

DISCUSSION NOTES ON THE JUST WAR THEORY

Dr Brian Brock (University of Aberdeen)



In light of the slides and pod cast, discuss the following:

A. Consider:

Western democracies defend their possession of nuclear weapons on the grounds that having them is conducive to a greater peace since every nation that has them knows that if they use their weapon their own nation will be destroyed. This is called the theory of mutual assured destruction (MAD for short).

What if we buried a bomb big enough to destroy the planet and gave everyone a trigger? By the extension of MAD, wouldn't this promote the most democratic and peaceful planet we can imagine?

- B. Look at the slides on *ius in bello*. Is it possible that more, or more powerful, weapons could make us all more safe? How?
- C. In the podcast there was some discussion about how decisions are made to go to war or to pursue a specific act within a war. Does the just war theory help us to understand decisions about having and using weapons? Can it help us decide whether or not we should let everyone on the planet have a trigger to a world-destroying bomb?
- D. Look at the slides on *ius ad bellum*. Do any of the criterion help to discriminate between everyone having a trigger, and only states or governments having access to trigger?
- E. What about movements that want to form a state, and only have rudimentary weapons. Is it wrong for them to use weapons like suicide vests? What is the difference between detonating a suicide vest and a nuclear weapon?