at national level, to demonstrate the positive relationships between faith groups and their shared abhorrence of violence in our communities. This is worthwhile as it counters the impression that could be gained from incidents of terrorism that religion is inherently divisive, problematic and is of dubious value in relation to the public good. But in addition to such totemic media opportunities what else might faith groups be doing to address extremism and violence?

## **6.3 Conclusions – observations on the divide of faith**

There could be many proposals for actions on the part of faith communities to help counter the narrative of those who support terror and we do not propose to attempt a comprehensive list of options here. One lesson that might arise from the above observations relates to the desire of extremists to achieve a separation from the mainstream in order to be successful in promoting and engaging in indiscriminate violence. Immediately this suggests some practical difficulty for mainstream religious institutions in influencing those who are or might be conditioned to support violence in our communities.

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<sup>18</sup> Biggar, (2013). *“In Defence of War”*. Oxford University Press. p61.

<sup>19</sup> Beech, H. (2014) Can a soldier love his enemy? (CCADD)

But arguably we do need a grounded cross-faith vision for a more just Britain to provide a counter-narrative to the despondency and hopelessness of some extremist groups. Such a vision would need to address some of the specific ills in our society, including discrimination, inequality of opportunity, lack of affordable housing, etc. If we wish to promote an inclusivity that bridges various social divisions then our churches and other religious groups have a specific role in bridging the divide of faith. Opening ourselves up to the scriptures of our respective faith traditions, using the process of scriptural reasoning for example, would enable encounter with the lived experience of members of other faiths. Such a process of encounter and sharing is the antithesis of the approach of violent extremist groups that may identify with our concerns for social justice but whose narrative of division and violence thrives within an enclosed space and is resistant to challenge.

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## APPENDIX

### Is the just war tradition still relevant today?

The Just war tradition maintains its influence as a principal tool for assessing ethical responses to violent crisis or extreme injustice albeit with increasing difficulty. While the application of a set of narrow jus ad bellum and jus in bello criteria seems ever more problematic, we have yet to see a widespread rejection of these long-standing principles around the limitation of the use of violence to achieve justice. These are principles that Christian (or nominally Christian) ethicists such as Grotius, Aquinas, Ambrose, Augustine have contributed to over two millennia.

But there is a crisis of confidence around Just War Theory<sup>20</sup> that has intensified as we experience a rise in incidence of civil conflict, insurgency and war fighting in urban areas. This pattern of conflict fundamentally challenges the categories of 'state' verses civil, combatant verses non-combatant, civilian support for insurgency verses those 'not directly engaged in hostilities'. Yet these distinctions are fundamental to a modern interpretation of Just War. Consequently, the application of a set of just war criteria to contemporary crises has become confusing and sometimes unrealistic.

The broader just war tradition provides a rich reflection on the righting a wrong; of punishing the evildoer while leaving open the avenue for repentance. But of late the question around pre-emptive action, for example in relation to the 2001 Iraq war, has come to the fore. The argument of the Bush administration that the Iraq war was a pre-emptive war is difficult to sustain. This would imply that the threat to the United States from Iraq was obvious and imminent, in which case the threat would also be incontrovertible. In reality the 2003 Iraq intervention was a preventative, rather than a pre-emptive war, in that it sought to prevent the build-up of military capacity by Saddam Hussain. Preventative military action is very difficult to reconcile with a just war, because the tradition from its earliest times perceives war as essentially immoral and a consequence of human sin, even when it is deemed necessary.<sup>21</sup> A just ruler has a responsibility to maintain and uphold peace, and consequently the initiation of a military campaign cannot be justified primarily on the basis of the good standing and just nature of a powerful state acting as the world's policeman.

Just war principles become very difficult to apply to threats of mass destruction or threats of indiscriminate terrorist actions where, much skill, intelligence and subjective judgement is necessary to assess risk. Pre-emptive military action if poorly judged, as was surely the case with Iraq, will heighten the sense of grievance leading to increase enmity and is likely to sustain chronic insecurity.

We should not expect an ethical framework designed to inform responses to a military attack to also help us safely navigate through the mire of chronic instability and insecurity. We lack today an equally cogent, persuasive and politically grounded framework for the promotion of a just peace and this is a serious deficit given the very diverse nature of the security threats that we now face.

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<sup>20</sup> The term 'just war theory' is used here to describe a set of jus ad bellum and jus in bello principles that are not only a part of the Christian tradition but have widespread secular support and have informed the development of international law.

<sup>21</sup> While Augustine proposed that war could be morally justifiable he nevertheless maintained that it was essentially sinful. For a discussion on the presumption against violence see Williams, Rt Rev R. "Just War Revisited" (14 Oct. 2003), Lecture to the Royal Institute for International Affairs – Chatham House.

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